

The Revolution Will Not Be Theorised: Du Bois, Locke, and the Howard School's Challenge to White Supremacist IR Theory

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Abstract

This article briefly examines the contributions to International Relations (IR) theory of W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. Taking as a point of departure the recent work of Robert Vitalis¹ on the 'Howard School' of IR of which these two were prominently associated, I both embrace and challenge Vitalis' thesis on the importance of these two African American scholars to the academic field of IR. Embracing Vitalis' invaluable articulation of the Howard School's critique of white supremacist arguments prevalent in IR at its founding and well beyond, I also challenge Vitalis' apparent disassociation of these scholars from the formulation of IR theory. Instead, I discuss how Du Bois and Locke provided some of the earliest theoretical arguments on the role of 'national imperialism' in modern war, as well as theses of cultural change and its impact on international relations.

Keywords

IR theory, racism, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, diaspora

Introduction

This article briefly examines the contributions to International Relations theory of W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. Taking as a point of departure the recent work of Vitalis² on the 'Howard School' of IR of which these two were prominently associated, I both embrace and challenge Vitalis' thesis on the importance of these two African American scholars to

1. Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).
2. Ibid.

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the academic field of IR. Embracing Vitalis' invaluable articulation of the Howard School's critique of white supremacist arguments prevalent in IR at its founding and well beyond, I also challenge Vitalis' apparent disassociation of these scholars from the formulation of IR theory. Although space does not allow for a fuller examination of Howard School scholarship, I discuss how Du Bois and Locke provided some of the earliest theoretical arguments on the role of 'national imperialism' in modern war, as well as theses of cultural change and its impact on international relations, which not only articulate IR theory but anticipate a 'diasporist' paradigm of IR. The latter goes beyond a critique of the racist hierarchical structure of the global political system, and focusses on culture groups as prominent units of analysis; diasporisation, as a key change agent in domestic and international politics; and cultural self-determination, intraculturally, and cosmopolitanism, interculturally, as objectives of intercultural (i.e. international) relations.

The article proceeds in several sections. First, I briefly review the centrality of white supremacy in the origins of IR as an academic field of study, and the prevalence of Howard School scholars, Du Bois and Locke, in critiquing such claims on practical and theoretical grounds. Second, I provide a pointed critique of Vitalis' marginalisation of the Howard School's contributions to IR theory. In the third and fourth sections, I consider, in turn, Du Bois and then Locke's theoretical contributions to both our understanding of national imperialism and its relationship to both the US Civil War and WWI, and the relationship among race, culture, development and democracy. Fifth, I provide a brief synthesis of the theoretical claims of the two theorists and show how they can converge in a thesis centred on the role of diasporas in world politics that anticipates developments in world politics today. Sixth, and finally, I conclude with a summary of the main points.

White Supremacism and the Origins of International Relations

For more than a century, social scientists have maintained that race and racism are amongst the most important factors in world politics. Racism is the belief in, practice, and policy of domination based on the specious concept of race.³ It is not simply bigotry or prejudice, but beliefs, practices, and policies reflective of and supported by institutional power, primarily state power. Prominent scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois⁴ acknowledged at the outset of the last century that 'the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa in America and the islands of the sea'. Increasingly – though still marginally – appreciated today is the centrality of race and racism to the core theorists of the incipient academic field of IR.⁵ Their early works were firmly grounded in Social

3. Errol Henderson, 'Navigating the Muddy Waters of the Mainstream: Tracing the Mystification of Racism in International Relations', in *The State of the Political Science Discipline: An African-American Perspective*, ed. Wilbur Rich (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 325–63.

4. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Fawcett, 1961 [1903]), 23.

5. See for e.g. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*; John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Darwinist theses of the day that assumed a hierarchy of races dominated by white Europeans and their major diasporic offshoots in the Americas, Australia, and South Africa. White supremacism informed the domestic and international policies of major Western states and rationalised their policies of white racial domination epitomised in chattel slavery, imperial conquest, colonisation, and genocide. Uniquely, whites were assumed to possess civilisation while non-whites were assigned a status of either barbarism or savagery. 'Lesser races' were thought not only biologically inferior to whites, but in a state of almost perpetual conflict; therefore, the 'civilizing mission' of those assuming the 'white man's burden' could be imposed by force. The incipient field of IR provided an intellectual rationale to justify white supremacism; and given the racist hierarchy that guided the international politics of the predominantly white major powers in their interaction with non-white polities, then international relations were 'interracial relations';⁶ and foundational works in IR focussed on race as their main axis of inquiry.

For example, Reinsch,⁷ whom Schmidt⁸ maintains 'must be considered one of the founding figures of the field of international relations', noted in what may be considered the first monograph in the field of IR, *World Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (1900), that 'national imperialism' was transforming the landscape of world politics as states attempted 'to increase the resources of the national state through the absorption or exploitation of undeveloped regions and inferior races'.⁹ Olson and Groom¹⁰ note that Reinsch's work 'suggests that the discipline of international relations had its real beginnings in studies of imperialism'; and studies of imperialism at the time were firmly grounded in white supremacist assumptions. Moreover, Reinsch's¹¹ 'The Negro Race and European Civilization', concurred with prominent anthropometric arguments that there were physiological differences between the brains of blacks and those of whites, such that for the former 'organic development of the faculties seem to cease at puberty'; and, he opined that the development capacity of blacks could be facilitated under white tutelage, which approximated 'an American variant' of British colonial policy of 'indirect rule'.¹²

Further, in *An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Kerr¹³ argued that 'one of the most fundamental facts in human history' is that '[m]ankind is divided into a

6. W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The African Roots of War', *Atlantic Monthly* 115, May (1915): 707–14; Paul Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 2nd Edition (Boulder: Westview, 1996).

7. Paul Reinsch, *World Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 9.

8. Brian Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 75.

9. Reinsch, *World Politics*, 14.

10. William Olson and A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations Then and Now* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 47.

11. Paul Reinsch, 'The Negro Race and European Civilization', *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (1905a): 154–5.

