

D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*:
Transnational and Historical Perspectives

Melvyn Stokes

Introduction

On February 8, 1915, Harry Aitken and D. W. Griffith founded the Epoch Producing Company to handle the distribution of *The Birth of a Nation*. The board of directors of the new company met in the middle of March to decide how to distribute the film, which was already playing to capacity audiences at the Liberty Theater in New York. Weighing up the alternatives of selling off the distribution rights in some areas and opting to "road show" the film themselves, they worked out a compromise: they would organize road shows to screen the film in major cities, potentially creaming off the most profitable sector of the market, while selling off the distribution rights in areas such as California, some western states, and New England outside Boston.¹ One or both of these strategies could be applied to countries outside the United States. From the beginning, Griffith and his collaborators were intent on capturing an international as well as a national market for *The Birth of a Nation*. In neighboring Canada, Epoch adopted a strategy of selling off distribution rights. In July 1915, the company signed an agreement with the Central Canada Exhibition Association to show the film for a week (September 13-20) in the capital Ottawa.² On September 9, the company agreed a ten-year deal which would give exclusive rights to the Basil Corporation to exhibit the film in "All the Provinces of Canada, and also Newfoundland, and Alaska."³ Shortly afterwards, total income from Canada was already estimated to have reached \$40,000.⁴

Reception in Canada

The reception of the film in Canada was heavily influenced by geographical propinquity to the U.S. This had two main consequences in respect of *The Birth of a Nation*. Firstly, many Canadians were already familiar, from coverage of American news in their own media or American newspapers circulating across the border, with the protests against the movie in the U.S. Secondly, there was already a sizeable African community in Canada. This reflected both the fact that, before the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, Canada had been the northernmost destination on the Underground Railroad for slaves escaping from the American South,⁵ and the post-Civil War “great migration” of African Americans from the rural South and Southwest northwards in search of farming work or jobs in industrial cities.⁶

In 1915, however, African Canadians were under pressure for a variety of reasons. They were poorer than their white compatriots and for the most part lived segregated lives. The migration of American blacks to Canada in the preceding decade and a half – although still numerically quite small⁷ – had prompted a range of measures, both official and unofficial, to prevent such immigration.⁸ The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 underlined just how much discrimination there was against the black community: there was strong white resistance to the idea of blacks in the armed forces. J. R. B. Whitney, proprietor and editor of Toronto black newspaper *The Canadian Observer*, launched a campaign to persuade Prime Minister Robert Borden to accept black enlistment in the army and militia.⁹ It was against this background that *The Birth of a Nation* arrived in Canada: it must have appeared yet another deliberate insult to African Canadians. One of them, having seen the movie in Ottawa, alerted J. R. B. Whitney and the readers of his paper to the impending arrival

of the film in their city. The film's "object," he declared in a telegram of September 16, was "entirely [the] creation of race feeling and embitterment" and "the moral effect [of the film's screening] could engender nothing but race prejudice and hatred."¹⁰

When *Birth of a Nation* opened at the Royal Alexander Theatre in Toronto on September 20, 1915, W. E. Cuthbert, the theater manager, endeavored to convince the local black community and other critics of the film that they had been misinformed as to its true character. "I wish to state that about 500 feet of this film drama," he told the *Toronto Daily Star*, "is devoted to the present-day negroes, showing their school, industries, etc. and how it would be hard for the South to get along without them, and also showing them to be honorable and respected citizens."¹¹ It is difficult to believe any version of *The Birth of a Nation* ever including anything like this. What seems to have happened is that the Basil Company, to dilute Canadian opposition to the film, had arranged to show the co-called "Hampton Epilogue" once *Birth* was over. This short film, entitled *The New Era* and shot at the black Hampton Institute in Virginia, had already been shown with *The Birth of a Nation* in a number of cities in the United States. It foregrounded the social, economic, and educational progress made by African Americans since the Reconstruction era.¹²

Local protest against the screening of *Birth of a Nation* in Canada seems to have been almost entirely black-led. On September 17, 1915, indeed, a story appeared in the *Toronto Daily Star* under the headline "Colored People Protest: Ask Province to Stop 'Birth of a Nation.'"¹³ That same day, A. W. Hackley, the former secretary and now a presiding elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, announced that he planned to go to the Provincial Government to protest the film, insisting that it "engenders racial strife and that, in unmodified form, it is not good for any race to

see."¹⁴ Hackley was part of a delegation appointed by a mass meeting at the A.M.E. Church to lobby the Provincial authorities to ban the film. The meeting had been opened by J. R. B. Whitney of *The Canadian Observer*, who had published an editorial condemning the film as "a deliberate and skilful bit of treachery ... [that] teaches to hate, as well as despise."¹⁵ Another member of the appointed delegation was William Peyton Hubbard. The son of slaves who had escaped Virginia to reach Canada by the Underground Railroad, Hubbard was the first black to be elected to any public office in Canada, serving for many years on Toronto Council and, from 1898 to 1908, on the city's powerful Board of Control.¹⁶ The difficulty Hackley, Whitney, Hubbard and their allies faced in calling for the film's suppression was that the Ontario Board of Censors had already passed it for public exhibition: chief censor George E. Armstrong explained that the film portrayed "one period of history in the United States, with which period neither England nor Canada had any part." From the perspective of the two countries that were now at war with Germany, the censors had found that there were "no objectionable features from the national standpoint."¹⁷ In spite of the protests from the black community, *The Birth of a Nation* was apparently shown to sell-out audiences in Toronto. It returned to the city, observes Paul S. Moore, "for three more weeks at Christmas 1915, again in August 1916, and many times more in the future."¹⁸

There were similar protests by African Canadians outside Toronto. In the prairie provinces to the west, racial issues were already salient as a consequence of immigration from the United States, particularly from Oklahoma which, after it acquired statehood in 1907, proved deeply inhospitable to American blacks. In March 1911, for example, there was controversy when an organized party of 194 black settlers from Oklahoma (and neighboring Arkansas and Texas) arrived in Winnipeg,

Manitoba. Many African Americans, initially from Oklahoma, also moved to Calgary, Alberta, where they encountered so much discrimination that a Colored Protective Association was formed in 1910.¹⁹ Both cities would later witness efforts on the part of local African Canadians to ban *The Birth of a Nation*: blacks in Calgary protested against the film²⁰ and the arrival of *The Birth of a Nation* in Winnipeg prompted a public outcry “by delegations of colored citizens.”²¹

Actions of this kind were not usually successful in preventing exhibition of the film in English-speaking Canada. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, however, according to James W. St. G. Walker, “with the compliance of white supporters, blacks were actually able to have the offensive film banned from city cinemas.”²² Given the recent history of blacks in Halifax (where they had *inter alia* been segregated in schools of their own and excluded from labor unions) and the fact that African Canadians in Nova Scotia generally had been unable to sustain “a high level of group solidarity and commitment to collective action,” this was a considerable achievement.²³

In French-speaking Québec province, *The Birth of a Nation* experienced major difficulties with the local censorship system. It was brought before the Office of Censorship in Montréal on September 17, 1915, in a version lasting about 180 minutes. This suggests that the Basil Corporation had already made 10 minutes or so of cuts before submission. It was approved on September 20, subject to certain cuts in specific reels:

Reel 2: White man hanging mulatto woman

Reel 9: Pursuit of girl by negro

Subtitle: "For her who had learned the stern lesson

of Honor, we should not grieve that she found
sweeter the opal gates of death."

Reel 11: Colored woman, immodestly dressed, drinking

White girl in the arms of a mulatto

It seems from this that the *entire* so-called "rape" sequence – with Gus chasing Flora to her death – was required to be cut. But the official notification form was also accompanied by another, unsigned sheet, listing two further cuts:

Reel 4: Cut all scenes of white girl in mulatto office

Subtitle: The town being given over to drunken
negroes²⁴

On September 23, four days before *The Birth of a Nation* was due to open at the Princess Theatre, Montréal newspaper *La Presse* reported that:

An important group of black inhabitants of Montréal met together yesterday evening, at the Union Congregational Church, under the presidency of Dr. J. Arthur Thomas ... to protest against the showing of ... *The Birth of a Nation*. It appears that our black fellow-citizens have learned ... that this drama ... is of the kind to provoke public antagonism towards blacks. Those who were present at yesterday's meeting expressed the intention of doing everything they could to prevent these screenings.²⁵

That promise of "doing everything they could" to stop the film proved prophetic, perhaps, in the light of what followed. On the morning of September 27, the day set for the film's first performance, the Princess Theatre was badly damaged by a fire. The previous evening, a black man had called on the theater manager and effectively threatened him if he did not withdraw the film. A police inquiry was launched but it was impossible to prove that the fire had been caused by arson. *The Birth of a Nation* did open that day – but in the Arena Theatre, specially rented for the occasion. It went on to become a popular success and returned to Montréal twice the following year. It was shown from May 1, 1916 at the Orpheum Theatre and from November 26, 1916 at the St. Denis. The publicity at the Théâtre St. Denis proudly proclaimed something new: that the film would be shown "with intertitles in French and in English, for the first time in the entire world."²⁶

