

GENERAL ARTICLES

“[F]or the Rights of Dark People in Every Part of the World”: Pearl Sherrod, Black Internationalist Feminism, and Afro-Asian Politics during the 1930s

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This article explores the political ideas and activism of Pearl Sherrod, an African American woman who became a leader of The Development of Our Own, a Detroit-based antiracist political movement that sought to unite African Americans with people of color in Asia during the Great Depression. This article demonstrates how Sherrod articulated “black internationalist feminism” by maintaining a commitment to building transnational and transracial political alliances while advancing a feminist agenda. By excavating Sherrod’s life, this article highlights the key role a nonstate female actor played in shaping black internationalist movements during a global economic crisis and within a climate of government repression and censorship.

Keywords: black internationalism, black radicalism, Afro-Asian solidarity

In Vancouver, British Columbia, summer of 1937, an African American woman named Pearl Sherrod (Figure 1) stood before a crowd of mostly white and Asian activists at the conference of the Pan-Pacific Women’s Association (PPWA), an international women’s organization that promoted “cross-cultural exchange and interracial harmony.”¹ Sherrod was a leader of The Development of Our Own (TDOO), a Detroit-based antiracist political movement that sought to unite African Americans with people of color in Asia during the Great Depression. A gifted orator and community activist, Sherrod arrived at the PPWA conference in 1937 in hopes of bringing



Figure 1 Pearl Sherrod (1934). *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 9, 1934.

international attention to the plight of people of African descent in the United States and other parts of the African diaspora. She was not originally scheduled to speak at the Pan-Pacific conference, but seized the opportunity to openly condemn the spread and development of global white supremacy. Speaking with a sense of deep conviction, the forty-one-year-old activist demanded the recognition of the rights of people of color across the globe. “[I] appeal to the white race all over this world to give the dark races their constitutional rights,” Sherrod passionately argued. Reminding her listeners that “all men were born equal,” Sherrod insisted that it was “unreasonable that one should have any rights to predominate over the other.” Reflecting the rhetoric of self-determination—which gained increasing currency in mainstream political discourse after World War I—Sherrod called on conference attendees to join forces with TDOO to secure the “rights of dark people in every part of the world.”²

Sherrod’s speech and sheer presence at the Pan-Pacific conference in Vancouver exemplify some of the critical and creative ways women articulated black internationalism during the 20th century. Black internationalism, an insurgent political culture, emerged in response to slavery, colonialism, and white imperialism. It describes the visions of freedom and freedom movements among people of African descent worldwide and captures their efforts to forge transnational collaborations and solidarities with other people of color.³ This article departs from the predominantly male-centric and top-down focus found in much of the scholarship on the Black International. Instead, this article highlights the key role a “nonstate [female] actor” played in shaping black internationalist movements and discourses during a global economic crisis and within a climate of government repression and censorship.⁴ In addition, while much of the literature on black internationalism privileges the political activities of the black middle-class and elite, this article foregrounds the ideas and praxis of a working-class woman activist from Detroit who skillfully employed a myriad of strategies and tactics to promote black internationalist politics

and Afro-Asian solidarity. Taken together, this approach sheds new light on the crucial, yet previously unacknowledged, role working-class women played in bridging black radicalism, feminism, and internationalism during the 1930s.⁵

Historians have typically focused on “Major” Satokata Takahashi, Sherrod’s Japanese husband who was influential in promoting pro-Japanese sentiments in black communities during the 1930s.⁶ This article situates Sherrod as a political leader and theorist in her own right and shows how she asserted her independence and agency. It underscores how Sherrod skillfully used her writings, influence, and leadership in TDOO to champion universal emancipation, challenge male supremacy, and expand opportunities for women. In so doing, this article joins the recent works of Carole Boyce Davies, Erik S. McDuffie, Dayo F. Gore, and others, that move radical women—women who challenged the status quo on the basis of race (or ethnicity), gender, and/or class and advocated revolutionary social changes—from the margins to the center of historical narratives on global freedom struggles of the 20th century.⁷ At the same time, it expands the scholarship on black women’s radicalism by shedding new light on how women activists fostered “new forms of (global) political solidarity and collective action” during the Great Depression—outside of mainstream radical and international organizations such as the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) and Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).⁸

This article weaves together archival material, census records, organizational records, newspaper articles, and records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to demonstrate how Pearl Sherrod articulated what literary scholar Cheryl Higashida refers to as “black internationalist feminism” in her study on black women writers on the Communist Left.⁹ According to Higashida, “black internationalist feminism” challenged “heteronormative and masculinist articulations of nationalism while maintaining the importance . . . of national liberation movements for achieving Black women’s social, political, and economic rights.”¹⁰ As black internationalist feminists, women in the Communist Party—Louise Thompson Patterson, Esther Cooper Jackson, Maude White Katz, and Claudia Jones, among them—linked their commitment to universal black liberation, decolonization, and economic justice with a desire to challenge patriarchy and expand women’s rights and opportunities. In this article, I employ the term similarly—not as a Marxist analysis of racism or explicit challenge to heterosexism but as a way to describe Sherrod’s dual commitment to building transnational and transracial political alliances while advancing a feminist agenda.¹¹

Visions of Afro-Asian Solidarity

The Russo–Japanese War (1904–5) sparked a rise in pro-Japanese sentiments among black men and women across the United States.¹² The war began in February 1904 over tensions between Russia and Japan concerning territorial claims in Manchuria and Korea, and officially ended with the Treaty of Portsmouth on September 5, 1905.¹³ For many black leaders, including influential civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois and the charismatic black nationalist Marcus Garvey, Japan’s successful

defeat of the Russian military was no small accomplishment. It served as a powerful “example of people who demonstrated the fallacy of white assertions that people of color were innately incompetent or inferior.”¹⁴ In the aftermath of World War I, many African Americans viewed Japan as a model of racial progress. The 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, though a source of contention, reinforced these pro-Japanese sentiments.¹⁵ Many black radical activists during this period viewed Japan as a model and potential military ally as they fought against global white supremacy.¹⁶ According to historian Gerald Horne, “black leaders . . . looked to Japan as a living and breathing refutation of the very basis of white supremacy, that is, that one had to be of a ‘pure European descent’ in order to construct an advanced society.”¹⁷

Across the U.S. Midwest, two Asian activists were particularly keen on spreading these pro-Japanese sentiments in black communities. During the early 1930s, Ashima Takis, whose real name was Policarpio Manansala, began promoting Afro-Asian political solidarity in various cities including Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and St. Louis.¹⁸ Born in the Philippines in 1900, Takis adopted a Japanese persona in an effort to secure approval among Japanese sympathizers in African American communities.¹⁹ During this period, he joined forces with a group of black and Asian activists in St. Louis, Missouri to establish the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World (PMEW), a pro-Japanese organization that supported the unification of people of color globally.²⁰ Meanwhile, in Detroit, Japanese radical Satokata Takahashi was collaborating with local black activists who were determined to combat racial segregation and discrimination at home and abroad.²¹ Born Naka Nakane in Japan in 1875, Takahashi relocated to Victoria, British Columbia sometime around 1900 until he and his family relocated to Tacoma, Washington in 1921.²² Claiming to be affiliated with the Japanese embassy, Takahashi advocated Afro-Asian solidarity during the early 1930s and began to draw a significant following of black radical supporters across the urban North.

