

Introduction

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The Fall 2022 issue of *Moja* focuses on the critique of Black (African and African diaspora) humanism. Today, Black humanism, particularly if we define humanism as a value system that prioritizes the well-being of human beings, continues to be complicated by uncertainty, disagreements, and dreams deferred. Although Africans and people of African descent have long struggled to bring about a value system aimed at prioritizing the well-being of Black humanity and humanism, the actualization of these projects, concretely speaking, seem yet to be altogether realized. The synergy of value systems such as decolonization, *ujamaa*, *ubuntu*, communalism, Pan-Africanism, and the civil rights movements—still seem like lofty ideals and promises not yet entirely fulfilled, though they continue to live in the hearts and minds of older generations, in the demands of younger generations, and in the syllabi of African and African diaspora studies in academia. What happened between then—the inception of these values/projects—and now—the consolidation of neoliberalism? Is Black humanism accommodating itself within the house of neoliberalism? What is the future of Black humanism? This issue of *Moja* seeks to respond to some of these questions, mostly critiquing Eurocentrism and the legacies and practices of colonialism by centering decolonization, postcolonialism, Pan-Africanism, and Afrocentrism.

“Decolonial Musings: a conversation with Drs. Trey Adcock, Ameena Batada, Agya Boakye-Boaten, and Jeremias Zunguze” features a conversation on decolonization between fellow academics of color: University of North Carolina Asheville’s faculty, Trey Adcock, Ameena Batada, Agya Boakye-Boaten, Jeremias Zunguze, and California State University Los Angeles’s Tavengwa Gwekwerere. This discussion stems from the premise that Africans, people of African descent, and Indigenous peoples continue to live under coloniality or the legacies and practices of colonialism—including the control of the economy, polity, knowledge, and subjectivity—founded on race as the organizing principle (Quijano & Ennis, 2000, pp. 533-580; Mignolo, 2011, pp. 8-9). The end of colonialism and slavery in Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean did not mean the end of colonial legacies and practices in contemporary humanism and knowledge among formerly colonized peoples. As such, Adcock, Batada, Boakye-Boaten, Gwekwerere, and Zunguze argue that decolonization continues to be as relevant as ever for Black and Indigenous liberation, particularly the assertion of Afrocentric, Pan-Africanist; and Indigenous land knowledge and systems of knowing as means to social transformation.

Engaging in epistemic decolonization, Kimani Nehusi centers African agency to critique Eurocentrism in Egyptology, tracing African religion in ancient Egypt and relocating culture in Parts I and II of his series on “The *It Neter* or father of god.” Applying Afrocentricity in cultural enunciation (Asante, 1980), Nehusi sees the Eurocentric approach to Egyptology as inadequate to understanding ancient Egypt, particularly the concept of the “social father” (p. 10). While Eurocentrism in Egyptology privileges biology or bloodline in its explanation of social paternity in ancient Egypt, Afrocentrism reveals that the concept of father and its multiple roles was rooted in African tradition; as such, it did not follow a bloodline (p. 10). Nehusi engages in the relocation of African culture, showing the vital

importance of using an Afrocentric approach to studying African epistemology that has too long been distorted by Eurocentric Egyptologist methodologies.

In “Multilingualism and decolonization in Femi Osofisan’s plays: a post-colonial perspective,” Jide Ajidahun takes a postcolonial theoretical approach to examine multilingualism in the Nigerian playwright Femi Osofisan. According to Ajidahun, Osofisan’s plays stage various characters speaking various languages—standard British English, Nigerian Pidgin English, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo (pp. 37-38). This multilingualism is an aesthetic strategy to convey the Nigerian postcolonial social reality to reach a larger audience (p. 50). By staging formal British English, Osofisan, says Ajidahun, is ironically representing class consciousness among the Nigerian elites in relation to the ordinary Nigerians who code-switch between Pidgin English and Indigenous languages (p. 37). Also, by staging African languages such as Yoruba, Osofisan also engages in linguistic decolonization. Meanwhile, his concept of decolonization differs slightly from that of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, who believes that the liberation of Africa from coloniality of language will only be achieved through the complete rejection of European languages (1986). Ajidahun concludes that Osofisan’s multilingualism is a paradox balancing the representation of formal and Pidgin English that “transcends all. . . ethnicities” to create a sense of unity among Nigerians, while the representation of Indigenous languages promotes the preservation of African cultural heritage (pp. 42). Still, one question remains: How can a colonial and imperialist European language like English coexist with other African languages without exercising a coloniality of power?

