

Panel 30

Rosetta Codling, PhD

Codling Educational Consultants

Thesis: Reflecting upon the Africana Diaspora's (involuntary) contributions to a global economy and projecting the (voluntary) insistence upon credit for global prosperity in the new Millennium

Abstract:

Africa and the African Diaspora (past and present) have always contributed to the advancement of the global economy, involuntarily, in favor of Europe and America. Most importantly, The (*infamous) Atlantic Slave Trade (including the Middle Passage) funded the very industrialization of Europe and America. The servitude of Africa continues within the 20th century. The Black Migration, in America, and the Windrush Era, in England, contributed greatly to the redevelopment of Post-War America and England. Currently, Africa contributes to the new Millennium (which engages techno-advancement) by supplying the world with mineral wealth.

Go-africanization may be a means for the realization of Africa's internal and external wealth. And this concept may serve as means for Africans, not foreigners, to capitalize upon their own wealth.

This paper serves to reflect upon past contributions of Africa and the African Diaspora to the global economy. A projection forward will be provided for a means for Africa and the African Diaspora to reap the benefits of their labor in the global market of today.***

A. Links between globalization, Capitalism, and access to free labor

Before the intrusion of the Iberians in the 1400's, Africa was sought by Europe for intellectualism, minerals, and human labor. The Greek civilization, the catalysis (*Black Spark, White Fire*, 1997) for the development of Roman intellectualism, derived much of their culture from the Egyptian (*Black Athena*, 1987).¹ African concepts regarding the development of aqueducts and the harvesting of crops took seed and blossomed later within Western Agricultural Science. And most importantly, African principles regarding philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and politics, also, took seed and became rooted in the very basis for Western thought. The famed researcher Chiek Anta Diop details, within his treatise, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (1967), the role of Africa, as a founder of Western civilization and of contemporary commerce. Yet, with the commencement of a new globalization, or the making of the Atlantic World, in the 1400's, things changed for Africa. The new globalization became an enterprise to bring together the diverse economic aspirations of Europe. Industry and trade were being organized and centralized for the mutual benefit of all parties. In short, Capitalism was at

the forefront of the making of the Atlantic World. There were no altruistic, religious motives involved in this venture. Profit was the objective and the means to achieve a considerable profit is often based upon cheap labor. America played a major role in this new, emerging world market because:

“The importance of the discovery of America lay not in the precious metals it provided but in the new and inexhaustible market it afforded for European commodities. One of its principal effects was to “raise the mercantile system to a degree of splendour and glory which it never otherwise have attained to”. It raise rise to an enormous increase in world trade....For Britain that was the triangular trade...the slave trade as “the first principal and foundation of all the rest and the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion.”

(Williams: 51) **Capitalism and Slavery*

As we know, America, from its very inception, has played a vital role in globalization. And the Americas have always played a vital role in”the triangular trade [of] England—France and Colonial America equally---supplied the exports and the ships; Africa the human merchandise; the plantations the colonial raw materials (Williams: *ibid.*)” Thus, Africa was an integral part of globalization, the triangular trade, and the making of the Atlantic World. Yet, Africa was the loser. Africa and Africans, from the commencement of globalization, provided the involuntarily, labor. But Europe and Europeans reaped all of the profits.

For, what commenced as an enterprise among equals regressed to a policy of exploitation. Africa was ravaged and depreciated of its human and natural resources. Previously, within the annuals of the famed Equiano (*The Life of Gustavus Vassa*, 1999), all of West Africa enjoyed a healthy climate of free-trade along the coast. But, this climate was short-lived. And the ensuing changes summoned for the decline of the very continent of Africa and the ascent of Western culture and industrialization. Within Eric Williams’ book, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1996), it is revealed that the industrial revolution obtained the capital for such through the free labor of slavery. And the travesty of the Atlantic World venture, and The Atlantic Slave Trade became the predecessors to contemporary, Black relocation movements such as the Windrush Era of the Caribbean/England and the Great Migration in the United States. Within each of these epic movements, the relocation and dislocation, involuntary, of peoples of colour sponsored globalization.²