While Takis’ movement began to wane, Takahashi’s influence rapidly expanded when he became involved in the Detroit-based organization, The Development of Our Own. TDOO was established by George Grimes, a local black worker, and emerged as a significant political site for working-class black activists in Detroit to ally with other activists of color—“yellow, brown, and black against all white people.”²³ Within a year of its founding, TDOO underwent an organizational shift as “Major” Takahashi became its new leader. Under Takahashi’s leadership the organization flourished, drawing an estimated following of ten thousand members—mostly Indians, Filipinos, and people of African descent.²⁴ Among these individuals were many members of the Nation of Islam (NOI) who embraced the political view that “the African-American economic and political struggle against Western imperialism [was connected] with that of the dark races in Asia.”²⁵

In addition to Takahashi’s charismatic leadership, the sociohistorical developments of the period also played a significant role in fueling TDOO’s rapid growth in Detroit. The racist “yellow peril” ideology of the late 19th century, which stemmed from white fears and anxieties over Asian immigration, persisted well into the 20th

century and extended beyond national borders.²⁶ The negative images and stereotypical depictions of Asian cultures that dominated Western mass media mirrored the pervasive global racist attitudes towards African Americans, and other people of color. These developments coincided with the Great Depression, which exacerbated already poor socioeconomic conditions in black communities. With an industrial economy, the city of Detroit was completely crippled by the Depression, which left thousands hungry, homeless, and unemployed. President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced a string of New Deal Programs aimed at improving economic conditions for all but African Americans did not experience the full benefits of these programs on account of racial discrimination and exclusion.²⁷

In Detroit, as in other parts of the country, people of African descent developed a range of survival tactics and strategies in response to these challenges.²⁸ The Great Depression, as historian Victoria Wolcott has argued, gave rise to the proliferation of black nationalist groups in Detroit that emphasized self-defense, economic self-sufficiency, and political self-determination.²⁹ In 1930, for example, a group of black women in the city established the Detroit Housewives' League in an effort to address economic concerns in black communities. Under the leadership of activist Fannie B. Peck, whose husband served as pastor of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, members of the League worked tirelessly to "stabilize the economic status of the Negro through direct spending."³⁰ By the mid-1930s, the League boasted ten thousand members residing in various Northern cities.

TDOO was distinct from the Detroit Housewives League and organizations like it because of its more internationalist focus. While members of the Detroit Housewives' League centered their activism on building black economic power in the United States, radical activists in TDOO launched an insurgent political movement aimed at combating white supremacy across the globe. Through the pages of the *Detroit Tribune Independent*, the city's dominant black newspaper during the interwar era, "Major" Takahashi denounced racism and called on black men and women to join forces with Japan: "I come here to promote international unity between the dark people of Japan and the dark people of America to lead them to a better and fuller life. ... What Japan has done in the past 70 years, the Negroes, too, can do by accepting Japan's five guiding principles."³¹ Takahashi, and those who embraced his teachings, maintained an internationalist vision that linked national concerns to global ones. Importantly, they envisioned Afro-Asian solidarity as a viable strategy for combating racial oppression in both domestic and international contexts. During the early 1930s, Takahashi and other leaders in the organization took to the streets of Detroit and other cities in the U.S. Midwest to promote their message and recruit new members.

Pearl Sherrod and the Development of Our Own

Pearl Sherrod crossed paths with Satokata Takahashi during one of his speaking tours, and would later become his second wife.³² Born Pearl T. Barnett in the state of Alabama in 1896, Sherrod spent much of her early years in West Virginia.³³

At age 15, she married James Sherrod, a Georgia native, with whom she bore three children—Vernell Sarah Sherrod (born in 1910), Jimmilee (“Jennie”) Sherrod (born in 1914), and Emerald Sherrod (born in 1913).³⁴ While details of her marriage to James are unclear, census records reveal that Sherrod resided in the city of Clarksburg during the 1920s where she worked as a laundress. Sometime between 1927 and 1929 she relocated to Detroit, Michigan with her two youngest children. Her relocation coincided with the Great Migration, a period in which thousands of black Americans abandoned the New South in hopes of finding better opportunities in the North and West.³⁵ When Sherrod arrived in Detroit, she continued to work in domestic service—a reality for the vast majority of black women workers during this period.³⁶ As a working laundress in Detroit, Sherrod likely exerted some amount of control over her day-to-day activities and was part of a tight-knit community of black women engaged in similar work.³⁷ By the late 1920s, Sherrod was separated from her husband and took on the full responsibility of raising the two youngest children—Emerson, age 16 and Jimmilee, age 15. The oldest daughter, Vernell Sarah, resided in Ohio with her husband, Joe Barron, and two young children.³⁸

Sherrod’s experiences in Detroit were critical in shaping her interest in black internationalist feminism. Sometime in 1930, she became involved in the newly formed Nation of Islam (NOI).³⁹ During the summer of that year, street peddler Wallace D. Fard began visiting the homes of black Detroitans, selling clothing while spreading his religious teachings.⁴⁰ Promoting a syncretic version of Islam, Fard instructed black residents to abandon Christianity for a more “authentic” religious practice. Fard also encouraged black residents to embrace an alternative religious racial identity, rejecting classifications such as “blacks” and “Negroes” and teaching his followers that they were “Asiatics.”⁴¹ Perhaps he showed up at Sherrod’s apartment in “Paradise Valley”—Detroit’s predominantly black neighborhood during the interwar years—or Sherrod might have heard about his teachings from friends and neighbors. Sherrod’s decision to join the NOI was influenced by a range of factors including her desire to improve her social condition and those of her children. During a period in which African Americans endured rampant acts of violence, racial discrimination and disenfranchisement, many found the NOI’s teachings appealing.

