

## The New Dawn: Black Agency in Cyberspace

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### **New Media and Its Uses in Transnational Black Studies**

No other medium or information technology developed during the twentieth century mirrors the transnationalism of the black world much like the Internet. Broadcast media have limited reach—broadcasts can only reach people within the boundaries of airwaves and frequencies. Telephones and fax machines, although they enable people to communicate virtually anywhere in the world, are narrowcasting media that connect only a few people at a time. But it is Internet technology's transnational character—globally networked, media-rich computers unfettered by national or geographic boundaries—that allows for multiple users in multiple locations to communicate, organize, and access data and transcend time and space by meeting in cyberspace. The increasingly broader use of the Internet comes at a time when scholars studying Africa and the African diaspora have called for research that transcends the constructed nation-state boundaries of the twentieth century as well as similar boundaries constructed by academe and that recognizes the interconnectedness of the black world. A historian who studies the historic, transnational links between Afro-Cubans and African Americans during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lisa Brock, for example, asserts that “there are and always have been solid ties between [Africa-descended] peoples and enough comparative ‘transnational processes or recurring conditions’ to make *black world studies* data rich and analytically fertile.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, within the black world, there exists the consciousness,

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which took its form in the late nineteenth century, that Africa-descended populations had and have a shared source of “their displacement and oppression: a matrix of white supremacy, colonialism and apartheid created and re-generated by the dominant powers of the modern West.”<sup>2</sup> This consciousness motivated and defined black political agency in the twentieth (and twenty-first?) century, what W. E. B. Du Bois called the “double-consciousness” of being black in the modern world.<sup>3</sup> From the first Pan-African Congress held in 1900 in Paris to the black consciousness movement of South Africa, all have been organized around building a supranational state or “ethnoscape” mobilized to change the multiple oppressions black people face as a *transnational* community.<sup>4</sup>

So as this article’s title proposes, we are facing a new dawn: the beginning of a new century, a new millennium, a new age of information technology, and a new era of examining black culture, politics, history, and societies transnationally. An exploration of black transnationalism on the Internet therefore seems appropriate here. Although much has been written on questions of race and identity in cyberspace, more systematic and exhaustive analyses still need to be made by scholars studying the connections between cyberculture, Africa-descended populations, black political agency, and the uses of the Internet by transnational black communities.<sup>5</sup>

### Questions of Access

No proper discussion of transnational black studies in cyberspace can overlook the ongoing debates about the global digital divide. Lest readers think that this article provides a utopian vision of cyberspace, it must provide a brief examination about issues of access to the Internet and other networked technologies, or lack thereof, for African and Africa-descended populations.

The digital divide is the fissure between people who have honed computer-mediated communication skills and access to digital technology, primarily the Internet, and those who do not have either the skills in or the access to new media technology. As might be expected, these gaps generally fall along the global fault lines of inequity between the developed and the developing world, as well as along race and class lines. In 2001, there were approximately 429 million Internet users in the world, or 6 percent of the globe’s total population. North America dominates Internet usage figures, claiming 41 percent of total global usage, leaving the rest of the world, and certainly African and diasporic communities, in the dust.<sup>6</sup>

Presently, there is one Internet user for every 750 people in Africa, compared to one in three in the United States. Africa represents less than 1 percent of the world’s Internet users, but comprises 13 percent of the world’s total population.<sup>7</sup> Latin America represents 4 percent of total global usage. In the United States, highly educated, urban, and wealthy users who have computers in their homes dominate connectivity. Close to 65 percent of college graduates have Internet access in their

homes and 86.3 percent have incomes greater than \$75,000 per year, compared to the 12.7 percent of overall households earning less than \$15,000. African Americans are the least connected people to the Web, representing 23.5 percent of the United States's total users, as compared to Asian Americans, the largest group using the Web, at 56.8 percent.<sup>8</sup> The evidence shows that, in general, Internet access for Africa-descended populations is the lowest in the world compared to global figures for other populations, which directly leads to the question: Once we overcome the roadblocks to get into cyberspace, who are we reaching and are we reaching each other?

