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# Culturally Relevant Education; Reclamation & Power the Route of Ma'at: A Response to Anti-Blackness

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**Abstract**

The intersection of anthropology and African Centered Pedagogy is an opportunity to explore the connections and reflections of the field. African Centered Pedagogy is a discipline of study that aims to explore how cultural practices, beliefs, and values shape educational processes and outcomes in African communities. Anthropologists study the diverse cultural practices of African societies, including their traditional ways of transmitting knowledge and educating their youth, while African pedagogy seeks to understand the cultural and historical context of education in Africa and its relationship to experiences in African societies. Anthropology, as a discipline that studies humans and societies, provides a framework for understanding the diversity of cultural practices and how they can influence education in different contexts. African pedagogy, on the other hand, is concerned with developing a culturally relevant and responsive approach to education in Africa. This approach recognizes and incorporates African cultural knowledge, values, and practices into the educational process to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of education.

George (2017) suggests that the intersection of anthropology and African pedagogy, therefore, seeks to explore how anthropological theories, methods, and concepts can be applied to understanding the cultural and social contexts of education for people of African descent. This involves examining the role of culture in shaping educational practices, the impact of colonialism and globalization on African education, and how African pedagogy can be used to promote a culturally responsive and relevant educational system. By the inclusion of these two fields of study, scholars and practitioners can develop a better understanding of the complexities and nuances of education in African societies and work towards creating educational systems that are more inclusive, culturally relevant, and empowering for African learners.

**Keywords:** Reclamation; Anti-Blackness; anthropology; African Centered Pedagogy

## Several positive impacts of culturally relevant education can be observed in students, teachers, and the education system.

Some of these impacts include:

• Improved academic performance: Students who receive culturally relevant education are more engaged and motivated to learn, leading to better academic performance. They feel a sense of ownership and connection to the material, which helps them retain it better.

• Increased engagement and motivation: Culturally relevant education allows students to see themselves and their cultural backgrounds reflected in the curriculum and classroom environment. This helps to increase their engagement and motivation in learning, as they feel more connected and invested in the material.

• Improved academic performance: When students feel seen and valued in the classroom, they are more likely to have positive attitudes toward school and learning. This can lead to improved academic performance and achievement.

• Development of cultural competency: Culturally relevant education helps to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, perspectives, and experiences. This can lead to the development of cultural competency, which is an essential skill for success in an increasingly diverse world.

• Reduction of biases and stereotypes: By incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, culturally

relevant education helps to reduce biases and stereotypes. This can support the development of understanding, empathy, and respect for others.

• Enhanced teacher-student relationships: Culturally relevant education allows teachers to build stronger relationships with students, as they are better able to understand and connect with their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Overall, culturally relevant education has the potential to promote greater equity and inclusion in education, by valuing and celebrating the diverse cultures and experiences of all students. This discussion aims to create an understanding of how anti-Blackness is perpetuated within our social, political, and economic systems, and how this affects the Africana/Black community on both a personal and structural level. Through this fundamental understanding, I would like participants to develop strategies for advocacy, allyship, and policy reform to help develop anti-Blackness conditions. Afrocentricity seeks to foster empathy and intersectionality by highlighting how different forms of discrimination intersect and impact the lives of marginalized communities.

Dr. Asante (1991) notes that furthermore, if education is ever to be substantive and meaningful within the context of American society, Woodson's arguments must first be starting with an address of the African's historical experiences, both in Africa and America (p.7). These ideas represent the core presuppositions on which Dr. Asante and myself have based a concentration of work in the field of education and African American Studies/Ethnic Studies, and these academic works propose the route of my own contemplating about what education can do to and for a nation and people.

One, Education is fundamentally a social phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is to socialize the learner; to send a child to school is to prepare that child to become part of a social group; & two, Schools are reflective of the societies that develop them (i.e., a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White supremacist educational system). An alternative framework suggests that other definitional assumptions can provide a new paradigm for the examination of education within American society. For example, in education, centricity refers to a perspective that involves locating scholars within the context of their cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives.