In addition, the organization provided a unique space for women. Certainly, the NOI endorsed black patriarchy and strict gender hierarchies of leadership like other black organizations, such as Marcus Garvey’s UNIA.⁴² For instance, Fard expected women in the organization to adhere to 19th-century Victorian ideals such as submissive wifhood and motherhood, while men were upheld as leaders and vigilant protectors.⁴³ However, the early NOI provided opportunities for women to engage in activities outside of the confines of home and family. According to historian Ula Y. Taylor, “From the beginning, Fard discerned the importance of capturing the attention of women; thus, from the onset he included them in his vision of the Nation.”⁴⁴ Under Fard’s leadership, some women maintained positions as “Mission Sisters,” which came with the responsibility of spreading NOI teachings in black communities and thus assisting with the recruitment of new followers.⁴⁵ According

to scholars Dawn-Marie Gibson and Jamillah Ashira Karim, black women found the NOI's focus on racial uplift appealing and generally "embraced the Nation's traditional gender roles given [their] generally lower socioeconomic status and American notions of respectability and economic advancement."⁴⁶

Fard mysteriously disappeared in 1934. Elijah Muhammad, one of Fard's most loyal followers, assumed leadership of the NOI and instituted a series of changes in relation to women's roles and responsibilities. Under Muhammad's leadership, women ceased to work as "Mission Sisters" and the organization took on a more militant and even more patriarchal tone. Muhammad emphasized "strict standards of discipline, obedience of authority, and patriarchy."⁴⁷ Sherrod's departure from the NOI coincided with this shift in leadership. While surviving records offer no indication as to why Sherrod left the NOI, the organization was in turmoil and Fard's unexpected departure may have influenced her decision to leave. Importantly, Sherrod may have envisioned TDOO as a viable alternative to the NOI—one that would open up new political opportunities and also allow her to remain part of the growing community of radical activists in Detroit.

The NOI and TDOO were not drastically different ideologically, as Takahashi and Muhammad had much in common. Muhammad, like Fard before him, promoted the belief that black people were "lost-found members of the Asiatic nation" and within this vision, he endorsed pro-Japanese sentiments.⁴⁸ These ideas were first popularized by Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA)—the precursor to the Nation of Islam.⁴⁹ Ali argued that African Americans were part of the "original Asiatic nations," linking people of African descent with other ethnic groups including "the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Indians, the people of South America and Central America [and] the Turks."⁵⁰ With this alternative racial identity, Ali and those who later embraced his syncretic religious views, maintained pro-Japanese sentiments. During the early 1930s, W.D. Fard developed an admiration for Takahashi and publicly supported his efforts in TDOO. Not surprisingly, Takahashi targeted NOI members during the process of recruiting.⁵¹

For Pearl Sherrod, joining TDOO significantly increased her visibility in the community and helped to propel her political career in a myriad of ways. The actual number of women in TDOO is unknown but surviving records reveal that the organization provided some opportunities for women to maintain formal leadership positions. In addition to serving as secretaries, some women were organizers and recruiters, helping to popularize pro-Japanese sentiments in black communities.⁵² One article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* described the efforts of an unidentified woman activist in TDOO, who "made numerous trips through the southland [and eastern seaboard] to organize ... Negroes in the cause of Japan."⁵³ According to Leon Taylor, a journalist for the Associated Negro Press, this "brilliant" and "suave" woman organized "under the cloak of many occupations" and enjoyed the company of "outstanding civic figures."⁵⁴ Taylor's vivid descriptions, albeit brief, shed light on the type of activities in which some TDOO women were engaged during the 1930s. Writing in 1934, Takahashi noted, "Men and women should respect each other, and

strive to develop harmony with each other.” While he acknowledged that some of the men in TDOO had reservations about women holding leadership positions, Takahashi reminded his followers that women activists were critical to TDOO’s success. “Permit me to say to you men,” he wrote, “that our internal supervisor is a woman . . . she is now in Chicago doing wonderful work among the white people, though different from my own.”⁵⁵ Takahashi’s comments offer a glimpse into the gender politics within TDOO and reveal the Japanese activist’s progressive views on gender roles within black internationalist movements. While surviving records on the organization offer few details on the subject, Takahashi’s statements certainly suggest that the TDOO provided a space, albeit limited, for women activists like Sherrod to hone their leadership and organizing skills.

When Sherrod married “Major” Takahashi in February 1934 (Figure 2), she secured her position as a leader in the movement. Personal affections aside, the marriage between the two activists was certainly one of convenience—politically and otherwise. Primarily, the union helped to increase TDOO’s visibility across the U.S. Midwest. During the Jim Crow era interracial unions were considered taboo, so the marriage between an African American woman and a Japanese man certainly “raised eyebrows.” Within the U.S. legal system, as historian Peggy Pascoe has argued, judges “[stigmatized] interracial relationships as illicit sex rather than marriage . . . [and] separated interracial intimacy from the notions of contract, choice, and civil rights otherwise associated with marriage and citizenship.”⁵⁶ As a result, the



Figure 2 “Major” Takahashi and Sherrod displaying their marriage certificate. *Detroit Tribune Independent*, April 21, 1934.

marriage between Sherrod and Takahashi openly challenged the dominant discourse on interracial marriages as “unnatural.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, the union also signified the merging of two racial and cultural groups for the unified purpose of challenging white supremacy.