### **Transnational Black Studies in Cyberspace**

There are several categories of new media technology at the disposal of Internet users: Usenets, or real-time bulletin boards available to anyone; MOOs or MUDs, text-based environments accessible through Telnet and generally based on subscriptions; listservs, or e-mail groups restricted to subscribers only; and Web sites on which users can access and download text, images, sound, and video as well as perform functions such as Web conferencing, listen to radio stations from around the globe, or even make telephone calls. Many Web sites on transnational black issues serve as common-interest portals to other sites, such as EuroAfricans.com and Britain-based Black Information Links.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this article, however, only a few of these technologies will be examined: Web sites, Web-based archives, and listservs. The focus of this article will be limited to new media that catalogue, map, or frame transnational black studies, politics, and culture or that seek to politically organize black communities transnationally. Commercial media sites with narrow marketing agendas to black communities will not be discussed.

The development and increasingly popular use of Internet technologies, as applied to the study of transnational black history, culture, and politics, has enabled scholars, students, activists, and others to research and explore the relationships between black agency in Africa and the African diaspora in three fundamental ways that differ from traditional media. New media allows for more dynamic and novel research in African and African-diasporic studies; it enables far-flung communities in the black world to be connected and to organize in cyberspace; and, because Web-based media does not have the same constraints associated with other media, such as costs of production and delivery or limited distribution, it can reach audiences globally and instantaneously.

The first way that the new media differs from traditional forms is its hypertextuality.<sup>10</sup> Hypermedia—dynamically linked, Web-based images, video, text, and audio housed in online databases—allows users to map connections and trajectories not necessarily or as easily made with traditional reference media such as print-based encyclopedias and bibliographies, because this new media enables users to jump from data on one subject matter to another quickly and with relative ease. Users often use hyperlinked media to navigate through data in a nonlinear and more

exploratory fashion.<sup>11</sup> A link found on a Web-based article about Negritude, for example, could lead to a link on Léopold Sedar Senghor, which could lead, in turn, to a link on his colleague and Negritude's cofounder Aimé Césaire, which could lead to information on African diasporic literature in the Caribbean. All of this could provide new insights for the user on how diasporic literature has influenced twentieth-century transnational black political and African liberation movements.

There are several sites that enable users to use Internet interactive database technology to research transnational black history, politics, and culture: Global Mappings, CASBAH, and Africana.com. Global Mappings: A Political Atlas of the African Diaspora is a pilot online interactive atlas of twentieth-century black organizations, activists, and world events.<sup>12</sup> The work has resulted from the collaborative efforts of Michael Hanchard, a political scientist at Northwestern University, some of Hanchard's graduate students, and the university's African studies and African American studies departments. Originally conceived to demonstrate the "interconnectedness of black agency and world historical events," and to chart transnationalism in the black world in the same way that other international movements, such as the Jewish diaspora, have been, the Web site presently holds 58 entries with plans of expanding articles to a total of 2,000.<sup>13</sup> As the site stands now, the entries are limited to events between 1900 and 1926 as well as 1965 to 1985 and are categorized under three headings: "Black Agency," "Pogroms," and "World Historical Events." Users access the entries by interfacing with the site's interactive map after selecting search criteria. The map is visually forceful and useful in helping users understand



A military unit of "Cuba Libre" made up of men, women, and children. Image appears on the Global Mappings Web site ([diaspora.northwestern.edu](http://diaspora.northwestern.edu)). From Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Courtesy Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana, Cuba

the international disbursement of, and intersections with, the black world and twentieth-century world events. Each category offers several articles relating to the subject heading. For example, under “Black Agency” one finds entries on various people and organizations that influenced and shaped black political mobilization as well as larger world events; within the “World Historical Events” heading there are article entries on historic events that affected many parts of the world; and in “Pogroms” articles cover events that caused the forced migrations and massacres of and terrorism committed against Africa-descended populations. Each entry has cross-listed, linked articles, so that a user can quickly jump between articles of related subjects and between the three subject headings. The Web site is still in its pilot stage, which accounts for its presently still thin content, but because the site’s concept is based on visually demonstrating and mapping black political mobilization, Global Mappings will serve as a unique and desperately needed contribution to online transnational black studies once more entries are imputed into the database. Furthermore, because Global Mappings is an academic project, it stands apart from other U.S.-based sites that provide content on black history, culture, and politics. The latter often simultaneously peddle wares to black folks, revealing these sites’ underlying agendas: to capture a specialized market, and not necessarily to contribute to genuine scholarship on the black world.

