

Education for Liberation in Black Africa

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Paper presented at the Codesria Conference on 50 years of African independence, Legon,
September 2010

 “The major function of education is to help secure the survival of a people”

--Amos Wilson, “The Sociopolitical context of Education”, in *Awakening the Natural Genius of Black Children*, 2nd Edition, New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1992, p.1.

“Know yourself, know your enemy; and in a hundred battles you will never be defeated”

--ancient Chinese military adage

“Our youth from the primary schools, through the secondary schools to the universities and higher institutions of learning, . . . must be taught to know the workings of neo-colonialism and trained to recognize it wherever it may rear its head. They must not only know the trappings of colonialism and imperialism, but they must also be able to smell out the hide-outs of neo-colonialism.”

--Nkrumah, [*Revolutionary Path*: 190]

 I wish to make some observations and raise some questions that should, I hope, help us to design an education system that would help us to build a Black Africa that is liberated from imperialism, neo-colonialism, powerlessness, and from the world’s contempt—a Black Africa that has a technologically robust culture; is autonomous in its economy, culture and politics; and is prosperous and Afrocentric.

For a people to be truly liberated, they must be independent: they must be powerful, and powerful enough to deter or defeat any attempts, by anyone whatsoever, to impose on them in any way. In other words, they must be truly sovereign; i.e. they must be able to act independently, without outside interference. For Black Africa to be truly liberated, it must have at least one superpower among its countries.

Some questions to ponder

1] Is Black Africa liberated?

The short answer is no! Let me explain by commenting on some key aspects of our far-from-liberated situation of today.

We are not politically liberated: we belong to their “Commonwealths,” their “Communities,” and especially to their UN which was set up, and still operates, as a syndicate of imperialisms led by the USA. Our national budgets are heavily subsidized by western donors, thus giving them the controls to dictate our policies. Our NGOs and CSOs are also funded by the imperialist “donors”, thus compromising their autonomy.

We are not socially independent: their NGOs have unfettered and unsupervised access to even the remotest villages in our rural areas.

We are not culturally or mentally independent: we are ruled by their ideologies and religions; their music, ideas and images dominate our airwaves and our minds. Their cultural missionaries, and the evangelists of their religions are everywhere--on TV, on radio, in schools, in village meetings--instilling in our minds the subversive and anti-African idea that anything African is inherently inferior, degraded and evil. Their books, their movies, their newspapers and media shape our values and desires; our parrots echo their fads and denounce patriarchy, homophobia, circumcision, etc; our languages, our architecture, our literature, are becoming more and more Europeanized; our governance institutions and norms imitate the European models; our discourse is saturated with Neo-Liberal concepts, prescriptions and jargon like transparency, public private partnership, global best practices, training in entrepreneurship, NGO, CSO, Freedom of Information, stakeholders, human rights defenders (i.e. missionaries), HPCs, MDGs, and poverty alleviation; yet we lie to ourselves and say we have become free from Europe. But are you free from the person who thinks for you and controls your mind and aspirations? Like Dessalines mockingly pointed out to the Haitians in 1804: “our laws, our customs, our cities, everything bears the characteristics of the French –and you believe yourselves free and independent of that Republic!”

2] Should Black Africa be liberated?

Why not? Why must we remain forever under the thumb or boot of others? Why must we allow ourselves to suffer the contempt of the other races of humanity? Why should we deny ourselves the material and psychological benefits of being a powerful people? We must understand that, without liberation, Black Africa will not achieve prosperity or power or self-respect, let alone the

respect of the world. And Black Africans will not savor the material and psychological satisfactions that only prosperity and power can give.

For example: why should each Black person not gain self-respect as a member of a powerful race; or lose the inferiority complexes and insecurities that undermine the confidence and life performance of black people? And why should we not experience the quiet confidence that comes with knowing you can defend yourself and your loved ones against all comers? Others sense this confidence without any immediate proof. If they know there are people in your race with that capacity, they automatically wonder if you are one of them, and give you the benefit of the doubt. Their caution is warranted, for your weakness can then not be taken for granted, as it presently is, and will continue to be for as long as your black skin is indisputably a badge of chronic powerlessness.

3] What should a liberated Black African society be like?

A liberated Black African society is one in which the Black population is in full charge of all its affairs, internal and external—from growing enough food to feed its population to making the armaments that enable it to defend its territory. The people should not feel subservient to any other people on earth, and should have no inferiority complexes. They should feel confident that their prosperity and autonomy cannot be destroyed by any other people.

4] Have we significantly de-Europeanized and re-Africanized our institutions?

