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AFRICA AND THE IMPERATIVE FOR BLACK STUDIES; A DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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Abstract

This paper seeks a way forward by exploring into the historical and political economic conditions which has made Africa a beggarly continent and the black man in general a burden to the world. The paper identifies Africa's doodling fortune in the midst or plenty as unfortunate. It sought to explain the role of African and black studies in salvaging the African predicament of under development. It identifies foreign investments in Africa as paradoxically translating to investments as avenues to develop the continent. In a cultural perspective, it analyzes the contributions of the African/black studies as having great prospects of repositioning Africa, the feats of the creative and enterprising black Agrarians who rose from the dust of slavery to prominence in America. The paper concludes that information is power, thus placing the responsibility of informing the black race on the African/black studies. It proffers possible recommendations which could help to place African and the black race on a path to development.

Keywords; African, black-race, black studies and development.

INTRODUCTION

African history has been a long journey of deprivation, anguish and exploitation. It has been one of the worst cases scenario of unprovoked case of assault on our social institutions and efforts at development. The culprits have been the west.

This state of affairs has culminated in Africa been tagged a beggars, continent and is this classified alongside the under developed part of the world. The present trend of globalization has not helped matters as it has further undermined African efforts at entrenching sustainable development. Africa's relationship with the west has engendered its perpetual under development given a dialectical relationship between the developed and under developed continent. Ake, C (1981).

Every continent, African inclusive has had a history of its of internally- propelled effort at development. Unfortunately, the present perception of Africa and her status in the global ranking has established a pedestal for global stigmatization. The effect is that everything African, including all that Africa and the black race stands for is treated with disdain, disrespect and contempt by foreign Eurocentric scholars.

Anthropologists, sociologist and Ethnographers especially the colonially inspired writers—wrote their literatures in obvious contempt of African history and culture. Their accounts were tilted with share racial subjectivism. This makes the need for African history and cultural experience to be projected in contemporary times by African scholars. This task must be accomplished with the understanding that no one but Africans can give a most accurate account of Africa, African peoples and culture and the black race better than the African scholar himself themselves.

Edozie, R.K. proposes the concept of the black studies Africanist. To her, black studies Africanist represent a way forward for black studies academic programs to unapologetically reclaim the study of Africa as a part and pieces of black studies. In addition it will represent a centrally, integrated region of advanced study among the black race.

The crux of the matter is the fact that Africa as a continent and the black race has suffered a subordinate position in the global power equation. And as such it contends with the power that ultimately determines human society. He identifies power as fundamental, to the relations among group of people in any society. Power posts-underscores the ability to defined one's interests and if necessary to impose one's will by any available means. That in relation between peoples, the question of power determine maneuverability in bargaining as well as the extent to which a people service as a physical and cultural entity.

Information is power, thus, making black and African studies primarily responsible for making, available, the information needed to recover the lost identity of Africa as a people and the black race. This has become more of an imperative in the face of a postmodern world where western scientific theory, technology and ideology has proven to be grossly incompetent in social management of human problems, thus the need for African to come to the rescue of humanity via African made solution.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS.

The notion that Africa was the white man's burden though unjustly put has become the ideological springboard for the inhuman era of slavery and human trade which eventually gave birth to colonialism and subsequently imperialism. After centuries of burden which have made life no better for the continent which they 'vowed' to uplift. Poverty, disease, unemployment and general social disorganization, has become a way of in Africa.

The dwindling fortune of Africa in the midst of plenty, human and natural resources raises so much questions as the future of the continent is in dark.

Obviously, her association with Europe has served to underdeveloped the continent, as the west has plundered African resources to develop their metropolitan cities. The need for a paradigm shift has become necessary and urgent to chart a way forward for Africa

Objective of the study

This paper has as its objectives;

1. To explore the factors that led to African's consent state of under development.
2. To explain the role of African and black studies in remedial Africa's situation
3. To explore the role of knowledge in advancement of African people.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS.

