

Abstract:

Promoting and appreciating knowledge in and from Africa. It is centred on the recognition and celebration of African-produced knowledge and a conversation about our contribution globally on an equal footing.

Opinion Piece:

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In the award-winning Broadway musical, *The Color Purple* (2015), originally written as a novel by Alice Walker, the characters pay homage to Africa in a song titled, 'African Homeland', by expressing that they are 'happy in the centre of the universe'. These characters express and find joy in the anatomy of Africa – its shape, form, people, and the fruits of its soil. These characters see Africa and being African as an identity to which they are happy to subscribe. These characters show us a hope that we should all share – to be happy in the centre of our universe, Africa – and to invest and indulge in all that it has to offer.

Our general ideas about African-produced knowledge/ indigenous knowledge systems are heavily influenced by Western doctrines. As such, this not only manifests as Western thought succeeding African knowledge as being the only acceptable worldview, but it further dictates practices within Africa and the general way of life dating all the way back to colonial times. As a result, African knowledge is given a back seat and is perceived as

being 'barbaric', as 'mumbo-jumbo', or simply lacking intellect and reason. However, the reality of it is that Africa in itself is a self-sufficient home that is rich in culture, in resources, and most importantly, knowledge.

In an article about *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Relevance of Higher Education in South Africa*, Hassan Kaya and Yonah Seleti introduce a compelling perspective that helps frame and understand our communal and collective understanding, as well as the undermining of African knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems as being 'lesser than'. According to Kaya and Seleti, Nkondo (2012) argues that:

the western perception of African indigenous knowledge as mere repetition of practices without any theory to explain them, is a depiction of western cultural and intellectual arrogance. In the perception of African scholars, a traditional healer who is able to cure a particular disease using specific herbs has the knowledge and theory of the plant species and their characteristics. Mazrui (1978) elaborates further the limited western conceptualisation of scholarship and education (and thus knowledge) that stresses that [in order] to be scholarly and scientific implies being free from external interference, especially community engagement and political demands.

The basic problem is that educational structures inherited from colonialism are based on cultural values different from those existing in most of the African indigenous societies. The lack of relevance is perpetuated by the continued social, economic, and technological ties between African countries and their former colonising powers.

Furthermore, there is more investment in links between Western cultures as opposed to those within and across the African diaspora.

What can we do?

I believe that our main prerogative as scholars is to dig deep. Our work, conversation, and our daily lives should be an inquiry that unpacks history and its influence on the present, and to find ways in which to build a better future for all. With that being said, I

believe that it is our prerogative as Africans who are scholars, who live in the centre of the universe, and eat from the African soil, not only to dig deep as other scholars ought to dig deep, but to capture the essence of Africa. It is important that we engage with the lived experiences and beliefs of our forefathers through text, artefacts, folklore, as well as by engaging with those who are older and wiser than us, and most importantly, by documenting and passing down that knowledge and creating archives that not only celebrate, but also aim to restore what has been lost. And sooner than we know it, the song, 'African Homeland', and the words, "we are happy in the centre of the universe", will ring truer than ever.