Not at all. After 50 years, our laws, our customs, our cities, everything bears the characteristics of European colonizers. Our administrative, judicial, military, educational institutions and procedures have not significantly deviated from those implanted by the colonizers. We have followed the European fashion in every aspect of life. When they sponsored military government, we went along. When they changed their mind and demanded electocracy, we went along, and dutifully imported constitutions and legislative institutions that imitated those in Paris, London, and Washington. In popular culture, we have imitated the break dance, hip hop, sagging pants, and whatever else we saw was fashionable in Europe or America. Hence we are, on the whole, drowning in European culture more deeply than 50 years ago. Just as Fanon predicted, our lumpen-bourgeois “caste has done nothing more than take over unchanged the legacy of the economy, the thought, and the institutions left by the colonialists.” [Fanon, Frantz *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p.176.]

5] Have we significantly de-Europeanized and re-Africanized our colonial education systems and curriculums? Let us find out through answering a few questions:

Do our schools make us proficient in our African mother-tongues? Do they ground us in our African heritage? Do they steep us in the myths, legends, proverbs, ethical and aesthetic values bequeathed by our ancestors? Or in the cosmological and philosophical assumptions of our ethnic groups? Do they teach and commend the African architectural, agricultural and ecological wisdom that our ancestors harvested in the course of millennia of living in Africa? The obvious answer to each of the above questions is NO! In not doing these things, our education is still colonial. In 50 years, no conscious campaign has been made to change the colonial character of our education. If anything, change has been in the other direction. For example, within the last decade, European and American universities have opened branches in Black African countries, and are disseminating their view of the world among us. So we still produce Black Africans who are fascinated with European ways, who are mindlessly obedient servants of Europe; who are filled with inferiority complexes; who are culturally de-Africanized, Europhile and Afrophobic, just like those produced by colonial schools.

6] What kind of education must we institute to re-Africanize our cultures?

If we claim we are still African, then how are we relating to our African heritage? Are we shaped by it through an education that, in the words of the 17th century Songhay scholar es-Sadi

“tells men of their fatherland, their ancestors, their annals, the names of their heroes and what lives these led.”

—Abderrahman es-Sadi, quoted in Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*, p.226

Furthermore, if indeed we are still Africans, we need to teach and dialogue with our pre-colonial African heritage. For our lives today, we need to draw inspiration from the entire African legacy. We need to learn from all extant African works: starting with works from Ancient Egypt and on through the epics, proverbs and wisdom texts of non-Islamic, non-Christian 19th century Africa. Are we constantly dialoging with African culture? What do I mean by that? Let Maulana Karenga explain:

“For us, Africa, more specifically ancient Africa, is our moral ideal, the foundation and framework on which and within which we understand ourselves and the world, conceive our purpose and obligations in life, ground our hopes and forge our future in effective and expansive ways. We take seriously [Malcolm X’s] teaching that even if we can’t or don’t

go back to Africa physically, we should go back mentally, spiritually and culturally. And this is not to escape into the past or to neglect the real challenges of the present or avoid decisions that will determine our future. Rather, it is to ground and center ourselves in our own culture and to extract from it models and messages of human excellence and achievement and to use them to confront and solve problems and to enrich and expand our lives. It is not an uncommon practice for persons to consult ancient texts for grounding and guidelines for how they live their lives. It is only with ancient African texts that some question the value and validity of the practice. Indeed, every day people read ancient texts of Greece, Rome, Palestine, Israel, Arabia, India and elsewhere for insight, inspiration and grounding. And we have read and read them too, but with Cheikh Anta Diop we ultimately ask what does Africa have to say about this or that critical issue? . . . In Kawaiida philosophy, we call this dialoging with African culture, asking it questions and seeking from it answers to the fundamental concerns and issues of humankind.”—Dr Maulana Karenga, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 04-15-10, p. A7

Unless our education introduces us to these African texts—and they don’t-- we will not be in a position to dialogue with them and harvest and apply their wisdom.

7] We have talked much about unity but done little to forge it. How do you unite people?

What kind of education forges a sense of one-ness in a population?

According to Cheikh Anta Diop, you give them a shared history, a shared culture, a shared language and values. If you don’t do that, you can put them under one government and they’ll still be disunited. Look at Sudan. It is under one government, but its different sections have been fighting to get away, some for more than 50 years. Why? Though all are black, some accept they are culturally African; others deny they are African and claim they are Arabs, because they have imbibed Arab culture. Hence there is no proper cultural basis for unity in Sudan.

In addition to a shared culture, you give them a shared historical project working together at which gives them a feeling that they are one team.

8] What are the flaws of the neo-colonial education we have entrenched?

These are the same as the flaws of colonial education. A primary flaw was that colonial education was focused on producing clerks and auxiliaries for the colonizers, and not focused on

providing creative economic producers of necessary goods and services for the colonized Africans. Furthermore, under colonialism Africans were educated so that they could be better enslaved and Europeanized. As Governor Cameron of Tanganyika put it in the 1920s, the intention [of colonial schooling] “was that the African should cease to think as an African and instead should become ‘a fair minded Englishman’” . . .

