

Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage*, the United States Information Agency and the Cultural Politics of Race in the Cold War

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On April 25, 1966, just two weeks before he left South Africa to go into exile, a young black photographer named Ernest Cole went to the offices of the United States Information Service (USIS) in downtown Johannesburg to retrieve a collection of photographic negatives. He had secreted them there for safekeeping during his last few months in the country, a period in which he was acutely conscious his movements were being monitored by the security services.¹ He was not mistaken. A South African Security Police report recorded that he entered the building alone, when nobody was around and retrieved the negatives from a steel cabinet to which he possessed a key. But, assuming this report is accurate, either he removed only a portion of his negatives on this occasion or at some point over the next couple of weeks he decided to return some or all of them to the USIS office rather than risk taking them with him on his departure to Europe via Nairobi. About a month later, on May 30, and now safely in London, Cole composed a letter to his friend and fellow photographer Struan Robertson instructing him to make contact with someone named Rockweiler at the USIS office in Johannesburg, to explain the situation to him and make arrangements for the (remaining) negatives to be transported to London, as he needed them for publication.² A South African Department of Justice memo from 1968, requesting that the then published photographic book be banned, makes explicit the US connection and assistance, although the name of Cole's contact has been redacted: "[Cole] specialised in photographs dealing with conditions in locations, hospitalisations, police raids and the poor conditions in which the Bantu lived. He took thousands of photographs of this nature and smuggled them out of the country – mainly with the help of [BLANK] of the American Embassy."

Aside from the colour it adds to the story of Ernest Cole's departure from South Africa, what is the significance of this rather obscure note retrieved from deep in the archival records? In this chapter, I argue that the episode can be best understood as a sub-plot within a larger narrative about Cold War visual culture, one that reveals the entanglement of two visual histories usually treated separately: the

photographic documentation of racial injustice in apartheid South Africa and the representation of race in a US convulsed by urban riots, civil rights struggle and militant black power. In the 1950s and 1960s, the conjunction of Cold War, racial conflict in the US and decolonisation in Africa provided a context within which representations of race became subject to international contestation, as part of a broader cultural politics. The political and racial circumstances of South Africa – a combination of staunch anti-communism and the perpetuation of white minority rule, underpinned by an ideology of white supremacy and enforced by the violent suppression of resistance – presented a challenge to successive US administrations. In short, the situation in South Africa shone an unwelcome spotlight on domestic racial problems. Furthermore, the policy of apartheid contradicted the postwar regime of human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. In a global political system where the nation state was seen as the guarantor of human rights, a state that flatly refused to guarantee such rights for a majority of its citizens, as a matter of principle, not simply in practice, represented a major contradiction.³ Despite the fact that the US delegation worked extremely hard to avoid external scrutiny of the situation in the southern states through the lens of human rights, the issue of apartheid was one means by which the issue of racial injustice could be returned to the UN agenda and, to the chagrin of the US, become the subject of international debate.⁴ Diplomatic relations with apartheid South Africa, therefore, had the capacity to expose contradictions, and reveal some unexpected connections, between US foreign and domestic policies on racial equality. Moreover, the images of racial injustice in South Africa that began to circulate in the postwar period might be seen to contest what Ariella Azoulay refers to as the “the human rights curriculum,” at the moment of its formation in debates at the UN.⁵ The active support of the US National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for the campaign, led by Michael Scott, to stop South Africa annexing the League of Nations mandate of South West Africa (SWA) might be taken as a critical example. The SWA campaign was accompanied by Scott’s film “Civilisation on Trial in South Africa,” viewings of which were arranged by the NAACP, including to delegates of the UN in 1949.⁶ The film consisted of documentary footage and still photographs from SWA and South Africa.⁷ It was intended both to indict the South African government for its treatment of the black majority, and to

establish the agency and right to speak on their own behalf of the SWA people, to which in some small measure it contributed. The political alignment between African Americans in pursuit of racial justice in the US and colonial subjects in Africa suggests that it was not inevitable that such images would be read in terms of distance; rather, viewing the film could be a productive moment of racial solidarity. For African American viewers at least, the identities of spectator and victim were not entirely settled.⁸ As Carol Anderson argues, the mobilisation against the annexation at the UN “raised the very real possibility of penetrating national sovereignty in the face of systematic human rights violations”,⁹ and was part of a broader perception on the part of African Americans that their struggle for justice at home was “inextricably linked” with those of colonised peoples across the world.¹⁰

It was in the interstices of these conflicts that a young African photographer was able to find support conducive to the survival of his project and its subsequent international dissemination. That this support came from the propaganda arm of the US government might initially seem surprising, but it also reveals the complex and multi-layered US response to a world in which the racial order was shifting. Although Africa has often been viewed as marginal within dominant Cold War histories, the conjunction of international and domestic approaches to the issue of race has increasingly begun to draw the attention of historians of US foreign policy.¹¹ Thomas Noer, for example, in an early study of US policy in Africa in the postwar period notes that, “the pursuit of equality in the American South and in Southern Africa created a rare case of reciprocity between domestic and foreign policy”,¹² and that black activism acted as a spur to the Kennedy administration’s approach to Africa. And, in her later study of civil rights and the Cold War, Mary Dudziak drew similar conclusions as she traced US efforts to articulate a narrative of civil rights that served Cold War foreign policy objectives. Yet, although there is some reference to film within these and other studies, photography plays only a minor illustrative role, with the emphasis more often placed on discourses of policy and journalism.¹³

My intention here, therefore, is to pursue the questions that surround this coming together of Cold War cultural politics and contested representations of race through the story of Ernest Cole’s photographic project and his movement into exile, a necessary condition of the work’s publication. In doing so, I hope not only to provide an account of the impact of the Cold War context on the work of

one photographer, but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of the production and circulation of photographs addressed to issues of race as a significant dimension of Cold War visual culture. In order to achieve these objectives, the inquiry develops in two directions. The first focuses on the encounter between Ernest Cole and the South African branch of the United States Information Agency (USIA). The second locates the body of work Cole published as a photographic book in 1967 within a broader history of the circulation of images of race during the Cold War period, considering both its reception in the US and the perception on the part of the South African authorities, who viewed it as part of a larger US propaganda effort.