12. Robert Vitalis, 'The Noble American Science of Imperial Relations and Its Laws of Race Development', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 4 (2010): 932. Paul Reinsch, *Colonial Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1902) and his *Colonial Administration* (New York: Macmillan, 1905b), also placed him among the leading experts on colonial administration.

13. P.H. Kerr, 'Political Relations between Advanced and Backward Peoples', in *An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, eds. A. J. Grant et al., (London: Macmillan and Company, 1916), 142.

graduated scale' ranging from civilised to barbarian to savage, necessitating colonisation of the latter by the former.¹⁴ Giddings viewed the 'governing' of 'the inferior races of mankind' as the duty of the civilised and drew on Kidd's *The Control of the Tropics*,¹⁵ which admonished superior races to assume their responsibility to cultivate the riches of the 'tropics'. Imperial competition for resources as European states seized and expanded colonies in Africa and Asia led to major wars among them, as Hobson, Angell, and Lenin famously argued. In fact, Du Bois had argued in 'The African Roots of the War', prior to the publication of Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, that WWI was largely the result of disputes over imperial acquisitions that fused the interests of bourgeoisie and proletariat in European states in a mutually reinforcing pursuit of racist and economic domination of African and Asian nations.¹⁶

Although subsequent scholarship in the incipient field of IR retained a focus on race, over time the justification for white racism progressed through several distinct, overlapping and often mutually reinforcing rationalisations rooted initially in theology, then biology and subsequently in anthropology. The religious and biological justifications of white supremacy are well known. Boas is credited with evolving the academic discourse of race away from biology and towards anthropology and in so doing ushering in an era of cultural relativism and modern anthropological analyses of race. Boas¹⁷ challenged anthropometric 'evidence' of correspondence between cranial capacity of peoples of different races and intelligence, and prevailing genetic arguments of racial heredity. Arguing against Social Darwinism, he rejected the notion of a hierarchy of culture, insisting that all peoples have cultures that should be evaluated on their own terms and not in relation to some cultural hierarchy. This perspective undermined the assumed scientific legitimacy of white supremacy based on notions of white cultural superiority and ushered in the discourse of cultural relativism in social science.

Less well known are contributions to the study of race of the first African American Rhodes Scholar, Alain Locke, who accepted much of Boas' position on culture, but argued against his anthropological view of race, suggesting instead that race was mainly sociological. In the first of a series of five lectures at Howard University in 1916 entitled, 'The Theoretical and Scientific Conceptions of Race', Locke argued that anthropology had not isolated any permanent or static features of race because race was sociological.¹⁸ It 'was simply another word for a social or national group that shared a common history or culture and occupied a geographical region'; but 'as applied to social and ethnic groups' race 'has no meaning at all beyond that sense of kind, that sense of kith and kin';

14. Ibid., 163.

15. Franklin Giddings, 'Imperialism?', *Political Science Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1898): 15.

16. Du Bois, 'The African Roots of War', was published prior to Lenin's tract, but it is neither referenced or anthologised in major IR textbooks, readers, or discussions of the origins of WWI; see Errol Henderson, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism and International Relations Theory', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 1: 71–92.

17. Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1911).

18. Locke originally gave these lectures to the Howard branch of the NAACP in 1915; see Jeffrey Stewart, 'Introduction', in Alan LeRoy Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*, ed. Jeffrey Stewart (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992 [1916]), xx.

it is 'an ethnic fiction'.¹⁹ Through this conception, Locke 'was standing racialist theories of culture on their heads: rather than particular races creating Culture, it was culture – social, political, and economic processes – that produced racial character'.²⁰ Locke removed race from its biological *and* anthropological moorings, placing it 'squarely on a cultural foundation': fundamentally, race was sociological – or in today's verbiage, a 'social construct'. Locke's contributions were as prescient and profound as they are ignored in contemporary scholarship on racism.

In previous studies,²¹ I analysed how white supremacism informs the paradigms of IR through their conceptions of anarchy derived from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant who grounded their respective 'social contracts' in a broader 'racial contract' that dichotomised humanity racially in a white supremacist hierarchy.²² The racist dualism at the paradigmatic level informs the theories, models, and theses derived from the paradigms. Anti-racist scholarship epitomised in the arguments of Howard School scholars such as Du Bois and Locke, discussed above (as well as Bunche), not only provided powerful critiques of European and Euro-American racist international relations, but offered insightful theoretical counterpoises that rest on their own merit as IR theory. Thus, I take a sanguine view of Vitalis' thesis with respect to the seminal contributions of the Howard School to IR, in general; however, I am not partial to his dismissal of their contributions to IR theory. In the next section, I flesh out this ambivalence.

The Howard School of IR

Vitalis²³ coined the name, the 'Howard School', to describe a group of scholars associated with Howard University in Washington DC, strongly influenced by Du Bois, they included Alain Locke, Ralph Bunche, E. Franklin Frazier, Rayford Logan, Eric Williams, and Merze Tate – the first black woman to receive a PhD in IR, and political science, in general, in the US.²⁴ Vitalis does yeoman work of deciphering and reintroducing old texts, navigating often poorly maintained archives, studying yellowing words on texts that often represent some of the most incisive scholarly inquiry in the nascent field of IR; and his work is commendable in this regard. Vitalis notes that 'the ideas' associated with 'the Howard school of international relations theory' were those of its 'leading thinkers [who] alone evinced a commitment to understanding and writing about white world supremacy from the standpoint of its victims'.²⁵ For him, the Howard School embraced a 'project of liberation [which] was from its inception (and by necessity) a world-spanning political and theoretical movement in response to the theory and practice of white supremacy'.²⁶ He is emphatic that 'the Howard school thinkers stand out for their early and relentless critiques of the

19. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, 12.

20. Stewart, 'Introduction', xxv.

21. Henderson, 'Navigating the Muddy Waters of the Mainstream', and Henderson, 'Hidden in Plain Sight'.

22. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

23. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.

24. Henderson, 'Navigating the Muddy Waters of the Mainstream'.

25. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*, 5.