What the Canadian experience points to is that – as *The Birth of a Nation* began its career outside the United States – it would do so as a profoundly unstable text. The film could be edited at any point by distributors or exhibitors. Although it was rarely banned by national censors (France being the major national exception to this), local censors could and sometimes did insist on cuts being made in some parts of the movie. To make the film more comprehensible to non-English-speaking audiences, the intertitles had to be translated into other languages – a fruitful source of re-interpretation and re-purposing. The length of the film – and thus its precise narrative – also seems to have differed profoundly from place to place. An American who had first seen the film in the United States wanted “to know why some of the best allegorical scenes” had been cut out when he saw it again in Australia, where according to the film’s manager, George Bowles, it ran for only 2 hours and 43

minutes.²⁷ The most dramatic example of cutting of this type appears to have been when *Birth* was first shown in Japan on April 25, 1924. The version screened seems to have been only 104 minutes long, rather than the 193 minutes in the Kino Blu-Ray edition of 2011 or 194 in the British Film Institute's Centennial blu-ray edition (released in November 2015). It was in fact less than the first part of the film in modern editions. It seems possible, indeed, that the version shown in Japan in 1924 (later known as the Kokumin creation) ended with Lincoln's assassination and the finish of the Civil War, avoiding entirely both the Reconstruction period and the Klan.²⁸

The Birth of a Nation in Britain

Birth of a Nation was submitted to the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), which passed it for universal viewing on August 5, 1915. James C. Robertson, the historian of the BBFC, notes that this award of a "U certificate without cuts to the anti-black *The Birth of a Nation* ... is not easy to reconcile with the BBFC's new-found sensitivity to racialism within the British Empire as well as its aversion to excessive violence."²⁹ Since there are no records of the discussions at the BBFC for this period, we simply do not know if there was any criticism of the film on the part of the censors. However, according to a report in *The Bioscope* on September 9, the distributors may have made some cuts to the film *before* it was first screened. Some of these related to scenes of the Civil War, which were deemed too graphic for a nation itself currently at war, but also included the elision of "certain incidents dealing with the bestialities of the emancipated negroes" that it was thought might offend British spectators.³⁰ *Birth of a Nation* opened on September 27, 1915 at the Scala Cinema on Charlotte Street. It was later also shown at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,

in the heart of London's theaterland. It proved hugely popular with audiences, for reasons – as Michael Hammond has argued – that may have had to do with the attempts of advertisers, exhibitors, and critics to reframe the film as a realistic description of modern warfare, as an expression of "Anglo-Celt" achievement contrasted with the threat of German "Huns," and as a symbol of how a nation could be regenerated after a war.³¹

There has traditionally been a general consensus among scholars that there was no opposition to the film in Britain. *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), even criticized what it described as the "complacent acceptance" of the film there.³² Yet recent work by Brian Willan has challenged this view. Researching in the archives of the British Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society (AS and APS), he discovered that Geo. S. Best, a private in the Army Service Corps and – Willan suggests – "probably of African American origin," wrote to the AS and APS, stating that he had taken part in a protest against the film "while a student in Boston" in the spring and insisting that it should not be screened in the UK. Best argued that Griffith's movie represented "a distortion (villainous in all its aspects) of the history of the American Civil War." Pointing out that "its avowed purpose is to stir up hatred of the Negro throughout the world," he insisted that it was "unthinkable" for the English people to "tolerate such a hydra-headed monster in their midst, especially at this time when Africans have assembled from all parts of the Empire to serve the mother country."³³ Best had simultaneously challenged the film's version of "history," internationalized protests against it through his actions in Boston and Britain, and linked it to the issue of colored soldiers fighting for Britain in the First World War. Travers Buxton, secretary of the AS and APS, had not heard of the film before Best's letter but now wrote to G.

A. Bedford, president of the BBFC, about it. "We feel," he declared, echoing Best's argument, "at this time especially, any exhibition which would tend to reflect on coloured races of the Empire who have proved themselves so loyal to the Mother Country is to be strongly deprecated."³⁴

Best also contacted the NAACP in New York. "An attempt is being made," he informed W. E. B. Du Bois in a letter of September 4, 1915, "to produce 'The Birth of a Nation' in England. I have got the Anti-Slavery Society to take the matter up and also the Lord Mayor of London." Best, aware from his own experience of the campaign against the film conducted by the NAACP in Boston, also asked Du Bois to "forward as soon as possible any particulars you think would be of use to us."³⁵ It was almost certainly in response to Best's letter that May Childs Nerney, secretary of the NAACP, wrote to Travers Buxton on October 2, enclosing some pamphlets the NAACP had produced critiquing the film and asking Buxton to devote his "efforts to prevent the play which is at the same time a libel and a caricature of the Negro, from being produced in your country."³⁶ The AS and APS also heard from Nina Gomer Du Bois, Du Bois's wife, then living in London, about the movie, which she described as "disgusting and mean."³⁷ The organization set up a committee of four to decide what, if anything, to do about the film. The committee itself was divided over what to recommend but one member, Georgiana Solomon, widow of a former prime minister of the Cape Colony and a dedicated suffragette, was so horrified by the film she took direct action against it. She stood up from her seat at the Scala cinema and denounced the movie, pointing out that "the news of it would spread to Africa, India and the Colonies. This was an insult to our glorious King's loyal Native subjects – everywhere." Solomon's speech was loudly supported by her friend and ally, Mrs. Cobden Unwin.³⁸

Both Solomon and Unwin were close colleagues of black South African writer and political activist Sol T. Plaatje, who took direct action against the film in a somewhat different way. Sixteen years later, Plaatje recalled that:

Some of us asked the British Home Secretary why a foreign film ... was permitted to libel the black race in England, at a time when black races by the thousands were dying in defence of England and the British empire. We were informed with regret that as the Film Censors had already licensed the play, the Government could do nothing.³⁹

In practice, according to Brian Willan, Plaatje was probably referring to a letter sent in late September 1915 to the Lord Chamberlain, describing the film as offensive and asking for it to be withdrawn. This letter, although subsequently lost, provoked considerable discussion on the part of officials in the Colonial Office, who ultimately advised the Home Office that though "the film might cause annoyance to American Negroes, ... it does not appear to the Secretary of State that it could cause reasonable offence to negroes in other parts of the world." There for the moment the matter rested.⁴⁰

The Birth of a Nation in France

The Birth of a Nation was advertised in France in September 1916 as a forthcoming attraction at the Casino de Paris.⁴¹ But it appears to have fallen foul of the new French national system of film censorship introduced a few months earlier. After June 16, 1916, a Central Commission of Control vetted all films shown in France, awarding visas to those it approved for exhibition. By January 1917, 145

feature films had been refused visas because "their theme was judged immoral or contrary to the public interest." *Birth of a Nation* was one of 14 American movies denied a visa.⁴² Since the records relating to the granting or refusal of visas for this period do not exist, we can only guess at the reasons behind this decision. The censorship regulations banned films including "violent and dubious deeds," and *The Birth of a Nation* featured "scenes of looting and destruction, arson, one seduction (of Republican politician Austin Stoneman by his mulatto housekeeper), an assassination (Lincoln's), two (implied) rapes, at least three murders, and election rigging."⁴³ The regulations also banned movies that were likely "to influence in any manner whatever the 'Sacred Union'" of France at war. Some of the Civil War sequences in the film, particularly trench warfare at Petersburg, were of great brutality (in Britain, indeed, they had been singled out for praise by some reviewers because of the marked lack of graphic depictions in British films and newsreels of what fighting on the Western Front was really like).⁴⁴ There was, indeed, an anti-war tone to some scenes – and especially intertitles – that French censors will certainly have noted. Above all, they must have been aware of the many colored soldiers serving in the French Army and worried about the consequences of the film's racism on these *poilus*. According to film historian Georges Sadoul, the French "censorship judged the projection of such a violently racist work inopportune whilst colonial soldiers were at the front."⁴⁵

It would take seven years for Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* to be released in France. But when it was first screened to paying customers in Paris, it became something of a *cause célèbre* and – despite having received a visa from French censors – was promptly banned on the orders of the national government. The problem for the film's distributors was that Paris, in the summer of 1923, was fast

becoming a major attraction for white American tourists. The tougher U.S. immigration law of 1921 had inspired transatlantic steamship companies to turn former steerage accommodation into inexpensive "Tourist Third Class" and the steeply falling franc also helped transform Paris into a major center of American tourism.⁴⁶ These new tourists expected the French they met to adapt their behaviour to meet the tastes of their American clients, including speaking English.⁴⁷ More to the point here, many white tourists from the U.S. brought with them segregationist views. They refused to meet and socialize with black people in bars, nightclubs, restaurants, and cabarets. During the summer of 1923, many fights broke out as white Americans attempted to throw black Americans out of bars in Montmartre and Montparnasse.⁴⁸ It soon became clear, moreover, that the whites involved made no distinction between African Americans and blacks from parts of the French colonial empire. On June 29, for example, Kojo Touvalou Houénou, a lawyer from Dahomey, was thrown out of *Le Jockey*, a bar in Montparnasse, at the request of its predominantly American clientele.⁴⁹