John Thornton’s work *Africa and Africans: The making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1630* (1992) and Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1991) share a similar perspective regarding the objective and focus of the making of the Atlantic World. Ironically, within these works, the self-serving role of slavery is conveniently scathed over. Theories presented in these Eurocentric publications assert that the noble objective of Europeans was to forge a broader scope to be known as the Atlantic World. Africa did not harbor romantic notions of a European presence in Africa and African affairs in the 1400’s. In John Thornton’s text *Africa and Africans: The making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1600* (1992), he does cite the initial resistance of the indigenous people by use of their navy.

The Iberian 'raid and trade' practices were not met with approval. Africans forcibly demanded that trade be conducted voluntarily and between equals. Indeed, the Portuguese Crown needed instruction to relearn these lessons in equitable trade several times or risk losing license to trade on the West Coast of Africa (Thorton:38-39). Portugal, an early interloper in African affairs, eventually gained the upper hand and seized Angola to establish a colony for the sole purpose of developing a commercial factory. Portugal needed to regulate trade from Ndongo (Thorton:40). This endeavor had no benevolent, utopian goal. Raw, unwavering, capitalist greed was the only goal. In truth, Walter Rodney's work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1992) lifts the veil upon the true nature of Europe's African enterprise. Capitalism and the notion of a 'global economy' are concepts rooted in the exploitation of one group for the furthering of another group.

Europeans began trading with Africa for the sole purpose of enhancing their own Capitalist trade. Eventually, the act of trading with Africa progressed to thieving 'Africa.' And this policy was not restricted to the Dark Continent alone. Indeed, the span of the Atlantic Slave Trade, otherwise known as the Atlantic Capitalist enterprise, extended to India, the Pacific Islands, all of the Americas, and unto the Caribbean Islands, as well. In an essay written by Elikia M'bokolo, she describes, in a concise manner, the full escapade. She states:

"The African continent was bled of its human resources via all possible routes. Across the Sahara, through the Red Sea, from the Indian ocean ports and across the Atlantic....The more than four centuries (from the end of the fifteenth century to the nineteenth) of a regular slave trade to build the Americas and the prosperity of the Christian states of Europe. The figures, even hotly disputed, make your head spin. Four million slaves exported via the Red Sea, another four million through the Swahili ports of the Indian Ocean, and perhaps as many as nine million along the trans-Saharan caravan route, and eleven to twenty million (depending upon the author) across the Atlantic Ocean."

(M'bokolo, Elikia, *The impact of the slave trade on Africa*, p.1)

All of Europe derived the benefits of this trade while all of Africa fell asunder due to certain propositions:

"The great slaving companies were formed in the second half of the seventeenth century. Americas, and other countries of the world, benefited from the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and various papal edicts which reserved African districts for the Spaniards, the Portuguese, and other nations of Europe. [In essence].... the whole of Europe – France, England, Holland, Portugal and Spain, and even Denmark, Sweden and Bradenburg shared the spoils, establishing a chain of monopoly companies....In Africa itself, sporadic raids by the Europeans soon gave way to regular commerce. African societies were drawn into the slavery system under duress..."

(M'bokolo, Elikia, *ibid*)

Slaving was vital to funding the global economic force in Europe. The European powers France, England, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Denmark and Sweden shared the benefits reaped from a cheap, African labor force. Once again, Africa made vital, involuntary contributions to Capitalism and the global economics of the world. And the contributions did not cease with the end of slavery. The manner of accessing a cheap, 'Atlantic-Slave Trade' became covert, and 'politically correct' in the Post-Modern world.

