



Akwaaba

Welcome to the last issue of The Navig8or newsletter for this current year (Gregorian calendar). It has been a great year and the New Year promises to bring forth exciting possibilities and opportunities for all who choose to seize the moment. The focus of this issue is on breaking out of redundant patterns of thinking and behaving and there is a lengthy – despite my pledge to reduce the length of the newsletter! – exploration of the psychological relationship between the ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ Afrikan communities. I will leave you to decide what ‘conscious’ actually means in practice.

In this issue:

- **The Games People Play**
- **Musings with a Brother**
- **People don't plan to fail...**
- **The ABDF**

The Games People Play – Moving Black Nationalism beyond Persecution and Rescuing

6243 has been a very good year for me and no doubt many other Afrikans across the globe, however in terms of our collective situation the jury is still very much out.

One of the decisions I made during the course of the past year was that I needed to focus my attention more on proactive, potentially transformative, activities rather than small, palliative/reactive initiatives. Though the latter are still needed, psychologically; there is only so long that one can remain motivated by repeatedly putting a sticking plaster over a cut jugular. To paraphrase the eminent Nigerian author Chinweizu; ‘It's time to bury the sh*t bucket rather than expending energy swatting away flies’.

One of the psychological blind alleys which Black Nationalists continue to drive up and down is manifested in the call upon the so-called ‘unconscious community’ to change their collective ways and be like ‘us’.

Now; there are two significant problems with this approach. Firstly, if you want to change a person's behaviour it is normally necessary to offer some sort of incentive/inducement/reward/punishment be it psychological (which is the most powerful), economic or social. At present Black Nationalists as a whole have very little to offer materially, being mostly mired in a ‘poverty=ideological purity’ mentality and equally have insufficient to offer by way of non-material incentives, being unable to offer anything like the same level of support and sense of community offered by the church, mosque or ‘gang’.

Secondly, too many of the ‘conscious’ community have their own integrity issues and talk a better game than they play. One has only to survey the wreckage of male/female relationships in the ‘conscious’ community to see that Ideology does not bring emotional healing or automatically lead to right conduct.

I have witnessed too many displays of highly destructive and abusive behaviour by people claiming to be down with Blackness to be seduced by rhetoric alone. So, how can we conceptualise and gain insight into the relationship between the so-called ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ (these are crude generalizations, but stay with me) Black communities?

Well, in this instance I believe a useful framework is offered by transactional analysis. I have chosen a European analytical tool since the vast majority of Afrikans in ‘the West’ – and many in Afrika – have been socialized in a hybrid European/Afrikan culture with the European component often dominant. This is made plain when one considers the two legs of culture which are Language and Religion/Spirituality and also the reality that most ‘Diasporan Afrikans’ utterly

reject the idea that they are Afrikans. Therefore perhaps European psychology can help us to understand the self-defeating nature of our Europeanised thinking and behaviour, whilst Afrikan philosophy can help us to understand how we should be thinking and acting.

Whilst there is insufficient space in this newsletter to explain in-depth the theory underpinning this branch of psychiatry/psychology one can briefly state that in this field of study it is suggested that people operate out of three ego states: Adult; Parent or Child. It is further suggested that people experience three types of '*psychological hunger*', namely, stimulus hunger; recognition hunger and structure hunger. Eric Berne in his book '*Games People Play – The Psychology of Human Relationships*'¹ explains that, "Structure-hunger has the same survival value as stimulus-hunger. Stimulus-hunger and recognition-hunger express the need to avoid sensory and emotional starvation, both of which lead to a biological deterioration. Structure-hunger expresses the need to avoid boredom....if it persists for any length of time, boredom becomes synonymous with emotional starvation and can have the same consequences." (Berne 1968: 17)

Berne goes on to suggest that when "one is a member of a social aggregation of two or more people, there are several opportunities for structuring time. In order of complexity, these are: (1) Rituals; (2) Pastimes; (3) Games; (4) Intimacy; and (5) Activity, which may form a matrix for any of the others." (Berne 1968: 18)

In his book Berne looks in detail at the aforementioned 'games' noting that "to say that the bulk of social activity consists of playing games does not necessarily mean that it is mostly 'fun' or that the parties are not seriously engaged in the relationship." (Berne 1968: 17) He also goes on to note that "Family life and married life, as well as life in organizations of various kinds, may year after year be based on variations of the same game." (Berne 1968: 17)

These ideas are interesting to me since I have noted how often people engage in repetitive and self/group negating types of

behaviour which ostensibly are at odds with or unhelpful to their stated goals. In his book Berne identifies various types of 'Life Games' (as well as other types) and the one that jumped out at me related to that of the 'Alcoholic' from which I think we can gain some insight into the current functioning of the relationship between the 'conscious' and 'unconscious' communities.