France and Britain were both colonial powers with large overseas empires. But France – unlike Britain – had traditionally taken the view that the colonies could be integral parts of France herself, electing deputies to the National Assembly. As a consequence, by 1923 there were several black deputies. It was one of these, Georges Bousset from the Indian Ocean island of Réunion, who made the growing number of racial incidents between American tourists and black French residents into a major political issue. On July 24, 1923, he published an article entitled "Appeal to Americans Visiting France" in the newspaper *Le Journal*. While thanking Americans for their help in the war, he reminded them of the excellent collaboration that had existed between white battalions and black French units, and warned that France

recognized no difference between citizens based on the color of their skin.⁵⁰ Seven days later, Boussenot's advice became the public policy of the French government: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Raymond Poincaré – who was also prime minister – announced that if "foreign tourists" continued to berate or demand the expulsion of "colored men originally from the French colonies," then "sanctions will be taken."⁵¹ Three nights after this, Kojo Touvalou Houénou was thrown out of *El Garòn*, a night club near Place Blanche in Montmartre at the request of a large group of white American tourists.⁵² Houénou would later be a major figure in the "Black Atlantic," being an important figure in protest movements in France, west Africa and the United States (where he became a friend of Marcus Garvey).⁵³

Houénou claimed to be a prince from Dahomey, the nephew of the last king before it became a French colony. He had served as an auxiliary doctor in the First World War, been wounded, and been awarded French citizenship for his meritorious war service. More importantly here, he was also a lawyer, and promptly sued the nightclub owner alleging grievous bodily harm.⁵⁴ Additionally, he complained to Blaise Diagne, a Senegalese deputy who had been the first black man to hold government office in France. Diagne in turn wrote to prime minister Poincaré over what he termed "these regrettable incidents." Poincaré responded with an assurance that the government would treat severely the proprietors of hotels and bars that discriminated between blacks and whites.⁵⁵

A few days later, two deputies – Joseph Barthélemy from Gers in southwest France and Gratien Candace, a black deputy from Guadeloupe – wrote to Poincaré threatening to table parliamentary questions over the rising tide of racial incidents.⁵⁶ Poincaré replied to both deputies assuring them he would "continue to follow this matter closely ... French laws requiring equality will be strictly observed and ... all

those who break them, whether foreigners or French, will be punished as required."⁵⁷

The Birth of a Nation opened at the Marivaux Theatre in Paris on August 17, the same day Poincaré gave the deputies this assurance. Black deputies Boussenot and Candace each attended one of the opening performances and complained about the film (Boussenot described it as holding "an entire people up to ridicule and hatred").⁵⁸

After just four performances, the Paris Prefect of Police – prompted by the government (and ignoring the visa granted by the French censors) – banned the film as a threat to public order.⁵⁹ A number of factors helped account for the suppression (which, in any case, would last only a few weeks⁶⁰). These including traditional French ideals of equality going back to the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, gratitude for the contribution of colonial troops in the World War (and the hope that they might offer a pool of manpower in future conflicts), growing hostility to white American tourists, the refusal of the U.S. government to accept a link between the repayment of wartime American loans and continuing German reparations, and the fact that Poincaré and the other politicians involved were all aware of (and positioning themselves for) the general election due to take place in 1924.⁶¹ At the same time, however, it seems certain that a key factor in the film's suppression was the position taken by influential black politicians in the National Assembly.

Road-showing abroad

If we go back to the early days of *The Birth of a Nation's* exhibition in the U.S. and abroad, the key to much of its success was the organization of road-shows. By the end of May 1915 there were three such American companies in operation with a fourth in gestation. By the end of July, a fifth had been organized and, by September, there were eight. By February 1916, there were twelve roadshows

crisscrossing the United States.⁶² Also by February 1916, three roadshows had been organized abroad: in Australia, England and South America. The fact that each was referred to in the accounts as "Company no. 1" pointed to the fact that further roadshows were already planned in each of these venues.⁶³ At their peak, 3 roadshow companies were touring Britain, 3 more in South America, and 4 in Australia and New Zealand. The manager of the South American roadshow, Guy Crosswell Smith, first introduced it to Argentina, where it ran for over two hundred performances at the Teatro de la Opera in Buenos Aires. He repeated this success in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Brazil.⁶⁴ Once the film had finished its initial run at the Scala and Drury Lane Theaters in London, roadshow companies managed by W. E. Burlock took the film out to British audiences in the provinces. Frustratingly, while the Epoch accounts tells us how profitable such companies were, they do not make it possible to trace precisely where and when the film was shown or the nature of its local reception. The same is true of the story of the film in Australia, though here we do have some evidence of whether or not it resonated with local audiences.

Australia

The Birth of a Nation had its Australian première at the Theatre Royal, Sydney, on Easter Saturday, April 22, 1916. The choice of location fitted well with the road show strategy. Sydney was the most populous city in Australia⁶⁵ and the first advertisements emphasized that the film "will never be presented at any but the Highest Class Theatres, and the Prices will be those customarily charged in such places." They also reiterated the false claims invented by publicists Theodore Mitchell and J. R. McCarthy for the film's New York opening thirteen months earlier: that 18,000 people and 3,000 horses had been involved in making the film, which had

cost \$500,000 (translated to its approximate Australian equivalent, 100,000 pounds sterling).⁶⁶ Other ads and planted publicity stories before the film opened emphasized that the film would “positively never be shown in the suburbs,”⁶⁷ it had already been seen by a million people in New York in a record 802 performances,⁶⁸ it had just been shown for charity at the Drury Lane Theatre in London to a distinguished audience that included the Queen,⁶⁹ and that it would “be presented as a regular theatrical attraction, with an orchestra for the specially-composed incidental music.”⁷⁰ The day after the film opened an ad attempted to suggest that the highest price charged for admission (6 shillings) was still much less than in London or New York. It also hailed *Birth of a Nation* in large capital letters as “A Tremendous Argument for a White Australia.”⁷¹

The “White Australia” policy had its origins in the fact that Australian colonies had passed laws attempting to restrict immigration – first from China, later from Japan – from 1855 onwards.⁷² On January 1, 1901, Australia had become an independent nation within the British Empire when a federation of separate colonies joined together into a new Commonwealth of Australia. In 1901, one of the first pieces of legislation adopted by the new country was the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act that formed the centerpiece of what became known as the “White Australia Policy.” This provided for entrance examinations only in European languages, effectively bringing an end to non-European immigration.⁷³ A supplementary law required the deportation by 1906 of all “Kanakas,” Pacific Islanders who had been brought to Australia as contracted plantation labor.⁷⁴

Publicists for *The Birth of a Nation* seem to have believed that the racial aspects of the film could be used to promote its appeal in Australia. George Bowles, sent by the Epoch Company to supervise *Birth's* exhibition in Australia in

collaboration with the local J. C. Williamson theater company, explained for the benefit of Australian audiences that the movie was based on Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s novels and play which "told the story of the American Civil War from the viewpoint of the defeated South, and it showed the horrors of the domination of the black man over the white which came when the slaves were freed and were given the franchise."⁷⁵ A few months later, indeed, a local newspaper in neighboring New Zealand commented that Griffith's film depicted "post-slavery days ... of terror and tragedy, and if ever a national lesson were in a picture, it is contained in the film depicting the struggle between the white and black man in the Southern States of the Union. The production is an impressive statement upon Australia's national policy of race purity."⁷⁶

In practice, however, few Australians seem to have made the connection between the movie and the White Australia policy, seeing the latter as something intended primarily against Asians rather than blacks. One commentator noted rather vaguely that "our own weaknesses with the colored races has rather weakened our reverence for [Harriet Beecher Stowe's] Uncle Tom and his brethren," though he still perceived the "slave-owners of Dixie-land" before the Civil War as "brutal."⁷⁷ Another baldly stated that "[t]he danger from the negro population is the underlying theme of the production. In Australia we are free of such problems, but there is still the lesson of what has been avoided. No doubt this will impress many minds."⁷⁸ There seems to have been no real attempt on the part of any Australian commentator to link the African Americans portrayed in *The Birth of a Nation* with the Aboriginal population of Australia, variously estimated at between 80,000 and 150,000 in the second decade of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ Those tasked with publicizing *Birth* consequently seem to have realized very swiftly that there was little point in trying to

link the film with the idea of a “White Australia,” and there was no further reference to this in subsequent advertisements for the film.

Where the film did connect was with the fact that Australia, like Britain and Canada, was involved in the First World War. In common with British commentators of 1915, Australian reviewers saw the war scenes as unusually realistic. “What war is like—its grimness and cruelty, pathos and tragedy, horror and confusion—is shown with remarkable effectiveness,” declared one critic. “Something quite new in the way of battle scenes is achieved in the tumultuous trench fighting ...”⁸⁰ Another praised “the spectacle of a startlingly realistic artillery duel, in which hundreds of guns and thousands of fighters are engaged.”⁸¹ Australian soldiers fought and died in the Gallipoli campaign, on the Western Front, and in places such as Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. “The tragedy of war,” one critic of *The Birth of a Nation* reflected, “is brought home to observers in a way that, in Sydney at least, must find many responsive hearts.”⁸² Many Australians in 1916 still thought of themselves as “British” and Griffith’s film further encouraged for some a sense of racial pride. An early ad described the film’s heroic Southerners as “proud and courageous Anglo-Americans” who “were of British breed.”⁸³ When Colonel Cameron (Henry Walthall) holds up a “fiery cross,” one writer commented, “[t]his is where the spectators begin to realise that they are really watching the deeds of Britons. The Camerons ... are a Scottish family ... and it is the daring leadership of the eldest son ... that rescues the whites from a black tyranny.”⁸⁴