26. *Ibid.*, 2.

supposed truths of racial science and the role racism played in sustaining imperialism'; and 'they represent a critical counter-network to the networks dedicated to upgrading the institutions of colonial rule that white professors forged...in the era of the League of Nations'.²⁷ He notes that 'Du Bois and his heirs in the Howard school would begin to insist that history, not biology, explained hierarchy, specifically the history of colonial and mercantile capitalist expansion and of the transatlantic slave trade that secured Western people's dominance and African, Asian, and Caribbean people's subordination'.²⁸ The Howard School scholars were among 'the first black scholars (and only them) in a deeply segregated academy' who 'challenged the fundamental premise of international/interracial hierarchy, that different norms applied to different classes of people'.²⁹

A core concept of the Howard School was 'that racism served as a remarkably productive device for the imperialist', which Vitalis traced 'back to Locke and Du Bois, identifying it as a central tenet of Howard school theory when most white international relations theorists clung to the seeming truths of the science of dominance and subjugation'. Vitalis adds that he 'was unable to find any white international relations scholar other than Fred Schuman who confronted this uncomfortable truth head on in his writings in the 1930s'.³⁰ Vitalis notes correctly that '[i]t is hard for readers today to accept the idea that race or the color line is where academic ancestors located the "international" in international relations'; and this led Vitalis to 'suggest[] some grounds for rethinking the genealogy of the idea of the "internal colony," a mainstay of 1960s and 1970s theory that critics of black separatist thought blamed on a misguided despair and problematic readings of Lenin'.³¹ Nevertheless, he makes it plain that Howard School scholars focussed on what were among the central issues of the incipient field of IR including race development, imperialism, and decolonisation. For example, Vitalis recognises that '[d]ecolonization was arguably the single most significant transformation of the twentieth century, yet it is impossible to name a single scholar among those in the contemporary canon who is known primarily for his or her work on the issue'; and added that '[w]hile arguments about imperialism proliferated across the globe after 1945, they completely disappeared from scholarship in a discipline that ten years earlier considered it to be the fundamental problem of world order'.³² This occurred even as 'more United Nations resolutions dealt with racism than with any other issue'.³³ Nevertheless, Vitalis noted that the Howard School scholars anticipated later scholarship ranging from the complex interdependence of Keohane and Nye to second image reversed analyses of Gourevitch.

Vitalis views his treatise on Howard as 'a brief for deepening engagement across the paradoxical interdisciplinary divides in the humanities and social sciences'.³⁴ He seeks to encourage a type of intellectual insurgency that builds on his identifying 'a weak point

27. *Ibid.*, 27.

28. *Ibid.*, 21.

29. *Ibid.*, 106.

30. *Ibid.*, 175.

31. *Ibid.*, 174–5.

32. *Ibid.*, 120.

33. *Ibid.*, 120.

34. *Ibid.*, 180.

or two in the intellectual bulwark of the practitioners' imploring acolytes that 'exploiting that weakness will depend on the cooperative efforts of critics on the periphery of the discipline and potential allies among scholars within the humanities' with '[t]he hope... that historians, historical sociologists, and professors of literature, culture, and theory will engage with critical international relations scholarship'.³⁵

While he laments the 'absence from international relations' of 'black faculty, students, and theory',³⁶ he astonishingly

dismisses as a diversion the question that graduate students and professors in international relations, rubbed raw by what they read, will typically fall back on, "How does this matter for theory?" The answer *already exists for anyone who really cares*. The question they ought to ask instead is this: How does it matter in those domains where what *professors do actually makes a difference*: the classroom, the department, the campus, and the professional association? [emphases added].³⁷

These comments of Vitalis seem to disparage empirical theory, which may be disconcerting in itself, but even more so since his text is replete with examples of, and assertions regarding, Howard School scholars' construction of IR theory – some of which is alluded to above with respect to racial hierarchy, imperialism, decolonisation, internal colonialism, among other phenomena; but beyond allusion, Vitalis also explicitly states that the Howard School was articulating IR theory.³⁸ In just one example, in his discussion of Fredrick Schuman, whom he acknowledges as 'the only white scholar to consider the implications... of "the retreat of scientific racism" for international relations theory, at a time when most other historians and political scientists still clung to their belief in the inferiority of black people' he refers favourably to 'the *theory* in the white academy and society about the role of racism in sustaining international hierarchy, the *theory* that Du Bois and Locke had first put forward in the years before World War I' [emphasis added].³⁹ Thus, Vitalis seems clear in this instance that Howard School scholars had proposed IR 'theory'.

Vitalis' opposition to theory – or to be generous, his ambivalence to empirical theory rather than critical theory – is all the more stark given his recognition of the criticality of 'bring[ing] black people into history and *theory*, not just as subjects but also as sources of truer accounts of the world'[emphasis added] – granted, this applied specifically to Black Studies rather than IR;⁴⁰ but one might assume he would extend this view to IR as well. Vitalis' dismissal of theory leaves one unaware – or dismissive – of how the

35. Ibid., 180. It may seem strange that Vitalis, a scholar from an Ivy League university in the US (University of Pennsylvania), seems to implore not his fellow elite university colleagues to his mission, but to assign it to those 'on the periphery of the discipline'.

36. Ibid., 13.

37. Ibid., 23.

38. No less disconcerting is Vitalis' assertion of the necessity of those taking up his emancipatory project to focus on what 'professors do' – as if what Howard School professors 'did' may be conflated with what was done by Reinsch, Stoddard, Fox, Kissinger, Huntington, among others.

39. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*, 91.

40. Ibid., 15.

scholarship of the Howard School informs IR theory beyond a critique of racism. Clearly, it is no small contribution to assert, as Vitalis does, the immense value of the Howard School in exposing, criticising, and rejecting the white racism in IR theory; but, it is inaccurate to contend that they did not articulate IR theory reflecting their intellectual agency and acumen. That is, there was much to the Howard School beyond critique; and a great part of what made Howard School scholars so exceptional was that they transcended the racist myopia of their contemporary IR theorists, the latter whom Vitalis has little difficulty identifying as ‘theorists’. Moreover, Howard School scholars proposed IR theory that was both novel and original. An analogy between their undertaking and Vitalis’ articulation of it is bell hooks⁴¹ engagement with feminist theory in which she implored feminists to advance beyond ‘victimization’ – analogised to Vitalis’ discussion of racism in IR; and ‘representation’ – analogised to Vitalis’ discussion of ‘representation’ in IR; to ‘agency’ – analogised to theory, which Vitalis dismisses. It is only to the last point that I direct a fraternal but necessary critique.