As historian Ernest Allen, Jr. has argued, Takahashi and Sherrod also used the marriage as a way to distract members of the public from Takahashi’s mounting legal challenges. As early as September 1933, “Major” Takahashi began to draw the ire of federal officials who were determined to squash his ‘seditious activities.’ In December of that year, Takahashi was arrested for committing a string of immigration violations: “entering the United States without inspection, failure to possess a valid visa, and being an alien ineligible to citizenship.”⁵⁸ It was not until April 21, 1934—days after Takahashi was deported to Japan—that a public announcement about Sherrod and Takahashi’s union appeared in the *Detroit Tribune Independent*. In a lengthy article subtitled “East Unites with West,” *Tribune* writers described the couple’s marriage ceremony, which had taken place months earlier at the Third Baptist Church in Toledo, Ohio. Masking Takahashi’s deportation, the writers of the article shrewdly described Takahashi’s travels this way: “Major Takahashi . . . left Detroit Friday night, April 13, en route to San Francisco, California, where he will embark on a steamer for Japan. After transacting important business in Tokyo, Major Takahashi plans to return to the United States, within the next three months.”⁵⁹

The Practices of Black Internationalist Feminism

In the immediate aftermath of her husband’s deportation, Pearl Sherrod became de facto leader of TDOO—mirroring the experiences of Pan-Africanist feminist Amy Jacques Garvey, who assumed leadership in the UNIA during Marcus Garvey’s incarceration in the mid-1920s.⁶⁰ In the absence of her husband, “Major” Takahashi, Sherrod wielded a significant amount of control in TDOO. According to her husband’s instructions, Sherrod was expected to run the organization in his absence. By one account, “Major” Takahashi envisioned his wife as a figurehead who was expected to carefully carry out his directives from Japan.⁶¹ However, when Sherrod declared to local newspapers that she would “carry on the management” of the organization, she had other things in mind.⁶² Sherrod was not interested in being a mouthpiece for her husband. To the contrary, she was determined to use her newfound leadership position to promote her own black internationalist feminist agenda. Toward this end, Sherrod used her political writings, influence, and leadership role in TDOO to promote Afro-Asian solidarity, challenge black patriarchy, and forge alliances with women leaders. In addition, she asserted control over her public image and identity.

In the summer of 1934, Sherrod assumed control of her husband’s newspaper column in the *Detroit Tribune Independent*. She openly criticized U.S. policies as incompatible with African Americans’ political goals and insisted that activists adopt a more internationalist stance towards eradicating racism. “The policy and efforts of the dark people of America in regards to diplomacy at this time,” Sherrod explained, “should be similar to that of other races who have established themselves

as nations.”⁶³ Calling for an immediate response to white supremacy, Sherrod argued that “[i]t will take nothing but organization to stop the barbequing and torturing of our race in the South.” “This does not have to take any aggressive measure against the whites,” she carefully explained, “but we need to develop ourselves.” “[We] owe it to the dark people of America,” she added.⁶⁴ Making reference to the 1931 Scottsboro case—in which nine black youths were accused of sexually assaulting two white women in Scottsboro, Alabama—Sherrod lamented Franklin D. Roosevelt’s lack of response to the challenges facing people of African descent.⁶⁵ She asked readers: “Does it please us to know that Mr. Roosevelt, our chief executive of the United States, refused an audience of those poor Scottsboro mothers, whose sons have been falsely accused and kept in prison so long?” “We can help them,” she reasoned, “only by organizing and developing ourselves to increase our power.”⁶⁶

In Sherrod’s view, black men and women could only increase their power and eradicate global white supremacy by forging political alliances with Asian activists. In June 1934, she wrote a passionate editorial in the *Detroit Tribune Independent* in which she audaciously declared that African Americans needed to join forces with the Japanese: “[O]ur minds have been diseased, and we have tried ‘Mr. White’s’ medicine and failed; tried ‘Mr. Black’s’ medicine and failed. *Now we must try ‘Mr. Brown’s medicine.’*” “No doubt he will cure us of the mental disease which was caused from a lack of organization,” Sherrod continued, “then we can develop ourselves.”⁶⁷ Sherrod’s comments offer a glimpse into the activist’s internationalist vision and pragmatic approach to combating global white supremacy.⁶⁸ Identifying the apparent shortcomings of mainstream civil rights activism and black separatism—“Mr. White’s medicine” and “Mr. Black’s medicine”—Sherrod urged readers to try a new antidote—“Mr. Brown’s medicine” or political collaboration with the Japanese. Sherrod’s appeal to black men and women to eschew the political approaches of mainstream civil rights leaders and black nationalist activists underscore her broader internationalist vision—one that was “connected . . . to an overarching notion of black liberation beyond any individual nation-state or colonial territory.”⁶⁹

Sherrod also promoted Third World solidarity by identifying the common interests and challenges between black men and women in the United States and nonwhites in colonial nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.⁷⁰ Writing in the *Detroit Tribune Independent*, she explained, “Let me remind you that fully three-fourths of the population of the world are colored people and only one-fourth are white [sic]. But the greater part of the colored world is today under white political control.”⁷¹ Sherrod envisioned Afro-Asian solidarity as a viable political strategy that sought to link two racially oppressed groups in the struggle to eradicate the global color line. Her internationalist vision was consistent with that of other black women activists of the period, including Eslanda Robeson, the wife of famed actor and activist Paul Robeson. Unlike Sherrod who emphasized Afro-Asian unity as the *primary* vehicle for universal liberation during the Depression years, Eslanda supported these political solidarities without ever losing sight of Africa. Through her political writings—most notably, *African Journey* (1945)—she articulated a commitment to Pan-Africanism and emphasized African political agency in the

global struggles to end white supremacy.⁷² This was not the case for Sherrod, who, along with a cadre of black radical activists in the United States, was “drawn to Afro-Asian solidarity and even [infatuated] with Japanese imperialism as an imaginative means of cross-racial alliance.”⁷³ Like many other black internationalists during this era, Sherrod maintained uncritical admiration for Japan, overlooking the nation’s military aggression towards other people of color.⁷⁴

Surviving records suggest that Sherrod’s new leadership and writings were met with some resistance from members of TDOO. For example, an article written by Willie Jenkins, chairman of the organization’s membership committee, reveals that the leadership transition from “Major” Takahashi to his wife, Pearl, was not an easy one. In his editorial, Jenkins urged readers to organize under the leadership of TDOO. “I am asking you, one and all,” Jenkins continued, “to give your full support to the Honorable Mrs. Takahashi because God has given us a wonderful blessing through her.” Comparing her to the Queen of Sheba who saved “four thousand Jews [and carried them] back with her to Ethiopia,” Jenkins pled with readers to “give [their] loyal support” to Sherrod. In an effort to allay any concerns, Jenkins carefully noted that “Major” Takahashi supported Sherrod’s new position: “Mrs. Takahashi is [handpicked] by God. Therefore let us give her all our support, so she can carry out the plans that were laid down by the Honorable Major Takahashi.”⁷⁵