—quoted in Walter Rodney *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London: Bogle L’Overture, 1988), p.248

Likewise,

“a French ordinance of 1899 indicated that the purpose of schooling in Madagascar was: ‘. . . to make the young Malagasy faithful and obedient subjects of France . . .’ [and] in 1919, Henry Simon (then Colonial Minister) outlined a program for secondary education in Africa with a view to ‘making the best indigenous elements into complete Frenchmen’”

—Walter Rodney *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London: Bogle L’Overture, 1988, p.257

“the colonial education corrupted the thinking and sensibilities of the African and filled him with abnormal complexes”—Abdou Moumini, quoted in Walter Rodney, *ibid.* p.249

Accordingly,

“those who were Europeanized were to that extent de-Africanized, as a consequence of the colonial education and the general atmosphere of colonial life. . . the colonial school system educated far too many fools and clowns, fascinated by the ideas and way of life of the European capitalist class. Some reached a point of total estrangement from African conditions and the African way of life, and like Blaise Diagne of Senegal they chirped happily that they were and would always be ‘European.’”

— Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London: Bogle L’Overture, 1988), pp. 248, 249.

In the colonial period, “being educated meant, in the eyes of the populace, an escape from the visible and perceived backwardness of traditional life and society.” —[Kwesi Prah, *The African Nation*, p.94]

As Samuel Chiponde of Tanganyika put it in 1925, "to the African mind, to imitate Europeans is civilization."

---Quoted in Ralph A. Austen. "Notes on the Prehistory of TANU," *Makerere Journal* #9 (March 1964), p. 2.; [See Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*, p. 86]

Now, 50 years from 1960, we have achieved neither the disappearance of colonialism nor the disappearance of the colonized African. Our task remains to achieve both. And the job of disappearing the colonized African belongs primarily to our education system.

However, and unfortunately, till today, our education does not question the beliefs fostered among us by imperialism, does not liquidate the ideas put forward by imperialism to influence us in its favor. Our education induces uncritical admiration for everything White (European or American or Arab); our education, through the school, the church, the mosque and the media, teaches reverence for whites and their culture; it subliminally teaches that the white man is the true man; that the white man is god; that Arabic is the language of god. As the Fanti saying, from colonial times, expressed it: "Bronyi ara na oye nyimpa"; literally "the white is indeed human", which is to say that the white man is the model or archetype of humanity and, by implication, that the blacks are not quite it, don't measure up. We behave as if we still believe in this tenet from the colonial era. We seem to have "no greater desire than to resemble the white man as far as possible"—culturally, and even physically. [Prah, *The African Nation*, p.126]

Furthermore, *our neo-colonial education does not teach us how to face the perils of today; does not teach us to create our own future; does not prepare us to face the perils of the future.*

Our worldview is still pro-imperialist. We still talk of the "Slave Trade". We still think that colonialism brought us the gift of civilization. Our youth don't know our enemies. They think colonialism is over. They think of the imperialists as our generous and benevolent 'development partners'; they think that race doesn't and shouldn't matter; they are desperate to escape to Europe and America in search of golden opportunities.

Principal flaws in our neo-colonial education:

It is said that "by their fruits ye shall know them". Let us therefore judge the failings of our neo-colonial education system by the behavior of its products:

1] *It doesn't teach us loyalty to our race, the Black race* –which is why a grown up Nigerian Muslim could say: "I am a Muslim and I worship Allah and I follow the way of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). I have no relationship with you, except that your skin is black.

The lightest Arab is closer to me than you. If there were to be war between Muslims of any shade of color and the darkest of black people, I will be on the side of Muslims.”

--Najib Bilal in email to B Bankie, Date: Mon, 11 Jun 2007 04:53:45 -0700 (PDT)

2] *It doesn't teach us racial solidarity*, which is why we have been unconcerned, and have shown no outrage at-- let alone tried to do something to stop--the current torture of Haiti by the USA, France, and their UN, a torture which has been going on for the last two decades, since President Aristide was first deposed by a coup in 1991; that is also why we have not rallied to defend the African peoples of Darfur and South Sudan who, for decades, have been under military attack by Arab expansionists.

3] *It doesn't teach us that we as a people have enemies, let alone who our enemies are*; in particular, it doesn't teach us that the Arabs and Europeans are our enemies, and have been so for thousands of years—which, for instance, is why we embrace the Europeans as our “development partners” despite their success in diverting us from pursuing industrialization policies, and despite their pressuring us to sign economic partnership agreements (EPAs) that will push African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries deeper into poverty and negatively affect the livelihoods of people living in ACP countries. In other words the EPAs are instruments of economic war on the ACP countries, yet we refuse to see their imposers as our enemies.