In the following sections I briefly review and also derive one of potentially several original theses emanating from Howard School theorists that remain relevant today; and this one is sufficiently rich that it not only proffers IR theory but also foreshadows a paradigm of IR.

Howard School Scholarship as IR Theory: Du Bois

The ‘national imperialism’ central to the nascent field of IR was important to the Howard School as well. Du Bois had a novel conception of its motivations and its implications for world politics.⁴² For him, both white capital and labour were implicated in the oppression of non-whites in the colonies – especially in Africa and Asia, and of African Americans, as well. He demonstrated how the latter ramified to the former in intellectually creative ways. For example, in *Black Reconstruction*, originally published in 1935, Du Bois highlighted the revolutionary power of black labour in the US and its international implications. Du Bois⁴³ noted that it was ‘the black worker, as founding stone of a new economic system, in the 19th century and for the modern world, who brought civil war in America. He was its underlying cause, in spite of every effort to base the strife upon union and national power’. For Du Bois, the US Civil War occasioned a ‘slave revolution’ associated with a ‘General Strike’ of hundreds of thousands of slaves that transformed a war to save the Union to a revolution to overthrow chattel slavery, fundamentally transforming the US, while also

41. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

42. His scholarly reputation in History was established by his *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (1896), which was the first volume in the Harvard Historical Studies Series; and in Sociology by his *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), one of the first statistical analyses of sociological phenomena in that discipline – the latter demonstrating Du Bois’ methodological pluralism so often absent from contemporary putatively ‘emancipatory’ scholarship, which too readily disparages quantitative analyses on its face.

43. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in the United States, 1860–1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1969 [1935]).

leading US national imperialists to cast their programme even farther abroad.⁴⁴ The black worker's role in transforming the US, for Du Bois, reflected the reality that 'the black worker was the ultimate exploited' and 'formed that mass of labor which had neither wish nor power to escape from the labor status, in order to directly exploit other laborers, or indirectly, by alliance with capital, to share in their exploitation'.⁴⁵ Black workers contended with 'class enemies' as well as 'race enemies'; and among their 'class-race' enemies, the white proletariat was as significant as the white bourgeoisie. It was the fusion of the interests of white labour and capital in the 'counter-revolution of property' following the Civil War, which terrorised newly emancipated black labour to re-enslave it, while promoting similar processes abroad. Du Bois noted that following the Civil War:

The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery. The whole weight of America was thrown to color caste. The colored world went down before England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and America. A new slavery arose. The upward moving of white labor was betrayed into wars for profit based on color caste. Democracy died save in the hearts of black folk.⁴⁶

It followed, for Du Bois, that

the plight of the white working class throughout the world today is directly traceable to Negro slavery in America, on which modern commerce and industry was founded, and which persisted to threaten free labor until it was partially overthrown in 1863. The resulting color caste founded and retained by capitalism was adopted, forwarded and approved by white labor, and resulted in subordination of colored labor to white profits the world over. Thus the majority of the world's laborers, by the insistence of white labor, became the basis of a system of industry which ruined democracy and showed its perfect fruit in World War and Depression.⁴⁷

Thus, the framework for national oppression was a fusion of the interests of white capital and labour, which had been formalised and developed in the 'counter-revolution of property' that destroyed Reconstruction, and was cast abroad in the form of 'national imperialism' with similar deleterious effects for the predominantly non-white people of the 'colonial world'. This racist fusion of white capital and labour in the aftermath of the Civil War through a type of internal application of 'national imperialism' within the US was prototypical of that which refashioned the landscape of world politics a half century later, giving rise to WWI.

44. Du Bois' assertion that changes in African American culture, specifically 'slave religion', led to the General Strike and slave revolution (i.e. political revolution) historicised a process of cultural revolution apart from Gramsci's contemporary postulations on the subject; and it also suggested a relationship between cultural revolution and political revolution for black America decades before Harold Cruse, Malcolm X, and other leaders of the Black Power Movement in the US would bring the issue to the fore (see Errol Henderson, 'Black Cultural Revolution in the United States: The Black Power Era' (unpublished manuscript, Pennsylvania State University, 2016).

45. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 15.

46. *Ibid.*, 30.

47. *Ibid.*, 30.

Twenty years before publishing *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois theorised the relationship among racism, national imperialism, and war – situating his discourse on black-white labour relations in the US within this context. In ‘The African Roots of the War’, which was published prior to Lenin’s more famous tract, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Du Bois argued that WWI was largely the result of disputes over imperial acquisitions which fused the interests of bourgeoisie and proletariat in Euro-American states in a mutually reinforcing pursuit of racist and economic domination of Africa and Asia. Du Bois outlined the process:

...gathered by starvation wages and boundless exploitation of one's weaker and poorer fellows at home, arise more magnificently the dreams of exploitation abroad. Always, of course, the individual merchant had at his own risk and in his own way tapped the riches of foreign lands. Later, special trading monopolies had entered the field and founded empires overseas. Soon, however, the mass of merchants at home demanded a share in this golden stream; and finally, in the twentieth century, the laborer at home is demanding and beginning to receive a part of his share....The white workingman has been asked to share the spoils of exploiting ‘chinks and niggers.’ It is no longer simply the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class that is exploiting the world: It is the nation; a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labor.⁴⁸

Du Bois continued:

The present world war is then, the result of jealousies engendered by the recent rise of armed national associations of labor and capital, whose aim is the exploitation of the wealth of the world mainly outside the European circle of nations. These associations, grown jealous and suspicious at the division of the spoils of trade-empire, are fighting to enlarge their respective shares; they look for expansion, not in Europe but in Asia, and particularly in Africa.⁴⁹

This fusion necessitated a concerted movement of the colonised people of the world and their diasporas to overthrow imperialism, and implied that such revolutionary movements, and possibly wars of national liberation, would be necessary to stave off even larger imperialist wars, epitomised in WWI. Thus, pan-Africanism, for example, was not only a plan for freedom, social justice, and prosperity, but global peace as well.⁵⁰