With Takahashi in Japan, Sherrod attempted to keep the pro-Japanese movement afloat while advancing her black internationalist feminist agenda. Writing in the *Detroit Tribune Independent*, Sherrod emphasized the importance of developing young women for leadership. “[L]et us remember,” she explained, “that everyone has sufficient brain for any profession or occupation he desires.” Appealing directly to fathers, she asked, “do you desire your sons to marry *girls of higher standard?*” “Then develop them,” she emphatically responded.⁷⁶ In another article, she emphasized black women’s leadership roles as vital to racial progress. “I wish to impress upon you that I am deeply interested in my race,” Sherrod explained, “and feel there is a duty *every woman owes to her race.*”⁷⁷ Similar to black Communist women, Sherrod advocated organized political action surrounding the Scottsboro Case.⁷⁸ Speaking directly to “every sister, daughter, or mother,” Sherrod called on black women across the nation to stand in defense of the accused “Scottsboro boys.” “There is a duty we owe,” she reiterated.⁷⁹

In addition to the weekly columns in the *Detroit Tribune Independent*, Sherrod launched a letter-writing campaign to solicit the support of black activists in Detroit and other parts of the U.S. Midwest. During this period, Sherrod identified black nationalist leader Mittie Maude Lena Gordon—founder of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia (PME) in Chicago—as a potential political ally. Similar to TDOO, Gordon’s PME promoted Afro-Asian solidarity during the Depression era while facilitating a vibrant political campaign to advance black emigration to West Africa. Sometime around 1931, Gordon collaborated with Japanese impersonator Ashima Takis, circulating an emigration petition in Chicago and later in Indiana. Gordon also shared Sherrod’s black internationalist feminist perspective and envisioned her organization as a political space in which black radicals in Chicago and beyond could agitate for

the social and political rights of all “dark races.” Moreover, she provided opportunities in her organization for women to engage in nationalist and internationalist politics during the Great Depression.

Sherrod was clearly knowledgeable about Gordon’s pro-Japanese views as well as her progressive gender politics, and hoped to convince Gordon to join forces with TDOO to challenge global white supremacy on local, national, and international levels. In June 1934, she sent a detailed letter to Gordon asking to arrange a private meeting in Chicago: “I beg to say if a date can be made for me to meet you I shall be glad to talk to you.”⁸⁰ “This movement is too serious to be played with,” Sherrod insisted. Referring to the federal government, Sherrod noted with a sense of assurance, “They cannot make any more connections with Japan than you or [any] one else here. Accept my statement as it is true.” Attempting to preemptively ease any doubts Gordon might have about her sincerity, Sherrod added, “I shall also bring letters showing you my authority *direct from Japan* and if no one else can do that I am asking you not to accept them for your people[’s] sake.”⁸¹

Whether or not Mittie Maude Lena Gordon responded to Sherrod’s letter remains a mystery. Given the widespread pro-emigration campaign in which Gordon was engaged during this period, it is likely that she never followed through with Sherrod’s request.⁸² Moreover, Gordon’s earlier skirmishes with Filipino political leader Ashima Takis—“Major” Takahashi’s acquaintance—concerning political differences must have given the PME’s founder some pause concerning Sherrod’s request to collaborate. Sherrod’s letter, regardless of the actual outcome, underscores how Sherrod attempted to keep the pro-Japanese movement afloat in her husband’s absence and even in the face of mounting government suppression. This was no small matter. Sherrod’s decision to lead the movement in her husband’s absence was a dangerously bold move, particularly in a climate of intensive political repression. She ran the risk of being discovered—especially considering the fact that authorities had seized her husband and other TDOO leaders in her apartment.

Although Sherrod did not directly challenge patriarchy in her political writings, she exhibited a commitment to black internationalist feminism by asserting political authority; and in this particular case, by supporting and attempting to ally with women activists who did the same. As Sociologist Myra Marx Ferree astutely points out, “Feminists do many different things in real political contexts in order to accomplish their goals . . . [and thus] it becomes self-defeating to pre-suppose that only women’s movements can be the carriers of feminism.”⁸³ While TDOO was neither a women’s organization nor a feminist one, it provided a crucial political platform for Sherrod to advance a black internationalist feminist agenda during the Great Depression.

As a black internationalist feminist, Sherrod, like her counterparts in the Communist Party, resisted “the gendered limitations imposed on Black self-determination, broadening it and transforming it to account for the struggles of Black women and to generate intersectional analyses of race and gender.”⁸⁴ And similar to the first generation of black women radicals in the Communist Left, Sherrod “had little to say about the links between sexuality and politics.”⁸⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, radical

black women would later articulate a more profound critique of heteropatriarchy.⁸⁶ Within the context of the 1930s, however, Sherrod and many other radical women activists generally overlooked inequality along the lines of sexuality; and instead focused their energies on combating race and gender oppression. Articulating a commitment to universal liberation for all people of color and supporting women's rights, Sherrod also attempted to build political alliances with like-minded activist women.

Significantly, Sherrod's political career was characterized by her willingness to take risks when opportunities arose. Using the funds that members of TDOO donated to assist Satokata Takahashi with living expenses and legal fees, Sherrod put on a flamboyant display of material success.⁸⁷ On the evening of October 30, 1936, for example, she held an extravagant dinner party in Detroit, featuring a list of distinguished guests and a "delightful five-course dinner."⁸⁸ Strategically, Sherrod hosted the elaborate dinner at a local dancehall where TDOO often held meetings, rather than at her more modest apartment on Baltimore East Avenue.⁸⁹ Sherrod's display of wealth and elaborate dinner parties brought far more attention to her social life than it did to her radical political activities.

These carefully orchestrated events were also strategies that sought to reinforce the public image Sherrod wanted to maintain—one that would mask her modest socioeconomic background and also counter stereotypical depictions of radical women as non-respectable.⁹⁰ On the pages of the *Detroit Tribune Independent*, Sherrod presented herself as a "graduate of the Tuskegee Institute" and a "member of a prominent colored family."⁹¹ In addition, Sherrod claimed to have been a principal of a high school in Birmingham, Alabama for many years after completing her studies at Tuskegee. Yet, Sherrod's statements to census-takers, on two separate occasions, as well as extant public records reveal that the activist had limited formal education. By her own statement, Sherrod received a fourth grade education and had not attended college.⁹² These inconsistencies suggest that Sherrod intentionally hid the truth concerning her limited formal education and modest socioeconomic background. Perhaps Sherrod reasoned that by downplaying her working-class background she would have greater access to individuals with financial means and political influence; or perhaps Sherrod's ostentatious behavior was as a political tool to draw more followers—a practice employed by flamboyant black religious leaders of the period such as celebrity preacher Charles "Daddy" Grace.⁹³

Sherrod's public façade offers a glimpse into how the activist used performance to assert authority.⁹⁴ It illuminates how she, as other black women activists, attempted to "recover their bodies" through self-representation.⁹⁵ During a period in which negative images of black womanhood dominated mainstream discourse, Sherrod's efforts to control her public image were an attempt to "wrest control of the physical and symbolic construction of [her] body away from the distortions of others."⁹⁶ Indeed, as scholar Cheryl D. Hicks notes, "ordinary black women held their own distinct notions about feminine dignity."⁹⁷ Regardless of the actual facts concerning Sherrod's early life and background, the activist went to great lengths to carefully construct a public "respectable" image that would best fit *her* sense of self and identity.⁹⁸ Through these acts of performance, Sherrod asserted her personal and political agency.

