Drawing on government documents from the French, Senegalese, and United States National Archives, this article examines the cultural clashes that occurred between French officials, American diplomats and African nationalists in the colony of French West Africa just after World War II. These clashes occurred over the construction of American libraries and cultural centers, the screening of Hollywood films and the creation of programs for Africans to study in the U.S. I argue that such confrontations reflected wider global political debates about communist infiltration in Africa, American cultural imperialism, racial discrimination and the possibility of an Africa independent of Western influence.