B. Continued Black funding of globalization (involuntary) through relocation and dislocation in America

Professor Thomas Holt's current treatise *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans* (2010) provides the most concise account of the legacy of African Americans in America. He relates the fact that:

“Although much of their history is likely to remain enigmatic, we can be fairly certain that the twenty Africans on that Dutch man-of-war were at the apex of a triangle formed by Europe, Africa, and America. At that moment, in particular, three European powers--- England, the Netherlands, and Spain, struggling for supremacy in Europe---were pushing the boundaries of their conflict into Africa and the Americas...twenty Africans landed at Jamestown...a part of a cargo of slaves on a Portuguese ...”
(Holt:6)

As stated earlier, Africans, in terms of globalization during the 1600's, were an integral part of the European economic venture into the Americas. And long after the involuntary departure of the Europeans from the Americas, Africans became the transferred chattel of this new group of European Creoles.... termed as Americans. But, how did this become a reality, one might ask? How does continued the containment and displacement of a people thrive?

The famed text entitled *The Willie Lynch Letter and The Making of a Slave* (1999) provides a glimpse into the science of enslavement. This work has long been disputed in terms of its authenticity. Yet, one can hardly deny the logic and the utilitarian purpose of such a philosophy. For the letter:

[Expresses]...The Materialistic viewpoint of Southern plantation owners (in America and the West Indies) was.... that slavery was a “business” and the victims of chattel slavery were many pawns in an economic game of debauchery, cross-breeding, inter-racial rape and mental conditioning of a negroid race, that they considered sub-human.... Equally important is the international nature of the European economic, political and cultural climate, influenced the slave trade.”
(Hassan-EL: 1)

Establishing an economic basis for slavery and the conditioning of slaves was vital to the survival of plantation life. Certain codes, edicts, or principles facilitate the domination of a people in order for them to be considered them to be a lesser entity. As a result of this premise, one can then cross-breed, rape, and condition a group without feeling any

measure of guilt. William Lynch, a Southern plantation owner, it is stated, delivered an address in the form of *The Willie Lynch Letter* to a group of plantation owners in 1712. Within this address, he developed six cardinal principles. The principles directed slavers to govern slaves as livestock, break their spirit, cross-breed, enforce a new, colonial language, and to contain the slaves psychologically and physically. If these edicts were followed...a subject would be a slave for life. Economically, these principles were certainly feasible and economically sound. If the theories of Willie Lynch are to be accepted, one must review the results. The results indicate that slavery in America was extremely successful and profitable. Indeed, the cotton, sugar, and tobacco exported from the Americas to Europe was vital to the Western, global economy. The Civil War in America stymied trade across the world for a period of time. And the reality was that this war was not fought to abolish slavery...it was fought to save the nation. Internal disputes regarding slavery imperiled the union of American states.

Jim Crow laws, which impeded African-American freedom, were developed in the post-Civil War South to maintain the order of a slave society. The North, covertly, sanctioned these laws to appease the defeated White, Southern populous, politically. These laws were part of the American Apartheid system. And American farmers were assured (through these laws) that Coloured, indentured groups would still work their lands after emancipation. Thus, all of African-American was restricted. However, a changing, new, global world was on the horizon with World War II. Industrial labor markets in the Northern cities of America needed cheap labor to work the factories. African-Americans were lured to the North with tales of equality and higher wages. Family farms in America became a dying industry and the Great Migration began. The Great Migration is the term for the mass exodus of African-Americans from Southern, agricultural states to Northern industrial cities. Scores of African-American men and women defected from farms, jobs, and families. Often, when the whistle of a train could be heard across the cotton fields, people fled. Immediately, these individuals left spouses, children, and families without notice. They left everything and everyone behind to jump on a train in pursuit of the promised land of Northern cities.³ As a result, African-America, again, experienced displacement and relocation to hostile territories. For, the cities of Northern America did not welcome them. The writers of this period described the disillusionment and despair. Richard Wright (*American Hunger*, *Native Son*, and *Black Boy*), James Baldwin (*Go Tell It on the Mountain*, 1953), Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison (*Invisible Man*) sounded the cry of a people manipulated, again. Later, the writers Claude Brown (*Manchild in the Promised Land*, 1993), and Toni Morrison (*Jazz* and *Sula*) provided insight, as the issues of the forefathers that came up North. A most current study of the Great Migration is Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts book *Harlem is Nowhere* (2011). Her book provides a retrospective glimpse into the pilgrimages of the early Black settlers in Harlem, New York. The writer, in fact, took of residence in Harlem to write this work. It is revealed that the Black settlers came to the city buying land and developing the disfavored community of Harlem itself. But, the African-Americans were met with hostility and anger. The White residents, of Harlem of the 1900's, preferred to let properties decay...rather than sell to African-Americans. Currently, Harlem, New York, is morphing to become a White community, once again. Black families are displaced because they are 'priced out' of the real estate market. In the pursuit of Capitalist progress, the African-American stands in

