



# **The Americans Are Coming!: Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa (New African Histories)**

*Robert Trent Vinson*

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For more than half a century before World War II, black South Africans and “American Negroes”—a group that included African Americans and black West Indians—established close institutional and personal relationships that laid the necessary groundwork for the successful South African and American antiapartheid movements. Though African Americans suffered under Jim Crow racial discrimination, oppressed Africans saw African Americans as free people who had risen from slavery to success and were role models and potential liberators. Many African Americans, regarded initially by the South African government as “honorary whites” exempt from segregation, also saw their activities in South Africa as a divinely ordained mission to establish “Africa for Africans,” liberated from European empires. The Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, the largest black-led movement with two million members and supporters in forty-three countries at its height in the early 1920s, was the most anticipated source of liberation. Though these liberation prophecies went unfulfilled, black South Africans continued to view African Americans as inspirational models and as critical partners in the global antiapartheid struggle. *The Americans Are Coming!* is a rare case study that places African history and American history in a global context and centers Africa in African Diaspora studies.

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