4] *It doesn't teach us how the world is structured and functions against us*—which is why we are not suspicious of the UN and such of its key agencies as the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the WHO (the WHO—World Health Organization, during an anti-smallpox vaccination campaign, vaccinated 97 million Black Africans with HIV-contaminated vaccines and thereby brought AIDS to Black Africa). Being unsuspecting of these UN agencies, we naively seek guidance and take orders from them.

5] *It doesn't teach us how to triumph against the forces arrayed against us*;

6] *It doesn't teach us about ourselves and how to overcome our weaknesses*;

7] *It doesn't teach us who we are as a people, and how we came to be in the despised condition in which we find ourselves in the world*;

8] *It doesn't teach us why there are no jobs in our country for the teeming millions of our youth*, or what we must do to create jobs for everybody—which is why our governments have no inkling about what to do to end the situation.

9] *It doesn't teach us why we stay poor despite our abundance of resources;*

10] *It doesn't teach us how we can make our country and Black Africa prosperous and powerful;*

11] *Our education does not teach economic patriotism*, which is why our leaders loot and plunder our countries and export the loot abroad, to “safe havens” in Europe, America and Arabia.

12] *It doesn't teach us how we can defend our country and our race from every form of attack.*

13] *It doesn't teach us about our enemies and how they have been defeating and exploiting us for centuries.*

14] *Our neo-colonial education doesn't give us an understanding of the world in which we live, and of how it came to be the way it is.*

15] *It does not equip us with a world picture—a global-political picture of the way the world is structured, and how it functions, and our Black World's place within it--let alone an understanding of how the world is rigged against us.* If it supplies any coherent global-political picture at all, it is the vague pro-imperialist picture in which the UN system is presented, quite falsely, as serving the interest of all of humanity rather than just the imperialist interest.

16] *Its cardinal failure is that it leaves us oblivious of global power realities.* In particular, it doesn't teach us that those who have vital and highly desired assets, but lack the power to defend those assets, are prone to exploitation and even extermination by the powerful.

Specifically, it has failed to acquaint us with what Marcus Garvey taught us a century ago:

“The attitude of the white race is to subjugate, to exploit, and if necessary exterminate the weaker peoples with whom they come in contact. They subjugate first, if the weaker peoples will stand for it; then exploit, and if they will not stand for SUBJUGATION nor EXPLOITATION, the other recourse is EXTERMINATION.”

--[Amy Jacques-Garvey, ed.. *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), Part I, p. 13.]

And Garvey further elaborated:

“When the colonists of America desired possession of the land, they saw that a weak aboriginal race was in their way. What did they do? They got hold of them, killed them, and buried them underground. This is a fair indication of what will happen to the weaker peoples of the world in another two or three hundred years when the stronger races will have developed themselves to the position of complete mastery of all things material. They will not then, as they have not in the past, allow a weak and defenceless race to stand in their way, especially if in their doing so they will endanger their happiness, their comfort and their pleasure. These are the things that strike the thoughtful Negro as being dangerous, and these are the things that cause us who make up the Universal Negro Improvement Association to be fighting tenaciously for the purpose of building up a strong Negro race, so as to make it impossible for us to be exterminated in the future to make room for the stronger race, even as the North American Indian has been exterminated to make room for the great white man on the North American continent.”

--[Amy Jacques-Garvey, ed.. *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), Part I, pp. 63-64.]

Furthermore, our education doesn't teach us that the Arabs and Europeans are our cardinal enemies. As Chancellor Williams concluded after documenting the facts:

“ ***the whites are the implacable foe, the traditional and everlasting enemy of the Blacks***’ . . . The necessary re-education of Blacks and a possible solution of racial crises can begin, strangely enough, only when Blacks fully realize this central fact in their lives: The white man is their Bitter Enemy. For this is not the ranting of wild-eyed militancy, but the calm and unmistakable verdict of several thousand years of documented history.”

--Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, p.310

The above are some of the fundamentals we must know about our global-political environment if we are to organize ourselves to survive as a people in this world. And yet the education system we inherited half-a-century ago from the European colonialists, and have foolishly retained, does not supply us with such knowledge. What good is an education that keeps us blind to reality, that alienates us from our group, that fails to teach us our basic interests?

Have you educated a child if you don't teach him about the situation he is in; or about the geography of his home; or about the snakes and scorpions and mosquitoes that abound in his environment; or about the habits and tricks of the liars and thieves and armed robbers that he will meet every day?

As we need to know all these things in order to survive as a race, needless to say, we need to create the type of education that will teach us all these things, and more.

Political education, education about our global-political environment, is indispensable.

Without it, we are like a farmer who does not know his soil, his crops and the weather under which he farms; like a hunter who knows nothing about the behavior of the animals he encounters; like a plane whose crew know nothing about the sky and the weather through which they fly.