Pearl Sherrod and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association

Similar to other black internationalist feminists during this period, Sherrod recognized the significance of building “transnational political solidarities with women around the world sincerely committed to racial equality, internationalism, women’s rights, and economic justice.”⁹⁹ In 1937, she attended the international women’s conference of the PPWA in Vancouver, Canada. Established in Honolulu in 1930, the PPWA was, according to historian Fiona Paisley, organized for the purpose of bringing together women activists from the “Pacific Rim settler colonial nations with those from Japan and China towards promoting social reform in the region.”¹⁰⁰ The 1937 PPWA conference, held from July 12 to 24, drew 125 official female representatives from eight countries in the Pan-Pacific region: Australia, Canada, China, Hawaii, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the United States.¹⁰¹ PPWA President Tsune Gauntlett, the leading Japanese delegate who presided over conference proceedings, called for a “new social order in which and by which peace may prevail between the countries bordering the Pacific.”¹⁰²

To ensure that black women’s concerns were addressed, Sherrod arrived at the PPWA conference accompanied by an unidentified black woman activist from TDOO. Arriving “in a chauffeur driven car and wearing expensive clothes,” Sherrod made a grand entrance, which quickly drew the attention of conference attendees.¹⁰³ Elsie Andrews, the conference’s international secretary, later recounted the course of events in the PPWA’s conference dairy. Though she was not originally scheduled to present at the conference, Sherrod earned an opportunity to speak before a crowd of conference attendees who were impressed by her expressive show of wealth.¹⁰⁴ However, Sherrod’s arrival at the PPWA conference was far more than another flamboyant display. By Andrews’ account, Sherrod and her female companion disclosed that they had driven to Vancouver “from Detroit in Michigan at their own expense to listen to the conference proceedings” and ensure that “the position of the coloured folk shall not be lost sight of.”¹⁰⁵

This is one of the reasons why she chose to exaggerate the organization’s focus, reach, and influence. When Sherrod sat down for an interview with Canadian journalists, she carefully constructed an altered version of TDOO’s history and mission in an effort to gain greater legitimacy among PPWA women activists. Reflecting her black internationalist feminist vision, Sherrod presented the organization as one that was formed by black women and led primarily by women. According to Sherrod, TDOO was established by “ten women grouped together some years ago in Detroit, Michigan” determined to “[work] for the betterment of their fellows.” These women, she claimed, obtained a charter in October 1933 to lead the organization comprised of “230,000 men, women, and children.” With little access to financial resources, the organization, according to Sherrod, ran a number of community programs including a soup kitchen and adult night school for impoverished black men and women in Detroit.¹⁰⁶

In reality, the organization boasted far fewer members than Sherrod estimated and surviving records counter Sherrod’s claim that women established TDOO. With the

exception of the recording secretary, men occupied all founding leadership positions in the organization.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the exaggerated account reinforced the public image Sherrod fought so vigorously to maintain. Making no mention of her husband, “Major” Takahashi, who by this time, had relocated from Japan to Canada, Sherrod presented herself as the primary leader of TDOO—and as one of its founders. Despite the fact that she was planning to visit her husband during this trip to Canada, Sherrod remained entirely silent about her personal affairs.

Appealing specifically to PPWA women, who she described as the “best representative of all races,” Sherrod used her new public platform at the conference to call for an immediate end to racial oppression. “The time has come for [us] to meet together in conference on matters vitally concerning the common weal,” she argued. Recognizing the difficult task ahead, Sherrod went on to explain that “[w]e are confronted with a problem whose factors are intricate and whose outcome is as far-reaching as any that has ever taxed human wisdom for solution.” Maintaining a sense of optimism, Sherrod insisted that racial equality was certainly attainable on a global scale but only with the unified effort of women activists of all races and ethnicities. She asked PPWA women to “appeal to the white race all over this world to give the dark races their constitutional rights.” “I wish to utilize a few moments on this occasion to mention this issue growing out of race prejudice and injustice,” she carefully explained. “Now I am appealing to you international women,” she continued, “to let us join hand and heart together and find the cause of the broken peace which is injustice and discrimination[,] and let us kill the germ of it.”¹⁰⁸

Sherrod also took advantage of the opportunity to speak on behalf of black Southerners facing racial violence and terror under Jim Crow. Reminiscent of journalist activist Ida B. Wells, who traveled across the United States and in Great Britain to condemn lynching, Sherrod openly denounced lynching at the PPWA conference and displayed newspaper clippings as evidence of its widespread occurrence in the U.S. South.¹⁰⁹ “[T]o the black man, justice is only a word in name but not in reality,” Sherrod explained. “Quite frequently,” she added, “the black man is lynched and burned without even a fair trial.” Linking national concerns to global ones, Sherrod reminded PPWA conference attendees that the problems facing African Americans were indicative of the challenges facing all people of color. “There can never be peace on the Pacific or Atlantic,” she continued, “until justice is given to *all* mankind.”¹¹⁰

Significantly, Sherrod and her female associate were the first African American women to attend the PPWA conference, opening up a space for women of African descent to engage in political dialogue with the mostly white and Asian members of the international women’s organization.¹¹¹ Sherrod used her visit to the PPWA conference as both a vehicle for building a political alliance with women activists in the PPWA, and as a platform for denouncing global white supremacy. Despite their emphasis on world peace and interracial harmony, PPWA leaders had overlooked the concerns of people of African descent. None of the thirty official U.S. representatives at the 1937 conference were African American, and previous conferences had not addressed African American concerns.¹¹² Sherrod’s unexpected arrival, then, spoke volumes.