The CASBAH Web site, or Caribbean Studies, Black and Asian History, constitutes another database-driven academic site.<sup>14</sup> To redress the dearth of research materials on Caribbean, black, and Asian studies in the United Kingdom, CASBAH was initiated at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies and funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme to provide an online archive of articles, photographs, and audio and video clips as well as to help users map and access other resources housed in archives and libraries across Britain. The project’s database went live in May 2002 and includes links to other organizations focused on Caribbean, black, and Asian studies. In contrast to these two academic sites, *Africana.com*, while having its origins in academia, clearly presents a commercial

Article page from Web-based political atlas on Global Mappings Web site. Courtesy Institute for Diasporic Studies, Northwestern University

The screenshot shows the 'Global Mappings Article View' page for 'Nicaragua's Planters' Strike' (Article #702). The page features a navigation menu with links for Article, Related Articles, Other Resources, Article Bibliography, Help, and Go to Map. The main content area includes the author's name, Ted Gordon, and a detailed text-based introduction to the 1894 Nicaraguan army invasion and the Creole planters' strike. A map of Nicaragua is visible on the right side of the page, showing the Mosquito Reserve and Creole Communities. Below the text, there is a section titled 'Connections to other articles' with links to 'Nicaragua', 'The Years 1900-1929', and 'United States Intervention'. At the bottom right, there is a photograph of banana plantations in Nicaragua, with a caption: 'Banana Plantation, Nicaragua. Image from "Disparate Diaspora." E.T. Gordon. UT Press. Used with permission.'

**Global Mappings**  
Article View

Article | Related Articles | Other Resources | Article Bibliography | Help | Go to Map

## Nicaragua's Planters' Strike

Article #702

**Ted Gordon, Article Author**

In 1894 the Nicaraguan army, with the full support of the U.S. in its role as regional superpower, invaded and took control of the Mosquito Reserve. This area on the Caribbean Coast of what is now Nicaragua had been governed as a quasi nation-state by Afro-Caribbean "Creoles" based principally in the towns of Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon.

In the ensuing decades Creoles (black and brown people of African, African-American and African-Anglo descent) rapidly lost their place of political, social, and economic dominance in the area after the invasion. White North Americans, who arrived to make their fortunes in the booming banana industry, and Nicaraguan Mestizos, who took most of the top political positions, replaced them. Creoles resisted this loss of power and influence. A central economic issue around which Creole politics coalesced during this period arose from their position as small producers. Creoles fought hard and long in the early twentieth century to preserve the viability of small-scale banana production in the face of State intervention and the monopolistic tendencies of international capital.

When in 1904 the Nicaraguan government granted the Bluefields Steamship Co a monopoly on navigation in the Escondido River Valley, Creole planters, who made up the bulk of small producers, organized with Jamaicans and a smaller number of Nicaraguan planters to resist this threat to their viability. The base of organization was the Union Club, a Creole social club that would soon become the center of operation for the UNIA in the Mosquitia.

The controversy centered on the low prices offered by Bluefields s/s co. and the right to sell bananas to competing companies. The Creole planters formed an association and bought transportation equipment from a rival fruit company. They agreed not to sell to the Bluefields s/s co. and attempted to break the monopoly by collectively transporting bananas for exportation on a boat they had chartered from a competing company. The Nicaraguan army enforced the monopoly by seizing Planters Association shipments, destroying their bananas, and sinking their barges.

In 1909 the Planter's Association organized another "strike" against the Bluefields s/s co. concession. The planters refused to sell their bananas to the company and began destroying fruit on plantations belonging to the company and on those of planters who continued to produce for the company. The national government declared martial law and government troops arrested offending planters and their family members, rounding up 200 people from their farms the length of the Escondido River and its tributaries and holding them in Bluefields. This allowed the Bluefields s/s co. to recommence its operations and undercut the