Knowing Ourselves

In addition to not knowing the world in which we live, we also do not know ourselves. In particular, we do not know our weaknesses, weaknesses which our enemies have studied and still exploit to get their way with us. As Cabral insisted:

“One type of struggle we regard as fundamental is . . . *the struggle against our own weaknesses.*”

--Amilcar Cabral, [*Unity and Struggle*: 121]

We therefore need to admonish ourselves:

Black Man, Know thyself; study your weaknesses and get rid of them!

We must ruthlessly eliminate all the traits in our character and in our culture that enable others to dominate our race. Below are some cultural flaws we must fix by education if we want to get and stay liberated, flaws that have made us easy prey for Arab and European predators for the past two millennia.

Here are some of the traits that must go:

(a) “We are not a suspicious race. We believe in the inherent goodness of man.”

--Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, p. 42

We have to stop being naïvely trusting. We need to learn, as John Le Carre said somewhere, that “survival is an infinite capacity for suspicion.”

(b) Mollie West, writing in 2009, said:

“It's hard to believe how (forgive my language) fucked up many of us are in our heads. I no longer wonder why we haven't achieved liberation as a group. ***We cling to unreal ideas about existence and who we are.***”

(c) “black people are the biggest stumbling block to their own liberation. We're humane to the world and yet traitors when it comes to one another. It's madness.”

(d) As Steve Biko pointed out:

Africans are a deeply religious race. --Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, p.44

And Mollie West elaborated:

“Somehow Blacks have the strange notion that ‘everything will fall into place for them if they just pray.’ Ha! Prayer certainly has its place, but we've been complacent for far too long now, and if the end came tomorrow for us as a people, I wouldn't be surprised one iota. I'd say, ‘We had enough time!’”

(e) Our programmed craziness

As Amos Wilson diagnosed, we are a crazy people: “Our mentality has been reversed and our behavior made backwards because we take the lie for the truth, and the truth for the lie.” [See Amos Wilson, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness*, New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1993, p. 25] We won't even accept the fact that the Arabs are not part of us, let alone that they are our permanent enemies. And as Mollie West perceptively said, we “cling to unreal ideas about existence and who we are.” Such are the attributes of crazy Niggas. And while we cling to our maladaptive nigga behavior, we want to stop being called niggas; we want to be respected and treated as equals by the sane sections of humanity! No way!!

(f) Another Afrocidal trait is a fatalistic patience, especially under misrule, which General Jan Smuts, that white supremacist promoter of imperialist Pan Africanism, described in 1930 as “one of the world’s marvels, second only to the ass’s”.

Any shortlist of our weaknesses must include what Nkrumah described as (g) “a lack of malice, an absence of the desire for vengeance for our wrongs”. [Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*: 114]. Though Nkrumah lists this among the admirable traits of the African Personality, we need to take a critical look at it, for it is, in fact, Afrocidal.

Other observers have described it more candidly and in more revealing detail. For example, an American reporter, David Lamb, after 5 years traveling and observing Africans in 48 countries during the late 1970s, said:

“Given all he has had to endure from the beginning of slavery to the end of colonialism, the African displays a racial tolerance that is nothing short of amazing. He holds no apparent grudge against the European as an individual, and it is rare indeed for any white person to experience even the slightest indignity because of his color. . . . The African has forgiven, if not forgotten.”

As a white settler in Kenya, a former hunter of Mau Mau freedom fighters, explained to Lamb:

“Why has it been forgotten? Well, partly I think, because the African isn’t capable of the depth of emotion that the European has. He doesn’t love his women or hate his enemies with the same intensity. You look at a good solid white hatred and it can last for generations. Africans don’t hate that way.”

But, on the other hand, Lamb notes:

“For a people who have had to tolerate so many injustices over the centuries, yet have remained basically gentle, polite and racially equitable, I was constantly shocked to see the cruelty, even sadism, that Africans inflict on one another so willingly.”

And he wondered what makes the African “a fatalist, intent on his own survival but caring little for those who are less fortunate.”

--[David Lamb, *The African*, 1985:161-162,164, 235,236]

Likewise, from Canada in the 1980s, another investigator, O. McKague, reported:

As one female member of the Nationalist party told me, one can treat blacks like dirt for years, cease such treatment, and almost immediately they are willing to be your best friends. This, she explained, is because blacks do not have the capacity either to feel injustices or to remember them. Jews, she stated, are quite [a different matter].