Despite the hopes of the Epoch Board and local manager George Bowles, *The Birth of a Nation* was not hugely commercially successful in Australia. It was expensive to set up the roadshow companies: the accounts showed that Australian Company No. 1 had cost \$9,301 up to 29 February 1916 and, in advance of the Easter

opening in Sydney, had generated no income.⁸⁵ In September 1916, with three road-show companies established, total income stood at \$13,427 with expenses – including Bowles's salary of \$2,098 – of \$13,426.⁸⁶ There also seems to have been significant resistance in Australia to paying inflated roadshow prices: the top price for reserved seats in the Theatre Royal, Sydney was 6 shillings, equivalent to three-quarters of the \$2 price tag in the U.S. Even at this level, it seems to have become obvious during May that, while the cheaper seats were still selling well, there was far less demand for expensive ones. On May 6, 1916, the J. C. Williamson management announced both that the run of *The Birth of a Nation* at the Theatre Royal had been extended and that the price of admission had been cut to between 2 shillings and sixpence and sixpence for evening performances and between 2 shillings and sixpence for matinees, an overall decrease of between a third and a half.⁸⁷

In Melbourne, where *The Birth of a Nation* began its run (also at the Theatre Royal) on May 20, the top price of a seat was 3 shillings (half what it had been at the start in Sydney) with other seats at 2 shillings and 1 shilling.⁸⁸ In spite of the usual barrage of publicity for the film,⁸⁹ and a successful opening night,⁹⁰ *Birth's* season in Melbourne began under something of a shadow. A week before the première, Hoyt's Theatre in Melbourne started to advertise a movie titled *The Curse of a Nation*, to open on the same day as *Birth* and with seats at exactly half the price of those at the Theatre Royal. Brazenly, Hoyt's claimed that *The Curse of a Nation* had cost £200,000 to produce (twice what had been claimed for *Birth*) and 5000 people had been involved in making it. In reality, *The Curse of a Nation* was a 50-minute drama about miscegenation, based on a play by Edward Sheldon and earlier known as *The Nigger*. Renaming it and advertising it in this way was little more than an unscrupulous ploy by Hoyt's to profit from the publicity for *The Birth of a Nation* (the

two films were advertised on the same page of the *Melbourne Argus*).⁹¹ J. C. Williamson sued Hoyt's and asked for an injunction restraining the theater management from advertising or screening *The Curse of a Nation*, but these initiatives failed.⁹² *The Curse of a Nation* in the event ran for only a few days, but one consequence of its arrival was that ads for *Birth of a Nation* were revised to include the statement that it was "the real thing in wonder picture. All others are imitations."⁹³ The other problem in Melbourne was that the Theatre Royal was booked for a live play from June 3, so the management of J. C. Williamson arranged for *Birth* to move to the Auditorium Theatre from June 3 to June 9, and finally to the Town Hall until June 16.⁹⁴ This foreshadowed the film's move to shorter engagements of between one and four nights at lower prices (maximum 2 shillings and sixpence) in a range of smaller towns and cities.⁹⁵

After leaving Sydney (where an ad claimed it had been seen by "[o]ver 140,000 people"⁹⁶) and Melbourne, Australia's two largest cities, *The Birth of a Nation* seems to have been less successful. The three touring road-show companies reported to Epoch profits of \$1,645 in October 1916 and \$1,052 in November. In December, there was a loss of \$191. By April 1917, with the three companies reduced to two, the monthly profit was \$1,475.⁹⁷ One factor in putting off potential Australian spectators was that the film was advertised as "history revived and shown in the making."⁹⁸ Publicity emphasized the amount of research that had gone into its making.⁹⁹ But many Australians had little interest in American history or were unaware of the Reconstruction period covered in the second half of the film. "The weakest part of the picture from an Australian standpoint," wrote one commentator, "is that it deals with a phase of American history about which the outside world knows little. ... Australians know nothing of the events following the end of the civil

war. As far as we are concerned, America was off the map from Lee's surrender until the arrival of the [American Great White] fleet in Sydney [harbor on August 20, 1908]."¹⁰⁰

A small number of film critics displayed an awareness that there were alternative views of the Ku Klux Klan to that expressed in the film. "Northern [American] writers," noted one, "say these clansmen were outlaws, Southern writers that they were the saviours of the Whites." "[N]ow that we seek the simple story of the Ku Klux Klan," wrote another, "we find one-half of the authorities upholding them as Crusaders of the noblest type, and the other half discussing them contemptuously as larrikin push."¹⁰¹ Apart from critics, a modern Australian commentator points out that ordinary spectators also at times displayed scepticism towards *Birth's* construction of the Ku Klux Klan as heroes – something that expressed itself in queries to the advice columns of some newspapers. The same writer suggests two possible reasons for such popular querying of "the film's picture of race relations." The first was the continuing popularity in Australia of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The second was the fact that a film entitled *In the Clutches of the Ku-Klux Klan*, offering a considerably more critical view of the organization, had already been shown there "less than two years previously." This 1913 production, made by the Gene Gauntier players in Florida, featured Gauntier herself as the daughter of a newspaper editor who has offended the Klan. The Klan captures and imprisons her and a Klansman who falls in love with her is persecuted by other members of the secret order.¹⁰²

Australia had no real movie censorship system operating when *The Birth of a Nation* arrived in 1916. Until December 1916, for example, New South Wales generally accepted films approved by the censorship boards in New York and

London.¹⁰³ This meant that, unlike in the United States, Canada, and Britain, there was no theoretical possibility of critics of the film trying to put pressure on such boards to suppress or amend it. Some Australian commentators reported in detail on the struggle to ban the film in the United States.¹⁰⁴ Yet in Australia itself, there do not appear to have been any protests at all. There seems no evidence that Aboriginals ever saw the film, let alone demonstrated against it. For most white Australians of 1916 and 1917, *Birth of a Nation's* endorsement of white supremacy was unexceptionable, even if they perceived such supremacy as something to be asserted primarily against Asians rather than blacks. Many had little interest in American history and this, together, with the length of the film, the cost of going to see it in its road-show format, and perhaps some sense of disappointment that it did not live up to its advance publicity, probably accounted for its relative lack of financial success.¹⁰⁵

Germany

Historian Leon F. Litwack claimed that *Birth of a Nation* "scored particularly impressive triumphs in Germany and South Africa."¹⁰⁶ It appears, however, that the movie was not screened in either country until some years after its first release. In Germany, this was almost certainly a consequence of the international campaign launched against what would become known as the "Black Horror on the Rhine." Leading up to and during World War I, France recruited around 190,000 African soldiers. When the war ended, it used some of these troops in the French-occupied zone of the Rhineland. As Tina Campt points out, this "represented the first large-scale Black presence in Germany."¹⁰⁷ On March 20, 1920, in a letter to the periodical *Nation*, British left-winger Edmund D. Morel complained that the French had "thrust barbarians ... with tremendous sexual instincts – into the heart of Europe."¹⁰⁸

Two weeks later, in the *Daily Herald* newspaper, Morel published an article entitled "Black Scourge in Europe: Sexual Horror Let Loose by the French on the Rhine."¹⁰⁹ Like Thomas Dixon, Jr. in the United States (whose novels and play had provided the basis for the second half of *The Birth of a Nation*), Morel had developed an obsession with black male sexuality. But his insane imaginings became the basis for a broad transnational campaign which, of course, was seized upon by German nationalists as a weapon with which to undermine the Treaty of Versailles that had ended the war and specifically, Iris Wigger suggests, "to discredit France internationally, to put pressure on the French government and to get rid of the French colonial troops as soon as possible."¹¹⁰

Erica Kuhlman, in her book on *Reconstructing Patriarchy After the Great War*, comments on what she saw as the profound similarities between Griffith's film and German tactics of the early 1920s. "The Rhineland horror campaign," she writes,

duplicated many of the themes of *Birth of a Nation*, such as the presumed inability of nonwhites to govern themselves (part of imperialism's paradigmatic civilized versus uncivilized supposition), the presumed natural desire on the part of black men for white women, and, of course, the myth of the black rapist. This extraordinarily popular movie ... reminded Americans and Europeans of what could happen if white men lost control of their society.¹¹¹

Kuhlman adds that "the popularity of Griffith's epic film ... helps explain the resonance of white supremacy in the 1910s and 1920s and the choice by the Rhineland Horror campaign to direct its propaganda across the Atlantic."¹¹² This

suggestion that *Birth of a Nation*, which had as yet not been shown in Germany (the French authorities, indeed, had prevented it from being shown for obvious reasons in the occupied Rhineland¹¹³), nevertheless helped shape the Rhineland horror campaign of the early 1920s is a fascinating one.

The "Black Horror" campaign launched by the German government was international in scope and particularly focused on influencing American opinion. It tried to work through the network of German sympathizers in the United States, focusing particularly on German-language newspapers, the Steuben Society, and other organizations.¹¹⁴ Considerable interaction took place between unofficial agencies of the German government, such as the Rhenish Women's League, and individuals in the United States.¹¹⁵ Cultural products produced by the campaign often had an international circulation. These included novels, newspaper articles, songs, poems, cartoons, posters, medallions, and plays.¹¹⁶ There was also at least one film, *Die schwarze Schmach* [*The Black Shame*], released in April 1921.