**Connections to other articles**

- Nicaragua
- The Years 1900-1929
- United States Intervention

**Creole Communities of Nicaragua**  
Map from Edward Gordon's "Disparate Diasporas." University of Texas Press, 1998.

**Banana Plantation, Nicaragua**  
Image from "Disparate Diaspora." E.T. Gordon. UT Press. Used with permission.

endeavor.<sup>15</sup> *Africana.com* is a companion Web site to Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s mammoth *Encyclopedia Africana*<sup>16</sup> and is "cobranded" with the Microsoft Corporation, the publisher of *Africana*'s interactive CD version, *Encarta Africana*,<sup>17</sup> now in its third edition. Much more commercial in nature and content, *Africana.com* fits squarely into the category of "lifestyle" Web sites. The index page features articles on black American celebrities or columns on issues affecting, or on the history of, African Americans. There are some links to articles about the larger black world, but most content is U.S.-focused, and few links exist to transnational black sites. Regardless of this, because the site has a search function connected to a very abridged edition of the *Encarta Africana* project, the site's more commercial content distracts from its potential use—to access the relatively richer content residing on the database. Because the Web site was produced in collaboration with the Microsoft Corporation, a purely commercial enterprise, much of the *Encarta Africana* content cannot be given away for free, so users are encouraged to buy the CD encyclopedia.

Since their first conference in April 2001 (at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT), "Race in Digital Space," MIT and the University of Southern California have worked collectively to host a robust forum for discussions of race and identity in cyberspace by activists, academics, artists, and journalists of color. Both the first and another conference held the following year featured presentations by academics working on issues of race and the Internet, digital artists, and Web activists. The Web sites for both conferences serve as archives with Web casts of panels and papers presented.<sup>18</sup> The conferences are significant in that they represent the only organized meetings dedicated to addressing head-on the myth of a raceless cyberspace and issues of identity and online communications in the United States. Perhaps they will even lead to more offline symposia around these issues.

### **Community Organizing and Communities of Interest**

Through the use of networked, computer-based media, Africa-descended populations throughout the world can meet and exchange information in cyberspace and organize politically, as well as forge new, virtual communities that previously may not have been possible without the aid of the Internet. Despite the many obstacles that Africa-descended people face in getting connected to the Web, black communities are using Web technology resourcefully and are making political change more efficient. Black women living in Robert S. Jervay Place in Wilmington, North Carolina, recognized the value of networked communications in the early days of the Web (the World Wide Web as it exists today was created in the early 1990s, with the introduction of browser technology).<sup>19</sup> Unhappy with proposed Housing and Urban Development (HUD) changes to their public housing complex, the women created a Web site using computer equipment donated to the residents association by HUD to publicly represent their demands for more control and input in their community.

They also used the Internet to search for online documents that HUD had been reluctant to share with them. The women subscribed to architecture listservs to appeal to architects and engineers to donate housing designs to better suit the needs of the Jervay community. The strategy proved very effective. One message sent on March 24, 1995, elicited responses from twenty-three people or organizations willing to assist the group in less than two weeks.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, with the help of three firms, the women presented the housing authority with construction plans that envisioned and addressed the realities and housing needs of their community. The women continued to use the Web site to reach out to the larger Wilmington community by expanding the site to include links to other community Web sites, sites on civic networking, child care, and community and economic development. They also included a discussion of the original government mandate to implement public housing and popular misconceptions of subsidized housing. This case demonstrates that in spite of serious roadblocks to bridging the digital divide, once Africa-descended and economically oppressed communities get online, they are innovative and creative in their use of new media and in their ability to integrate new technologies into their efforts to mobilize for change or to protect their communities.

A grassroots, global social change organization that predates the Web is the Institute for Global Communications (IGC). Founded in 1987, IGC was one of the first service providers to provide networked communications to grassroots organizations advocating change.<sup>21</sup> It now has four media channels focused on different social change movements (Peacenet, Econet, Womensnet, and Antiracismnet). The IGC started Antiracismnet to provide a network and forum for several organizations fighting against racism globally. One of the featured Web links on Antiracismnet's home page is the U.N. World Conference against Racism ([www.un.org/WCAR](http://www.un.org/WCAR)) held in Durban, South Africa. Antiracismnet's circular, multicolored logo is even based on the world conference's logo, and the Web site features a special Web channel with articles and commentary on the conference. The U.N.'s General Assembly officially proclaimed 2001 the "International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance," which culminated in August with the Durban conference. The meeting brought together several hundred government representatives, state officials, and groups working globally to eliminate all forms of discrimination. Significantly, one of the biggest controversies surrounding the conference occurred on September 3, when the United States and Israel withdrew because of wording in the document to be developed out of the proceedings, which declared Zionism a form of racism. Every press release, report, and proceedings document is archived on the U.N. site, which has served as an interactive archive of the history of the U.N. antiracism conferences since the first one held in 1978.