— [McKague, O. ed., *Racism in Canada*, Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991: 93]

This obscene rush to forgive and forget even the most grievous wrong, provided it is done to us by the white enemy, was most publicly exhibited in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which, quite sacrilegiously, placed on the same moral level both the violence of the Apartheid oppressors and the counter violence of those who fought their oppressors! The armed aggressor violence of the Apartheid state criminals who inflicted the Sharpeville and other massacres and who murdered Steve Biko was treated as no different morally from the unarmed, defensive counter violence of the children of the Soweto uprising. ***Tutu's approach is as obscene as condemning equally for violence the soldier's hand that is strangling a baby and the milk teeth by which the baby tries to bite off the strangler's hand!***

(h) "the resignation and the apathy of too many of our people are part of the means by which the system maintains itself. The fear of trusting and uniting with each other, the fear of coming together and solving our problems together, the belief that it is just not in us to unite and solve our problems and overcome the dominance of European imperialism itself becomes a part of the problem and helps to maintain the system." -- Amos Wilson, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness*, New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1993, p. 75

(i) According to Cheikh Anta Diop, "one of the weaknesses of black civilization, particularly during medieval times, was the openness, the cosmopolitanism of these societies. . . . And today, one of the basic weaknesses of African societies is that they still maintain this inherited cosmopolitan trait." --[*Great African Thinkers*, p. 243] which is why we welcome, even invite, Arabs, Indians etc into our Pan-African movement, on the grounds that anybody born in Africa is an African. On this principle, we would suicidally embrace and welcome a python into our family meeting simply because it has made its nest in a corner of our compound. We thus disregard the basic fact, as is said in Jamaica, that 'simply being born in Jamaica does not make one a Jamaican, in the same way that a chicken hatched in an oven is not a biscuit.'

Our enemies have studied us thoroughly, which is why they easily defeated and continue to dominate us. Let us avail ourselves of what they have found out about us, however painful and distasteful their findings may be, and let us consciously work to give up those self-defeating traits.

Here are two sketches of the Negro/Black African character; one by P.W. Botha, the last-but-one President of Apartheid South Africa, and the other by Frederick Lugard, the conqueror and founder of Nigeria.

“the Black is the raw material for the White man. . . . Blacks cannot rule themselves. Give them guns and they will kill each other. They are good in nothing else but making noise, dancing, marrying many wives and indulging in sex. Let us all accept that the Black man is the symbol of poverty, mental inferiority, laziness and emotional incompetence. . . most Blacks are vulnerable to money inducements. . . . His inferior sense of morals can be exploited beautifully. And here is a creature that lacks foresight. There is a need for us to combat him in long term projections that he cannot suspect. The average Black does not plan his life beyond a year: that stance, for example, should be exploited.”

-- President P.W. Botha, of Apartheid South Africa, to his Cabinet, 1985

“In character and temperament” wrote Lord Lugard, “the typical African of this [Negro] race-type is a happy, thriftless, excitable person, lacking in self control, discipline, and foresight, . . . His thoughts are concentrated on the events and feelings of the moment, and he suffers little from the apprehension for the future or grief for the past. . . . He lacks the power of organisation, and is conspicuously deficient in the management and control alike of men or business. He loves the display of power, but fails to realise its responsibility. His most universal natural ability lies in eloquence and oratory. . . . He is very prone to imitate anything new in dress or custom, whether it be the turban and flowing gown of the Moslem, or the straw hat and trousers of the European, however unsuited to his environment and conditions of life. . . .In brief, the virtues and defects of this race-type are those of attractive children, . . . they bear no malice and nurse no grievance. . . .”

--Frederick, John, Dealtry Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1965, 5th Edition), pp. 69 –70.

Any honest assessor of how Nigerians have mis-managed Nigeria in the fifty years since they got self-government in 1960, will acknowledge that Lugard thoroughly understood the people he conquered and ruled so easily.

I have presented above a list of some self-defeating traits of the Negro/Black race. Some of these traits were pointed out by Negroes/Blacks, some were pointed out by Whites. We need to be aware of all of them, and must resolve to correct these weaknesses.

What our education must do and become

Think of the issues I have raised thus far in this paper. They should properly determine the core aspects of an Afrocentric education, of any education of Black Africans in the interest of Black Africans, any education that aims to carry out what, according to Amos Wilson, is the major function of Black African education, i.e. to help secure the survival of Black people.

Bearing in mind the fact that the countries, societies and races on earth are in an unceasing struggle for power, prosperity and status; and also bearing in mind the ancient Chinese military adage: “Know yourself, know your enemy; and in a hundred battles you will never be defeated”, we must consciously invent an education system that will serve us well in that inescapable struggle.

We must invent an education system that gets us to understand, not only ourselves and our European and Arab enemies, but also the way the world of today works and was put together. It must get us to understand all the other peoples with whom we must share this planet Earth. Such an education is a strategic necessity for our survival.

We must also consciously fashion an Afrocentric education system, formal and informal, that will repair the colossal damage that centuries of defeats and enslavement, and a century or more of Eurocentric education has done to the Black African psyche.