Die schwarze Schmach was shown in Munich, Stuttgart, Berlin, Dantzig, Nuremberg, Bremen and Breslau.¹¹⁷ Its makers Carl Boese, John Freden, and Heinrich Diestler, were ambitious to have it shown in the United States, though so far as is known this never happened. The film's narrative was a remorseless account of the victimization of white German women by black French soldiers: the main female character in the story is kidnapped and locked up in a house of prostitution, other women are raped. Some elements of the film parallel those of *The Birth of a Nation*. The major female character in *Die schwarze Schmach* is called Elsa; in *Birth of a Nation*, she is Elsie. Both movies emphasize the supposedly insatiable desire of black men for white women. Both mythologize the idea of the black rapist. Both present a

white-dominated society as the only means of preserving natural order. Both work narratively as films because they show white men defending white women from the lascivious attention of black soldiers. In *Die schwarze Schmach*, it is white French officers who do this; in *Birth of a Nation*, of course, it is the white-robed Klansmen. Both films not only demonize blacks, they also portray black bodies in strange, disorienting ways. Gus, in *Birth of a Nation*, moves in some respects like an animal when he pursues Flora Cameron to her death. In the case of *Die schwarze Schmach*, suggests French scholar Jean-Yves Le Naour, the black French soldiers "seem not at all to belong to the human race: hidden behind great trees from which they appear suddenly like wildcats, they run with sideways steps, bandy-legged with shoulders dangling. On the face of it, they are large monkeys."¹¹⁸

If *Die schwarze Schmach* mimicked *The Birth of a Nation* in narrative and aesthetic terms, is it possible that Griffith's film even had direct influence on the German one? Since *Birth of a Nation* had not been shown in Germany up to this point, the answer to this can only be found in the strong transatlantic links between members of the pro-German community in the United States and those living in Germany during and after the war. The evidence so far is suggestive rather than conclusive. One of the pioneers of the "black shame" campaign in the Rhineland was conservative American journalist and actress Ray Beveridge. Beveridge, a former employee of the Germany Embassy in Washington, had spent much of the war living and writing in Germany. In February and March 1920, she gave a series of speeches in Hamburg and Munich attacking the presence of black troops in the Rhineland and warning of the threat posed by mulatto children "to the purity of the German race." She wrote proposing that German men follow the example of white men in the American South and lynch blacks who insulted white women. In June she spoke on

the "black shame" at the University of Berlin and began a tour that would take her to 25 more German cities, finishing with a rally of 50,000 people in Hamburg in the spring of 1921.¹¹⁹ Where did Beveridge originally get her ideas, indeed her obsessions, from? Belonging to a German-American family (her grandfather was governor of Illinois in the 1870s), she began in 1915 to return to the U.S. as a propagandist for the German cause. She made speaking tours of the Midwest and Northeast and, given the racial attitudes she would later espouse, it seems highly probable – but sadly there is no documented proof – that she saw *The Birth of a Nation* on one of these trips.¹²⁰

South Africa

Equally frustrating in terms of the possible transnational effects of *The Birth of a Nation* is the making and career of *De Voortrekkers*, released in South Africa in 1916. Dealing with the movement of Boers, farmers of Dutch ancestry, away from the Cape Colony and British rule in the 1830s, *De Voortrekkers* fitted well with the political conservatism of the period after the Act of Union of 1910 when white British and Afrikaan settlers reconciled at the expense of South Africa's black majority. As one contemporary critic observed, the movie “has probably done more to bring Dutchmen (i.e. Boers) and Englishmen together and to help each other to a better understanding of the other’s point of view, than anything that has ever previously happened.”¹²¹

De Voortrekkers had many similarities with *The Birth of a Nation* that have already been explored by Jane Gaines, Edwin Hees, Jacqueline Maingard, and Peter Davis.¹²² Both films deal with the foundation of a white "Edenic state," subsequently threatened by blacks, which is ultimately recovered. Both represent fair-minded white

leaders destroyed by a "lethal alliance" between "generalized black iniquity and individual white villains."¹²³ Both show blacks made more threatening by alcohol. Both include "historical facsimiles." Both celebrate "the establishment of white supremacy by violence" and link together the question of white supremacy with that of nationhood. Both end with the creation of new white families and "a clear religious sanction" for the re-born white nation. Both have "faithful souls": "good blacks, faithful servants who protect their masters and mistresses even against their own people."¹²⁴ The "sexual paranoia" of *The Birth of a Nation* might be lacking, but both it and *De Voortrekkers* "exploit black people as 'others' against which white identity is confirmed and celebrated." The two films, as Jane Gaines notes, have a similar lesson: "[t]wo white groups at ideological odds with each other [Boers and British in South Africa; Northerners and Southerners in the U.S.] must both claim commonality with one another in order to distinguish themselves from people of African descent."¹²⁵

Was there a more direct relationship between the two films? Isadore W. Schlesinger of African Film Productions¹²⁶ brought Harold Shaw to South Africa specifically to direct *De Voortrekkers*, the first epic film to be shot there. Shaw had come from a remarkably similar background to D. W. Griffith: born two years after Griffith in Griffith's home state of Kentucky, he had also pursued for several years a career as an itinerant actor before moving into directing.¹²⁷ In the fall of 1915, Shaw was in Britain working for the company London Film Productions. It is very probable that he saw one of the London performances of *The Birth of a Nation* but there is, once again, no direct evidence for this – or for Peter Davis's claim that *De Voortrekkers* was "probably inspired" by Griffith's movie.¹²⁸

The Birth of a Nation itself was not shown in racially complex South Africa until 1931. Historians have offered differing explanations of the reason for this. Brian Willan suggests that the delay was a consequence of the campaign against the film in London in 1915. On October 13, Travers Buxton, secretary of the AS and APS, wrote to William P. Schreiner, the South African High Commissioner in London, requesting him to use his influence to stop the film being screened in South Africa. Schreiner replied on November 19, noting that he had watched the movie "and have taken certain unofficial steps which will, I hope, prevent the film from going to South Africa. ... I think it would do harm there."¹²⁹ Three months later, Buxton declared to Mary White Ovington of the NAACP that he and his colleagues had thought "it well to call the attention of the authorities to the serious objections which existed to such a play being produced in South Africa and we have reason to believe that steps were taken which would effectively prevent its production in that country, where the question of colour is a very acute one."¹³⁰ John Trumbour, by contrast, sees the long delay as a product of a political initiative: in 1923, the British government asked Will Hays, recently appointed head of Hollywood's Motion Picture Producers' Association, to block the exhibition of the film in South Africa. As usual in such cases, Hays explained that he had no legal grounds for doing so but gave assurances that the American producers would decline to distribute the film there.¹³¹

Whatever the reason or reasons for the delay, it took 16 years before *The Birth of a Nation* was at last shown in South Africa. It was screened for four days at the Town Hall in Johannesburg in July 1931 and, two months later, at the Trocadero in Kimberley, Northern Cape Province, in the heart of the Diamond Fields. Sol Plaatje, the black South African activist who had campaigned against the film in London in 1915 and Boston, Massachusetts, in 1921, published two articles vigorously

condemning what he called "the cinematographic calamity."¹³² Plaatje's opposition to the film had not diminished since 1915: what had diminished sharply was the impact of *Birth* itself. Shown as a truncated version of the 1930 synchronized sound reissue – which did not include speech – it provoked mainly derision. The film, according to the reviewer in the Johannesburg *Star*, "portrayed the death of the old cinematography which used to delight our simple hearts many years ago." A critic in the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote that it was "odd at first to see the characters move their mouths while making no sound" and identified "moments in the picture when dramatic intensity according to up-to-date ideas falls short." A writer for the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* similarly noted that "If proof was needed that the silent picture had served its turn, *The Birth of a Nation* ... would be more than sufficient."¹³³ By 1931, a film that had once stirred passions though its racist depiction of American history, had itself come to be seen by many *as* history.

There were other reasons why the film may have had less impact. In 1931, having banned the film for "immorality and race prejudice" in both 1921 and 1924, the Bureau of Censorship in Montreal, Canada, finally agreed to approve the sound version, but insisted on the following cuts:

Eliminate

Reel 8 – Negro servant tied up and shot for wrong voting

The passage of Bill providing (?) for the intermarriage of

Blacks and whites

Reel 9 – Negro chasing a white girl

Reel 10 – Negroes shooting at white men

View of body on steps of Lieut. Governor's house

Reel 11 – Ill treatment of Cameron (father) by negroes

The master (Cameron) in chains paraded [sic] before his

former slaves

Negro struggling with Elsie

Reel 12 – Girl tied to chair and gagged

Kidnapping of Elsie by negro

Most of the film's propaganda against miscegenation in particular seems to have been removed, and with it presumably much of the meaning it once had for earlier viewers.

Conclusion

There are still many things we do not know about the reception of *Birth of a Nation* across the world. Digitalization of local newspapers is making it possible for us to fill in the story of local responses to it. Yet there are still language barriers standing in the way. It is likely that the film was differently received and interpreted in many places according to the social and cultural context in which it was screened.

I do not believe there is so far any study of how the film was received in Latin America, where it was screened in many countries, including Brazil, the last country in the western world to abolish slavery in 1888. I am also unaware of any analysis so far of the film's later career in Germany although its message of white supremacy would have chimed well with Nazi racist propaganda. The film was apparently screened in Spain in October 1921, but the circumstances and reactions are currently unknown. We know that the Epoch Company sold the rights to distribute the film across the whole of Scandinavia in May 1917 and that it was first shown in Denmark

in March 1918, Sweden in September 1918, and Finland in April 1922, but so far we know nothing of the response of audiences and critics.¹³⁴ "There is no evidence," states Brian Willan, "that *The Birth of a Nation* was ever shown in the Caribbean, or indeed in the [British] African colonies."¹³⁵ Was it ever shown in India? So far we simply do not know. Nor have we any knowledge, at least in English, of how it was received in Japan in 1924.