Many Africans living in diasporic communities in North America and Europe connect through country-specific Web sites and listservs, such as Burundinet,<sup>22</sup> NigeriaCentral.com, Ghanaforum.com, Sierra-Leone.org, and Tanzanet.org,<sup>23</sup> to

inform, connect, and provide a forum for Africans living abroad as well as to stay involved with political events back home and to organize in their host countries. Virtually every African nation and many African ethnic groups have at least one Web site or listserv forum; most have several. In the case of Burundinet, Rose Kadende-Kaiser has shown that the listserv provides a safe space for expatriate Burundians to frankly discuss very painful, taboo topics such as identity and ethnic violence in ways impossible in face-to-face communication in Burundi.<sup>24</sup> Many country-specific sites provide daily news updates, classifieds, forums, and community directories. Tanzanet.org, one of many Tanzanian community Web sites, is a content-rich community site with news feeds from Tanzanian Web-based newspapers as well as the BBC and several chat rooms, listservs, and bulletin boards. AfroCubaWeb.com could also be considered a country-specific site, but by using discussions of Afro-Cuban identity as a lens, the site serves as an example of a site that also uses one black identity to address much broader black transnational issues. Although not explicitly stated on the Web site, an unspoken goal of AfroCubaWeb.com also seems to be to connect with the larger black world, especially North America. Based in the United States, the site was developed in 1997 to promote Afro-Cuban culture, politics, and an open dialogue about Cuban race and identity politics. Most of the content is in English, but the site features several bilingual areas and categories that include articles and information on Afro-Cuban history and music as well as listings of speaking engagements in North America and Europe by black Cuban authors and scholars.

### **Black Agency and Transnational Political Action Online**

Computer-mediated communication allows for a much more efficient and immediate cross-pollination between various black political movements as well as between these groups and others faced with similar struggles than the use of other media does. Subscribers to the Black Radical Congress's (BRC) very active listservs, for example, reprint articles from many left publications, distribute their own writing and scholarly work, as well as exchange commentary and viewpoints on current events.<sup>25</sup> Subscribers are not necessarily members of the BRC. Of the thirty-six BRC listservs, some are restricted to members-only organizing or chapter use, while others are dedicated to discussion or organizing around international, feminist, gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered, and media issues. One BRC listserv focuses solely on debate and activism around the imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal. There are several radical black and nonblack organizations represented on the Web who are mobilized for the immediate release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and who have made connections with other groups organized for justice for all political prisoners, such as the Jericho Movement.<sup>26</sup> Another activism site, the Britain-based Operation Black Vote (OBV), is a voting rights and voter education organization founded in 1996 to address the needs of black Briton voters and to foster enfranchisement through encouraging black people to vote.<sup>27</sup> The group uses the Internet as its primary tool to inform

its constituents as well as to network, and now it has broadened its original networking focus beyond Britain to reach black voters in the European Union and the United States.

Finally, because the Internet is not restricted by geographical boundaries that can limit distribution, or the space constraints associated with print media, and because the Web straddles the benefits of both broadcast and print media at the same time, material on the Net has a global and immediate reach. This unique characteristic has proven to be quite effective in enabling African and African diasporic peoples to organize more efficaciously internationally. Ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria used the Internet as a political mobilizing resource very effectively during 1994 and 1995. When military repression against Ogonis protesting land degradation by foreign oil companies was at its peak, leading up to the death of environmentalist and writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, journalists and activists used laptops to e-mail stories censored in Nigeria to Nigerians in the United States and the United Kingdom as well as to foreign media.<sup>28</sup> What resulted was an outcry by international organizations, including the United Nations, against the Abacha government's imprisonment and execution of Saro-Wiwa, and an international boycott of Shell Oil Company, one of the central multinational culprits colluding with the military regime in the Niger Delta.<sup>29</sup> Although international protests did not prevent Saro-Wiwa's death, they did sensitize and mobilize not only the Nigerian diaspora but also the larger African diaspora and other international communities to scrutinize Western corporations involved in exploitative business practices in Africa. Additionally, as more and more African, Caribbean, African American, and black European newspapers and journals become available online—through their own Web sites or through portal sites such as allAfrica.com—scholars, students, laypeople, and activists can directly access news articles on and produced in the black world, rather than those filtered by mainstream Western media.