Du Bois’ thesis clearly implicates IR theory, in two main ways. First, in recognising the prevalence of white supremacist imperialism which subjugated whole swaths of humanity in Africa and Asia, it recognises a global hierarchy as opposed to the global

48. Du Bois, ‘The African Roots of War’, 709.

49. Ibid., 711.

50. Ronald Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993). Pan-Africanism also generated transnational organisations associated with Africa and its diaspora in ways that challenge the view of a progression of transnationalism to a European ideal epitomised in the European Union; but are rarely considered as such in mainstream IR, even in the case of the largest transnational organisation of black peoples, Garvey’s UNIA & ACL, see Robbie Shilliam, ‘What about Marcus Garvey? Race and the Transformation of Sovereignty Debate’, *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006): 379–400.

anarchy imagined and theorised by realists and liberal/idealist IR theorists. Clearly Marxists and feminists of the time also recognised a global hierarchy but what was more novel was his demonstration that white racism had overcome the putative class antagonism between white capital and white labour to compel them towards a concerted effort at imperialist foreign policy and war. Thus, whereas Hobson's prior thesis on imperialism and war can be said to have implicated political factors (e.g. domestic interest groups who profited from imperialism – especially financial interest groups), and Lenin's subsequent thesis implicated economic factors (e.g. monopolistic cartels of finance capitalists), Du Bois' thesis of 1915 implicated social or cultural factors – specifically, racial factors – as determinants of imperialism and war. Considering the role of racism in imperialism for the remainder of the 20th century,⁵¹ clearly, Du Bois' thesis was borne out empirically to a greater extent than its two rival theses: it is not only IR theory, it is accurate IR theory.

Du Bois' analysis of racism and imperialism in WWI dovetailed with that of Howard School scholar, Alain Locke, whose lecture of 1916, 'The Political and Practical Conceptions of Race', argued that modern conceptions of race largely reflect prevailing distributions of power. Locke rejected the claim that white politico-military superiority reflected white cultural supremacy, arguing the reverse: white cultural supremacy was a result of white politico-military superiority. For him, notions of racial supremacy 'refer only to the political fortunes of a group and not to any intrinsic or inherent qualities with respect to social culture'.⁵² In his view, 'the conception of "inferior" races or "backward" races and of "advanced" races or "superior" races largely comes from the political fortunes and political capacities of people'. That is, 'the ruling people will be the people who invariably dominate the group, not only dominate the group practically but control the actual class distinctions that may prevail in the group, making almost all of the subordinate status of race flow from their will and their traditions...justifying their success in terms of their innate forms'. In contrast, those who have not 'been successful in acquiring dominance...will be called the inferior people...the backward people', although 'it may be a historical fact that they have contributed more importantly to the civilisation of which they are a part than the people that [have] been able to actually make the nominal political conquest and [hold] political power'. Thus, 'from the point of view of history, the successful group is invariably the superior group, so [that] the race that succeeds and conquers is naturally the better race'.⁵³

Locke viewed these patterns of domination as imperialism, which is 'essentially the practical aspect of what one might call 'race practice' as distinguished from race theory', maintaining that 'all those peoples that in political life have managed to dominate [the] political life [of other peoples] are imperialistic peoples'.⁵⁴ Therefore, in its political and practical aspects, race reflects political imperatives largely associated with imperialism. Viewing imperialism as fueled largely by commercial exploitation of foreign markets complemented by religious missionary activity, he noted that it enabled political,

51. Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*.

52. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, 23.

53. *Ibid.*, 22–3.

54. *Ibid.*, 24.

economic, and social domination internationally and domestically. This led Locke to provide one of the earliest arguments that WWI resulted from the imperialistic practices of the European major powers (which predated by eight months Du Bois' 'The African Roots of the War'). Also, with respect to the domestic implications of imperialism, Locke noted that 'under modern conditions to be subjected to economic subordination and social prejudice is similar to being subject to political dominance and commercial exploitation'.⁵⁵ That is, if one lives 'within the system, you confront what is, after all, the internal or home policy of imperialism'. This argument from his 1916 lecture was one of the earliest articulations of domestic colonialism – long before the Communist International's endorsement of Haywood's⁵⁶ 'black belt thesis' in 1928, and its embrace decades later by black power activists in the US in the 1960s.⁵⁷

Clearly, Howard School scholars, Du Bois and Locke, in their analyses of race, imperialism, and war were not only critiquing white supremacist IR, they were proposing empirical theory on how world politics operated and not only how white racist scholars rationalised it. They were also theorising international relations in novel, creative, and often prescient ways. Locke's scholarship on culture and social change epitomises this; and we turn to it in the next section.

'Howard School' Scholarship as IR Theory: Locke

Although noted primarily for his role as an intellectual leader of the Harlem Renaissance through his editorship of the seminal volume, *The New Negro*, which largely defined the artistic and intellectual movement, Alain Locke's contributions to IR are as important as they are ignored. He studied culture as few had up to his time in Oxford and Berlin as the first African American Rhodes Scholar. One of the earliest proponents of Boasian cultural pluralism, he departed from it insofar as he asserted the salience of 'Aframerican' culture rooted in an admixture of African and American cultural tendencies. While similar to Du Bois' conception of black culture, Locke drew a clearer distinction between African and Aframerican aesthetics in a broader project linking black culture to his sociological view of race and his 'critical' pluralism.

To appreciate Locke's contribution to IR theory it is important to consider his analysis of race, culture, and cultural change. Rejecting the view that culture was determined by race, in the first of his series of five lectures at Howard University in 1916 entitled, 'The Theoretical and Scientific Conceptions of Race', he argued that race was sociological. For Locke,⁵⁸ 'when the modern man talks about race[,] he is not talking about the anthropological or biological idea at all' but the relative fortunes of 'an ethnic group'; however,

55. Ibid., 33.

56. Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator, 1978), 223–4.

57. In his 1929 essay 'Marxism and the "Negro Question"', Bunche noted that '[t]he organization of Negro society bears, in certain important aspects, a significant resemblance to the organization of society in a colony or a subject nation'. Ralph Bunche, 'Marxism and the Negro Question', in *Ralph J. Bunche: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Charles Henry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 34–48.

58. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, 11.

Locke contends, 'these groups, from the point of view of anthropology, are ethnic fictions'. Interestingly, he notes that, 'This does not mean that they do not exist[,] but it can be shown [that these groups do] not have as [permanent] designations those very factors upon which they pride themselves'. That is, 'They have neither purity of [blood] nor purity of type'; instead, 'They are the products of countless interminglings of types[,] and they are the results of infinite crossings of types' and 'maintain in name only this fetish of biological [purity]'.⁵⁹ For Locke, to the extent that a person has a race 'he has inherited either a favorable or an unfavorable social heredity, which unfortunately is [typically] ascribed to factors which have not produced [it,] factors which will in no way determine either the period of those inequalities or their eradication'.⁶⁰ Locke was among the first scholars to explain that race is a social construct.

In fact, in the lecture, 'Modern Race Creeds and Their Fallacies', Locke argued that peoples of different races, including whites and blacks in the US, were highly assimilative beings within a broader society whose arbitrary policies and practices were based on the physical incompatibility of racial types; however, '[t]he factors which really determine race inequalities...are factors which are not at all commensurable with these physical factors. They are factors of language, customs, habits, social adaptability, [and] social survival'.⁶¹ 'Consequently', he concludes 'any true history of race must be a sociological theory of race. [It] must be a theory of culture stages and of social evolution[,] and must interpret in terms of one and the same principle[,] the accomplishments of all ethnic groups and civilizations'.⁶² The 'stages' and evolutionary aspects of race do not appear to be intrinsic to the race but represent the social context in which the races are cast; thus, they are extrinsic to the race. It was important to distinguish these sociological contexts from the components of races, themselves.⁶³

As noted above, Locke demystified race as a social construct; he also explained its political and practical deployment, and especially its relations to imperialism, which he discussed in the lecture, 'The Political and Practical Conceptions of Race' mentioned above. In his lectures on race contacts and international relations, Locke had implicated race in imperialism both internationally and domestically but, interestingly, he did not jettison the concept. In fact, Locke asserted the usefulness of race as a concept and point of reference. He observed that a certain conception of race can serve an important function for both Negroes in America, and for American cultural development, more generally. Locke insisted on the functionality of racial identity as a source of group solidarity, which, in his view, would never be completely excised from a group since it is necessary for community. While Boas viewed the solution to the 'race problem' as requiring de-emphasising race through the assimilation of ethnic groups into the 'dominant American stock', Locke asserted the value of race consciousness, while rejecting both extremes that race was either a 'permanent biological entity or nothing at all', and instead conceived of it as 'social race'.⁶⁴

59. *Ibid.*, 11.

60. *Ibid.*, 12.

61. *Ibid.*, 10.

62. *Ibid.*, 11.

63. *Ibid.*, 12.

64. Stewart, 'Introduction' xxv.

For example, in 'Racial Progress and Race Adjustment', the fifth of the Howard University lectures, he remarked that 'there are too many of us' in his view 'who feel that race is so odious a term that it must be eradicated from our thinking and from our vocabulary'. He insisted that

a word and an idea covering so indispensable[,] useful[,] and necessary a grouping in human society will never vanish, never be eradicated, and that the only possible way in which a change will come about will be through a substitution of better meanings for the meanings which are now so current under the term⁶⁵

He added that '[r]ace as a unit of social thought is of permanent significance and of growing importance' and one that was 'not to be superseded except by some revised version of itself' because '[t]oo much social thinking has gone into it for it to be abandoned as a center of thought or of practice'. He argued that 'the aim of race theorists' should be 'To redeem, to rescue, or [to] revise that thought and practice' related to race.⁶⁶ He noted that 'the present problem' is '[w]hat conception of race is to dominate in enlightened social thought and practice'. For him, his sociological conception of race was to be preferred insofar as 'representing phases, stages, and groupings in social culture' it 'repudiates the older biological and historical doctrines of race in social practice, although it does not wholly supersede them in their scientific uses'.⁶⁷ In light of this, Locke observed '[t]hat much of race sense is healthy and to be regarded without fear because it performs a certain function[,] and in the light of that function[,] it must be admitted it is good'; but he was 'doubtful' about the future of race in this political sense, viewing it as too given to empire.⁶⁸

Instead, Locke argued that '[t]he only kind of race that is left to believe in and to be applied to modern problems is what we call the idea of social race, defining it more narrowly as a conception of civilization or civilization kind'. He added that '[t]his seems to be the only thoroughly rational meaning of race' and he saw this as 'the race concept of the future'.⁶⁹ He argued that 'a basic law in human society' was that '[e]very civilization produces its type' and 'it should be judged in terms of that civilization type, and [that it] should come to know itself in proportion as it recognizes the type'.⁷⁰ Civilisation type evokes for Locke that 'sense of shared practices and modes of life consistent with participation in a competitive economy and other common core institutions' of modern society.⁷¹ 'Consequently', Fraser notes, 'modern societies', for Locke, 'tend to produce a single "civilization type," an ideal-typical sort of person, which members come roughly to approximate by virtue of participating in a common social structure and institutional

65. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, 84–5.

66. *Ibid.*, 85.

67. *Ibid.*, 85.

68. *Ibid.*, 87.

69. *Ibid.*, 88.

70. *Ibid.*, 88–9.

71. Nancy Fraser, 'Another Pragmatism: Alain Locke, Critical "Race" Theory, and the Politics of Culture', in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, ed. Leonard Harris (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 12.

framework'; in light of this, '[c]ivilization type, according to Locke, is the proper overarching unit of solidarity in modern societies'.⁷²

Although civilisation type generates conformity, it is less homogenising than generating common frames of reference for its constituent social cultures that provide a sense of belonging and solidarity. Therefore, people articulate social cultures within the context of their civilisation type; importantly, there is diversity within the civilisation type as reflected in the diverse social cultures that participate in it. Since social culture like all culture is dynamic, civilisation type is subject to change from within (i.e. from changes among its constituent social cultures) and from without through its contacts with social cultures of other civilisation types. For Locke, social cultures are highly interdependent; and he emphasised that '[t]here is no part of the universe today which is not in some way, economic[,] or political[,] or social, bound up with the other parts[:]' such that 'no social culture in the present day world will be ignorant of other types or object to [some kind of]contact with other types'; and this relationship obtains 'no matter how much a line is drawn theoretically between races' because 'the practical demands of present day life necessitate the contact of races, and an increasing contact of races'.⁷³ In addition, the social races that social cultures generate are also dynamic; and this dynamism is accentuated through contacts with other social races.