In the game of alcoholic there is no such thing as alcoholism or 'an alcoholic' but there is a role called 'The Alcoholic' in a certain type of game. As Berne suggests, there is plenty of debate about whether alcoholism has a biochemical or physiological basis, however games analysis is interested in "the kinds of social transaction that are related to such excesses. Hence the game 'Alcoholic'." (Berne 1968: 64)

In this game Berne suggests that there are often up to five players although he notes that these roles may be boiled down to only two players which is often the case at the beginning and end of the game. The roles are as follows:

Alcoholic – the one who is 'it'

Persecutor – usually the spouse

Rescuer – e.g. family doctor who is interested in the patient and also in studying drinking problems

Patsy/Dummy - of alcoholic who gives him/her money and sympathy e.g. their mother or other close relative or friend

Connexion – e.g. bartender, the direct source of supply who understands alcoholic talk.

Berne suggests that the purpose of all games is the psychological 'payoff' and that in the game of alcoholic the payoff "comes from the aspect to which most investigations pay least attention." (Berne 1968: 65) He suggests that drinking itself "is merely an incidental pleasure....leading up to the real culmination which is the hangover." (Berne 1968: 65)

The crux of the game of alcoholic is for the alcoholic to obtain forgiveness from the persecutor and or other players. "The transactional object of the drinking, ...is to set up a situation where the Child can be severely scolded not only by the internal Parent but by any parental figures in the environment who are interested enough to

¹ Berne, E. (1968) '*Games People Play – The Psychology of Human Relationships*', Penguin Books: London

oblige.” (Berne 1968: 66) He notes that “Cases have been reported of a chapter of AA running out of Alcoholics to work on; whereupon the members resumed drinking, since there was no other way to continue the game in the absence of people to rescue.” (Berne 1968: 67) He suggests that “the psychological cure of an alcoholic lies in getting him to stop playing the game altogether rather than simply changing from one role to another.” (Berne 1968: 67)

If one were to relate this game to the intra-communal relations within different segments of the Black community I would suggest that the ‘Alcoholic’ is played by the ‘unconscious’ Black community addicted to the bitter grapes of whiteness and briefly, but repeatedly contrite and apologetic - when experiencing the cruel rebuff of White society - which constitutes the ‘hangover’. The ‘conscious’ Black community plays the multiple roles of Persecutor; Rescuer and Patsy whilst inadvertently reinforcing the Alcoholic in their game playing and addiction. The Connexion (or supplier) is played by ‘liberal’ white society which provides the Alcoholic with the fix of whiteness but refuses to serve them if they get too drunk.

As Persecutor; the ‘conscious’ berate the ‘Alcoholic’ for their unproductive, backward behaviour and selfishness with sentences that often begin with “why don’t Black people...” As Rescuer; the ‘conscious’ offers advice and support and ‘treatment’ to the unconscious attempting to wean them off their addiction. As Patsy/Dummy the ‘conscious’ overlook or pretend to be unaware that the ‘unconscious’ has fallen off the wagon for the umpteenth time, pretending that the support offered will be used for a productive end, in an act of self-deception. The Connexion supplies the alcohol for a price with the explanation that ‘it’s my job’ or ‘no one is forcing him/her to drink’.

If we follow this analogy through we can see that the best thing the ‘conscious’ community can do is to understand the game, stop playing the game and build a relationship with the ‘unconscious’ based upon honest Adult communication and get on with building a productive life. This should involve neither abandonment nor indulgence of the ‘unconscious’.

