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**Andy DeRoche. "KK, the Godfather, and the Duke: Maintaining Positive Relations between Zambia and the USA in Spite of Nixon's Other Priorities." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 12:1 (January 2011): 97-121. DOI: 10.1080/17533171.2011.533915. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2011.533915>**

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Review by **William Bishop**, Vanderbilt University

**T**his excellent article by Andy DeRoche represents much of what is exciting about the direction in which the field of foreign relations history is heading. Among the greatest strengths of the article is that DeRoche has clearly done his homework. He has conducted extensive archival research in Zambia and the United States, thoroughly examined Zambian newspapers, and conducted numerous interviews with former Zambian officials. This research has enabled him to provide a fascinating account of the U.S.-Zambian relationship during Richard Nixon's presidency.

The story DeRoche tells is not a happy one, at least not at the official level. DeRoche describes Nixon's policy toward sub-Saharan Africa as one of "jackassery" (112). This will not come as a surprise to scholars familiar with the Nixon Administration's African policies, most infamously National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 39, which advocated quietly developing closer ties with southern Africa's minority regimes on the premise that "[t]he whites are here to stay."<sup>1</sup> While DeRoche's argument may not be startling, he uses the U.S.-Zambian relationship to demonstrate that African issues languished at the bottom of Nixon's agenda. DeRoche shows that Nixon refused to meet with his Zambian counterpart, Kenneth Kaunda, when Kaunda was at the height of his prestige or to lift a finger to stop the passage of the Byrd Amendment, thereby allowing

<sup>1</sup> For more on NSSM 39, see eds. Mohamed A El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Study Memorandum 39*, (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976). For a more general overview's of Nixon's policies toward sub-Saharan Africa, see Thomas Borstlemann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 222-237.

the United States to join South Africa and Portugal as the only nations to openly flaunt mandatory U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia's white-supremacist regime. Preoccupied with Vietnam and domestic politics, Nixon was not overly concerned about the precipitous downturn in America's relationship with one of its closest African allies. It is for this reason that Zambian officials would later describe his years in office as an "era of arrogance."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the poor state of relations at the top, DeRoche digs beneath the surface to demonstrate some of the ways in which Zambians and African Americans attempted "to build bridges between their respective countries, in spite of Nixon's indifference" (97-98). The attention DeRoche devotes to non-state actors and cultural diplomacy is another great strength of this article. He documents how the African goodwill missions of tennis great Arthur Ashe, jazz legend Duke Ellington, and "the Godfather of Soul" James Brown strengthened the cultural bonds between citizens in both countries at a time when official relations were stagnating. In this way, DeRoche contributes to a growing literature on the role of non-state actors in foreign affairs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, while his article examines state-to-state relations, DeRoche manages to transcend "old-fashioned diplomatic history" by exploring how issues of race and culture affected U.S.-Zambian relations.<sup>4</sup>

DeRoche also introduces readers to a number of lesser-known diplomatic figures such as Congressman Charles Diggs, Ambassador Jean Wilkowski, and Zambian Foreign Minister Vernon Mwaanga. While it may be difficult for non-specialists to keep up with this ensemble cast, focusing on figures other than Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger enables DeRoche to provide a richer understanding of the U.S.-Zambian relationship during these turbulent years than would otherwise have been possible. Nixon and Kissinger may not have been particularly interested in African affairs, but DeRoche demonstrates how lower-level officials struggled to improve U.S.-Zambian relations in spite of Nixon's other priorities.

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<sup>2</sup> United National Independence Party Archives, (Lusaka, Zambia), UNIP 7/23/51 file, Brief for a Zambian Delegation to the United States led by His Excellency Dr. K.D. Kaunda, April 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 1975.

<sup>3</sup> There is a vast literature on the importance of non-state actors and cultural diplomacy. Two such works which relate to Africa are: Penny von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), and Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> This approach is in line with the recent work of historians such as Mary Dudziak, Brenda Gayle Plummer, and Thomas Borstelmann, all of whom argue that statecraft cannot be studied in isolation from broader societal trends. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), and Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*.

Despite all this exciting work, DeRoche fails to explain why the U.S.-Zambian relationship was so important. He criticizes Nixon for prioritizing Vietnam and domestic political issues ahead of America's relationship with Zambia but never makes a compelling argument as to why Nixon should have done otherwise. Was it because of Zambia's role in the struggles for majority rule going on throughout southern Africa? Because the United States needed access to Zambia's copper mines? Or for more humanitarian reasons? DeRoche seems to lean toward the latter option, suggesting in his conclusion that improved U.S.-Zambian relations could have facilitated a swifter resolution of the conflicts in Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia, as well as possibly allowing the United States to persuade Kaunda not to transform Zambia into a one-party state. However, this reviewer remains unconvinced that a more conciliatory posture on Nixon's part would have made a substantial difference. Kenneth Kaunda was a man with his own agenda, and it is far from certain that a warmer relationship with Richard Nixon would have deterred the Zambian leader from doing what he felt was best for himself and his country.

DeRoche also could have done more to contextualize the U.S.-Zambian relationship. Decolonization and the Cold War were the predominant issues facing policymakers in Washington and Lusaka during the 1970s, and DeRoche could have explored in greater depth the ways in which these factors affected U.S.-Zambian relations. For instance, did Nixon's efforts to establish détente with the Soviet Union, end the war in Vietnam, and normalize relations with the People's Republic of China do anything to placate Zambian officials? Did the fact that Zambia was hosting leftist "freedom fighters" from across the region ruffle feathers in Washington? Shedding light on these issues would have made this article even more illuminating.

Despite these minor quibbles, this article fits nicely into an emerging literature on U.S.-African relations during the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> It provides further evidence that Richard Nixon viewed African affairs as a low priority. It also advances the field by showing how Americans and Zambians at both the official and non-official level struggled to prevent a collapse of the U.S.-Zambian relationship during Nixon's presidency. Given DeRoche's reputation as one of the preeminent historians of U.S.-Zambian relations, this reviewer eagerly awaits the release of his forthcoming monograph on the subject.

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<sup>5</sup> This literature includes: Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), Andrew DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001), Philip Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*, (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), and ed. Sue Onslow, *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation*, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Independence, 1965-1980” examines the role played by the United States in facilitating Zimbabwe’s transition to majority rule.

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