In 1903, W. E. B Du Bois declared that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line."¹³⁶ Twelve years later, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* showed how a spectacular motion picture could recount a false version of the American civil war era that justified continuing racial segregation in the United States. But Griffith's film was shown in many places outside the United States. Responses to it were heavily conditioned by local social, cultural, and political circumstances. In Australia, it was initially presented as a film supporting the "White Australia" policy of keeping out immigrants from Pacific nations. In France, by contrast, it was twice banned: during the First World War for threatening the policy of recruiting soldiers from the colonies and, in 1923, for seemingly providing support for the insistence of white American tourists on creating a color-line in France itself. It also, in South Africa and Germany, may possibly have influenced the making of racist films with similar messages and narrative tropes. Among critics of the film, it encouraged the growth of what would today be termed the "Black Atlantic": activists such as Private Best in England and Sol Plaatje from South Africa who resisted the film in both Britain and America (and in Plaatje's case also, much later, in South Africa itself). To these may be added Kojo Touvalou Houénou, who played a major if inadvertent role in the French suppression of the film in 1923 and was later active in both the United States and West Africa. The international response to the movie over

time was itself influenced by broader changes in cinematic art: the long delay before it was first shown in South Africa in 1931 meant that it was now regarded as something of a museum-piece from the era of the "silents." At the same time, the tendency of some censors – as in Montreal in 1931 – to require removal of the most racially charged passages before the movie could be screened meant that *The Birth of a Nation* had also lost much of its old capacity to shock.

¹ Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation": A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of all Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98, 118-19.

² Agreement, Epoch Producing Corporation and Central Canada Exhibition Assoc'n, in *David W. Griffith Papers, 1897-1954*, microfilm ed. (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1982), reel 2, frames 1246-50. The agreement committed Epoch to supply an operator and a band leader as well as the film, in return for 70% of the gross receipts. *Ibid.*, 1247

³ Contract, Epoch Producing Corporation and the Basil Corporation, September 9, 1915, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., reel 2, frames 1258-65, quotation from 1259.

⁴ Statement of Net Earnings, Epoch Producing Corporation, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., August 12 to September 10, 1915, reel 2, frame 1267.

⁵ See, for example, Adrienne Shadd, Afua Cooper, and Karolyn Smardz Frost, *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop Toronto!* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2009).

⁶ According to official records, approximately 5,000 black migrants were admitted into Canada between the final decades of the nineteenth century and World War I. Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 13. They joined

the 17,500 blacks (probably an underestimate) already living in Canada according to the Census of 1901. Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 291.

⁷ Dorothy W. Williams estimates that less than 1% of immigrants allowed into Canada from 1897 to 1920 "were of African descent." Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 43.

⁸ James W. St. G. Walker, "African Canadians," in Paul R. Magocsi, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 166; Howard and Tamara Palmer, "The Black Experience in Alberta," in Howard and Tamara Palmer, eds., *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 365, 368, 370-72; Williams, *The Road to Now*, 40, 42. Sarah-Jane Mathieu notes that "[later] Canadians opposed to black migration persistently conjured up images of the black rapist, made popular in D. W. Griffith's internationally celebrated film *The Birth of a Nation*, when making the case for blocking the passage of blacks into Canada." Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 25.

⁹ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 100, also see *ibid.*, 100-108; James W. St. G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada: A study guide for teachers and students* (Ottawa: Minister of State Multiculturalism, 1980), 95-96; Walker, "African Canadians," 165.

¹⁰ "'The Birth of a Nation' As Played in Ottawa, Ont.," *The Canadian Observer*, September 18, 1915, 1.

¹¹ Cited in Eric Veillette, "How Ugliness changed Toronto's movie-going landscape," first pub. on *Heritage Toronto*, Nov. 19, 2010, www.silenttoronto.com/?p=1365, accessed March 18, 2016.

¹² On *The New Era*, see Stokes, D. W. *Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation,"* 144-45, 224-25 and Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 161-81.

¹³ "Colored People Protest: Ask Province to Stop 'Birth of a Nation,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, September 17, 1915, p. 5, col. 5. A paragraph in a fine article by Brian Willan ("'Cinematographic Calamity' or 'Soul-Stirring Appeal to Every Briton': *Birth of a Nation* in England and South Africa, 1915-1931," *Journal of South African Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3 (2013), 624) was responsible for first interesting me in the reception of *The Birth of a Nation* in Canada. I am happy to acknowledge this debt.

¹⁴ Cited in Veillette, "How Ugliness changed Toronto's movie-going landscape," www.silenttoronto.com/?p=1365, accessed March 18, 2016.

¹⁵ "Dixon's Play A Scene of Skilful Treachery ... Resolution Passed Denouncing Play," *The Canadian Observer*, September 18, 1915, 1, 4; "Skilful Treachery" (Editorial), *The Canadian Observer*, September 18, 1915, 4.

¹⁶ "Ex-Controller After Film: Mr Hubbard Denounces Play to Provincial Inspection Department," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 18, 1915, p. 5, col.1. On Hubbard, see Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 331 and Stephen L. Hubbard, *Against All Odds: The Story of William Peyton Hubbard, Black Leader and Municipal Reformer* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), *passim*.

¹⁷ "'Birth of a Nation' Not Objectionable," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 15, 1915, p. 2, col. 6; Veillette, "How Ugliness changed Toronto's movie-going landscape."

¹⁸ Paul S. Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 202.

¹⁹ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 301-302; Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 22; Howard and Tamara Palmer, “The Black Experience in Alberta,” 369-70; David Este and Wek Mamer Kuol, “African Canadians in Alberta: Connecting the Past with the Present,” in David Divine, ed., *Multiple Lenses: Voices from the Diaspora Located in Canada* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 32, 37; Howard and Tamara Palmer, “The Black Experience in Alberta,” 386-87.

²⁰ Divine, ed., *Multiple Lenses*, 6. Divine cites the *Calgary News-Telegram*, May 31, 1918.

²¹ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 168. Mathieu cites the *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 20, 1920.

²² Walker, “African Canadians,” 165.

²³ Donald Clairmont and Fred Wein, “Blacks and Whites: The Nova Scotia Race Relations Experience,” in Douglas F. Campbell, ed., *Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia* (Port Credit, Ontario: The Scribblers’ Press, 1978), 157-58, 162 (quotation from 162).

²⁴ Pierre Hébert, Yves Lever, Kenneth Landry, *Dictionnaire de la censure au Québec: littérature et cinéma* (Québec: Éditions Fides, 2006), 83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 84 [my translation].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 84-85. As a footnote to this story, *The Birth of a Nation* was reviewed again by the Montréal Office of Censorship, made up of new members and headed by Raoul de Roussy de Sales, on November 15, 1921, and refused a visa for exhibition on the grounds of “immorality” and “race prejudice.” On June 26, 1924, a “reconstructed” print was also rejected for the same reasons. But, two days later, after an appeal, the visa was issued subject to further cuts: the removal in reel 10 of a shot of a “Negro

shooting at a white man” and in reel 12 of “Elsie tied in chains + gagged/Lynch kidnapping Elsie.” *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷ “On the Screen and Off,” *Graphic of Australia* [Melbourne, Victoria], June 16, 1916, 10; “A Phenomenal Undertaking—The Making of ‘Birth of a Nation,’” *Sunday Times* [Sydney, New South Wales], April 23, 1916, 4.

²⁸ http://www.allcinema.net/prog/show_c.php?num_c=7799; <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0004972/releaseinfo>, both accessed April 7, 2016. A DVD reissue of the Kokumin version has on its cover a shot of the Little Colonel (Henry Walthall) on horseback, leading Confederate soldiers off to war in 1861, instead of the much more common image used in advertising the film of a white-sheeted Clansman on a rearing horse waving a burning cross.

²⁹ James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 11.

³⁰ *The Bioscope*, September 9, 1915, 1114-5.

³¹ Michael Hammond, “‘A Soul-Stirring Appeal to Every Briton’: The Reception of *The Birth of a Nation* in Britain (1915-1916),” *Film History*, vol. 11, no. 3, *Early Cinema* (1999), 353, 355, 357-62, 364-66.

³² *The Crisis*, vol. 11, no. 4 (February 1916), 174-76.

³³ Willan, “‘Cinematographic Calamity,’” 628.

³⁴ Travers Buxton to G. Bedford [of BBFC], September 143, 1915, quoted in Willan, “‘Cinematographic Calamity,’” 629.

³⁵ Geo. S. Best to W. E. B. Du Bois, September 4, 1915, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers (NAACPP), Library of Congress.

³⁶ May Nerney to Travers Buxton, October 2, 1915, NAACPP. A week later, in a letter to novelist and former colonial administrator Sir Harry Johnston, Nerney

explained that the two pamphlets were “Fighting a Vicious Film,” produced during the Boston campaign in spring 1915, and a so-called “English Leaflet” including an article by Professor [Albert Bushnell] Hart of Harvard on the inadequacies of the film’s claim to represent “history.” May Nerney to Sir Harry Johnston, October 9, 1915, NAACPP.

