

AFRICAN STUDIES

“Africa can easily be shaped in our minds to serve the image we wish to project of ourselves.”



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Essay:

“Africa can easily be shaped in our minds to serve the image we wish to project of ourselves.” How does this quote reflect the way in which people – whether they are or are not Africans—have written about Africa?”

When thinking about this statement/question, I must result to research of Blacology and ask who is making the statement? Research has revealed that statements are made according to the physical and mental make up of the person writing. One must give consideration also to chronology. According to Dr. John Hendrik Clark, “Africa has always has things that others needed but did not want to pay for”. This statement can be problematic if it is seen through the eyes of colonialism. Chronologically it is consistent with the way that Europeans see Africa. In the past, Europeans have seen Africa as a place were there is no intelligence and no civilization. They feel as though Africa is theirs to be taken. Africa is a frontier for what ever Europe needs. This statement is without consideration of the injustices that have already been carried out on Africa. It brings to mind the conception of the open space or the atmosphere with out acclamation or order. Is this a Euro-centric perspective on Africa? If this is true then this thinking would have to be from a time when White Supremacy Racism was practiced without shame or conscious laws. This statement makes you think that it is all right to view Africa as undeveloped. This is a good example of how from the 1400’s to 1950’s Europeans practice humanity. When I first heard this statement, I was taken for a ride it appeared to be all right. But the more I contemplated on the substance to the question, I began to realize that it appealed to a particular indoctrination that was trained within my makeup that I have been trying to eliminate from my thinking. That is the unconscious affect of white supremacy has on Black/African

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people born in the Diaspora. Black/Africans are trained to like everything white and dislike everything Black or African. What Black/Africans must do is acknowledge to what extent white supremacy racism has affected them.

According to Joe Madison on 1450AM in Washington, DC, in this country and throughout the world, Black/Africans have been thought that whites are superior and Blacks are inferior and the manifestation of this is that Blacks are underestimated, marginalized, and devalued. In the White Supremacy racism construct one could only see Africa in this vein. It is vanity that one would see Africa in the image we wish to project of ourselves. This is why people of European colonialism have written about Africa in their own language and images.

In class discussion we were talking about modernization. What it means to us and how do we see modernization today. When I think of such terms in accord with the above statement, I must first ask the question who determines what is modern and what is not. I am cautious in my deliberation on modernization because it can mean the marginalization of Africa. When one people examine other cultures to theirs without humanity, it can underestimate the value of others. Modernization is prejudice concept based on the eyes of the beholder. Africa has suffered the judgment of those who feel that they are superior to Africa. Much of the African development has been damaged do to colonialism. One has to acknowledge that Africa was not a primitive culture with people who had no talent or gifts. Africa was not in this state when Europeans arrived on the continent. Africa is the way it is because of the two or three hundred years of wars. African people did not lie down and let the Europeans have their land and resources. They fought for hundreds of years.

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Indigenous knowledge (IK) sounds like someone is inferior or less than. What is the purpose of this terminology? Why is it that Black/African Thought is look upon as sub par or non-intelligent? Since the Europeans see non-whites and Blacks as inferior, how do they realistically se them selves? Do the all Europeans have a god complex? How is socialism any better than capitalism or is capitalism better than socialism? Both seem to have exploited or assaulted Black African people and their culture. The ideals were the images and vision Europeans had for Africa. These methods are considered as modern approaches to the development of Africa. Sociology is over a hundred years and both socialism and capitalism are even older. These systems of thought have fail in the development of Africa. It is interesting that Europe still sees Africa in the images of their own mind. It is apparent that capitalism and socialism has contributed to the problem of African redevelopment. The problem with this statement is that it does not speak to the local Black/Africans and how they feel about the image of Africa.