Ernest Cole and the USIA in South Africa

In his late teenage years and early twenties Cole worked briefly as a layout assistant at *Drum* magazine before becoming a freelance photographer, undertaking assignments for newspapers and magazines in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria. He was largely self-taught and although not politically active had a strong sense of the injustice of the regime under which he lived. As his work developed, he conceived of a book length photographic study of life under apartheid. This was a project that came to dominate his work from the early 1960s until he left South Africa at 26 years of age. These were the negatives he stored at the USIS offices in Johannesburg, which would be published as *House of Bondage* in 1967, a little over a year after he arrived in the US. Although *House of Bondage* was the first and only major publication of Cole's photographs during his lifetime, the book quickly came to be seen as one of the key photographic commentaries on life for black South Africans under apartheid. It received wide coverage on its publication and despite its banning provided a significant point of reference for a generation of photographers in South Africa who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s and committed their photography to the service of a struggle for liberation and democracy. It is now regarded not only as a damning critique of apartheid but also a canonical photobook.¹⁴

In the early 1960s, Cole was simply a young black man from a township outside Pretoria beginning to establish himself as a freelance photojournalist in Johannesburg. It was as such that he first came into the ambit of US public diplomacy on the continent, in the form of the USIA, or the USIS as it was

known in South Africa.¹⁵ Established in 1953, the USIA was the main agent of US informational, cultural and educational programmes through its overseas offices for the second half of the twentieth century. Its central purpose was to convince overseas publics that US foreign policy was “in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress and peace”, through the use of modern media and communication techniques.¹⁶ Whilst the USIA has been the subject of major studies, most notably Nicholas Cull’s *The Cold War and the USIA*, which I draw upon here, the South African dimension has yet to receive substantial attention. Cole’s development as a young photojournalist coincided with an increasing interest on the part of the US in Africa, its people and its leaders, and potential leaders. As Leonard Marks (USIA Director, 1965-68) put it, in Africa, “our primary audiences must be leaders, present and potential”.¹⁷ The decolonisation that swept across much of Africa during the 1960s meant that for the first time black African leaders and citizens were important audiences with respect to US foreign policy objectives. It was in 1960 that Africa first became an “area operation” in its own right for the USIA;¹⁸ and a report of 1961 urged expansion of USIA cultural, educational and exchange activities in Africa, where political change had made their current operations seem inadequate. Furthermore, the USIA understood the importance of race in the perception of the US and took a lead in appointing African Americans to its staff. It argued, with limited success, that NASA should make greater effort to train black astronauts, and employed black lecturers to tour Africa talking about the space program. This competition for African opinion even extended to bringing journalists to Europe to witness for themselves the erection of the Berlin Wall.¹⁹

At a local level, “USIS cultural officers around the world made it their business to get to know artists in their client cities.” More specifically, a report on the USIS in South Africa referred to “‘friendly and sometimes intimate relations’ with key South Africans including the Progressive Party MP Helen Suzman and the editorial staff of the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Johannesburg Star*, and the black-oriented daily *The World*”.²⁰ The USIS in Johannesburg also “co-sponsored courses to train black South Africans for careers in journalism and provided a space in which otherwise censored publications could be read”; indeed, “three-quarters of [USIS] library patrons were non-white”.²¹ Most importantly, for a study of photography, Cull argues that “the whole history of the agency... serves as a valuable reminder that the

images which were so much a part of the Cold War were not disseminated by accident”,²² an observation that prompts a series of questions regarding Cole’s travels and the circulation of his photographs.

It was at the USIS offices in Johannesburg and Pretoria that Cole came into contact with the agents of US public diplomacy. Details about the precise nature of his interactions with USIS staff are unclear, but it is striking that Cole was prepared to place at least a portion of his life’s work for safekeeping in their hands.²³ At a time when risks to the survival of his photographic project and its successful publication abroad were all around him, it may be that the USIS was one of the few places in Johannesburg where Cole felt his negatives would be out of reach of the South African authorities. Nevertheless, the fact that he had independent access to the offices, and a cabinet in which to store his negatives, suggests a rather closer relationship than one might have expected.

As a freelancer, Cole worked for the *Rand Daily Mail* and had at one time been on the staff at *The World*; and he knew many of the journalists in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria. Most likely, his contact with staff at the USIS came through these connections. Young photographers as well as journalists were part of the USIA’s routine sphere of operation. In the year or so before he went into exile, Cole also developed a working relationship with Joseph Lelyveld, correspondent for the *New York Times*, who would have been familiar to senior staff at USIS, and was himself expelled from South Africa around the time Cole departed, following his publication of articles critical of apartheid. Cole provided photographs to illustrate several of Lelyveld’s pieces in the *New York Times*, and its companion magazine, including a photo-essay on apartheid that accompanied a profile of Helen Suzman published in March 1966.

At the same time, Cole’s commitment to self-education, following his rejection of the apartheid system of Bantu education, would have led him to make use of resources such as those offered by the USIS libraries. As one US visitor to South Africa in 1965 recalled, “on weekday afternoons, the library was filled with black teenagers doing school work and it was hard to find a seat.”²⁴ Although no longer a teenager at this point, Cole may well have been occupying one of those seats. It is interesting to speculate, therefore, on how the material he would have encountered via the USIS shaped his perception of America and its receptiveness as an audience for the photographic study he was in the process of

creating. As Cull notes, “Observers relying only on USIA sources for their picture of the African American Civil Rights movement would have the impression that the hero of the civil rights era was the federal government which came to the aid of the distressed black citizens”.²⁵ Cole was not entirely dependent on the USIS for his view of America however; for example, through his friend Geoff Mphakati, he had access to texts by writers such as Frantz Fanon and James Baldwin, which were unlikely to have been available in the USIS library. He was also an avid fan of modern American jazz musicians such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Furthermore, Struan Robertson recalls that by 1965 Mphakati had a copy of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech on vinyl, which he played to both him and Cole at his studio.²⁶ Although King’s speech would not in itself have been incompatible with the narrative of civil rights that the USIA wished to present, and the USIS could quite feasibly have been the source for the vinyl edition.²⁷ Indeed, on more than one occasion USIA and the South African government came into conflict around the circulation of representations of race and civil rights. In 1964, the South African government sought to censor the USIA film *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums*, made as a tribute to John F. Kennedy following his assassination, and which included scenes of black and white working together in the Africa and the US.²⁸ When USIA refused to edit the film it was banned. Similarly, in 1965, the US was openly accused by the South African press of distributing “‘frankly propagandistic’ material” on civil rights.²⁹

One of the defining projects of Cold War photography, was shown in South Africa uncensored however. Sponsored by the USIA, Edward Steichen’s *Family of Man* exhibition arrived in South Africa in 1958; and in Johannesburg at least was open to all racial groups. Whether this latter fact should be interpreted as an invitation to integration on the part of the USIA is a moot point; but, as Tamar Garb shows, a number of commentators including the black South African writer Lewis Nkosi took the licence offered by this “radical space of reception” to re-imagine human relationships beyond the entrenched racism of apartheid.³⁰ Although Cole was only 18 years old at the time, and at the very beginning of his photographic career, it would prove to be an influential exhibition.³¹ A number of the photographers working for *Drum* magazine acknowledged its importance in shaping their understanding of the medium’s potential, but Cole seems to have studied it closer than most. His

