

Endsights:



An afrocentric philosophy is needed. The essential purpose is not to destroy eurocentric views but to identify or emphasize the role of Africa and its people in the creation of world civilizations by placing them at the center or near the center of one's perception of their own culture

By Carlton Wilson
Contributor

In the foreword of Molefi Asante's book *Afrocentricity*, Kariamir Welsh asks the questions: what is an afrocentric philosophy and why is there a need for such a philosophy? These questions should be posed to all students both young and old, black and white.

Those who observe the sentiments of college students across the nation have noticed an increase in black awareness among black students and even some white students. This awareness is primarily displayed by an increasing interest in black studies courses and the popularity of displaying some type of symbolic identification, e.g. the wearing of ornaments or clothing, expressing a relationship with Africa. Recently I asked a student who was wearing a bracelet made of cowrie shell and a badge made of kente cloth if he knew what those Afrocentric styles symbolized? His vague response was, "I think they have something to do with Africa." This is a minor reason why there is a need for an afrocentric philosophy that stresses the central role of Africa and people of African descent in the development of cultures and civilizations throughout the world. Generations of students and teachers have been educated from a eurocentric perspective that has downplayed or totally ignored African and the people of African descent. As Carter G. Woodson asserted, this has caused a substantial amount of mis-education. In order to at least create a balance, blacks need to do more than wear symbols. An afrocentric philosophy is needed. The essential purpose is not to destroy eurocentric views but to identify or emphasize the role of Africa and its people in the creation of world civilizations by placing them at the center of one's perception of their own culture.

However, there are those, both students and teachers, black and white, who will not even recognize a need or the validity of an afrocentric philosophy. But even these individuals must at least make a serious effort to acknowledge the position of Africa and Africans in shaping cultures and societies from Europe to the Americas, from antiquity to the present. For example, the study of Greek and Roman civilization should naturally include the presence of blacks in antiquity, and studies of European societies should recognize black people and black communities in Europe. Furthermore, it is just as significant to study blacks in colonial America or any other period of American history as it is to examine the English, the Italians, or the Irish. All

of them contributed to the creation of American ideals and institutions. It is important to understand the enlightened philosophy of a Thomas Jefferson, but it is just as important to examine how such an individual could be an owner of slaves. If these issues are not properly addressed then the lessons being taught and learned are incomplete and falsehoods are being perpetuated.

In addition, afrocentricity involves more than the taking or teaching of a course. Blacks should examine their inner-self and come to terms with their own black experience. At the same time black people in America must become more sensitive to the presence of a worldwide black experience. The African Diaspora involves much more than the United States. Likewise, whites need to continue to work at being more sensitive to the conditions that affect blacks in America and elsewhere. Recognizing the importance or usefulness of afrocentricity would help them and others realize and understand that the black experience involves much more than slavery. While attending a recent conference I was dismayed to hear a white historian state that black history only became significant after the appearance of *Roots*. Surely, this individual needs a dose of afrocentricity. He needs to start at the beginning and digest the works of Chancellor Williams, Cheikh Diop, Ivan Van Sertima, or Frank Snowden.

From the "afrocentric style-wearing" college student to the college professor, a broader and more precise understanding of the Black Experience is needed. Perhaps this will help to deter what appears to be a growing insensitivity toward blacks on various college campuses and throughout American society.

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Search For A Past

Brothers and sisters, it has come to my attention that we are a lost people-- a people without a past, a people with a dismal present and hopeless future. That is the message we as African-Americans have come to know and cling to in this country. But I am here to tell you that it is not so. African-Americans have a history so rich and significant that the establishment has struggled to keep it hidden. To tell a people they have no beginnings, they have no significant contributions to the world is to tell an entire race they have no worth, that they come from nothing and that that is all they may ever hope to achieve in their lifetime. Since birth, African Americans have been told that what is black is bad. Bad guys always wore black and even evil magic was called black. It was on the TV, at the movies, in the books they read to us at school. As a child you were hard pressed to find a black Barbie doll or a black GI Joe. These were your heroes, and they were all white. Nowhere in your history books were blacks mentioned except that one paragraph on the slave trade and the one on Martin Luther King, which your teacher because of time constraints decided to skip over. So you secretly wondered if the stereotypes were right. Were my people the lazy, shiftless miscreants that society made them out to be, because it seems they have not contributed anything to this world but fried chicken recipes and family reunions. So white must be right and what I am must be wrong. That, my friends, is the message we have come to know and cling to. But it is time, African-Americans, to put away our childhood heroes and to look up and see the light of a new day. We are a people, a beautiful, intelligent people to be reckoned with, who have endured and contributed our blood, sweat and tears to make this world a better place. But that fact and many others are somehow forgotten and looked over in our textbooks. As black men and women, boys and girls, we have to find our past. And in our search we find new heroes with timeless causes and pursuits. Did you know black men and women invented the first pencil sharpener, lawn mower, gas mask, and indoor toilet? No, you didn't, and you never will if you don't make the time to go to the library, the museum, take as many AFAM courses as you can and find your past, find your people. This country was built on the whipped-raw backs of our ancestors. We, as a people, have survived so much. Our ancestors have endured so much, paved the way for us to enjoy freedoms that would have seemed ludicrous 10 or 20 years ago. Now it is our turn. Our turn to take the establishment's racist rules and statistics and shove them. Our turn to cross religious and economic barriers and take a stand for our people. For more than anything we are a surviving people, a people who turn the odds in our favor and snatch the whip from the master's hands and crush it. Armed with the facts and deep sense of pride, we are unstoppable. FEAR OF A BLACK NATION? I think so.-- Teresa Jefferson

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