the way of the globalization and gentrification of the new Harlem, New York. The historian Thomas C. Holt chronicles these current events in his latest study entitled *A History of African Americans*, (2010) within the chapters *Ragtime* (185-236) and *A Second Emancipation* (237-283). Again, relocation and displacement served the global minded Capitalist, and not the workers.

C. Post –Modern deployment of African resources to aid globalization through England’s Windrush Era

Andrea Levy’s novel *Small Island* (2005) tells the story of the migration of Caribbean people from small islands to a mythical, ‘Mother’ island, named England. The Windrush Era was a modern day plan for the relocation and displacement of the descendants of the original Atlantic Slave Trade. Andrea Levy’s book portrays the bittersweet chronicle of several people that find their way through this tumultuous period in Black history. Between the years 1947-1954, post-war England sought the energy and vitality of their Caribbean chattel to come and work in the most deplorable conditions in the cities of England. For a paltry sum, Caribbeans were seduced by the illusion of opportunity and kinship to come and work in England. In truth, British Capitalists needed a cheap labor force and overt slavery was politically incorrect this time. This new, labor force had to be lured, voluntary, to aid in the new global economy. Historical records indicate that these brave, Caribbean individuals traveled by boat. Upon arrival in England, they disembarked from the ships, gracefully and in such finery that the English locals were astonished. Such grace and finery was limited, solely, to the Caribbeans. The British locals responded to the newcomers with vile hostility and utter racism. But, there were labor shortages in the UK. Cheap labor was needed and the Caribbeans were a source for labor of this caliber. The British Capitalists were not troubled by the frustration and anger of their beleaguered, underclass citizens. The Caribbean newcomers served the purposes of industry.

Many years later, the infamous ‘Bloody Saturday’ (April 11th, 1981, Brixton) erupted. This day was the result of racial clashes brewing over the years. On this day, in South London, riots developed. Initially, protest stemmed from a belief that a stabbed, Black youth was not attended to properly by police and left to die. The continued unrest, however, was rooted in the despair stemming from poverty, joblessness and the segregation of the Black populous into prescribed communities in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester.

The rationale for the relocation and the dislocation of Caribbean, Indian, and Brown peoples no longer applied to the England of the 1970’s and 1980’s. A second generation of Caribbeans was not needed. The objectives for the use of a cheap labor force were exhausted. And the younger, second generation of these immigrants in the ‘Motherland’ was problematic. They sought better jobs and opportunities that were never envisioned for them by the British society. In fact, the permanent, White underclass of British society was still scampering in the 1970’s and 1980’s for the same limited jobs. All of England was wrestling with a crippling recession in the 1980’s which continues to this present day. The Caribbeans and the White underclass began to clash in semi-and

organized fashions. Anger against the 'upstart' Caribbeans rose. Eventually, England rescinded its' policy of freely admitting Caribbeans and other 'Commonwealth' peoples. This shift in policy took the form of definitive legislation that required that a prospective Caribbean immigrant prove that he or she had a parent in the UK, or a bona fide relative possessing the status of 'British Subject.' Abruptly, the 'Other' was no longer welcome in England after the 1980's.⁴