It followed for Locke that under these conditions social races should be 'conserved' to the extent that they promote solidarity and a sense of belonging – especially for marginalised groups such as racial minorities (and presumably other marginalised groups) – and, therefore, assist in the articulation of their cultural expression. For example, in 'Modern Race Creeds and Their Fallacies' Locke argued that 'human society must [have] a [certain homogeneity based upon] consciousness of kind, and that consciousness of kind is a healthy[,] and a normal[,] and a fundamental social instinct'; and although 'this normal and healthy social instinct has a very abnormal expression from time to time', importantly, '[u]nder certain circumstances' he maintained that 'race types and race kind can be transformed... into social kind' such that 'essentially a man must become one of the same race [or civilization type] when he lives or [learns] to live in the same civilization and [has] conformed to a civilization type. [This] is the only essential kind of race that exists in the world today'.⁷⁴ He continued:

... if you have the same manners and customs and have allegiance to the same social system, you belong to the same race [or social kind,] even though ethnically you many not; so that really when you conform or belong to a civilization type... you are of the same race in any vital or rational sense of race... to exclude you from that kind of race is simply arbitrary and [a] very perverse practice which comes from an abnormal conception on the part of the society of what consciousness of kind is and of what the social or civilization type consists.⁷⁵

72. Ibid., 12–13.

73. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, 13–14.

74. Ibid., 79.

75. Ibid., 79.

He notes that race prejudice 'falsely attributes to certain arbitrary ethnological and biological factors, sociological and social standards which do not pertain to them at all'.⁷⁶

Locke is convinced that 'American society is hastening the process of social assimilation by the very restrictive measures that [it is] imposing' in part because '[w]hile social assimilation is in progress there seems to be necessary some counter-theory, or rather some counter-doctrine. This counter-doctrine one finds in racial solidarity and culture'.⁷⁷ For Locke, 'secondary race consciousness' is the race consciousness of a minority group in a society. He argued that the 'stimulation of a secondary race consciousness within a group' was necessary 'for several practical reasons'.⁷⁸ Foremost among them was the group's need 'to get a right conception of itself'; and 'it can only do that through the stimulation of pride in itself'. He avers:

Pride in itself is race pride, and race pride seems a rather different loyalty from the larger loyalty to the joint or common civilization type. Yet it is only apparently paradoxical. It is not paradoxical when it is worked out in practice, because...the very stimulation to collective activity which race pride point out...will issue into the qualification test and the aim to meet that qualification test, which, of course, must be in terms of the common standard. So that through a doctrine of race solidarity and culture[,] you really accelerate and stimulate the alien group to a rather more rapid assimilation of the social culture, the general social culture, than would be otherwise possible. This race pride or secondary race consciousness seems to be the social equivalent to self-respect in the individual moral life.⁷⁹

It facilitates the re-creation of the race type and its ultimate merging with the civilisation type. Further, Locke asserts that 'we can only get recognition for our [contribution] collectively [and only] through a recognition... given a re-created race type that expresses itself in terms of a representative class or representative products', which secondary race consciousness stimulates and facilitates.⁸⁰ Locke's thesis insists that race consciousness 'prevents the representative classes, as they develop[, from] being merged[, really absorbed] into the larger group, from being dissipated and lost in the larger group[.] And it also has the practical advantage of harnessing them to the submerged group, which stimulates...the general progress [of the group]'.⁸¹

Given its functionality especially for minority groups seeking a basis for cultural identity, belonging and solidarity, social race should be 'conserved' through the promotion of secondary race consciousness. But Locke is clear that 'this is not a doctrine of race isolation' but 'It is really a theory of social conservation which in practice conserves the best in each group, and promotes the development of social solidarity out of heterogeneous elements'.⁸² His was not a 'doctrine of race conservation' but a 'doctrine of

76. *Ibid.*, 79.

77. *Ibid.*, 96.

78. *Ibid.*, 96.

79. *Ibid.*, 97.

80. *Ibid.*, 98.

81. *Ibid.*, 98.

82. *Ibid.*, 98.

social conservation'.⁸³ The objective of 'race progress and race adjustment' for Locke was the promotion of 'culture-citizenship' which would result from the 'group contribution to what becomes a joint civilization'.⁸⁴ Locke explains that culture-citizenship 'is the goal in which we can jointly accept whatever [of value] there is in the civilization's conception of itself'; and this requires 'the development and education of a higher type of race consciousness', in which 'race type blends into the "civilization type"', such that 'the race issue has performed a social function in society because it has blended two heterogeneous elements into a homogeneity of which ...either one in itself would have been incapable without the collaboration and the help of the other'.⁸⁵ The reciprocal recognition of social cultures within the civilisation-type facilitated 'culture-citizenship', which reflected the ideal of cultural development: cosmopolitanism, which for Locke necessitated multiracial democracy.

Culture, for Locke, is dynamic; and it does not 'evolve' to a white ideal. The dynamism of culture inheres in the continual interaction of people with each other, with other groups, and their environments. Locke's thesis suggests that cultures may be characterised by the degree to which they express cosmopolitan characteristics he argues inheres in all cultures, which are accentuated by their reciprocity with – and tolerance of – other cultures. The motor of this process of culture groups – transposition and transvaluation of culture within them, and reciprocity and tolerance between them – is facilitated by democracy more than any other political system; thus, his framework implies a relationship between culture and democracy. Democracy, for Locke, facilitates culture's realisation of its cosmopolitanism, although he viewed racial democracy as a political system that no state had achieved. Buck⁸⁶ notes that Locke viewed democracy proceeding through nine stages: (1) local democracy, (2) moral democracy, (3) political democracy, (4) economic democracy, (5) cultural democracy, (6) racial democracy, (7) social democracy, (8) spiritual democracy, and (9) world democracy.