In summary, what is needed is an Afrocentric education that grooms the young to be loyal to the Black race, to feel responsible for ending the humiliations of the race and psychologically prepares them to take full control of our societies and our destiny, and grooms them not to tolerate dishonor to the race, and makes them psychologically driven to independently define Black Africa’s interests and go forth, boldly and skillfully, to defend and advance them.

I shall comment on these core aspects under the following ten headings: Afrocentric Political Education; Education for race loyalty; Education for the unification of our peoples;

Education for strong racial consciousness and solidarity; Education for security consciousness; Afrocentric re-orientation of disciplines; Education for productivity; Education for social responsibility; Education for autonomous modernization; Education for an Afrocentric governing cadre.

1] Afrocentric political education

On political education, Nkrumah correctly urged:

“Our youth from the primary schools, through the secondary schools to the universities and higher institutions of learning, . . . must be taught to know the workings of neo-colonialism and trained to recognize it wherever it may rear its head. They must not only know the trappings of colonialism and imperialism, but they must also be able to smell out the hide-outs of neo-colonialism.”

--Nkrumah, [*Revolutionary Path*: 190]

Lest we forget, Nkrumah set a worthy example by founding the Winneba Institute, and the Young Pioneers. Have we been following his wise prescription and example? Are we teaching Pan-Africanism, or colonialism and neo-colonialism in our primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions? Are we implanting in the minds of our children the motivating vision of an industrialized and powerful and respected Black Africa? Do we teach them to defend, at any price, the honor and the land of the Black race? Are we updating our knowledge of imperialism as it evolves?

2] Education for race loyalty

We need to effectively compete for the emotional loyalty of African children – that is, their loyalty to Black African people, Black African culture and Black African interests. In the past century, through television, school curriculum, religious institutions, and “social inertia”, black children have been routinely, and very early, imbued with loyalty to non-African peoples and cultures, and most importantly, to non-African *interests*. This needs to be changed by effective educational measures. These should be carefully and imaginatively worked out.

3] Education and the unification of peoples:

The teaching of history, culture and languages should be guided by the need to unify the peoples of Black Africa through shared languages, values and histories. Diop’s prescription should be followed.

4] Education for strong racial consciousness and solidarity

As Chancellor Williams pointed out:

“Caucasians will wage frightful wars against other Caucasians, but will quickly unite, as though by instinct, against non-whites, not only in wars but in international politics. They have developed a kind of built-in solidarity in their relations with non-Caucasian peoples. This fact, as much as anything else, helps to explain their position as masters of the world.” –Chancellor Williams, *Destruction . . .*, p.298

We need to emulate this racial solidarity of the Caucasians. One important way to bring this about is by consciously designing education curriculums that foster Negro or Black racial solidarity.

5] Education for security consciousness

The average Black African today, military leaders included, is obsessed with personal prosperity. The security of his country or race from enemy attack is the last thing on the mind of the Negro/Black African; but given the dismal history of the Negro, it ought to be his paramount concern; it ought to be the framework within which all else, especially personal wealth, is subordinately situated since, as Cheikh Anta Diop pointed out, it is on the public welfare that the individual welfare depends. And, after all, isn't it much better to be a poor member of a strong country or race than to be a rich member of a weak and defenceless country or race?

In the 1930s, following the Italian attack on Abyssinia, Garvey warned us that “unpreparedness is a crime”. It is a warning we still need to heed. What is needed is an education that produces in each person a state of preparedness for the likely dangers to the country and the race, and of watchfulness for the unexpected. We desperately need an education curriculum to produce habits of alertness and careful observation; logical and comprehensive situation analysis; problem solving aptitudes; facility for logistics, [Chess would be helpful here]; security consciousness [through early training in martial arts together with a year of compulsory military service for all 18-year-olds.]

6] Afrocentric re-orientation of disciplines-e.g. history, economics

Every discipline taught in Black Africa should be deliberately re-oriented to serve Black Africa.

History and economics, especially, need to be re-oriented. History should be obliged to teach African and world history from an Afrocentric perspective. Economics should be reorganized away from the allegedly universal doctrines and principles that promote European power and wealth; it should be obliged to explain how Black Africa can escape from the tyranny of the world market that has been designed by Europeans for European global hegemony. Afrocentric Economics should be specially charged to show us how to transform our abundant resources into wealth and economic security, with full employment, for all in Black Africa. Rather than mislead us with neo-liberal doctrines and theories of ‘development’ that have never produced industrialization anywhere, it should emphasize economic history, particularly case studies of industrialization, so we know why and how it was actually accomplished in the already industrialized countries.

7] Education for productivity to meet Black Africa’s material needs

Education should be re-designed to emphasize practical and management skills, to prepare each of its products for making some simple necessities like food, clothing, environmentally suitable houses, household goods, etc. This redesign should result in a high density of applied productive and management skills in the population, and prepare the way for every village or town to become dense with goods-producing enterprises. It should make a healthy break from the prestige-laden academic education that the colonizers introduced to provide them with clerks and administrative auxiliaries.

