

Alain Locke - Precursor of ~~the~~ African Diaspora  
Studies

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In 1924 when Alain Locke published in the recently launched review *Opportunity* an article "Apropos of Africa," the term diaspora, used in English by that time less than 50 years, referred exclusively to the post-Biblical dispersions of the Jewish people. In the last twenty years the term has increasingly been applied to all dispersions of peoples from real or mythological homelands, and notably to the dispersion of sub-Saharan--Black people--from Africa to various sites in the Western hemisphere, a dispersion that begins with the Maritime Age of the sixteenth century. So intense has the concern with diasporas become that a journal with that name was created a few years ago.

I wish to argue that Alain Locke was a ~~prophet~~<sup>precursor</sup> of diaspora studies and indeed that the results of his attention to race relations and to ethno-cultural encounter provides useful paradigms for illuminating and enriching the slippery enterprise which studies of the African diaspora have become. Locke was inevitably the product of a tradition and of his own particular experiences and it is from these that his first proto-diasporic formulations arose. What then, was this tradition and what were those experiences?