Interestingly, Locke recognised that political and economic rights did not guarantee the rights of cultural minorities; therefore, Locke's 'fifth phase of democracy', cultural democracy, 'rests on...the guarantee of the rights of minorities'.⁸⁷ Locke contends that 'the race question is at the very heart of this struggle for cultural democracy' and '[i]ts solution lies beyond even the realization of political and economic democracy'.⁸⁸ For Locke, cultural democracy extends political and economic democracy to the cultural sphere, and, in so doing, facilitates racial democracy – Locke's sixth phase.⁸⁹ Locke

83. Ibid., 99.

84. Ibid., 99.

85. Ibid., 100.

86. Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith & Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2005).

87. Ibid., 251.

88. Ibid., 251.

89. The remaining phases are social democracy, which is characterised by the equality of social groups; spiritual democracy, which is marked by a transcendent level of democracy throughout society; and world democracy distinguished by 'the essential equality of all peoples and the potential parity of all cultures'. See Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1943), 14.

appreciated the potential international ramifications of the struggle for cultural democracy that was a prerequisite for racial democracy. In fact, in his 1943, *World View on Race and Democracy*, he suggested that '[o]f all the barriers limiting democracy, color is the greatest, whether viewed from a standpoint of national or world democracy'.⁹⁰ In 1949, he saw the 'race question' as the 'number one problem of the world', arguing that its resolution in the US was the 'acid test' for its resolution throughout the world.⁹¹ Although, he was convinced that '[w]hen the merits of different races are understood they will bring a kinship of humanity'; he viewed race as 'the crux, the litmus test, the hinge on which the entire project of democracy hangs'.⁹²

Although Locke's thesis clearly has implications for domestic politics,⁹³ importantly, given the focus of this essay, it has implications for IR theory, as well; among the most prominent is the role of culture based diasporas in the global system. For example, culture group members faced with extending political and economic democracy to the cultural sphere, historically, and in the contemporary era, have sought emigration, and/or encouraged immigration. Both help create diasporas, which transform the cultural composition – and likewise the challenges for cultural democracy – in both host and receiving countries. In this way, Locke's thesis suggests the relevance of diasporas as actors in world politics and, thus, objects of study in IR. This is not a deduction relying on racist notions of 'civilizationism', which Locke debunked in his Howard lectures, nor does it rely on primordialist renderings of 'clashing civilizations'⁹⁴ prevalent in IR today. Instead, Locke's arguments on race, culture and political change were prescient, novel theoretical expositions of the motive forces of world politics when promulgated at Howard in 1916. In fact, Locke's – and Dubois' – theses not only constitute IR theory, but anticipate a 'diasporist' paradigm of IR. The latter goes beyond a critique of the racist hierarchical structure of the global political system, and, as argued elsewhere,⁹⁵ focusses on culture groups as prominent units of analysis; diasporisation, as a key change agent in domestic and international politics; and cultural self-determination, intraculturally, and cosmopolitanism, interculturally, as objectives of intercultural (i.e. international) relations.

Thus, Locke, like Du Bois, proposed not only trenchant critiques of white supremacist IR, but empirically based IR theory, as well. The two examples briefly outlined in this article only touch on the rich theoretical tradition of Howard School scholars that Vitalis⁹⁶ has done so much to recover and situate as it should be as central in discussions of the

90. Ibid., 1.

91. Buck, *Alain Locke*, 252.

92. Ibid., 252.

93. Locke's analysis also allows one to theorise the 'slave revolution' Du Bois historicised in *Black Reconstruction* as motivated by a cultural revolution (see Errol Henderson, 'Slave Religion, Slave Hiring, and the Incipient Proletarianization of Enslaved Black Labor: Developing Du Bois' Thesis on Black Participation in the Civil War as a Revolution', *Journal of African American Studies* 19, no. 2: 192–213), as a black cultural revolution in the US (see Henderson, 'Black Cultural Revolution', 224–63).

94. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

95. Errol Henderson, *Afrocentrism and World Politics: Towards a New Paradigm* (Westport: Praeger, 1995).

96. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.

foundations of IR as an academic field. It is only that aspect of Vitalis' otherwise exceptional work that dismisses or minimises their formulation of IR theory with which I take issue. Putting my fraternal critique in context, what I find much more troubling is the prevailing plethora of mainstream IR scholarship that 'strategically ignores' the white supremacism in so much of the IR canon. Vitalis⁹⁷ makes a major contribution in confronting and repudiating those 'silencing' discourses. I am reminded, however, and insist on acknowledging – and demonstrating – that among those who actually blazed the trails of emancipatory discourse with respect to race – such as the Howard School theorists, whose insights, struggle and sacrifice have enabled their descendants, like me, to have the positions we hold now – were black men and women who proposed strategies to transform oppressive societies throughout the world, including the ones in which they were compelled to conduct their scholarship; and they did this in practical, historical, as well as exceptionally creative, and even revolutionary ways. One of the instruments they devised and utilised to accomplish these was IR theory; and a fair share of it remains pertinent today.

Conclusion

In this article, I have briefly examined the contributions to IR theory of W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke – two scholars of what Vitalis refers to as the Howard School of IR. In delineating only a few of their many scholarly contributions, I both embraced and challenged Vitalis' thesis on the importance of their work. Embracing Vitalis' invaluable articulation of the Howard School's critique of white supremacism in IR, I also challenged his apparent disassociation of these scholars from the formulation of IR theory itself. I outlined some of Du Bois' and Locke's theoretical arguments on the role of 'national imperialism' in modern war, as well as theses of cultural change and its impact on international relations, which not only articulate IR theory but anticipate a 'diasporist' paradigm of IR. Such an approach goes beyond a critique of the racist hierarchy in the global political system, and focusses on culture groups as units of analysis; diasporisation, as a change agent in world politics; and cultural self-determination, intraculturally, and cosmopolitanism, interculturally, as objectives of international relations.

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97. Robert Vitalis, 'The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture: Making Racism Invisible in American International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2000): 331–56; Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.