8] Education for social responsibility

Every school leaver, whatever the practical skills acquired, should be burning with a desire to take responsibility for the entire society and the Black race. Needed is an education designed to instill in the population, and especially in the elite, a devotion to meritocracy and a deep sense of responsibility for the whole country and the whole race; an education that teaches that the survival and power of the Black race, and the autonomy of the community are supreme values, supreme because they are the indispensable guarantors of individual wealth and liberties; an education that teaches that it is the responsibility of each member of the community to look out for and help guarantee the survival of the race and the autonomy of the community.

9] Education for autonomous modernization

Examples to learn from.

Meiji Japan—selective adoption of foreign practices. We should adapt and adopt their slogan: “wakon yosai”= Japanese spirit, western technology/technique/knowledge.

Maoist China—Socialism with Chinese characteristics (China resisted Russian pressure to get China to toe the Russian line, and this led to the Sino-Soviet rupture.) We should be taught to find and stick to our own path of modernization, without yielding to any hegemonists, even if they are our allies.

Castro’s Cuba—Worked out its own path to modernization after overthrowing US neocolonialism.

South Korea--To achieve the industrialization of South Korea that he thought was necessary for defense and prosperity Park Chung Hee, when he seized power in 1961, generally relied upon private businesses, the *chaebol*. The Park regime initiated a successful program of industrialization for South Korea based upon export-oriented industries which were guided and aided by the government.

10] Education for an Afrocentric governing cadre

One of the roots of Black Africa’s problems is the unnoticed fact that its elites are not governing cadres but self-seeking individuals addicted to possessive individualism. A governing cadre is a tightly-knit group of persons trained for a government of service and duty; trained to take collective responsibility for the survival and the long-term welfare of the country it governs; trained to a sense of duty to serve and safeguard the public interest; and trained to approach its governmental responsibilities with deliberation and seriousness; an elite is not trained to these things. Though composed of the best and brightest individuals in their fields, and though dominant in the pinnacles of the power institutions of its society or country, an elite is not necessarily imbued with a sense of group responsibility for their country, or with a sense of duty to serve the public interest. Only when it is so trained does it become a governing class. As Walter Rodney pointed out:

“Any socio-political system needs its cadres. That was the role played by the youngest age-grades in Shaka’s armies and it was the role played by the Komsomol or Young Communists in the Soviet Union. Being a cadre involved not just training for a practical job but also political orientation to serve as a leading element in the system.”— Rodney, Walter *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London: Bogle L’Ouverture, 1988), p. 258

Other countries have their unique ways and their elite schools for indoctrinating the cadres that eventually take total charge of their country. Think of Britain’s public schools with

their character-building game of cricket. Think of the handful of elite schools (grandes ecoles) that have produced most of the political, intellectual and administrative leaders of France in the last two centuries. Think of the imperial examination system that produced the Confucian-indoctrinated mandarins that governed Imperial China. Think too of the education system that indoctrinated the scribes and bureaucrats who governed Pharaonic Egypt for thousands of years.

50 years on, the elites of Black Africa are a far cry from the cadres we need: men and women with the standards of public service and capacity for leadership which self-rule requires. The absence, in Black Africa, of an Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist cadre has meant that no functional Pan-African programs or political movements can be sustained, or presented as viable alternatives to the neo-colonial status quo. There is, therefore, a paramount need to organize leadership training to produce an Afrocentric governing cadre that is indoctrinated to take full responsibility for every aspect of a Black African country.

Concluding remarks

In educating our children, let me recommend an approach which I found useful for decolonizing my own colonially mis-educated mind. Here is what I wrote in the preface to *The West And The Rest Of Us*, (1975) :

[Black] Africans especially, must endeavor to see clearly the larger system of things in which we are enmeshed or be irretrievably lost in catacombs of irrelevant details; and . . . we must understand the awful predicament that binds us together or we shall be repeatedly manipulated to fight one another and so hasten the march of disaster upon ourselves. . . . I have found it invaluable to focus upon the arsenal of techniques accumulated to serve western imperialism, and upon the structures and processes whereby the West constrains events, determines our views and actions, and shapes our realities. If this approach should contribute to clarifying for the reader . . . how that world stage was put together and is managed upon which African and other Third World nations have to perform to regain their liberty; if it should help us decrease, even by one jot or tittle, our susceptibility to being lured by carrots, intimidated by the lash of sticks, or stampeded by hysteria into collaborating in the defeat of our enlightened [Black African] interests, then this work would have done more than I could seriously hope for.

--Chinweizu, *The West And The Rest Of Us*, (New York: Random House, 1975), preface , p. xxii)

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