The Afrocentric idea must be the stepping-stone from which the multicultural idea is launched. A truly authentic multicultural education, therefore, must be based upon the Afrocentric initiative. If this step is skipped, multicultural curricula, as they are increasingly being defined by White "resisters" (to be discussed below) will evolve without any substantive infusion of African American content, and the African Ameri child can continue to be lost in the Eurocentric framework of education.

The Afrocentric challenge has been posted in three critical ways:

• It questions the imposition of the White supremacist view as universal and/or classical (Asante, 1990).

• It demonstrates the indefensibility of racist theories that assault multiculturalism and pluralism.

• It projects a humanistic and pluralistic viewpoint by articulating Afro-centricity as a valid, nonhegemonic perspective.

In their arguments against the Afrocentric perspective, these proponents of Eurocentrism often clothe their arguments in false categories and fake terms (i.e., "pluralistic" and "particularistic" multiculturalism) (Keto, 1990; Asante, 1991). Besides, as the late African scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop (1980) maintained: "African history and Africa need no defense." Afrocentric education is not against history. It is for history-correct, accurate history and if it is against anything, it is against the marginalization of African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, Native American, and other non-White children.

Anti-Blackness/white supremacy is a systematic issue that affects not only the Black community but society. By sharing personal experiences and perspectives and engaging in open and honest dialogue, participants can gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of anti-Blackness and how to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Ultimately, the outcome of the anti-Blackness workshop is to promote cultural competency and understanding, encourage allyship, and empower individuals to act toward combating anti-Blackness in their own lives and communities. We incorporate Afrocentric perspectives in our education and discourse on the appropriation of Black culture and harmful language. This involves centering the voices and experiences of Black individuals and acknowledging their agency in shaping their cultural narratives and experiences. By incorporating Afrocentric perspectives, we can challenge dominant narratives that often marginalize and erase the contributions and experiences of Black people. This can help create more inclusive and equitable Black people and view cultural expressions and behaviors through the lens of African agency and history. By doing so, we can challenge dominant narratives and power structures that have perpetuated the marginalization and oppression of Black people. Asante also emphasizes the importance of critical analysis in understanding the complexities of African culture and history. This involves examining the historical and social contexts in which cultural expressions and behaviors emerged, as well as the power dynamics at play in their adoption and appropriation by non-Black individuals and institutions.

Overall, incorporating Afrocentric perspectives in our education and discourse on the appropriation of Black culture and harmful language can help us to promote understanding,

respect, and equity within our communities and institutions. It is an essential step towards dismantling systems of oppression and promoting positive change for Black people and all people of color. Let's talk about the international nature of Africana Studies/Pan-African Studies, which reflects the diversity of people of African descent throughout the globe. While the original Pan-Africanists of the late 19th century focused on uniting African peoples across the diaspora, the movement evolved in the early 20th century to include the fight against colonialism and the quest for political independence. The 5th Pan-African Congress represented a radical shift in Pan-African focus on repatriation and a return to African roots, the 5th Pan-African Congress marked a shift towards a more radical, anti-colonial agenda that demanded self-determination and sovereignty for African nations.

The Congress brought together a diverse group of Pan-Africanists, including African American civil rights activists like W.E.B. DuBois and Caribbean nationalist leaders like George Padmore. However, it was the African delegates, particularly Nkrumah, who emerged as the leading voices and demanded immediate action and solidarity among African nations in the fight against colonialism and imperialism. The shift towards a more continental focus in Pan-Africanism reflected the changing political climate of the time, as African nations began to gain independence and assert their sovereignty on the global stage. This shift also signaled a recognition of the diversity within the African diaspora and the need for solidarity and collaboration among Black people across the globe. Overall, the 5th Pan-African Congress marked a significant turning point in the history of Pan-Africanism, reflecting the changing political landscape and the evolving perspectives of Black leaders and activists.

