



0. Albert Schweitzer and His Hospital in Gabon - Story
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When Albert Schweitzer returned to Africa, after WWI, he found the Gabon-based hospital in shambles. The war, the presence of the white people—and then the sense of loss when the whites abandoned them after the war—left the people of Gabon in turmoil. Undaunted, Dr. Schweitzer set about to continue his work. He built a new hospital and new doctors and nurses from Europe, who had followed him to Africa, came to help him. Then his work was once-again interrupted by war. The hospital was supposed to be neutral territory, when the war came to Africa, but gun fire was common in the area. Once Albert was nearly killed when machine guns fired into the hospital yard. The commander of the troops came to the hospital to apologize, personally, to Albert.

After the war ended, problems in African were not over. Beyond a famine, no money was forthcoming from a war-torn Europe, and only one nurse remained to help Dr. Schweitzer. Just when Albert was about to give up, and close the hospital, a large check arrived from America. It literally saved the day!

How was it that such a life-saving check came from America? Albert's fame had extended across the Atlantic. With that fact at work, American charities became the hospital's major source of financial support.

Albert had trained Africans to be orderlies at the hospital, but he found it difficult to recruit new doctors. Whites could not readily adapt to the African climate and wanted to stay in their home countries.

Eventually, as part of their training, some doctors and nurses came to Dr. Schweitzer's hospital to treat patients and learn about tropical diseases. However, they rarely stayed more than a year or two.

In post-war Gabon, the people held an election to determine whether the country should remain a colony of France or should seek independence. During an interview, in 1960, Albert observed:

There is no problem of the Africans which they cannot solve for themselves given time, if the civilized nations of Europe and America do not blow themselves and Africa up first. (Albert Schweitzer, quoted by George N. Marshall and David Poling, in *Schweitzer: A Biography*, at page 227 of an electronic version of the book, online via Google Books.)

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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Albert Schweitzer

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