Another group organizing locally as well as globally through the Internet is the Quilombolas movement, or the landless descendents of escaped African slaves in Brazil. For the past twenty years Quilombolas have worked to regain control over their ancestral land, called *quilombos* (a settlement of escaped African slaves), from commercial farms, and in 2000, the 4,000 inhabitants of Conceicao das Crioulas, a *quilombo* in Pernambuco State, one example of the sixteen communities to take title over their land, had that right guaranteed by the Brazilian constitution.<sup>30</sup> The government, through its agency Fundação Cultural Palmares (Cultural Foundation of Palmares), created a Web portal ([www.palmares.gov.br](http://www.palmares.gov.br)) dedicated to African Brazilian identity, the eradication of racism in Brazil, and the Quilombolas. Several *quilombos* have Web sites that connect with other *quilombos* throughout Brazil and with other landless community movements globally. Even though Quilombolas represent one of Brazil's most disenfranchised and impoverished communities, they have considerably wide representation on the Internet and through this Web pres-

ence have attracted more international media attention to their struggle against racism, poverty, and landlessness.

### **Conclusion**

In the ongoing discussions surrounding the construction of civil society and new media, there has been much debate as to whether or not the Internet actually enables a robust democratic process because community building online tends to organize around communities of interest and not the broader public sphere. Others view the Internet as a great equalizer and a truly democratic space because the bars of entry are lowered—ownership of media production is now not monopolized by the few who can afford to own a newspaper or broadcast station, so that multiple perspectives can be voiced online—and because anyone accessing the Web, from a cybercafé in Dakar to a PC workstation in a Kingston office, can join a listserv or post a Web site to the Internet. This characteristic of online social and political behavior may benefit the communities of interest in the black world precisely because organizing is centered on a specific group of people with shared commonalities and similar political agendas and because more can access the discourse online. Moreover, as more research is done on the dynamics of computer-mediated communication and black transnationalism, what kind of changes might be revealed as to how the black world organizes its cosmos since the advent of the Internet? During most of the twentieth century, the dominant black transnational movements were organized around the theories and dialogues of a predominately black elite. What shifts have happened since the black world moved part of its dialogue to the Internet, with its lowered bars of entry? In other words, if the dialogue has moved to the more democratic space of the Web, where working-class black people, for instance, can participate in constructing the rhetoric of black transnationalism, what kind of changes will we find?<sup>31</sup> The argument here is not that Internet technologies can or should replace the organizing and community building continuing to take place offline in the transnational black world, but rather that the technology enables an extension of that process, providing a virtual meeting place for communities as well as a rich research tool for scholars studying Africa-descended communities. Internet technology acts as a living, networked archive with every online database, Usenet thread, photograph, videoclip, article, or Web site saved to a server. Global figures for active Web sites are estimated at more than 385 million, and this figure grows each month.<sup>32</sup> However, data residing on the Web tends to be vast, disparate, and unordered, making the task of analyzing all that is on the Net as it relates to transnational black issues somewhat daunting. An exhaustive study of all the possible Web sites produced by and for the transnational black world remained impossible for this article, which instead intends to serve as a starting point for more exploration and wants to encourage users to begin clicking through to sites consciously making transnational links in the black world.