Beyond the political realm, Pan-Africanism has also touched on social, cultural, and economic issues. There have been efforts to establish Pan-African communities and safe spaces for Black people, particularly in areas where they are a minority. These spaces serve as a way for Black people to connect, share experiences, and support one another in facing the challenges of systemic racism and discrimination. Cultural institutions and festivals, such as the World Festival of Black Arts convened in Dakar, Senegal in 1966. These initiatives aimed to celebrate and promote the diversity of African cultures and foster a sense of unity and connection among Black people around the world.

In terms of social issues, Pan-Africanism has sought to address the lack of safe spaces for Black people in predominantly non-Black communities. This includes efforts to combat racial discrimination and address police brutality, which has been a critical issue in the United States and other countries with significant Black populations. At the community level, Pan-Africanism has also focused on addressing unrest and promoting healing in areas where racial tensions have led to conflict and division. This involves building bridges between communities and promoting dialogue and understanding between different racial and ethnic groups.

Finally, there is a need to address the lack of representation of Black people in various fields, including politics, media, and the arts. Pan-Africanism calls for greater diversity and inclusivity across all aspects of society, recognizing that full representation and participation are essential for achieving true equality and liberation. In conclusion, Pan-Africanism represents a complex and multifaceted movement that speaks to the diverse experiences and struggles of Black people across the globe. Whether addressing political, social, cultural, or economic issues, the underlying goal of Pan-Africanism is to foster greater unity, solidarity, and empowerment among Black peoples and to work towards a more just and equitable world.

Education on the appropriation of Black culture involves understanding the historical and cultural context of certain elements of Black culture, including music, fashion, and language it's important to acknowledge the origins of these cultural elements and how they have been adopted and appropriated by non-Black individuals and institutions without proper credit or recognition given to Black creators and communities. When it comes to language that can be harmful. It's important to acknowledge that these elements were created as a means of resistance and survival, often in the face of adversity and oppression.

Therefore, when individuals from outside the Black community appropriate these elements, they often do so without understanding or acknowledging the origins and significance of these cultural expressions. In terms of language, certain phrases, and language patterns have been historically used to oppress the Black community, such as the use of the "N-word" and other racial slurs. It's important to educate individuals on the harm these words can cause and the power dynamics at play when non-Black individuals use them.

To hold institutions and organizations accountable for harmful language and appropriation, it's important to have a system in place for reporting and addressing instances of harm. This can include policies and training for employees and members, as well as community-led initiatives for accountability and reparations. It's also crucial to include students in the conversation and education on the appropriation of Black culture and harmful language. This can be done through curriculum reform and inclusive programming that centers the experiences and perspectives of Black students and encourages an understanding of cultural differences and respect for diversity. To help Black folks feel welcomed and accepted in predominantly non-Black communities, several steps can be taken:

• Acknowledge and address systemic racism and discrimination: It's important to recognize that systemic racism and discrimination still exist and can make it difficult for Black folks to feel comfortable in non-Black communities. Taking active steps to address these issues, such as implementing anti-racism

systemic racism: It's important to acknowledge that systemic racism exists and affects the experiences of Black people. Non-Black communities must take active steps to address this issue, including challenging their own biases and actively working towards creating a more inclusive environment.

- Create opportunities for interaction and connection: Create opportunities for Black people to connect with members of the community, whether it's through community events, volunteering, or other activities. This can help to break down barriers and promote understanding and acceptance.

- Celebrate Black culture and heritage: Celebrate and promote Black culture by highlighting the contributions of Black people to history, society, and the community. This can help to create a sense of pride and belonging and promote a more diverse and inclusive community.

- Provide support for Black-led organizations and businesses: Support Black-led organizations and businesses by shopping at Black-owned businesses, attending events hosted by Black-led organizations, and donating to Black-led nonprofits. This can help to create a more equitable and supportive community for Black people.

- Listen and learn: Listen to the experiences of Black people in the community and learn from their experiences. This can help to build empathy and understanding and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

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