Africans had their own religions. They had their own belief in a one God or Supreme being. Africa had its own brotherhood. Africa was not the name of the land of the Blacks. Research has revealed the name was AcuBuland. It has been revealed that there was no Africa before the European intervention. The people of the land did not call themselves Africans. The name Africa came from the mispronunciation of a people in northern Africa were the Europeans landed. The name of the people were called Afreeka. This may not be the correct spelling but this is the story that has been revealed in the research and study of Blacology, a Cultural Science. What does the Word Africa mean? I would like to know the meaning of the word, “AFRICA”. As a student of African Studies, I do not know the meaning of the word. Africa can be seen in

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the image of those who have colonized it. But the land of the Blacks must be enquired by its inhabitation as to how it should be seen. It is not what you call me but what I answer to. I get the impression from the above statement that Africa belongs to anyone. This is not a reality. You cannot go to Europe Rome, France, or England and see it as you wish. Even the people who did not like the way things were being run in these countries left to start their own countries in far away lands. The Europeans say when you are in Rome you do as the Romans do.

As Black Scholars, we must stop and analyze what is being said in the frontier of our scholarship in the redemption of our people and the redevelopment of our culture. Dr. Molefe Asante says, “the struggle continues and the victory is certain”. When there are analogies from the area of white supremacy 1400’s to 1950’s, we must challenge these ideals. For the lack of a better term, Africa is a name we have accepted. The Afrocentric Scholars led in the struggle against Eurocentric assumptions about Black/Africa. There are basically a world of people who are ignorant about the African Scholarship and the visionary growth and development of the Black/African mind. According to Dr. Molefe Asante, “the ancient Greece understand that their origin came from Africa. Aristotle and Plato acknowledged that the origin of all knowledge began in Kemet or Africa”. This statement imposes that Black people should fit into some kind of European system of thinking.

In class discussion, the question was asked, what is African Studies? In thinking about this question one would have to analyze the worth of Black/African Scholarship and its contributions to the field of African studies. What has Black/African Scholarship received for the works it done? What are their significant achievements? Has Black/Africans been awarded according to their deeds? Has African studies encouraged the scholarship of Black/Africans in the area of cultural autonomy. Has African studies nurtured the Black/African intellect in its

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evolutional development, so as to teach Black/African scholars how to research study and produce from their creative genius an interdisciplinary cultural science? In thinking about the statement one cannot just be content with the position of stewardship.

The Black/African Scholar must realize that with the seeking of knowledge comes growth and maturity. The responsibility of the wise is to make things better for the next generations and also to build a foundation that will supply living and the unborn with tools for a better tomorrow. The responsibility is not only on African Studies, it is also on the Black/African Scholars to do for their own culture. Every man and woman has a responsibility to the future of his or her culture. The Black/African scholarship cannot just be shape in the minds of other. The Black/African culture cannot be in the image in which others wish to project for themselves. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us, “Whatever your life’s work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better.”

African Studies is a European perspective on African history, people and culture. African Studies was founded by Emil Durkheim a European founding father of Sociology as well. I know that Black/African have contributed much in the field but you must give credit where it is due. African Studies is a European Academic Field of Study. It has provided nurturing and opportunities for the Black Scholars. It is time that Black/Africans used their minds to serve in the shaping of the image of Black/African scholarship they wish to project in the development of their own cultural science.

As scholars Black/Africans must remember what Dr. John H. Clark said, “he did not thinks that Blacks, Africans or Jamaicans took a look at what that Orientals did with their culture after World War II. They survived two bombs. They did not make a lot of speeches nor did they call anybody any names. They did so astute thinking and researching to turn their country

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around. Now they are competing as a world power”. This is the job of Black/African Scholars. To study and research the information our people has left for us. Julius Nyerere show us the way and what we can do if we use our minds. Marcus Garvey show us also how we should use our creative genius. This is just a few of our people who were successful. We have a blueprint we must use it. Black/Africans must have an affect on the way in which people - whether they are or not Africans - write about Africa. The statement suggests that no one controls what is being said or written about Africa.

Let us be realistic about where we stand as scholars in the fields of Europeans Studies. What is our position and what do we hope to achieve? How long are we going to depend on these fields for our comfort? When will Black/African scholars recognize their own value as credible thinkers and creative scientist? I once talked to a Black/Man who was a Christian and an associate Minister. He had been practicing Christianity and a minister for 25 years. When I asked him why don't you start your own church? His reply was, he was afraid that he would not make it. He had seen others go out to start their own church and failed. So, he did not want to do that. Are Black/African Scholars like the fearful minister? Are they afraid to stand on their own and comfortable with the image that others wish to project them in?

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