familiarity with the accompanying catalogue publication no doubt influenced his thinking about the presentation of his own photographs. There were in fact direct connections between the two projects: Jerry Mason, a driving force behind the *Family of Man* catalogue, was editor-in-chief for the series in which *House of Bondage* appeared under the Ridge Press imprint. Yet, as I have discussed elsewhere, *House of Bondage* can be seen as a counter-text to Steichen's exhibition. Cole's project rejects the universalising humanist vision projected by Steichen's selection and sequencing of photographs, and might be better understood as a visual parallel to Roland Barthes' response to the exhibition, which he criticises for mistaking historical injustice for human diversity, most notably in the context of colonialism.³² As is evident in the treatment of the theme of education, *House of Bondage* is a photographic essay on racial and social injustice, not universal human experience. Cole's photographs of the weary teacher and bare classrooms, accompanied by an analysis of education policy under apartheid, draw the viewer's attention to the politically and historically specific circumstances for black school children in South Africa. In contrast, Nat Farbman's photograph in the *Family of Man*, of an African elder in a pre-modern setting holding the attention of a circle of children, projects the idea of Africa as a timeless place, outside of history and representative of a universal ideal. Cole's book is notable too for its relentless indictment of the routine forms of oppression apartheid imposed on daily life for black South Africans; education, healthcare, transport and policing each get separate thematic treatment. The message of the work owes as much to its overall structure and sequencing, as it does to compelling individual photographs. Ultimately, Cole leaves the reader in no doubt that his is a record of specific injustice, not a visual essay on a concept as abstract as the human condition.³³ The extent to which Cole self-consciously addressed his own project to what he saw in the *Family of Man* is a matter for debate, but nonetheless photographs and other cultural texts from the US, many of which arrived in South Africa via channels of public diplomacy, were important points of reference.

Practically and intellectually, then, Cole benefitted from a US public diplomacy that sought to bypass the National Party government and build connections directly with black South Africans who they believed could be influential in a future democratic dispensation. That is not to say US policy towards South Africa could be considered progressive; there were very clear limits to its support for

opponents of the apartheid regime. This was particularly so during the early part of the Cold War, when it largely opposed the use of sanctions. In contrast, the liberation movements in southern Africa, including the African National Congress (ANC), received tangible support from the Soviet Union and Cuba. Many in the US were critical of apartheid, and on the ground in South Africa US government officers were quite prepared to challenge its racial tenets through cultural means.³⁴ Ultimately, however, US-South Africa relations were viewed through the lens of the Cold War and larger strategic interests; what Noer refers to as Cold War realism – the view that anti-communism was the overriding threat to the US – tended to win out.³⁵ The National Party government was viewed by many of those in power in the US as a somewhat distasteful but nevertheless tolerable bulwark against communism in the region. As a consequence, US policy was limited to cultural and diplomatic opposition to the institutional racism of apartheid. This was the framework within which it was possible for Cole to establish a common interest with US public diplomacy in South Africa.

Reading *House of Bondage* in the Cold War

The opening up of a collection of original prints held at the Hasselblad Foundation in Sweden – the only extensive collection of Cole's prints to have survived – accompanied by exhibitions in South Africa and North America and a substantial catalogue publication,³⁶ has prompted a renewed interest in Cole and his work.³⁷ These presentations, however, have emphasised the personal endeavour of Cole's journey to document the banal brutality of apartheid and his distinctive achievement as a photographer. While the story deserves telling in this way, it is very much a twenty-first century reading, one in which the struggle against apartheid has ended, the context of the Cold War has faded away and the status of the photographer as artist is able to come to fore. In contrast, the task here is to offer a more historically situated reading. As the context of the Cold War influenced the production of Cole's book, ensuring its safe passage, so too did it shape its reception. It also rather tragically constrained Cole's ability to re-imagine himself as a photographer in exile. *House of Bondage* was just one set of photographs on the subject of race, albeit a particularly significant set, among many that circulated across the globe during

the Cold War period. It was within this broader cultural context that the book's American audience would have to negotiate their reading when it emerged in the late 1960s.

Although, inevitably, the East-West ideological divide dominated propaganda efforts during the Cold War, the challenge that racial discrimination and the struggle for civil rights presented to the US image of democracy and freedom abroad meant that race was a significant site of contestation from the outset. Soviet and Chinese propagandists saw racial discrimination as a weakness in US appeal to world opinion that they could exploit; and, in turn, the USIA put considerable effort into countering international perceptions of racial injustice. Mary Dudziak goes further, arguing that civil rights legislation was a product of the Cold War, and the priority given to civil rights under successive US administrations needs to be understood in the light of the foreign policy implications of what might otherwise have been regarded as a domestic issue. The US government realised, for example, "that their ability to promote democracy among peoples of color around the world was seriously hampered by continuing racial injustice at home".³⁸ In response to Communist exploitation of racial strife in the US, the USIA sought not to deny the problem, but rather to shape the perception of American history as "a story of redemption".³⁹

A brief survey of the work of the USIA demonstrates an ongoing awareness of the need to challenge negative portrayals of race in the US, and the development of a narrative around civil rights that could be presented as progressive and compatible with the US image of democracy. Even before the formation of the USIA, the USIS had produced a pamphlet for international distribution entitled *The Negro in American Life*, which exposed racial discrimination as a shameful part of the national story. In contrast to totalitarianism, however, democracy was argued to provide a path to reconciliation, and a means of transcending the past. But it was the ruling of the Supreme Court that segregated education was unconstitutional – *Brown v. Board of Education* – that finally gave credibility to this narrative, and which USIS offices overseas lost no time in disseminating. Although white responses in South Africa were rather diffident, reaction elsewhere in Africa was more welcoming of the decision.⁴⁰ A few years later, the battle over the implementation of this ruling, at a High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, provided dramatic images with which to represent the conflict, including US paratroopers

escorting nine African American students into the school. Predictably, white South Africans saw confirmation in the stand off at Little Rock that “the forces against integration were gaining in the United States,” whereas black South Africans were reported to be “somewhat shocked.” Yet, at the risk of sounding rather too convinced by their own propaganda, the American consulate also reported that black South Africans realised the events at Little Rock did not represent the policy of the US government.⁴¹ In 1963, images of police using fire hoses and dogs against civil rights marchers in Birmingham, Alabama became international news, featuring extensively in Soviet news output and propaganda. A Soviet poster from that year by the graphic artist Viktor Koretsky, for example, depicts a group of African Americans confronted by police, quite possibly copied from a photograph of the scenes in Birmingham, inscribed on the face of the Statue of Liberty. The poster bears the title, “Shameful Brand of American ‘Democracy’”.⁴² The events in Alabama were also cited in an open letter to President Kennedy from Ugandan Prime Minister Milton Obote at the first meeting of the Organisation of African Unity.⁴³ And for many African diplomats visiting Washington, the fact of racial discrimination became one of which they had first-hand experience.⁴⁴ The March on Washington that followed in the summer of 1963, however, enabled the USIA to reclaim civil rights as a story of steady progress. Although controversial in Washington, the USIA film by James Blue – *The March* (1963) – in the re-released version of which Carl Rowan, then USIA Director, claims the event as “a profound example of the procedures unfettered men use to broaden the horizons of freedom and deepen the meaning of personal liberty”,⁴⁵ was seen positively by officers in the field. As was the subsequent, and less controversial, *Nine from Little Rock* (1964), which narrated the lives of the nine students from Little Rock in the years after 1957. Although the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 underpinned the positive narrative that the USIA presented abroad, race continued to surface as an issue throughout the remainder of the 1960s, not least due to urban unrest in US cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit, and the shift from the legislative focus of the civil rights movement to the more militant assertion of black pride and self determination that characterised the black power era.⁴⁶ And if the war in Vietnam came to overtake civil rights in the international perception of the US, it is evident that radical black activists also understood this conflict in terms of international racial solidarity.⁴⁷

