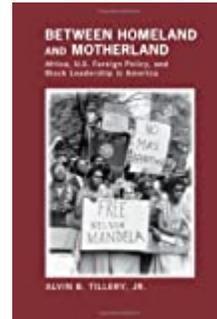




Jr. Tillery, Alvin B. *Between Homeland and Motherland: Africa, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Black Leadership in America.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. 198 S. ISBN 978-0-8014-4897-3; ISBN 978-0-8014-7734-8.



Reviewed by David Hostetter

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A. B. Tillery, Jr.: Between Homeland and Motherland

This is a bold survey of the evolution of elite African American opinion and action regarding US policy toward Africa. Covering the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Tillery provides a sweeping yet concise analysis of the changing calculations and considerations regarding the engagement of black elites with Africa. The book devotes a chapter to several historic episodes: the antebellum actions of the American Colonization Society, the challenge of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association to Pan-Africanism espoused by W.E.B. Du Bois, the response of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to World War II and the founding of the United Nations, and the struggles of the Congressional Black Caucus. *Homeland* posits a "strategic behavior model" (p. 13) to explain the development of black demands pertaining to American engagement with Africa, buttressed by an analysis of media coverage of the key debates regarding emigration, global conflict, and the movement to end racism in South Africa and beyond.

The chronologically arranged chapters on black elite engagement with Africa provide a useful overview of the ways in which the stakes have shaped the choices

of those in the most prominent voices in the black community. Tillery begins his account with explication of the work of black Quaker Paul Cuffee, who was instrumental in founding Sierra Leone. Moving from the work of Cuffee to the debates over repatriation, *Homeland* examines the treatment of emigration to Liberia in black publications of the time. He repeats this textual analysis in his treatment of each episode, interweaving historical context with social science empiricism, thus illuminating a trajectory in which black leadership moved from representing an oppressed minority calling for relief to serving as sophisticated stakeholders able to speak for a transnational constituency.

Tillery provides a subtle and nuanced treatment of this history, seeking to establish the "between" place of the black elite suggested by his title. *Homeland* is strongest in outlining each of the debates involved in this evolution, to which Tillery aptly applies the notion of "authenticity blues" described by cultural critic Stanley Crouch (p. 103). In striving to democratically connect and balance concerns about Africa with the needs and desires of the majority of African Americans, black

elites have faced the dilemma of how much to speak for those they wish to represent. From this process has arisen a method of democratic representation, which by the 1970s took concrete form through the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). The richest portion of *Homeland* derives from the series of interviews Tillery conducted with members of the CBC who participated in the successful effort to impose economic sanctions on the apartheid regime in South Africa. From his analysis of CBC voting patterns Tillery demonstrates that ethnic solidarity and transnational commitments to a motherland are not necessarily enough to mobilize the resources required to make change. *Homeland* concludes with a discussion of the division in the CBC over the African Growth and Opportunity Act, passed in 2000, where protection of textile jobs at home trumped support for free trade abroad for some CBC members.

In his effort to establish the pragmatic political judgments involved with transnational solidarity rather than just "emotive commitments" (p. 3), Tillery gives short shrift to the role of political culture, making his work more of a frame for further research than a definitive departure from past appraisals. For example, path-breaking tennis player Arthur Ashe, a member of the black elite heavily involved in anti-apartheid activism, asserted in his memoir: "Like many people with even a modicum of conscience and intelligence, I was too confused about what was going on among the leaders of black America, especially the younger leaders, to know precisely where to tread. South Africa was a clearer issue, and I turned to it almost with relief." Arthur Ashe / Arnold Rampersad,

Days of Grace: A Memoir, New York 1993, S. 115. Ashe, who spoke from the experience of being a prominent international figure able to use his fame to shine a light on the crimes of apartheid, exemplifies the challenges faced by the black elite that Tillery seeks to explain. Inclusion of more historical context of this sort could have strengthened the social science critique of *Homeland*.

Tillery does not include a bibliography, nor does he make reference to several key secondary sources such as Carol Anderson's *Eyes Off the Prize* Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955*, Cambridge 2003. and *Fit for Freedom* Donna McDaniel / Vanessa Julye, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*, Philadelphia 2009. by Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye. Engagement with these works would more fully ground the analysis Tillery presents. No mention is made of the role of gender in this history, and the contributions of black women are not fully discussed, a surprising omission for a work that aims to be comprehensive.

Between Homeland and Motherland offers a challenge to social scientists and historians seeking to understand the relationship of ethnicity and foreign policy engagement. Tillery's work will be useful for upper level undergraduate courses and applicable to graduate seminars. By refining the frame of transnationalism from the perspective of a political scientist, Tillery has opened the way for further multidisciplinary discussion of African American activism regarding Africa.

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