Conclusion

Pearl Sherrod's memorable presentation at the 1937 PPWA conference in Vancouver marked one of the activist's few documented public appearances, and serves as the only account of her travels abroad.¹¹³ She resurfaced again in 1938, one year after her visit to Vancouver, when she and a group of TDOO supporters showed up in Chicago attempting to meet with the Japanese Consul for the purpose of "making a contribution to the Japanese war effort." Despite a very public marital dispute with her husband in 1938, which resulted in her removal from leadership in the organization, Sherrod was determined to advance black internationalist politics and promote Afro-Asian solidarity. She remained steadfast in her belief that Japan's military triumph and political ascendancy was a viable step towards realizing liberation for people of African descent—and all people of color globally. To that end, federal records indicate that Sherrod and a group of supporters made another visit to the office of the Japanese Consul in 1939—this time with a financial contribution of an estimated three hundred dollars for the Japanese government.¹¹⁴

Following her separation from Takahashi and subsequent removal from TDOO, Sherrod tempered her black internationalist feminist activities, quietly resuming her previous life in Detroit with her son, Emerson. In the 1940 census, Sherrod, then forty-four, identified herself as a widow and admitted to being unemployed without any reliable source of income. She obtained some limited assistance from her twenty-seven year old son who held a position as a construction worker for the Works Progress Administration (WPA).¹¹⁵ Sherrod's life in 1940 was a far cry from the one on display only a few years prior. In 1945, an anonymous informant reported to federal authorities that Sherrod was no longer engaged in political activities and instead chose to spend most of her free time with friends at a summer resort in Idlewild, Michigan.¹¹⁶

Sherrod's political ideas and praxis during the Depression era in Detroit and beyond enrich our understanding of radical politics, Afro-Asian political movements, and black internationalism more broadly. As this article reveals, the Great Depression era opened up a space for working-class black women like Sherrod to engage in black internationalist discourses and movements despite few resources and thus, limited mobility. During a period in which African Americans had limited access to the formal political process, TDOO provided a public political space for radical women like Pearl Sherrod to agitate for black self-determination, forge transnational and transracial political collaborations, and support women's political rights. Even without the backing of a federal agency, missionary or charitable organization, or corporate entities, Sherrod crossed geographical, cultural, and racial boundaries during the Great Depression in an effort to promote a black internationalist feminist agenda. Her radical activities, which have been largely invisible in the historical record thus far, illuminate the diverse strategies black women employed during a global economic crisis and in an era of much political turmoil. In so doing, this article deepens our understanding of 20th-century African American history, Women's History, and the modern African Diaspora.

Notes

1. Fiona Paisley, “From Nation of Islam to Goodwill Tourist: African-American Women at Pan-Pacific and South East Asia Women’s Conferences, 1937 and 1955,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 32 (2009): 21.
2. “A Pro-American Appeals for Better Understanding,” *Vancouver News Herald*, July 23, 1937. On the rhetoric of self-determination, see Erez Manela, *A Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
3. My thinking on black internationalism is deeply informed by the scholarship of Michael O. West, William G. Martin, Fanon Che Wilkins, and others. See West, Martin, and Wilkins, eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘But a Local Phase of a World Problem’: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883–1950,” *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 1045–1077; James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935–1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011).
4. Here I am drawing on Brenda Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Seminal works on 20th-century black women’s internationalism include Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Bu Doi* (New York: New York Press, 2000); Gregg Andrews, *Thyra J. Edwards: Black Activist in the Global Freedom Struggle* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2011); Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Erik S. McDuffie, “‘For the Full Freedom of... Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in these United States...’: Black Women Radicals and the Practice of a Black Women’s International,” *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender and the Black International* 1 (2012): 1–30.
5. Seminal works on Afro-Asian solidarity include Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity of Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Gerald Horne, “Tokyo Bound: African Americans and Japan Confront White Supremacy,” *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 16–28; Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, eds., *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, eds., *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Yukiko Koshio, “Beyond an Alliance of Color: The African American Impact on Modern China,” *Positions* 11 (Spring 2003): 183–215; Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
6. See Ernest Allen, Jr., “When Japan was Champion of the ‘Darker Races’: Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism,” *The Black Scholar* 24 (1994): 23–46; Allen, “‘Waiting for Tojo’: The Pro-Japan Vigil of Black Missourians, 1932–1943,” *Gateway Heritage* (1995): 38–55.

7. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), 292, n. 1. On the black radical tradition, see Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Seminal works on black women and radical politics include Ula Y. Taylor, "Read[ing] Men and Nations: Women in the Black Radical Tradition," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society* 1 (Fall 1999): 72–80; Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: the Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Erik S. McDuffie, "I Wanted a Communist Philosophy, but I Wanted Us to have a Chance to Organize Our People': The Diasporic Radicalism of Queen Mother Audley Moore and the Origins of Black Power," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 3 (2010): 181–195; McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Gregg Andrews, *Thyra J. Edwards: Black Activist in the Global Freedom Struggle* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2011); LaShawn Harris, "Running with the Reds: African American Women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression," *Journal of African American History* 94 (2009): 21–43; Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston : Beacon Press, 2013).
8. Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 121.
9. Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1999* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).
10. *Ibid.*, 2.
11. For the purposes of this article, I am relying on Linda Gordon's definition of feminism: "a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable." See Gordon, "What's New in Women's History," in *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies*, ed. Theresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 29.
12. Nicholas Papastratigakis, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power: Military Strategy and the Build-Up to the Russo-Japanese War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Rotem Kowner, *The A to Z of the Russo-Japanese War* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009); Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Rotem Kowner, *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007).
13. Steven Ericson and Allen Hockley, eds., *The Treaty of Portsmouth and its Legacies* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2008).
14. Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*, xxv.
15. *Ibid.*, 72.
16. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 28–29.
17. Gerald Horne, *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 43.
18. William Miller, "Finds Japan Trail in Negro Colony Here," *Cleveland Press*, June 3, 1942.
19. Marc S. Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 97.
20. Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 31.
21. Takahashi was also affiliated with the Black Dragon Society, an ultranationalist organization established in 1901 for the primary purpose of obtaining military information to aid Japan's imperialist ventures. See Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" 31; Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*, 76; David E. Kaplan and

39. Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 168.
40. Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 6 (May 1938): 894–907.
41. Claude Andrew Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Edward Curtis, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002); Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*.
42. On black patriarchy in the UNIA see, Barbara Bair, "'Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God': Laura Kofey and the Gendered Vision of Redemption in the Garvey Movement," in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism*, eds. Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1996); Barbara Bair, "True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement," in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, eds. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Karen Adler, "'Always Leading Our Men in Service and Sacrifice': Amy Jacques Garvey, Feminist Black Nationalist," *Gender and Society* 6 (1992): 346–375.
43. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151–174. On women in the NOI, see Bayyinah S. Jeffries, *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women: African American Muslim Women in the Movement for Black Self-Determination, 1950–1975* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014); Dawn Marie-Gibson and Jamillah Karim, eds., *Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).
44. Ula Taylor, "As-salaam Alaikum, My Sister, Peace Be Unto You: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Women Who Followed Him," *Race and Society* 1, no. 2 (1998): 179.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Gibson and Karim, *Women of the Nation*, 2.
47. Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 402.
48. Quoted in Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Black Man in America* (Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2 1965, 1973), 156.
49. See Ernest Allen, Jr., "Identity and Destiny: The Formative Views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam," in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito (Atlanta: Oxford University Press, 2000).
50. Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, eds., *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 248.
51. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 32.
52. For references to TDOO women in secretarial positions, see "Nab Jap Who Preached Anti-Nordic Creed," *Chicago Defender*, July 8, 1939; "Jap Organizer Gets Three Years in Federal Pen," *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 7, 1939; "Jap Dreamer of Dark Empire Held," *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 8, 1939.
53. Leon W. Taylor, "Japanese Propaganda Among American Negroes," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1943. The identity of this woman activist is unclear. While Taylor may have been referring to Sherrod, it is also possible that he was describing the activities of Dolores De Angelo, the wife of Ashima Takis who was featured in an earlier newspaper article. See William Miller, "Finds Japan Trail in Negro Colony Here," *Cleveland Press*, June 3, 1942.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Quoted in Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 33.
56. Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–4.
57. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

58. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 34.
59. "Local Woman Weds Japanese Officer," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, April 21, 1934.
60. On Amy Jacques Garvey, see Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
61. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 35.
62. "Local Woman Weds Japanese Officer," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, April 21, 1934.
63. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 16, 1934.
64. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, May 5, 1934.
65. Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).
66. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 16, 1934.
67. Ibid (emphasis added).
68. Douglass Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
69. West, Martin, and Wilkins, *From Toussaint to Tupac*, xi.
70. Darryl C. Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Third World Solidarity* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001).
71. Mrs. P. T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 16, 1934.
72. Ransby, *Eslanda*, 294, n. 12.
73. Ho and Mullen, *Afro Asia*, 5.
74. Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*.
75. Willie Jenkins, *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 9, 1934.
76. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, May 5, 1934 (emphasis added).
77. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, June 16, 1934 (emphasis added).
78. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 58–90.
79. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi, "Development of Our Own," *Detroit Tribune Independent*, May 5, 1934.
80. Mrs. P.T. Takahashi to Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, June 11, 1934 (Exhibit 167), The Development of Our Own, FBI file no. 65-562-109. All FBI files cited in this article were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
81. Ibid (emphasis added).
82. (On Mittie Maude Lena Gordon's pro-emigration campaign, see Michael Fitzgerald, "'We Have Found a Moses': Theodore Bilbo, Black Nationalism, and the Greater Liberia Bill of 1939," *Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 2 (May 1997): 293–320.
83. Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp, eds., *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 9.
84. Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 35.
85. McDuffie, "For the Full Freedom of... Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in these United States," 11.
86. "Heteropatriarchy" refers to the social hierarchy that recognizes male over female; and heterosexual over homosexual. See Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," in *Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*, eds. Andrea Smith, Beth E. Ritchie, and July Sudbury (Cambridge: South End Press, 2006), 66–73.

87. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 36.
88. "Dinner Party," *Chicago Defender*, October 31, 1936.
89. The Development of Our Own, FBI file no. 65-562-109.
90. On radical women activists and the politics of respectability, see LaShawn Harris, "Running with the Reds: African American Women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression," *Journal of African American History* 94 (2009): 21–43.
91. "Local Woman Weds Japanese Officer," *Detroit Tribune-Independent*, April 21, 1934.
92. 1940 U.S. Census Records for Detroit, Michigan; Enumeration District: 84–30; *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. Ancestry.com subscription database, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed November 29, 2013). To date, the author has yet to locate any concrete evidence to suggest that Sherrod was ever a student or employee of the Tuskegee Institute.
93. See Marie W. Dallam, *Daddy Grace: A Celebrity Preacher and His House of Prayer* (New York: New York University, 2007).
94. Elin Diamond, ed., *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996).
95. Michael Bennett and Vanessa D. Dickerson, eds., *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self Representations by African American Women* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).
96. *Ibid.*, 5.
97. Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3.
98. Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
99. McDuffie, "For the Full Freedom of... Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in these United States," 7.
100. Paisley, "From Nation of Islam," 21.
101. *Women of the Pacific: A Record of the Proceedings of the Fourth Triennial Conference of the Pan Pacific Women's Association*, Vancouver, Canada, July 1937, *Women and Social Movements, International* database, <http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/> (accessed December 4, 2013), 4.
102. *Ibid.*, 20.
103. Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 207.
104. *Ibid.*
105. 1937 Diary, Elsie Andrews Papers, MS 312, Puke Ariki, Taranaki Museum, New Plymouth, New Zealand (digitized version), 56.
106. "A Pro-American Appeals for Better Understanding," *Vancouver News Herald*, July 23, 1937.
107. Allen, "When Japan was Champion of the 'Darker Races,'" 44, n. 75.
108. *Ibid.*
109. 1937 Diary, Elsie Andrews Papers, MS 312, Puke Ariki, Taranaki Museum, New Plymouth, New Zealand (digitized version), 56. On Ida B. Wells, see Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).
110. "A Pro-American Appeals for Better Understanding," *Vancouver News Herald*, July 23, 1937 (emphasis added).
111. Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific*, 204.
112. Paisley, "From Nation of Islam," 23.
113. *Ibid.*
114. Robert A. Hill, *FBI's Racon: Racial Conditions in the United States during World War II* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 515.

115. 1940 U.S. Census Records for Detroit, Michigan; Enumeration District: 84-30; *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. Ancestry.com subscription database, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed November 29, 2013).
116. The Development of Our Own, FBI file no. 65-562-109; On Idlewild, see Ronald J. Stephens, *The Rise, Decline, and Rebirth of a Unique African American Resort Town* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013).

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