

## WHAT IS AFRICA?

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Africa is a bright continent with adequate material resources for potential autocratic development but after decades of independence, Africa remains the least developed continent in the world. It is even referred to as the dark continent and African peoples no matter their standard of education and achievements are looked down upon and ridiculed everywhere. Considering that scientifically Africa was the cradle of the human race and historically the cradle of civilization, certain questions come into mind. These questions include: what is Africa? How did Africa find itself in this dismal situation?; how can Africa get out of this situation?

Many people think of Africa as the continent of Africa together with Madagascar but that is a total misconception. As a consequence of the forces of history and migration there is Africa in Europe, Africa in the Americas, and Africa in Asia. The same demeaning forces of slavery and colonialism extended the boundaries of Africa into Europe and into the hearts of the Americas. All Africans irrespective of their location on this planet are of a common ancestry and as such belong to the same family. There has always existed a family of Africans who speak different African dialects. The Ga people of Ghana refer to this family of Africans as *Jaku*.

This concept of *Jaku* is very important for it implies that every person with a drop of African blood in his or her veins is a member of this *Jaku*. This is precisely so because African culture does not consider any child as illegitimate or inferior and accept any person, whether of male descent or female descent as a member of the clan community. No person has the right to deny any person of African descent the right to claim that he or she is an African except that person himself or herself. Indeed, that is why Jerry John Rawlings, the President of Ghana is accepted by Ghanaians as an African and an Ewe despite the fact that his father is Scottish. However, that does not necessarily mean that Rawlings considers himself to be an African, for every human being has the free will to disown his or her own parents and hence ancestry.

Because no African has the right to deny any person of African descent membership of this *Jaku*, all people of African descent irrespective of their place of birth are members of this *Jaku* and are Africans. African-Americans, African-Canadians, African-Europeans, African-Caribbeans, whether they are mulattos or not, are Africans. Of course, because of the dismal situation of continental Africans today some members of the *Jaku* may be tempted to deny that they are African but the denial does not alter the fundamental truth that they are Africans. But no matter where Africa is located, African people relatively occupy the lowest position in a racist vertical mosaic constructed about 500 years ago by European imperialists.

During the era when racism did not exist but virtue, some Africans including Severus Septimus became emperors of Rome and some of the early Popes and saints of the Christian Church were Africans. Saint Augustine was an African and so was Saint Maurice. The consequence of the institutionalization of racism is the rationalization and justification of the European slave trade in Africans followed by colonialism which took Africans out of history by reducing them to the status of commodities or chattels. In the process, Africans internalized their slavery into mental slavery and African culture which defines the African became polluted. Africans ceased to be a people and were assigned several labels by Europeans just as commodities on shelves in the supermarkets are given labels. Some of these labels are Nigerians, Liberians, Tanzanians, Trinidadians, Jamaicans, African-Americans all of whom are Africans and members of the great *Jaku* being descendants of Mother Africa.

Colonial policies and logic including the colour bar and the horrors of William Lynch stifled the development of African entrepreneurs everywhere. Independence granted on the terms of the colonizer did not mean decolonization for the colonial structures remained intact. Because African leaders are themselves mentally enslaved, they are blind to taking the appropriate actions to unite Africans for autocentric development. Instead of thinking of themselves as Africans who should collectively benefit from the human and material resources of Africa, they continue to think of themselves as Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, Ethiopians, Nigerians, Jamaicans etc. Meanwhile the resources of Africa continue to be plundered to the benefit of Europeans and Euro-Americans.

These Europeans and Euro-Americans claim to be providing Africa with aid whereas in reality it is Africa which provides them with their much needed material and human resources. Africa is plundered and its peoples exploited without mercy. The most wonderful oxymoron in human history is that Africa, the poor, continues to make both America and Europe richer and richer. However, all is not lost. The resources of Africa are still vast but before Africa can get out of this dismal situation certain conditions must be fulfilled. The first is the eradication of the mental slavery that without assistance from Europeans or Euro-Americans, Africans cannot develop on their own.