If we return to our earlier description of the lack of incentives for joining the ‘conscious’ community and the lack of support within it, then these are the areas that ‘conscious’ people need to address. Their focus should be on getting those who claim to know better to do better in practical terms and to build the institutions that will attract ‘the unconscious’ by addressing their basic needs i.e. food, clothing, shelter and security (physical and psychological) and hence induce them to voluntarily relinquish their addiction to this game.

So, my focus for 2008 will be on working with others to translate rhetoric into action that will attract others to the cause of Black liberation. Let those who wish to come; come and those who wish to stay; stay. The time for excuses has long since passed.

Musings with a Brother

I recently had the opportunity to share a conversation with a highly respected writer and scholar. We discussed a number of issues including the foregoing analysis. The brother’s pithy response was that “most of the conscious people are not conscious and if you scraped away a thin veneer you would see something that is quite ugly.” He went on to note how most of the people who practically support his work were not the Kente wearing ‘hard-core’ but rather ‘ordinary’ Afrikans. This latter group are the people I often refer to as pro-Blacks.

We went on to discuss our relative experiences in trying to ‘crack’ the US Black books market. We were both in agreement that it was proving very difficult to make significant inroads and noted how little response we had received from US Afrocentric scholars when informing them of our work. The brother had gone much further than myself and had emailed around 1000 Afrikan scholars at universities across the US and had received a grand total of one response! He was of the opinion that there was a significant element of protecting their ‘turf’ and that whilst some of these scholars were happy to be paid large fees to fly over and speak in the UK they were rather

less keen to assist UK based writers to access the US Black market.

This conversation chimed with Professor Manu Ampim's observations about how Afrocentrism degenerated in the 1990's into a high priced lecture circuit with little practical action emerging from these scholarly talks. He compared the state of Afrocentrism to the US Lyceum movement of the mid 19th to early 20th century which started off with attempts by local speakers to promote self-improvement for members of their local community and ended up with an elite national lecture circuit with superstar speakers charging astronomical fees. When we note that some Afrocentric scholars were (and perhaps still are) using White booking agents to negotiate their speaker fees it is not hard to understand what Professor Ampim is getting at.

As the brother noted, given that we are immersed in a European dominated environment, if you do not keep moving forward then you move backward – a bit like running up the down escalator. This brother has produced cutting edge work that reinforces and in many instances improves upon the work of some of our greatest scholars and yet he is underutilised in the UK and effectively blocked out of the US.

There is definitely something amiss within the so-called Afrocentric movement.

People Don't Plan to Fail....

At this time of year I go through the process of updating my LifePlan which is a task I have undertaken for the past six or seven years. Very briefly, I will share with you what I consider to be useful components of such a plan. If you do not consciously create a plan for yourself I would highly recommend the benefits of this process.

Components of an Annual Life Plan:

- ❖ A positive personal statement. This should highlight all your positive qualities and characteristics with no negative qualifying statements.
- ❖ Relationship goals. Identify how you can improve your key

relationships. Be specific and identify what behaviours you will change or add.

- ❖ Material goals. Identify how you will improve your material condition. This could relate to changing job, starting a business, reducing debt etc. Again, set specific targets with timescales.
- ❖ Medium term aim. Identify where you want to be in 3-5 years. This should relate to your overall life purpose.
- ❖ You may wish to supplement the above with targets relating to your Health.

Remember, *'procrastination is suicide by installments'*, so don't think about writing a lifeplan, just do it.

ABDF Ltd – Mind over Money

Hopefully; readers of this newsletter are familiar with the ABDF Ltd which I conceived and co-founded in 1996. I thought that I would take this opportunity both to unashamedly promote what we are doing as well as to share the lessons I have learned from what has been a journey that has combined excitement, frustration, and optimism in almost equal measure.

The Concept – Quite simply to get Afrikans, who love being Afrikan, to come together and put their money where their Black Nationalist/Pro-Black mouths are to create an investment fund and to eventually create a worldwide corporation founded upon ethical principles (Ma'at).

The Aim – To use economics to contribute to the transformation of the Afrikan world.

The slogan – Investing for tomorrow, today.