1. African; This refers to the continent located centrally in the Globe and a highly populated people of black skin who live in the sub-Saharan region. The Mediterranean part of Africa is populated by fair skinned Africans who tend towards the Arabic culture. Africa is a continent of the black race.
2. African studies:- This refers to intellectual researchers, garnered towards a comprehensive understanding of the culture, people, history, issues and challenges of the African continent and her peoples.
3. Black studies: This refers to the studies spearheaded by blacks in Diaspora, these are studies of racism geared at containing racist propaganda by the West and European Nations and the World at large. W.L.B Du Bois, Malcom X and a houst of African Americans were at the fore front.

AFRICA AND THE PROBLEM OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT.

The integration of African continent into the Global capitalist system by the western colonialist and then imperialism is the event which has had the most profound influence in shaping the socio-economic and political development of contemporary Africa. Ake, C 1981.

He further posit that far from putting resources into the development of the colony, the colonial powers exploited the colony. What it implies is that Africa was colonized by the Western Powers, who exploited the colony. What it implies is that Africa was colonized because European capitalist was seeking better opportunities to capital

accumulation and as it maximized its capital, it as well maximized its exploitation. Thus, the African people were not developed rather they were subjected to exploitation and underdevelopment.

Colonialism was fuelled by an ideology which presupposed that African was subhuman, thus they could be subjected to brutality and robbed of the right to self governance. This presupposition. Ake lambasts as being implicit racist. Alluding to the above position. Rodney W (2009) warns that, mistaken interpretations of the causes of under development usually stem from prejudiced thinking, otherwise it could stem from the erroneous belief that one can learn the answers by looking inside the under developed economy. He further explained that one of the common ways of exploitation of a Nation by another Nation, relevant to African's external relations is exploitation through trade that once the terms of trade are set by one country in a manner that is entirely advantageous to itself, then the trade become essentially detrimental to the trading partnering Nation, to the extent that the pricing of primary products like agricultural products and mineral all subject to the wily manipulations by the developed economies, Africa remains at the receiving end. The developed economies set prices for manufactured goods in addition to the high rates unnecessary for trade in the shifting industry, from the fore going. African trading that of unequal exchange and one of exploitation (partners are Rodney 2009)

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS: A PARADOX

The partnering of foreign investment in colonial African economy only served to reinforce and complement only between African and western economies as well as the structural dependence of the former on the latter (Ake, C 1981).

Rodney notes that given a scenario of direct pontifical control, foreign investment only serves to ensure that the natural resources as well as the labour of African produce economic value which is lost to the continent. He further explained that foreign investment usually comes as loans to Africa, and loans naturally are to be paid back with interest. These interests and profits emanating from direct investments in the economy constitute channels through which African economies are drained.

One critical issue surrounding this trend is the fact that information on these matters are always kept quite or secret. Thus, the need for African studies to include in their focus these huge outflows of African resources via foreign investment.

Foreign investment facilitated the integration of the African economy into the domineering western capitalist system by promoting the capitalist mode of production. Ake, C 1981). He further stresses that as western capital flowed into the colony capitalism spread. And as capitalism and capitalist related, institutions grabbed African National currencies, the economies of the colony increased in its compatibility with western economies and this aided integration. He contends that foreign investment engendered linkages between the metropolitan and the colonial economies.

While stimulating primary production in the colonies foreign investment devoted its forward linkage outwards to the metropolis. The growth of capitalism encouraged the growth of a small class of indigenous capitalists who had common interest with foreign capital. The pressure from foreign primary production in the colonial African Nations served to reinforce the existence of preventing the colonies and the metropolis as well as reinforcing the structural dependence of the Colonial Western Countries. (Ake 1981).

Thus, the primary concern of African and black studies centres around how to intimate African's structural dependency position in the global economy. In practice they must address how Africa would start adding value to her primary resources. In addition, the quest for African's absolute control over her resource must be addressed by the African and black studies.

In a nutshell, African studies must find a way of making African human and material resources.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO AFRICAN'S STRUGGLE.