Key to the narrative on race that the US wished to present abroad was the idea of racial prejudice as predominantly a problem of the South. There were many challenges to this perception, not least the riots that erupted in cities across the US in the mid to late 1960s, the period Cole arrived in the US, but it nevertheless retained a certain currency. It is interesting, therefore, to see this theme surface in one of the first press interviews Cole gave in the US, shortly after the publication of *House of Bondage*. The article in the *New York Times* from December 1967 echoes precisely this contestation over the definition and location of US racism. “I had been told that being colored didn’t matter at all in the United States – outside of the South that is,” Cole was reported as saying, “But everywhere I saw racial attitudes that were very much like those I know from South Africa”.⁴⁸ Cole did not discuss where he gained this impression of US racism as a problem only of the South – who had “told” him it was thus – but in part at least it can be read as a testament to the influence of the USIA narrative he was exposed to in South Africa. In this, Cole’s experience echoed that of the many diplomats and politicians from newly independent African states who, despite expectations to the contrary, suffered racism on their arrival in Washington and New York.⁴⁹ The day after publication, Cole composed a letter to the *New York Times* (it is unclear whether or not the letter was printed, or indeed even sent) setting straight several misinterpretations of his views. He was not surprised, as the article had implied, at the racism he experienced in the South, as he had been living in New York for ten months, where he had frequently been subject to racism. He also emphasised that the grievances of blacks mentioned in the article were not his ideas but quotes from African Americans.⁵⁰ This suggests that the framing of the article owed as much to the journalist and the pervasiveness of the North-South racial narrative, as it did to Cole’s own words. The way in which Cole’s identity as a black South African in exile was positioned in relation to US racial conflict in this article is worth further consideration, and comparison with other black South Africans arriving in the US during this period.⁵¹ And of course Cole would have had to negotiate his own position in relation to the racial situation that confronted him in Harlem, where he was living, and as he travelled across the US. It may be significant that the portrait of Cole illustrating the *New York Times* article showed him wearing a Black Panther style beret. Adopted by the Black Panther Party (BPP) shortly after it was founded in 1966, the beret “signified paramilitary action and serious

militancy”.⁵² The article’s publication coincided with the BPP campaign to free Huey Newton, who was arrested after the fatal shooting of police officer. The campaign was accompanied by a widely disseminated poster of Newton in beret and leather jacket, holding a spear in one hand and a rifle in the other, in a symbolic fusion of the African warrior and the urban American street fighter. It seems inconceivable that Cole would not have seen this image, and that his choice of headgear was not a self-conscious identification with black radicalism.⁵³ Similarly, his explicit rejection of the term ‘Negro’ in favour of ‘black’ is an indication of his political sympathies. Whilst the civil rights narrative promoted by the USIA would have dominated his perception of the racial situation in the US when he was in South Africa, now living in New York he saw this for the propaganda it was and aligned himself with the more militant perspectives associated with black power.

Turning to the book itself, how might it have been read in the context of the Cold War? Among those keenest to get their hands on it following publication were, unsurprisingly, the South African authorities. They must have acquired copies relatively soon after publication, as the book was banned in South Africa the following year, making it an offence to possess or distribute copies. There were references to the book (and copies of reviews in US magazines, including *Ebony*) in Cole’s police files in South Africa; and a copy was provided for the Minister of Justice to consult at the time of the book’s banning. In fact, the Security Police had been aware that Cole was leaving South Africa intent on publishing the book in the US. *House of Bondage* was interpreted as part of an international propaganda battle being waged over the representation of the apartheid system and racial justice in the eyes of US and South African publics. The following extracts from the Security Police records demonstrate this clearly:

This is not so much about the person Cole but about the influence the book will have, and it should not be forgotten that the people helping him in America are our arch-enemies. They are using Cole to spread liberalist or pink Communist views about us under the pretext that he is one of the oppressed people who have fled.

I am convinced that if we do not stop this in time, these writings will be smuggled into the country and distributed to Bantu schools here, as is constantly being done with other integration propaganda from America. Coming from an escapee from the RSA [Republic of South Africa], this will have a greater impact if it is distributed.

From newspaper reports reaching us from abroad about Cole and his book it is clear that even the self-confessed Communists are not having as much success with agitations against us as Cole has achieved now.⁵⁴

The South African authorities may well have developed an exaggerated sense of the book's influence, or exaggerated it in order to persuade the minister of the necessity of its banning, but it is clear nevertheless that they saw Cole's book as grist to the mill of what they referred to rather strikingly as "the fertile liberalist propaganda machine in America".

There is little direct evidence of how *House of Bondage* was read by those the South Africans authorities referred to as "American liberals," but a number of reviews that were interested in and to some degree sympathetic to Cole's project provide insights into its reception. One theme that emerged in the US reception of Cole's book was the extent to which it showed something unique to the oppression of the apartheid system or, conversely, whether similar images could not just as easily have been made in the southern US. For example, a review in *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (October 29, 1967), the only review issuing from a southern outlet that I have identified, implied a commonality between Cole's photography and the racial situation in the US. Although the parallel is unsurprising, it is worth observing how *House of Bondage* presented a challenge largely missing from representations of Africa elsewhere in US mainstream culture, notably in the illustrated magazine *Life*. The racial anxiety induced by the prospect of decolonisation, and the multiple conflicts that came with it, was assuaged for its white readers by the maintenance of a more reassuring visual discourse depicting whites in positions of authority and blacks as exotic primitives or subservient workers, who lacked the capacity to exercise agency responsibly. Where agency was accorded to newly independent Africans it was as nascent capitalists and consumers.⁵⁵ Even in its coverage of the civil rights struggle, *Life* represented

blacks primarily as victims.⁵⁶ Whilst *House of Bondage* is not a study of black political agency, through its concentration on modern urban settings it counters the dominant positioning of Africans as essentially pre-modern. And in its thematic structure, addressed to issues such as housing, healthcare and education, it articulates a social and economic rights agenda, which would have been legible to some at least in the US. Equally, one should not discount the fact that the photographs were those of a black African photographer. Cole was identified as the author of the work, and speaking for a black constituency. In the US in the late 1960s, both of these things served to bring the message of the book closer to home.