³⁷ Willan, ““Cinematographic Calamity,”” 629.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 629-31. Brian Willan points out that there may have been more direct demonstrations against the film than this, citing the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* who remembered in 1923 – at the time of the film’s suppression in France – “that public protests were made against it during the exhibition in London because of the Ku Klux Klan scenes.” *Ibid.*, 631.

³⁹ S. T. Plaatje, “An Inflammatory Bioscope Film,” *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 18, 1931, quoted in Willan, ““Cinematographic Calamity,”” 633.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 633-34.

⁴¹ “Echos,” *Ciné-Journal*, 370, September 16, 1916, 7.

⁴² Jean Bancal, *La censure cinématographique* (Paris: Jose Conti, 1934), 94-97, 103-104. Also see Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), 332-37 and Paul Légise, *Histoire de la politique du cinéma Français, vol.1, Le cinéma et la IIIe République* (Paris: L’Herminier, 1969), 32-33.

⁴³ Melvyn Stokes, “Race, Politics, and Censorship: D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* in France, 1916-1923,” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Fall 2010), 21-22 (quotation from 22).

⁴⁴ Melvyn Stokes, “Europeans Interpret the American South of the Civil War Era: How British and French Critics Received *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone With the Wind* (1939),” in Cornelis A. van Minnen and Manfred Berg, eds., *The U.S. South*

and Europe: Transatlantic Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 185.

⁴⁵ Georges Sadoul, *Histoire d'un art: Le cinéma des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949), 119.

⁴⁶ Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 235-36. On the falling exchange rate of the franc to the dollar, see "Franc falls to 17.29 a Dollar," *Chicago Tribune* [European ed.], August 2, 1923, 1; "Franc Falling Still in Paris," *New York Tribune* [European ed.], August 14, 1923, 1.

⁴⁷ Levenstein, *Seductive Journey*, 246, 258, 262-63.

⁴⁸ *Chicago Defender*, August 23, 1923, cited in Levenstein, *Seductive Journey*, 264.

⁴⁹ Emile Derlin Zinsou and Luc Zouménou, *Kojo Tovalou Houénou, précurseur, 1897-1936: pannégrisme et modernité* (Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 2004), 132.

⁵⁰ Georges Boussenot, "Appel aux Américains qui visitent la France," *Le Journal*, July 24, 1923, 4.

⁵¹ "Respect aux hommes de couleur," *Le Journal*, August 1, 1923, 1; "Des étrangers qui exagèrent," *Le Matin*, August 1, 1923, 1; "Les étrangers en France," *Le Temps*, August 2, 1923, 1; "No 'Color Line' in France Tourists Told," *Chicago Tribune* [European ed.], August 2, 1923, 3.

⁵² "A quoi sert le dernier avertissement sur le respect du aux Français de couleur," *Le Journal*, August 7, 1923, 2; "Un noir vaut un blanc," *Le Petit Parisien*, August 8, 1923, 4; "Test Case to be Brought in Paris After Montmartre 'Color-Line' Row," *New York Herald* [European ed.], August 8, 1923, 1; Zinsou and Zouménou, *Kojo Tovalou Houénou*, 132.

⁵³ Zinsou and Zouménou, *Kojo Tovalou Houénou*, especially chaps. 8, 9, and 10; Melvyn Stokes, “Kojo Touvalou Houénou: An Assessment,” in *Transatlantica*, “Hommage to Michel Fabre,” 2009 (1), <https://transatlantica.revues.org/4271>, accessed March 29, 2016.

⁵⁴ Zinsou and Zouménou, *Kojo Tovalou Houénou*, 39-40, 44, 57, 59, 65-66, 132; Stokes, “Race, Politics, and Censorship,” 29, 31.

⁵⁵ “Le prince Tovalou [sic] porte plainte contre le tenancier trop brutal,” *Le Journal*, August 8, 1923, 2; “A quoi sert le dernier avertissement sur le respect du aux Français de couleur,” *Le Journal*, August 7, 1923, 2; “Test Case to be Brought in Paris After Montmartre ‘Color-Line’ Row,” *New York Herald* [European ed.], August 8, 1923, 1.

⁵⁶ “Blancs et noirs: M. Barthélemy interpelle,” *L’Ère Nouvelle*, August 11, 1923, 2; “Plans Interpellation on Drawing Color Line,” *Chicago Tribune* [European ed.], August 10, 1923, 3; “Les français de couleur,” *Le Temps*, August 12, 1923, 2; “Blancs et noirs,” *L’Ère Nouvelle*, August 12, 1923, 1; “Les incidents entre Américains et gens de couleur,” *Le Matin*, August 12, 1923, 2.

⁵⁷ “Le français de couleur—un lettre de M. Poincaré,” *Le Petit Parisien*, August 18, 1923, 2; “Les français de couleur,” *La Lanterne*, August 19, 1923, 2.

⁵⁸ Auguste Nardy, “Les incoherences d’Anastasie,” *Le Courrier Cinématographique*, August 25, 1923, 7; “Une interdiction,” *Ciné-Journal/Le Journal du Film*, 730 (New Series 28), August 24, 1923, 8; “Suit Threatened in Banned Movie,” *New York Herald* [European ed.], August 22, 1923, 1. The text of Boussenot’s letter to Maunoury was published in Jean Clair, “La politique et le cinéma—le film interdit,” *L’Ère Nouvelle*, August 22, 1923, 2.

⁵⁹ “Color-Line Discussion Has Sequel in Ban on ‘The Birth of a Nation,’” *New York Herald* [European ed.], August 20, 1923, 1; “La préfecture de police interdit un film,”

Le Petit Parisien, August 20, 1923, 3; “La représentation d’un film hostile aux noirs est interdit à Paris,” *Le Journal*, August 20, 1923, 2; “Un film américain interdit,” *Le Matin*, August 20, 1923, 1.

⁶⁰ The ban was lifted in mid-September and the film opened in Paris again in early October. Jean-Louis Croze, “Interdiction levée,” *Comœdia*, September 17, 1923, 2; “Interdiction levée,” *Le Cinéopse*, 5th year, 50, October, 1923, 784.

⁶¹ Stokes, “Race, Politics, and Censorship,” 34-38.

⁶² Balance Sheet, Epoch Producing Corporation, May 31, 1915, frames 1212-13; Balance Sheet, Epoch, July 31, 1915, frame 1243; Statement of Net Earnings, Epoch, August 12 to September 10, 1915, frame 1267; Epoch Producing Corporation, Report and Accounts, February 29, 1916, frame 1520, all *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed.

⁶³ Epoch Producing Corporation, Royalties Paid and Accrued, For the Period Ended February 29, 1916, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., frame 1541.

⁶⁴ Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907-1934* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1985), 79; João Villaverde, “O Nascimento de uma Nação’ marca o início do domínio de Hollywood sobre o cinema mundial,” “Cultural Cinema,” *Estadão* [Rio de Janeiro], March 29, 2015.

⁶⁵ <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Appendix%20C%20-%20Urban%20growth.pdf>, accessed April 11, 2016. Melbourne, the second city in terms of size of population (ibid.), was also second to screen *The Birth of a Nation*.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Ad, *The Sun* [Sydney, New South Wales], April 16, 1916, 7. On Mitchell and McCarthy, see Stokes, D. W. Griffith’s “The Birth of a Nation,” 115-16.

⁶⁷ Ad, *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 21, 1916, 2.

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- ⁶⁸ *Referee* [Sydney], April 12, 1916, 15; “On the Screen and Off,” *Graphic of Australia* [Melbourne, Victoria], April 20, 1916, 11.
- ⁶⁹ “Royalty Sees Picture,” *The Sun* [Sydney], April 17, 1916, 3.
- ⁷⁰ “*The Birth of a Nation*,” *The World’s News* [Sydney], April 15, 1916, 5.
- ⁷¹ Ad, *The Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 6.
- ⁷² Marjorie Barnard, *A History of Australia* (Sydney and London: Angus and Robertson, 1962), 446-50; Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 20-118.
- ⁷³ Barnard, *A History of Australia*, 466-67; Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy*, 119-21.
- ⁷⁴ Barnard, *A History of Australia*, 468-69; Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy*, 182-85.
- ⁷⁵ “A Phenomenal Undertaking—The Making of ‘The Birth of a Nation,’” *The Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 4.
- ⁷⁶ “*The Birth of a Nation*,” *Ashburton Guardian*, December 14, 1916, 2, National Library of New Zealand.
- ⁷⁷ “The Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes,” *The Sun* [Sydney], April 30, 1916, 19.
- ⁷⁸ “Brilliant Premiere Accorded Big Film,” *The Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 10.
- ⁷⁹ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129544179>, accessed April 11, 2016.
- ⁸⁰ “Birth of a Nation—Battle Film at Royal,” *The Sun* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 2. On trench fighting, also see “The Playgoer,” *Punch* [Melbourne], June 8, 1916, 41.
- ⁸¹ “The Birth of a Nation,” *The Ballarat Star* [Ballarat, Victoria], June 12, 1916, 2.

⁸² “Brilliant Premiere Accorded Big Film,” *Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 10; cf. “£100,000 Production,” *Punch* [Melbourne], May 18, 1916, 11.

⁸³ “The Birth of a Nation,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 11, 1916, 2.