At present we have around 110 Afrikans across the UK (Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, High Wycombe, Bristol, London and Kent) who are members of ABDF, investing anywhere from £10 per month up to over £100 per month. Details of what we are up to at present can be gleaned

from the company's website www.abdf.co.uk however what I want to explore is the psychology underlying the process of getting Afrikans who talk Ujamaa (Co-operative Economics) to do Ujamaa.

I have identified the following stages of our journey to date:

Excitement (1996-1997) – We started out with great hopes, great optimism and great naiveté. Perhaps if we had known then what we know now we may have thought twice about starting out on this journey!

Reality Strikes (1998-2000) – It soon becomes clear that we had volunteered for lots of hard work with only a few volunteers.

The Vicious Circle (2000-2001) – Even amongst the 'conscious' community the general attitude was 'prove that you can succeed and we will join', however how could we become a success if people would not join?

Introspection (2001-2004) – Between 2001 and 2004 the ABDF closed its doors to new members in order to consolidate its new structure as a limited company. Whilst I personally did not agree with this decision we all stuck together and respected the collective decision.

Renewal (2005-2006) – The ABDF members broaden their horizons and start to think big. Optimism starts to become infectious. The members vote to invest in Ghana.

The Virtuous Circle (2006-Present) – Reaching ten years of age seems to positively affect the way prospective members view the company and as membership grows, confidence grows and as confidence grows membership grows. ABDF breaks the 100 member barrier.

The Future – The future looks highly promising with realistic prospects for massive expansion leading to a genuinely international presence over the next nine years. A few of the more immediate landmarks will include:

- ❖ Welcoming of first overseas investors (from the USA) in Jan 2008.

- ❖ Commencement of trading of ABDF Ghana Ltd in early 2008
- ❖ Production of an 80 year vision for the organisation by March 2008
- ❖ To build and consolidate our relationship with the Bring Back Black movement in the US.
- ❖ To achieve at least 200 investors by the end of 2008
- ❖ To pay dividends to shareholders in 2011

The critical lessons I have learned from the ABDF story have been:

- ❖ It was never about the money – As we all know Afrikans in the UK (and other parts of the rich world) collectively earn a lot of money. The amount of money wasted upon Christmas highlights our position as world champion consumers. The barriers to be overcome by the ABDF and any other similar venture are not financial, but rather psychological.
- ❖ Don't just rely on Black Nationalists – Black nationalists tend to be ideology rich and financially poor. They also constitute a very small segment of the Black community (perhaps 2 per cent). We have found that the loudest voices are not necessarily the best responders. The Pro-Blacks are a much bigger constituency and often have more money to invest.
- ❖ It requires sacrifice – At some point someone has to sacrifice in order that a great many more can benefit. This sacrifice will involve a lot of time and some money and cannot be avoided. The founders of the ABDF were willing to pay this price and can now see the fruits of their labour. Blood and tears may not be required but sweat definitely will be.
- ❖ It always starts with a few - It does not matter how big or

small the movement it is always catalysed by the actions of a few. The masses do not spontaneously respond without a stimulus; however in the end transformation can only be achieved with the support of the masses.

- ❖ Ideology is necessary but not sufficient – It is important to build on a foundation of sanity! This may sound strange, however a Black Nationalist ideology does guarantee emotional well-being. There are a number of highly destructive people I have come across who claim to love Black people but who destroy or undermine every organisation they join. Select people on the basis of personal integrity and balance as well as ideology.
- ❖ Our young people are crying out for concrete examples of Black Power – I am increasingly coming across Afrikan young women and men in their 20's who express surprise that the ABDF exists and frustration at the general absence of vibrant organisations doing the work that is described in the books they read and rhetoric they hear from their elders.

think and act positively in unison and your/our success is assured.

Well, there it is. The ABDF Ltd story so far. We don't claim to be 'the solution' but do claim to be a part of the solution. For further information visit www.abdf.co.uk or email me at lfayomi@ntlworld.com

And Finally..

I hope you have enjoyed this edition of 'The Navig8or' and that it has given you food for thought and stimulus for action. I promise that in the New Year I am going to reduce the length of these newsletters! We need to move beyond the rhetoric of perpetual struggle and embrace the language of Power and Victory. Success is a state of mind, so