Before the quest for gold in the 15th century brought Europeans to the shores of Africa, Africans were developing on their own. It is naive for African leaders to think that there are imperialists and capitalists out there in Europe and America who are all that willing to develop Africans. Be it known to African leaders that capitalists do not set out to create other capitalists to compete with them or to develop any area of Africa. The logic of the capitalist is to maximize profit with the maxim "make money, dear capitalist, make money; honestly, if you can but dear capitalist make money. In the same manner, no imperialist sets out to develop any area of Africa. The imperialist sets out to dominate and exploit without mercy.

The second is African self-discovery through the realization that it is culture that makes the African what he or she is and that the holus bolus transplantation of European culture into Africa can never work because Africans are not Europeans. Africans can learn from Europeans but that knowledge has to be adapted to African culture. For example,

democracy is nothing new to Africa for it is an integral part of African culture but African democracy is not the same as European democracy. European democracy is based upon competition in which the winner takes all whereas African democracy is based upon consensus, compromise, and cooperation in which everyone shares the cake. What Africa needs is therefore not the forked-tongue democracy called liberal democracy which on one part of its tongue holds that the interest of the individual is paramount while the other part of the same tongue holds that the interest of the majority is paramount, but *Jaku* democracy which ensures the satisfaction of the interest of everyone through consensus, compromise and cooperation.

African culture does not encourage individuals to boast or praise themselves. African culture teaches: let the people praise you and not yourself. The political platform of liberal democracy in which candidates boast and praise themselves, and even crooks can convince the electorate to vote for them is completely alien to African culture. In *Jaku* democracy, candidates were selected by merit based upon how members of their community viewed them right from childhood. Crooks therefore had no chance.

The quality of management and leadership matters. Africa requires well-trained managers in the various institutions to be established but if the political leadership is not dynamic and committed enough, the transformation process may stagnate. There are two types of leaders required: transaction leaders and transformation leaders. Transaction leaders are those who can fine tune the transformation processes of development by bringing about relatively small changes. However, whenever there is a tendency for stagnation, transformation leaders capable of radical changes to the status quo are required. Africa's present predicament demands the existence of transformation leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Dr. Dubois, George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, Edward Blyden and Patrice Lumumba with the appropriate vision and capability for uniting the continent into one great nation. Unfortunately, most of the leaders of Africa today have been captured through IMF and World Bank colonialism and go about with caps in hand begging for the crumbs that might be allowed to fall from the tables of capitalists and imperialists. Instead of freeing Africa from the shackles of imperialism they have allowed themselves to be transformed into agents of neocolonialism. The greatest problem of Africa is therefore the betrayal of the leadership. Africa needs light but the leaders do not know how to operate the appropriate switches.

The Philipines and Indonesia are countries each comprising more islands than the Caribbean but have been united into single entities. Because of mental slavery inherited from the past, the conversion of the leaders of the Caribbean into selfish comprador imperialists, and the divide and rule operations of imperialism Caribbean integration, which should be relatively easy when compared to the Philippines and Indonesia, has been turned into an almost impossibility. It is even surprising that the African dominated islands of the Caribbean have not been able to unite. The situation on the African continent is even worse. The Organization of African Unity has been turned into an Organization for African Disunity. Despite their history of oppression, exclusion and marginalization, the Africans in the United States have not been able to unite to constitute a strong common front to fight for their rights. The same holds true for the Africans in

Europe and Canada who are atomised and divided more than sand. The *Jaku* family remains divided everywhere and because the greater majority do not know their history, some are not even aware that they are Africans. All sheep everywhere know that they are sheep and all goats everywhere know that they are goats but Africans in the United States, on the continent of Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia think they are different. Surely, Africans are in the dark and require the light of Pan-African Nationalism – the African Light.