⁸⁴ “Scotland for ever,” *Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 30, 1916, 16; cf. “Historic and Informative,” *The World’s News* [Sydney], May 6, 1916, 5.

⁸⁵ Epoch Production Company, Financial Statement up to February 29, 1916, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., reel 2, frame 1541. All numbers are rounded up or down to the closest dollar.

⁸⁶ Epoch Production Company, Treasurer's Financial Statement for September, 1916, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., reel 2, frame 1682.

⁸⁷ Ad, *The Sun* [Sydney], May 6, 1916, 2. The film would continue to be screened at these prices in Sydney until June 9, 1916. See Ad, *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 5, 1916, 2.

⁸⁸ Ad, *The Argus* [Melbourne], May 10, 1916, 16.

⁸⁹ See for example Ad, *The Argus* [Melbourne], May 12, 1916, 14; Ad, *The Age* [Melbourne], May 10, 1916, 16.

⁹⁰ “The Theatre Royal was not large enough to accommodate the crowds which flocked to it on Saturday.” “Gossip of the Theatres and Players,” *Referee* [Sydney], May 24, 1916, 15; cf. “Williamson News,” *Sunday Times* [Sydney], May 21, 1916, 6.

⁹¹ Ad, “The Curse of a Nation,” *The Age* [Melbourne], May 13, 1916, 16; *The Argus*, [Melbourne], May 15, 1916, 14.

⁹² “The Birth of a Nation—Rival Picture Productions—Matter Before Supreme Court,” *The Age* [Melbourne], May 20, 1916, 14; “What’s In a Name?—Rival Picture Plays,” *The Argus* [Melbourne], May 20, 1916, 21; “The Birth of a Nation—Rival Picture Productions—Injunction Refused,” *The Age* [Melbourne], May 24, 1916, 12.

⁹³ Ad, *Table Talk* [Melbourne], May 25, 1916, 26.

⁹⁴ “The Playgoer,” *Punch* (Melbourne), May 25, 1916, 40; Ad, *The Age* [Melbourne], May 27, 1916, 16; “Music and Drama,” *The Argus* [Melbourne], June 12, 1916, 5.

⁹⁵ Ad, *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* [Newcastle, New South Wales], June 12, 1916, 8; Ad, Garden Picture Palace, *Maitland Daily Mercury* [Maitland, New South Wales], June 12, 1916, 8; “The Birth of a Nation,” *The Ballarat Star* [Ballarat, Victoria], June 12, 1916, 2; *Geelong Advertiser* [Geelong, Victoria], June 15, 1916, 1;

⁹⁶ Ad, *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 5, 1916, 2.

⁹⁷ Statement of Net Earnings, Epoch Producing Corporation, October 1916, November 1916, December 1916, April 1917, *D. W. Griffith Papers*, microfilm ed., reel 2, frames 1690, 1731, 1768, 1988.

⁹⁸ “The Birth of a Nation,” *Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 16, 1916, 19.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Ad, *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 1916, 2.

¹⁰⁰ “The Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes,” *The Sun* [Sydney], April 30, 1916, 19.

¹⁰¹ “Miscellaneous,” *Sunday Times* [Sydney], May 21, 1916, 17; “The Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes,” *The Sun* [Sydney], April 30, 1916, 19. “Larrikin push” was Australian slang for “hooligan gang.”

¹⁰² “Brooksie’s Silent Film Collection,” May 30, 2014,

<http://brooksiescollection.tumblr.com/post/87247634902/a-1916-film-diary-birth-of-a-nation>, accessed April 12, 2016; “In the Clutches of the Klan,” *The Moving Picture World*, vol. 18, p. 50 (1913).

¹⁰³ See <http://libertus.net/censor/hist1901on.htm>, accessed April 12, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, "A Phenomenal Undertaking," *Sunday Times* [Sydney], April 23, 1916, 4.

¹⁰⁵ See <http://brooksiescollection.tumblr.com/post/87247634902/a-1916-film-diary-birth-of-a-nation>, accessed April 12, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Leon F. Litwack, "The Birth of a Nation," in Marc C. Carnes, Ted Mico, John Miller-Monzon, and David Rubel, eds., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (London: Cassell, 1996), 136.

¹⁰⁷ Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 31-35, quotation from 35.

¹⁰⁸ E. D. Morel, "The Employment of Black Troops in Europe," *The Nation* [London], March 27, 1920, 893.

¹⁰⁹ E. D. Morel, "Black Scourge in Europe: Sexual Horror Let Loose by France on the Rhine," *Daily Herald* [London], April 10, 1920.

¹¹⁰ Dick van Galen Last with Ralf Futselaar, *Black Shame: African Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1922*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 144-52, 156-59, 179-84, 188-200; Iris Wigger, "'Against the laws of civilization': Race, Gender and Nation in the International Racist Campaign Against the 'Black Shame,'" *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46, *Race and Ethnicity: in a Global Context* (2002), 114-15.

¹¹¹ Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy after the First World War: Women, Gender, and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 59.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ "In France, the film was forbidden by the censorship. ... It remained forbidden in the French-occupied zones of Germany, where the nationalists waged a lively campaign against the presence of Senegalese troops in the Rhine." Georges Sadoul, *Histoire Générale du Cinéma, Tome III: Le Cinéma devient un art (1909-1920), Deuxième volume: La Première Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Denoël, 1952), 17.

¹¹⁴ Keith L. Nelson, "The 'Black Horror on the Rhine': Race as a Factor in Post-World War 1 Diplomacy," *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 42, no. 4 (December, 1970), 617, 620; Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy*, 60-61.

¹¹⁵ The Rhenish Women's League had been founded in May 1920 inside the German Ministry of the Interior. Later that year, it distributed a pamphlet in English called *Colored Frenchmen on the Rhine: An Appeal of White Women to American Womanhood*. Julia Roos, "Nationalism, Racism and Propaganda in Early Weimar Germany: Contradictions in the Campaign Against the 'Black Horror on the Rhine,'" *German History*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2012), 51-54; Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Wigger, "'Against the laws of civilization,'" 116-17, 122-23; Dick van Galen Last, "Black Shame," *History Today* (October 2006), 19.

¹¹⁷ Jean-Yves Le Naour, *La honte noire: l'Allemagne et les troupes coloniales françaises, 1914-1945* (Paris: Hachette, 2004), 135. In August 1921, its exhibition permit was revoked by the censorship bureau on the orders of the German government, following strong French diplomatic pressure. *Ibid.*, 136-37. Also on the film, see Julia Roos, "'Huns' and Other 'Barbarians': A Movie Ban and the Dilemmas of 1920s German Propaganda against French Colonial Troops," *Historical Reflections*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 69-77.

¹¹⁸ Le Naour, *La honte noire*, 135.

¹¹⁹ Jared Poley, *Decolonization in Germany: Western Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 188-205; Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy*, 57-58; Peter Campbell, “‘Black Horror on the Rhine’: Idealism, Pacifism, and Racism in Feminism and the Left in the Aftermath of the First World War,” *Histoire sociale/Social history*, vol. 47, no. 94 (June 2014), 474; Nelson, “The ‘Black Horror on the Rhine,’” 615; Wigger, “‘Against the laws of civilization,’” 120.

¹²⁰ Campbell, “‘Black Horror on the Rhine,’” 474; Poley, *Decolonization in Germany*, 188.

¹²¹ *Stage and Cinema* [South Africa], September 1, 1917, quoted in Peter Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the jungles of cinema’s South Africa* (Randburg, SA: Ravan Press, 1996), 129.

¹²² Jane M. Gaines, “Birthing Nations,” in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie, eds., *Cinema and Nation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 298-316; Edwin Hees, “The Birth of a Nation: Contextualizing *De Voortrekkers* (1916),” in Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela, eds., *To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 49-69; Jacqueline Maingard, *South African National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 16-34; Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 128-35.

¹²³ Hees, “The Birth of a Nation,” 55-56.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57, 58, 62, 65; Maingard, *South African National Cinema*, 20; Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 133.

¹²⁵ Hees, “The Birth of a Nation,” 59; Maingard, *South African National Cinema*, 20; Gaines, “Birthing Nations,” 312. Gaines also points out that each film is associated “with a defeated group [Boers, Southern secessionists] whose history is glorified.” Gaines, “Birthing Nations,” 301.

¹²⁶ Schlesinger, a businessman born in eastern Europe in 1871, had emigrated to the United States in 1884. A decade later he left for South Africa where, according to James T. Campbell, he would become the principal founder of South African cinema. James T. Campbell, ‘The Americanization of South Africa,’ in Campbell and Matthew Pratt, eds., *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 140-42.

¹²⁷ Maingard, *South African National Cinema*, 24. On Shaw, also see <http://thebioscope.net/2008/11/24/harold-shaw-and-de-voortrekkers/>, accessed April 4, 2016.

¹²⁸ Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 128.

¹²⁹ Brian Willan, "Cinematographic Calamity," 636.

¹³⁰ Travers Buxton to Mary White Ovington, February 18, 1916, NAACPP.

¹³¹ John Trumbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World: U.S. and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144.

¹³² Willan, "Cinematographic Calamity," 637-38.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 638.

¹³⁴ Epoch Production Company, Financial Statement up to May 31, 1917, D. W. Griffith Papers, Microfilm ed., reel 3, frame 0070. For release dates, see www.imdb.com.

¹³⁵ Willan, "Cinematographic Calamity," 635.

¹³⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903), 1.