African and the black race were influenced largely by the Eurocentric school, thus warranting a radical departure for a fundamentally, Afrocentric in orientation. Rajah F (2007) shows how the black Power movement happened in the redefinition of African militants' identity, as well as establishing a new and influential political force, the black power to be known as black studies, goes to show how activism has transformed into organizational change. More so, it shows how politics can be assimilated into the academics.

Read R.C (2011) shows how African Americans rapidly transformed Chicago into achieving political and economic recognition by building on the massive formation of population growth after the great migrations from the South whereas, western scholars see Population growth as a factor that undermines development. But the foregoing contradicts this Eurocentric position. Read R.C emphasizes that the entrance of a significant

working class into Chicago's Industrial work force coupled with the proliferation of black groups, mapping out of labour issues and the struggles for control of black literatures.

Thus, we can safely assert that a growing population could translate into an asset and enhanced skills that could contribute to growth of the economy. Thus, human resource development must be accorded in African.

THE NATURE OF AFRICAN/BLACK STUDIES

African studies are all about knowledge formation it adopts a multi-perspective approach in studying Africa and African- in- Diaspora. Which seeks to explore the Global character of black struggles using a multidisciplinary? It captures the mass migration and movement of African population to the metropolitan centre's of Western world, in the first half of the twentieth century. This status quo in a post world war period all testified to interplay of peoples, ideas cultural and economic practices that failed to fit into pre-existing framework.

It captures the middle passage symbolized by the forced migration of peoples across the Atlantic and their enslaved labour in multiple colonial an imperial societies which all together constitute a movement of globalization.

It also seek to analyze and disseminate a racist ideology citifying African enslavement from the 16th century which became a transnational phenomenon during the period in study. This is especially with regards to Africa –descended population, migration and shift in response to new employment opportunities, in reaction to the limited opportunities emanating from shifts in production regimes from one region to another.

Practical issues such as the circulation of toxic waste and after polluted substances, recycled clothing from the overdeveloped to the under developed world are also seen as opportunities for use, much for students of African and black studies.

BLACK STUDIES

In an age signified by globalization, black studies examines the dilative-yet actually-existing power bases in addition to the creative and alternative expressions which have come to forge African American cultures feminism, literary genres and a houst of other dynamic facts of African Americans', political, economic ,entrepreneurship, innovation, human capital and cultural production.

In fact black studies is representative of a comprehensive study into the complete experience of the black man in a world where he is struggling to raise this voice to be heard. It also represents a study into the collective aspiration of the entire black race to live a fulfilled life devoid of exploitation, deprivation and subjugation. It is also a study into the numerous contributions of the African continent to the evolution of a fast growing global culture. These are contributions which may have been ignored; only then can Africentric oriented scholarship can assure the delivery of a true Africa experience.

CONCLUSIONS

African and the black race have become a byword for under development and backwardness, this state of affairs may be tractable to Africa's traumatic history spanning the slave era through colonialism and down to imperialism era. A change of this status quo can only come via a comprehensive break from the exploitative forces that have undermined her efforts to develop Africa. This break is only possible through a new awakening and awareness of the potential for the black race and Africa to reclaim their glorious past.

Information is power and thus the role of African/black studies in charting the course there a new African. This could only be achieved through a comprehensive curriculum centered on an Afrocentric background. Until we Africans gets to tell her story by herself , the whole picture cannot come clear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maximizes the benefits of African/black studies certain policy recommendations are imperative; viz.

- 1.African states must create department for diaspora affairs. These departments under the foreign Affairs ministry will act as a synergizes in ensuing that experiences of the Diaspora in areas such as entrepreaurship, technology and creativity are harnessed and adopted to enhance their contributions to the economic development of African states.
- 2.African status must build strong economic partnership with black entrepreneurs to make for a cross fertilization of ideas in investments and economic development.
- 3.African status and non-state actors must embark on more collaborative research efforts geared towards engendering greater development efforts.

4. African states must encourage the study of African and black studies by making the study of African studies a compulsory subject at least up to secondary school certificate level. This is to ensure that every African school leaver acquires a basic intellectual bias which is Eurocentric in orientation.

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