Stanley Kauffmann's review in the liberal magazine *New Republic* (October 1967), entitled "Hue and Cry," first set the racial conflict represented in Cole's book in a global context, as *the* conflict of the era – "Perhaps *this* is the way the world ends: neither with a bang nor a whimper but wrecked on the color bar"⁵⁷ – before explicitly addressing the book's content from the perspective of the liberal reader: "The liberal reader's first reaction is that such a book is superfluous: he knows that apartheid is horrible. There is, admittedly, no need to break the news of venomous oppression in South Africa. But Cole's photographs... make it harshly vivid, in a way we have no right to call unbearable".⁵⁸ Kauffmann then used the alibi of an "American Negro friend" to compare the racial situation in South Africa with that of the US. It is worth quoting at length:

She said that matters are basically no different in this country, they are just less overt. I think there is some truth in this, to the extent that Afrikaners are acting out the unacknowledged dreams and fantasies of many white Americans. But the difference between overtness and covertness makes for another difference. The American crisis is the result of a contrast between professions of equality and actual practice. There are no South African professions of equality – not even in the relatively liberal Verwoerd's plans for Bantu separation. If the present South African situation continues, there will not be a crisis like ours, there will simply be an explosion.⁵⁹

He concluded the review with a call for the US to reflect on the threat that racial injustice posed to its own stability: “Cole’s book holds out no hope whatsoever for South Africa; still that hopelessness may help to scare some others sufficiently”.⁶⁰ Writing just a few months after race riots had exploded on the streets of Detroit and Newark (July 1967), his point may have resonated with readers. Though, as the equivocation in the review indicates, there remained the possibility that *House of Bondage* could be read in a more reassuring way by US audiences; that what was significant about Cole’s image of South Africa was not its similarity to the racial situation in the US, but its difference. Lysle Meyer made a similar observation in his analysis of US perception of South Africa in the mid-1970s: “If Americans were guilt-ridden – and many were – about their own race problem, they could always point to South Africa as an example of what was considered a more detestable system”.⁶¹ In the liberal reader, the reception of Cole and his work in late 1960s America manifested a tension within this question of similarity or difference between South Africa and the US, which was echoed in foreign policy debates. It was a comparison that USIA officers never failed to challenge.

Although there are relatively limited sources from which to gauge the African American reception of *House of Bondage*, *Ebony* ran a feature on Cole in February 1968, under the title “My Country, My Hell!” A selection of 14 photographs, all but one of which appear in *House of Bondage*, was accompanied by a text that recounts Cole’s personal story from young photographer to exile. The additional photograph depicts a Christian gathering, possibly in Lady Selborne, echoing the view presented in *House of Bondage* that religion offers a form of escape from oppression. The caption also makes the following comment on politics: “Young Africans oppose black political parties which they say are totally ineffective”.⁶² This photograph and caption, like the section on religion in the book, seems to convey something of Cole’s personal frustration with the incapacity of political and religious institutions to effect real change in the lives of black South Africans. The rest of the selection provides a visual summary of the themes developed in the book: punitive pass laws, migrant labour, poverty, education and healthcare – a visual repertoire that connects racial and social injustice – concluding with a powerful juxtaposition of a photograph of a black mother holding her malnourished child to the camera while she turns her own head away, with a moment of intimacy between a healthy white child

and its black nanny. The photographs themselves do not explicitly link the racial injustice suffered by black South Africans with that experienced by African Americans, though they are certainly legible in those terms. In his closing remarks Cole invites just such a reflexive reading, which serves to collapse the distance between the US and South Africa and disrupt any consoling effect: “They [the photographs] should give readers some feeling of what it is like to be a black man in South Africa. And they may also explain why in, of all countries, I should feel somewhat at home in the United States”.⁶³

Although the letters pages in subsequent issues were dominated by other debates, for example on the use of the term “Negro,” the styling of hair and whether or not Lincoln might be regarded as a white supremacist, the article did receive a small number of responses, published in the April issue. William C. Jones and Celestine L. Billings of Chicago, wrote that, “the similarity is quite evident in America’s racist attitude toward her Black minority. Who is the carbon copy of whom?” George S. Carpenter of Queens, New York on the other hand spoke from a more humanist position: “I was not angered because I am black and they (South Africans) are black, but because I am a human being, and most assuredly, they too are human beings.” Herbert Hayward of Elizabeth, New Jersey simply noted that the article “made me weep,” an indication of the intense affective responses the photographs could evoke. It is worth observing too, that these African American responses refer to anger and sadness, forms of emotional identification with a capacity for solidarity, in contrast to the anxiety and guilt of white readers. To what extent African American readers interpreted the book in terms of solidarity in an international struggle against racial injustice is not a judgement that can be made with confidence. Some of the more aspirational middle-class readers of *Ebony* may not have seen it that way, but it is reasonable to conclude that others did.

Conclusion: Cole, Race Relations and Anti-Apartheid

When he left South Africa for exile, Cole was a talented young photographer determined to escape the oppression of apartheid and bring the body of work he had created to the attention of a wider world. The publication of *House of Bondage* did so emphatically, burning brightly for a moment in the late 1960s. In conclusion, however, I want to direct attention beyond the moment of Cole’s departure and

arrival. There are two aspects worth further reflection: the fate of Cole and his photographic ambitions in the US; and the subsequent circulation of images taken from *House of Bondage* in the campaigning literature and publicity of anti-apartheid activism, and Cole's seeming ambivalence to such uses of his work.

If a USIA-crafted narrative of civil rights progress dominated Cole's perception of the US from the global South, in exile he discovered something much less comforting. It was one thing to imaginatively identify with the African American experience through the images and music that arrived in South Africa, quite another to encounter and negotiate a place for oneself in the reality. In this respect, it is instructive to revisit one of the shortest sections in *House of Bondage* – African Middle Class. I have commented previously on this section as one of the darkest in Cole's book.⁶⁴ Several of the images, such as that of an "expensive" white wedding with the status symbol car decked in ribbons, or that of the "Miss Non-White Africa" contest, are clearly offered as condemnations of black African aspirations to Western values; and the text explicitly refers to Africans "los[ing] sight of the fact of their unalterable blackness and the realities to which this condemns them." The latter comment, clearly resonant of Fanon, indicates an engagement with the psychological consequences of racism that was equally important to black power and its critique of more moderate civil rights organisations. Whether it was assembled in the US or South Africa, this section can be read as a commentary on where Cole has arrived and a rejection of the dominant US version of racial progress that was on offer. Moreover, the text makes clear that these are values Cole associated with the US. He ridicules a man who, in order to establish the smallest of social distinctions in a society structured to oppress him, takes every opportunity to boast of his brief trip abroad on a sports mission and, as a result, became known as "Mr 'When-I-Was-in-America' Duma".⁶⁵ And the final image of the section, showing Albert Luthuli, President of the ANC, *en route* to Oslo to pick up the Nobel Peace prize, might be interpreted as a reflection on Cole's own departure into exile. Disabused of the view of America he had formed with the assistance of the USIA, Cole realised the limits of racial justice in the US and the consequences for his own aspirations:

On my departure from home I thought I would focus my talents on other aspects of life, which I assumed would be beautiful and a joy to do. However, what I have seen of this country [US] over the past two years has proved me wrong. Recording truth at whatever cost is one thing, but finding oneself having to live a lifetime of being the chronicler of misery, injustice and callousness is another. Unfortunately, such matter is about the only work magazines here want to offer me, all because of the fact that the subject matter of my first book happened to be centred on a “race issue,” the colour of my skin and the fact that I endured the living hell that is South Africa. But the total man does not live by one experience. He is moulded and shaped by the diversity of other experiences into some form of the whole man.⁶⁶

US Cold War public diplomacy assisted Cole, both in its provision of resources and networks that he could access as a young black photojournalist in the hostile environment of apartheid South Africa and, more directly, in facilitating the safekeeping of his negatives during his final months in the country, and their safe passage to join him in exile. At the same time, in exile in the US, the narrative of race and civil rights the Cold War helped to construct was a trap within which, tragically, Cole became caught, unable to find a new direction for his work.⁶⁷ By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the aspirations expressed above had been replaced by a commitment to work on a project, funded by the Ford Foundation, which looked remarkably like a continuation of the USIA Cold War project to orchestrate the representation of race in the US.⁶⁸ Cole was funded to undertake two studies: “A Study of the Negro Family in the Rural South” and “A Study of Negro Life in the City”.⁶⁹ The justification was that the project would enable Cole to become “a more useful commentator on racial matters” and “do something important in the field of US race relations.” This commission makes perfect sense when one realises that the support offered to Cole first by the USIA and then by the Ford Foundation were simply two points on an ideological continuum linking foreign and domestic approaches to race. The ideology that first embraced him in South Africa was there to accommodate him too in the US, though it came

at a huge personal cost. Cole would never achieve the wholeness he wished for and from the mid-1970s on he suffered with mental health problems and long periods of homelessness.⁷⁰

In juxtaposition with Cole's biographical narrative, one can consider the corresponding fate of his photographs. At the time of its publication, *House of Bondage* represented the most comprehensive and penetrating photographic account of life in South Africa for its oppressed majority. It was inevitable, therefore, that beyond the publication of the book, the photographs would be picked up and disseminated in the service of the international anti-apartheid movement as its reach extended through the 1970s and 1980s. I am not aware of research that traces the full extent of the use of Cole's work, but it is clear that individual images from the book were being copied and reproduced in a variety of political contexts, including the official journal of the ANC in exile, *Sechaba*,⁷¹ publications produced by the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), and projects in conjunction with the UN Special Committee on Apartheid.⁷² Images copied from *House of Bondage* were also deployed in grassroots boycott campaigns, such as that instigated in 1970 by two African American Polaroid employees – the Polaroid Workers Revolutionary Movement – protesting against the company's complicity with apartheid through its supply of technology for the production of passbook photographs.⁷³

The framing of Cole's South African images within a narrative of liberation, and as a basis for international racial solidarity, ought to provide a counterpoint to the attempt, symbolised by the Ford Foundation commission, to incorporate Cole the photographer within an American liberal capitalist model of racial progress. Yet, the evidence suggests Cole was profoundly ambivalent about these uses of his work. At the heart of his ambivalence, I suggest, was the deep disillusionment he experienced in the political reception of his photographs during his early years of exile. In an interview by Swedish photographer Rune Hassner, first broadcast in 1969, Cole explicitly discussed the ambition for his photography to contribute to the work of the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN in its opposition to apartheid. Yet, Hassner later recalled, he felt disregarded by many of those to whom he tried to show his work, including ambassadors of other African countries.⁷⁴ Several people who met Cole in his later years recollected the way he felt exploited in the use of his work by the ANC, without acknowledgement or support.⁷⁵ And when he met Omar Badsha for the first time, in hospital shortly before he died, Cole

launched a verbal attack on his political approach to photography.⁷⁶ Intensifying his disillusionment, I believe, Cole was hurt by the indifference to the integrity of his work in its use as campaigning material. More than most in the generation of photojournalists from which he emerged, or the political generation of photographers that followed, Cole had a developed sense of the autonomy of his vision as a photographer. Fellow exile Lefifi Tladi recalls Cole saying of the ANC, “They call themselves a liberation movement and yet they’re not conscious of the importance of the arts in the context of the struggle”.⁷⁷ To subsume photography to the political struggle for liberation, no less than to subsume it to the betterment of US race relations, was, for Cole, an act of negation.

Yet, notwithstanding the genuine anger and disillusionment that he felt in his later years, a longer perspective must acknowledge that although Cole’s life was no story of redemption, *House of Bondage* represented a key moment in the development of an “evidentiary poetics”⁷⁸ of anti-apartheid struggle, and has provided a source of creative affirmation for future generations of black photographers.⁷⁹ Furthermore, legible as it was within the different political discourses of US race relations and international racial solidarity, Cole’s book might also be taken as paradigmatic of a Cold War critical imagination. As Octavio Paz argues, writing from a different set of Cold War co-ordinates: “In our age the imagination operates critically. Criticism is the imagination’s apprenticeship in its second turn, the imagination cured of fantasies and determined to face the world’s realities”.⁸⁰ One could not better describe Cole’s photography. And if, ironically, it was the cultural space opened up in the service of US foreign policy that provided the conditions for Cole’s work to survive and travel, it was nevertheless an act of courage and imagination to grasp the opportunity.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1.1 ‘Teacher toward end of her day in school’ (caption from *House of Bondage*). Photograph by Ernest Cole. © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.2 Portrait of Ernest Cole. Photographer and date unknown. This portrait was used as a publicity photograph for Jürgen Schadeberg’s film about Cole; it appears to have been made at the same time as the image reproduced on the dust jacket of *House of Bondage* and to illustrate a short article on Cole in the *New York Times* (1967). Reproduced courtesy of Claudia and Jürgen Schadeberg (www.jurgenschadeberg.com).

Figure 1.3 ‘My Country, My Hell!’ *Ebony*, February 1968. The photograph on the lower half of the page is the only image with this article not reproduced in *House of Bondage*. The caption reads: ‘Christianity is used by many black South Africans as a means of escaping oppression’. Photographs © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.4 ‘My Country, My Hell!’ *Ebony*, February 1968. These photographs both appear in *House of Bondage*, though not in juxtaposition, where they are captioned respectively, ‘Infant suffers from advanced malnutrition’ and ‘Servants are not forbidden to love’. Photographs © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.5 ‘Rented car is status symbol at middle-class marriage. Expensive wedding can leave couple broke for a year’ (caption from *House of Bondage*). Photograph by Ernest Cole. © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.6 ‘Albert Luthuli, President of the ANC, en route to Oslo with wife to receive Nobel Peace Prize for 1960. Then – as now – he was officially in banishment.’ (caption from *House of Bondage*). Photograph by Ernest Cole. © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.7 Southern USA, c.1969-70. Photograph by Ernest Cole. © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1.8 New York, c.1971. Photograph by Ernest Cole. © Ernest Cole Family Trust. Reproduced with permission.