In “Performing the Third Chimurenga: popular expressions of nationalism in the context of land reform in Zimbabwe,” Shingi Mavima taps into political decolonization, particularly the people’s reclamation of land in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Although the twentieth-century postcolonial Zimbabwean government under the leadership of Robert Mugabe implemented reforms to mitigate the coloniality of land, according to Mavima, the masses have always expressed the reclamation of land even in times when the leadership appeared reluctant (p. 57). People’s land reclamation movement, according to Mavima, has always been found in Zimbabwean popular aesthetics (i.e., song, poetry, and theater), conveying land negotiation in connection to national identity (p. 57). According to Mavima, popular praxis is an important source for understanding the twenty-first-century politics surrounding land in Zimbabwe—beyond Mugabe, who is often credited with such an effort (p. 57). Mavima revisits Fanon’s concept of decolonization: “For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity” (2004, p.9). In short, in a settler colony like Zimbabwe, decolonization without reclaiming the land as a platform on which national identity can be self-fashioned is simply an epistemic abstraction.

Finally, in “Justice is dead” and “Thank You Lord for my cross” Ajidahun, through poetry, again, reflects on the Nigerian postcolonial social reality, conveying aesthetics of violence and suffering. In “Justice is dead,” the hopeless poetic voice announces the death of justice the night before, a tragedy followed by a cascade of frightful events, in which “(t)he criminals are back / No more respite for the poor / The hope of the masses is gone . . . (a)nd we are doomed.” Throughout the poem, it is unclear when justice was alive, though the poetic voice expresses shock at “[h]ow are the mighty fallen!” and the nostalgia about Justice that once provided a sense of protection and security: “Your presence was reassuring / But frightening to the intruders / Your barking made them flee” (p. 79). In “Thank You Lord for my cross,” reminiscent of Nigerian songwriter, political activist, and Pan-Africanist Fela Kuti’s song “Suffering and Shmiling,” Ajidahun conveys an irony, in which the poetic voice, though suffering, is thankful for one’s hardship because it is not as bad as that of others: “When I look at the cross of others / I thank you for my own / Even though I sometimes faint carrying it / Some others have died while carrying theirs” (p. 80). The aesthetic of violence, be it state-sanctioned

and/or inter-ethnic, and suffering through poverty are part and parcel of the postcolonial African experience exacerbated by the legacies and practices of colonialism. Africans and people of African descent carry the trauma of colonialism and slavery which often is taken upon the poor masses. Postcolonial Nigeria, despite being one of the most developed nations in Africa—culturally and economically—since independence in 1960, the country has been plagued by corruption, dictatorship, and civil war, having a devastating impact on the poor masses. Aware of these socio-historical conditions, Ajidahun uses poetry to both celebrate and expose the resilience and hardship of everyday postcolonial Nigerians.

The authors, poets, and academics gathered together within this edition of *Moja* speak openly of the fact that Africans and people of African descent are not yet fully liberated—even after colonialism, slavery, and class emancipation within neoliberalism. Each of these writers implicitly and/or explicitly recognize (1) an enslaving logic as the organizing principle of global labor exploitation and (2) racism as the structuring principle of humanism and knowledge that continue to affect Africans and people of African descent. While elite Africans and people of African descent who have attained power, wealth, education, and/or other privileges often view access to resources and class mobility as the key to ultimate liberation, even these Black elites, in fact, continue to occupy a subordinate position in power, because of the racism which continues to control the global polity, economy, knowledge, and subjectivity. And if even the elites' polity, economy, knowledge, and subjectivity in Africa and the African diaspora are heavily controlled by the neoliberal hand, imagine how this control ends up severely affecting the less empowered, less privileged, less resourced African masses! All of our contributors in the Fall 2022 edition of *Moja* argue and agree that African and African diaspora liberation will only come through continuous engagement with decolonization and reclamation of Afro-centered and Pan-African value systems.

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