## A Cyber Bibliography

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## Notes

1. Lisa Brock, "Guest Editor's Introduction," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 24.2 (1996): 3. Brock quotes from George Fredrickson, "From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History," *Journal of American History* 82.2 (1995): 587–601.
2. Michael Hanchard and Rebecca K. Givan, "Global Mappings: A Political Atlas of the African Diaspora" (paper presented at "Diaspora Paradigms: New Scholarship in Comparative Black History," Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, September 20–23, 2001), 3.
3. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: Penguin, 1989).
4. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33–34.
5. See, for example, Bosah Ebo, ed., *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia? Race, Class, and Gender on the Internet* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998) and Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman, eds., *Race in Cyberspace* (New York: Routledge, 2000). In April 2001, and again in 2002, the University of Southern California and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology held "Race in Digital Space" to examine issues of race in cyberspace. Users can watch conference proceedings online at [cms.mit.edu/race](http://cms.mit.edu/race).
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10. The corresponding Web site is [www.blink.org.uk](http://www.blink.org.uk).
11. Nancy Kaplan, "Politexts, Hypertexts, and Other Cultural Formations in the Late Age of Print," *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine* 2.3 (1995): 3.
12. Global Mappings is available at [www.diaspora.northwestern.edu](http://www.diaspora.northwestern.edu).
13. Michael Hanchard, interview by the author, Evanston, IL, March 27, 2002.
14. Available at [www.casbah.ac.uk](http://www.casbah.ac.uk).
15. The African American Biographical Database ([aabd.chadwyck.com](http://aabd.chadwyck.com)) is another excellent example of an archive-driven Web site with source material from an encyclopedia. Randall K. Burkett, Nancy Hall Burkett, and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds., *Black Biographical Dictionaries, 1790–1950*, (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1990).
16. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds., *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999).
17. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds., *Encarta Africana*, 3d ed., software (Seattle: Microsoft, 2002).
18. The corresponding Web site can be found at MIT ([cms.mit.edu/race](http://cms.mit.edu/race)) and the University of Southern California ([www.annenberg.edu/race/index.html](http://www.annenberg.edu/race/index.html)).
19. Although the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web have a somewhat contested history regarding which was the first browser technology, it is generally accepted that the Web was born with the development and use of browsers such as Mosaic and Netscape in 1994. See LivingInternet.com, "How the Web Was Invented," available at [livinginternet.com/?i/iiz.htm](http://livinginternet.com/?i/iiz.htm), accessed on December 1, 2001.
20. Christopher Mele, "Cyberspace and Disadvantaged Communities: The Internet As a Tool for Collective Action," in *Communities in Cyberspace*, ed. Marc A. Smith and Peter Kollock (London: Routledge, 1999), 295–300.
21. Others include the Association of Progressive Communications ([www.apc.org](http://www.apc.org)) and SANGONet, originally Southern African NGOs Network ([www.sn.apc.org](http://www.sn.apc.org)). SANGONet was founded in the early 1990s to provide information services to NGOs in Southern Africa but has grown with the Web to serve as an online community portal for community service and activist organizations throughout the region.
22. Rose M. Kadende-Kaiser, "Interpreting Language and Cultural Discourse: Internet Communication among Burundians in the Diaspora," *Africa Today* 47.2 (2000): 121–48. According to Kadende-Kaiser, several university servers in the United States and Europe hosted the Burundinet listserv.
23. These sites provide just a few examples. Searches on Web search engines such as Google.com on any African country will return hundreds of links.
24. Kadende-Kaiser, "Interpreting Language," 123.
25. See the Web site at [www.blackradicalcongress.org](http://www.blackradicalcongress.org).

26. The Jericho Movement's Web site address is [www.jericho.th.net](http://www.jericho.th.net). Some of the organizations for the immediate release of Mumia Abu-Jamal with a Web-presence are, International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal ([www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org))—the site is registered under the MOVE Organization; Peoples' Rights Fund ([www.mumiazoo.org](http://www.mumiazoo.org)); The Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal ([www.freemumia.org](http://www.freemumia.org)).
27. The corresponding Web site is available at [www.obv.org.uk](http://www.obv.org.uk).
28. Akwe Amosu, "People Power," *BBC Focus on Africa* (e-magazine), October–December 2000, 30.
29. See Essential Action's Boycott Shell at [www.essentialaction.org/shell](http://www.essentialaction.org/shell).
30. Paolo Cabral, "Slave Descendants Want Their Land Back." *BBC News Online*, September 17, 2002, available at [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/americas/2002/brazil\\_journey/2263792.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/americas/2002/brazil_journey/2263792.stm), accessed November 2, 2002. See also, for example, Projeto Manejo dos Territórios Quilombolas's Web site at [www.quilombo.org.br](http://www.quilombo.org.br).
31. A very good discussion on how the Internet has shifted the concepts of the bourgeois "salons" that attempted to build a civil society based on a strong middle class appears in Jodi Dean's "Cybersalons and Civil Society: Rethinking the Public Sphere in Transnational Technoculture," *Public Culture* 13.2 (2001): 243–65.
32. NetRatings Inc./Nielsen Media Research, "January 2002 Global Internet Index Average Usage," 2002, available at [www.netratings.com/corporate/corp\\_hot\\_off\\_the\\_net\\_i.jsp](http://www.netratings.com/corporate/corp_hot_off_the_net_i.jsp).