Ironically, with orchestrated precision, America granted free access for Caribbeans and 'Others' of colour to come and work in America in 1965. After the passage of legislation, during the John F. Kennedy administration, America freely opened its doors. African Americans in the Civil Rights Era of the 1960's refused the menial labor of their forefathers. And America was experiencing great social changes being lead by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. This was catalysis for major shifts in America's immigration policy.⁵ Previously, immigration laws and quotas favored Europeans with traditional bases and communities within the States. But, the American Civil Rights Movement was making things difficult for accessing indigenous, cheap, 'Coloured' labor in America. America, like Europe, needed to compete globally. Cheap labor was vital to production. Adam Smith in his text *The Wealth of Nations* stresses this most point accurately (Smith: 68-90). The Caribbean Islands were traditionally under the Commonwealth protection and parentage of the 'Motherland.' But, with Britain's abdication/retreat from open immigration, America tapped a new, cheap labor market. Globally, the African continued to be outsourced to meet the needs of another market. The pattern continues.

C. Africa's continued role in the globalization of China and the Western World

The Atlantic World continues to expand and encompass the Pacific World. China and India are developing world powers. Developing powers required raw materials. Africa is the source, once again, exhausted of human and mineral resources? China's ventures in Africa are supposedly purely mercantile.⁶ China wishes to conduct trade. Raw materials are extracted for a fee. China brings trade to the African nations with whom they conduct business with. Yet, the Chinese pay a moderate price for the minerals that are extracted.⁷ China ravages the land in order to extract the minerals without concern for the harm inflicted. African workers are rarely hired by Chinese firms in Africa. The few that are hired are poorly paid and vulnerable to injury or death because they are no labor laws to protect their interest. China is not concerned about the violation of human rights in the countries in which business is conducted. One might construe that China is self-serving pursuit, developing as a global power at the expense of Africa. This is not an uncommon policy in terms of the continent of Africa.

The oil industry of Africa, not the Middle East, supplies most of the fuel for America. America's oil interests in Africa exploit the people and ignore the blatant violation of human rights.⁸ England, again, prompts cause for concern in Africa. The vast oil reserves found in many African countries are exploited by England. The African people obtain little of the profit because of the neo-colonial governments installed by European, global

powers. Belgium and France, in the pursuit of the mineral coltan (vital for computer chips and cell phones,) incited internal disputes in African nations. Companies such as Nokia, Ericsson, Intel, and Sony lust for African resources. Many other legitimate sources for minerals, such as coltan, can be found in Western countries such as Canada, Australia, and even in South American countries such as Brazil. But, in Africa, once again, resources can be obtained for global use for little or no fee. The global diamond market is almost entirely dependent upon the cheap labor and minerals found in Africa. Internal civil wars and conflict are inspired and/or supported by European powers that profit from African strife⁹

In summary, Africa of the past, Africa of the present, and Africa 'devoid of future' will always be at the forefront of globalization, involuntarily.

1. *Black Athena* (1987) is a scholarly text that illustrates the Africa imprint upon Greek civilization.
2. The Windrush Era in England and The Great Migration in America were periods of relocation and dislocation for peoples of African descent.
3. The Southern part of the United States benefits from the extensive rail links which were used to transport agricultural goods to the Northern states prior to the Civil War. These same rail links served to facilitate/lure the defection of African-Americans to the Northern states to work in the factories in war and post-war American industrial states.
4. The post-Windrush Era of England found no place/space for the offspring of the Caribbeans.
5. President John Kennedy's liberal immigration policy for non-Europeans and non-Whites opened America's doors to a new group.
6. China, although not exhibiting a desire to gain colonial residence, has acquired trade agreements with Africa for the export of minerals that appear to be less than profitable for African nations.
7. America has benefited from the civil unrest in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and other African nations.
8. Many internal African conflicts are incited and/or fueled by American and European nations to gain access to a cheaper market price for minerals.
9. African conflicts in Rwanda, the Congo, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan are often prompted by Western, Capitalist instigators in order to cause profitable mayhem.

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