

Wright is harsh, but his response to the continent is fuelled by a desire to take part in the unfolding drama of Africa. He had already 'rejected' the United States and the initial glamour of his entry into French society was beginning to fade. At this stage of his life and career, the last thing he needed to be reminded of was the extent to which he was an American. Wright knew that the troubling quality of his Americanness was there to be solved if he could make a connection with Africa that was based on race. Like Crummell and Blyden before him, the idea of racial solidarity was to be his salvation, but this strange, 'primitive' continent failed him. 'I was black and they were black, and my blackness did not help me.' Race did not help him in his quest to understand these Africans. A shared pigment unlocked nothing. 'I'm of African descent and I'm in the midst of Africans, yet I cannot tell what they are thinking and feeling.'

In 1997 Keith Richburg, an African-American *Washington Post* journalist, having served three years as an African correspondent based in Nairobi, published *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa*. Richburg arrives in Africa predisposed to ascribe some of the continent's ills to the legacy of the colonial period, but he quickly changes tack and is soon sounding almost hysterical. 'Talk to me about Africa and my black roots and my kinship with my African-American brothers, and I'll turn it back in your face, and then I'll rub your nose in the images of the rotting flesh.' The author's disappointment is so deep that he claims he will never again refer to himself as an African-American. The very term 'African' offends him. 'Thank God', he writes, 'my ancestor got out, because, now, I am not one of them ... In short, thank God I am an American.'

Richburg travelled to Africa as a bureau chief for one of America's foremost newspapers. He did not travel as 'an African-American', although his racial heritage was clearly a part of his carry-on luggage. Naturally enough, the nature of his African reportage differs from that of his predecessors. However, what he does share with those who went before him

is a profound sense of disappointment with Africa. And this is, unquestionably, the legacy of his racial heritage. Africa faces a unique set of problems as it tries to orientate itself through the postcolonial nightmare of corrupt leaders, and beyond the resounding clash of the new world entering as its people are still trying to pick over the remnants of the old world which was destroyed by European incursion. All is not well in Africa, but the continent is no more guilty than Europe or Asia in the atrocity department. Richburg and his predecessors appear to be uncommonly eager to condemn. What Africa needs is critical self-analysis, and intellectually rigorous minds and impassioned voices to dissect the past and suggest a future. And it possesses such minds and voices. What Africa does not need is a continual flow of disaffected African-Americans, wounded by race, acting out their fantasies of belonging and alienation with a presumed authenticity which is underscored by the pigment of the pigment.