Notes

¹ Department of Justice File No. 2/1/2265. I am grateful to the Freedom of Information Programme at the South African History Archive, and in particular Gabriella Razzano, for facilitating my access to these documents. In most cases the original is in Afrikaans. Redactions are indicated by [BLANK]. See also Darren Newbury, ‘Ernest Cole and the South African Security Police.’, in *History of Photography* 35, no. 1 (2011): 76-79.

² Robert A. Rockweiler was director of the USIS office in Johannesburg in the mid-1960s. In recent correspondence, he suggested that Cole’s storage of negatives at the office would have been somewhat irregular and not something he would have condoned; and whilst he acknowledged it was entirely possible he had met Cole, he would then have passed him on to his press officer (now deceased) who had much more frequent contact with the “several young photographers who worked with *The Star*, the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Post and Drum*”. Robert Rockweiler, *pers. comm.*, (December 1, and December 12, 2013). I am grateful to Nick Cull without whose prompting and assistance I would not have located Rockweiler. It seems probable that, rather than Rockweiler being a direct contact, Cole was asking Struan Robertson to appeal to him in his position of authority at the USIS office in order to secure the safe transit of his negatives. The implication remains, however, that Cole developed a relationship with the USIS that went beyond their normal support for young black photographers and journalists, and viewed them as a source of support for his project.

³ South Africa was regularly the object of censure in UN resolutions though despite calls for its expulsion vetoes by the US, along with the UK and France, ensured it remained a member; it was, however, excluded from participating in the work of the General Assembly from 1974.

⁴ For a detailed account of the role played by African American civil rights organisations in the negotiations going on at the UN during the period in which the UNDR was taking shape, see Carol Anderson, ‘From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, the United Nations, and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1947’, *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (1996): 531-641; and Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵ See Ariella Azoulay, “Ending World War II: Visual Literacy Class in Human Rights”, in Sophie McClennen and Alexandra Schultheis Moore, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights*, 159-72, (New York: Routledge, 2016). Azoulay is referring here to the submission of human rights to national sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction, and its visually corollary, wherein the identification of human rights violations is tightly circumscribed, excluding, for example, the use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the forced migrations that followed the end of the war.

⁶ Carol Anderson, “International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid: The NAACP’s Alliance with the Reverend Michael Scott for South West Africa’s Liberation, 1946-51”, *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (2008): 319.

⁷ The photographs were taken by Leon Levson. Darren Newbury, *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2009), 43-68.

⁸ Azoulay is no doubt right that the dominant pedagogy of human rights would ultimately win out over such readings, as set out in this volume. As Anderson notes, the virulent anticommunism of the 1950s precipitated a retreat from the embrace of a broader human rights and social justice agenda in the African American struggle. Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, 273. But dominant readings are never entirely uncontested, and the potential for international racial solidarity, I suggest, continued to unsettle the reception of images of apartheid South Africa in the years that followed.

⁹ Anderson, “International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid”, 325.

¹⁰ Walter White cited in Anderson, “From Hope to Disillusion”, 532.

¹¹ See, for example: Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jason Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices: US Cold War Public Diplomacy and the Formation of the Third World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹² Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 126.

¹³ The 2011 edition of Dudziak’s book is illustrated by a number of iconic images, but neither the images nor their production or circulation are given any sustained consideration. Similarly, Parker’s 2016 book includes a sequence of 23 photographs illustrative of US public diplomacy presented without further discussion. Sönke Kunkel, *Empire of Pictures: Global Media and the 1960s Remaking of American Foreign Policy*, (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016) specifically considers the visual dimension of US foreign policy, including African case studies, though he accords television a more central place than photography. Literature, painting and theatre receive greater consideration in the wider study of Cold War visual culture, but reference to Africa is largely absent, as it is from most discussions of the highest profile photographic exhibition of the Cold War period, the *Family of Man* exhibition. See Tamar Garb, “Rethinking Sekula from the Global South: Humanist Photography Revisited”, *Grey Room*, no. 55 (2014): 34-57.

¹⁴ Ernest Cole, *House of Bondage*, (New York: Random House, 1967). *House of Bondage* features in Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, eds., *The Photobook: A History*, Volume II, (London: Phaidon, 2006), although the accompanying interpretation contains inaccuracies.

¹⁵ In order to maintain a degree of continuity, the overseas offices of the USIA retained the older designation of United States Information Service (USIS), the name by which the agency was known to foreign citizens. This usage is followed here: hence, USIS refers to the South African office, and USIA to the US government agency as a whole.

¹⁶ Jian Wang, “Telling the American Story to the World: The Purpose of US Public Diplomacy in Historical Perspective”, *Public Relations Review* 33, no. 1 (2007): 25.

¹⁷ Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 278.

¹⁸ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 159.

¹⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 201.

²⁰ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 279.

²¹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 279.

²² Nicholas J. Cull, “‘The Man Who Invented the Truth’: The Tenure of Edward R. Murrow as Director of the United States Information Agency during the Kennedy Years”, *Cold War History* 4, no. 1 (2003): 24.

²³ The archival references to the USIS are contained in Cole’s letter of May 1966 and the Security Police records, in addition to a remark that Joseph Lelyveld made about Cole conceiving of his dream to publish a book of photographs on South Africa in the USIS library in Johannesburg or Pretoria. Joseph Lelyveld interviewed by Darren Newbury, Hampstead, London, October 18, 2006.

²⁴ Arnold Reinhold. Available online at: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USIS-Johannesburg.agr.jpg>. Accessed July 17, 2015.

²⁵ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 211.

²⁶ See Struan Robertson, *pers. comm.*, (April 13, 2007). Mphakati would himself travel to the US on a leadership program in the mid-1970s.

²⁷ King featured extensively in USIA materials, including, to cite just one example, in “Distinguished Young Americans”, a 1962 pamphlet for global distribution.

²⁸ Vernon McKay, “South African Propaganda: Methods and Media”, *Africa Report* 11, no. 2 (1966): 42; and Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 171.

²⁹ McKay, “South African Propaganda”, 42.

³⁰ Garb, “Rethinking Sekula from the Global South”, 47-49.

³¹ Cole was familiar with Steichen’s exhibition, and had access to a copy of the published version at Struan Robertson’s studio where he often spent time. Struan Robertson, *pers. comm.*, (April 24, 2007).

³² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (London: Paladin, 1973), 107-10. For more recent readings of the exhibition, and an attempt to reclaim it from Barthes’ damning critique, see Gerd Hurm, Anke Reitz and Shamoon Zamir, eds., *The Family of Man Revisited: Photography in a Global Age* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with Centre National de l’Audiovisuel (CNA), Luxembourg, 2018).

³³ For a more extended reading of Cole’s book along these lines, see Newbury, *Defiant Images*, chap. four.

³⁴ See Daniel Whitman, *Outsmarting Apartheid: An Oral History of South Africa's Cultural and Educational Exchange with the United States, 1960-1999*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015). There is, however, something uncomfortably self-congratulatory about several of the US perspectives offered in this volume, and indeed its title.

³⁵ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 29.

³⁶ See Gunilla Knappe, ed., *Ernest Cole: Photographer*, (Göteborg: Hasselblad Foundation and Steidl, 2010).

³⁷ “Ernest Cole: Photographer” opened at Johannesburg Art Gallery on September 19, 2010 and has been shown across South Africa and in the US. A smaller collection of Cole’s photographs was also exhibited in “Ons hou van Suid-Afrika (We love South Africa): One Country in Three Exhibitions,” May 28–August 22, 2010 at the Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden. Cole had strong connections with Sweden during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and spent long periods there.

³⁸ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 12.

³⁹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 49.

⁴⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 108.

⁴¹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 126, 144.

⁴² This poster is in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (E.1739-2004).

⁴³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 169-72.

⁴⁴ See Renee Romano, “No diplomatic immunity: African diplomats, the State Department, and civil rights, 1961-1964”, *The Journal of American History* 87, no.2 (2000): 546-579.

⁴⁵ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 234-35.

⁴⁶ See Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2.

⁴⁷ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 85. Anderson argues, however, that emphatic as it was, the BPP's internationalism was largely rhetorical, in comparison to the historiographically neglected role of black liberals working within structures of government and the UN. See Carol Anderson, "The Histories of African Americans' Anticolonialism during the Cold War", in MacMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World*, 184.

⁴⁸ See Alden Whitman, "A South African Talks about U.S.", *New York Times*, (December 11, 1967).

⁴⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 211; Romano, "No diplomatic immunity".

⁵⁰ Letter from Ernest Cole to the editor of the *New York Times*, December 12, 1967. Private collection.

⁵¹ Nat Nakasa, who arrived in the US on exit visa a few years before Cole, would be one such example. See Ryan Lenora Brown, "A Native of Nowhere: The Life of South African Journalist Nat Nakasa, 1937-1965." *Kronos* 37, no. 1 (2011): 41-59.

⁵² Ogbar, *Black Power*, 118.

⁵³ One can be less certain how Cole would have responded to the use of the spear and shield to signify Africa, since, under apartheid, identification with an ethnic identity risked complicity with the ideology of 'separate development'. Elsewhere, Cole has expressed caution over the use of his few photographs of 'traditional' African cultural practices. See Knape, *Ernest Cole*, 235.

⁵⁴ Department of Justice; File No. 2/1/2265.

⁵⁵ Sarah Bassnett, "Photography and Insecurity: *Life* Magazine and the Emergence of Neoliberalism", conference paper delivered at *Cold War Camera*, Mexico City, 13-14 February, 2015.

⁵⁶ See Martin A. Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁵⁷ Stanley Kauffmann, "Hue and Cry", *New Republic*, (October 28, 1967): 22. Original emphasis.

⁵⁸ Kauffmann, "Hue and Cry", 22.

⁵⁹ Kauffmann, "Hue and Cry", 22.

⁶⁰ Kauffmann, "Hue and Cry", 22.

⁶¹ Lysle E. Meyer, 1976. "The American Image of South Africa in Historical Perspective", *Social Studies* 67, no. 1 (1976): 25. For an earlier version of this same ideological narrative, the result of a USIA commission for South African author Alan Paton to visit the southern US, see Alan Paton, "The Negro in America Today", *Collier's*, (October 15, 1954).

⁶² Ernest Cole, "My Country, My Hell!", *Ebony*, (February 1968): 71.

⁶³ Cole, "My Country, My Hell!", 69.

⁶⁴ Newbury, *Defiant Images*, 203-4.

⁶⁵ Cole, *House of Bondage*, 170.

⁶⁶ Struan Robertson, n. d., "Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage", (Unpublished biographical essay): 24.

⁶⁷ Cole was not the first young black South African to find himself trapped in this way. Nat Nakasa, a young journalist who like Cole had worked for *Drum* magazine, left South Africa on an exit visa to take up a fellowship at Harvard in 1964. He soon found himself "inundated" with requests to speak on the racial situation in South Africa, which he regarded as a "display for the benefit of white liberals looking to assuage their own guilt. Had they noticed, he wondered, that there was a massive civil rights struggle underway in their own country?" Brown, "A Native of Nowhere", 55. Shaken by a visit to the southern US in the spring of 1965, Nakasa fell into a depression; and in July of that year he jumped to his death from the seventh floor of a New York apartment.

⁶⁸ Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, Karen Ferguson's excellent study of Ford Foundation support for black cultural activities in the US provides a deeper context for understanding Cole's Ford commission, albeit Cole's project appears to be more of a one-off than part of a sustained programme. See Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Interestingly, in view of Cole's seeming gravitation towards a more radical separatist position, Ferguson argues that, somewhat counter intuitively, the Ford Foundation found common ground with advocates of black separatism. Ferguson,

Top Down, 9, 50. This perceived affinity, as well as potentially useful insights for their extensive programmes in racial enclaves in US cities, which were backed by massive investment, explains why Cole was seen as a useful commentator on race relations in the US.

⁶⁹ The use of the term “Negro” here may be a clue as to the extent in which this project was shaped by the Foundation.

⁷⁰ Whilst Cole did make photographs during the period of Ford commission, none of these were published at the time and the majority were considered lost. Remarkably, however, in 2017, after the first draft of this chapter was written, Cole’s US negatives came to light, having apparently been stored in a Swedish bank since the early 1970s. This collection includes not only many negatives from Cole’s work in South Africa, but also those from the studies he conducted for the Ford Foundation, as well later work in New York. I am grateful to James Sanders for information on the negatives’ emergence and the extent of the material contained in this collection. See James Sanders, “Ernest Cole’s photographs reveal America’s apartheid”, *The Sunday Times*, (October 22, 2017).

⁷¹ Robertson, n. d., “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, 39.

⁷² Knappe, *Ernest Cole*, 243.

⁷³ Several of Cole’s photographs also appear (uncredited) alongside images of civil rights struggle in the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore.

⁷⁴ *Bilder för miljoner* (“Images for millions”), No.5; and “Lewis Hine och Ernest Cole bild som vapen” (“Lewis Hine and Ernest Cole: photography as a social weapon”), shown in Sweden, June 8, 1969. Hans Beukes, “Ernest Cole: Photojournalist,” interview with Rune Hassner, (Göteborg, Sweden, August 1993).

⁷⁵ See Robertson, n. d., “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, 34, 39. It is not always easy to discern Cole’s voice in these recollections, and some concerns may have been amplified by political differences. Geoff Mphakati, for example, is reported by Robertson as saying that Cole was “completely ripped off” by the ANC.

⁷⁶ “I hear you’re full of shit. You’re into politics. You know man, fuck all that shit. Get rid of politics. Don’t involve yourself in politics. Take your pictures. Fuck all that shit!”. Robertson, n.d., “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, 43.

⁷⁷ Robertson, n. d., “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, 39.

⁷⁸ Garb, “Rethinking Sekula from the Global South”, 52.

⁷⁹ Native American photographer Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie cites *House of Bondage* as moving her to become involved in photography when she first saw it in the late 1960s. See Newbury, *Defiant Images*, 208-9.

⁸⁰ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, (New York: Grove Press, 1985 [1972]), 325.