Editorial

Some Senses of Pan-Africanism from the South

The contributions to this Special Issue respond to a call last year for papers to commemorate the Centenary Anniversary of the University of Fort Hare. This historically advantaged university, the first for black Africans in Southern Africa, which taught many leaders of various African nationalist struggles, was established in 1916 under the Inter-State Native College Scheme led by liberal news editor JT Jabavu, which responded to a prior Africanist scheme led by WB Rubusana. Support for Jabavu's scheme was stoked by fears of 'Ethiopian' separatist churches in the early 1900s and by the radicalisation of black students who were going abroad to study at various African American colleges when denied entrance at home. Fearful white funding helped the scheme to overtake Rubusana's rival Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme, which was supported by Cecil John Rhodes. Of late imperialist support for separate African institutions, as opposed to integrative institutions, the significance is prescient.

In both these schemes, at any rate, the principle of African self-reliance lay at the heart. Inspired by stirrings of Pan-Africanism from the Northern diaspora, including the 1900 Pan-African Congress in London (held in opposition to African partition following the Berlin Congress), Rubusana and Jabavu both agreed, despite their differences, that African development could not rely on non-racialism in white institutions. Africans would have to unite to forge their own independent destiny. The South African Native College, now the University of Fort Hare, flourished as a centre for African intellectual endeavour, bringing together leading lights from across

the continent. This fruitful exchange fostered the African Nationalist turn taken by Youth League alumni, such as Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, and the Pan-Africanist thinking of Robert Sobukwe, who, in turn, influenced Azanian and Black Consciousness thought at the height of the mass liberation struggle in the 1970s and 80s. These neglected principles haunt South Africa forty years after Biko's death.

With political independence, despite the sterling example of early nationalist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, relations between African Nationalism and Pan-Africanism have tended to contradiction. Despite their affiliation, the two ideas typically part on the borders Africa inherited from Europe, with each jurisdiction vying for sovereignty at the expense of intracontinental cooperation. What, then, is the legacy of these competing ideas? Are these concerns still relevant for African emancipation and development?

Despite the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union attesting to renewed commitment across the continent to Pan-African unity, it cannot be denied that Pan-Africanism is, in the words of Kwasi Kwaa Prah,

> Philosophically adrift, fairly depleted of substantial content and is in dire need of fresh ideas to drive the project forward, without jeopardizing its primordial leitmotif.

The guest introduction to this special issue by liberation struggle stalwart, Denis Goldberg, critically challenges the basis of Pan-African unity in a distinction between African and Western values and he disputes underlying presumptions in Pan-Africanism regarding the unity of African values, people or culture, or even the unity of any culture for that matter. Goldberg lists various factors impeding African unity and closes by identifying some points of possible cooperation.

The author of the first contribution, Simphiwe Sesanti, responds to the editorial with the apt observation by Basil Davidson that, whenever something remarkable turns up in Africa, 'a whole galaxy of non-African (or at any rate, non-black)' people are dragged in to explain it. Such is the thorn in the side of the white editorial for this special issue, a worrying postmodern nudge through the fourth wall, typical of pluralistic neo-imperialism. Sesanti argues that it is precisely such insidious Eurocentric syncretism which informs the

underlying effort of white African scholarship to deny black African cultural unity, in turn, to socialise Africans to identify with European norms. The emphasis of white interpreters on multi-cultural ethnic diversity and reified tribal distinctions works to undermine the development of a unified Pan-African consciousness. Davidson's authoritative proof of the African origins of Ancient Egypt posed an inconvenient problem for European racists by portraying 'a black mother of civilisation.' What comes with the colour of such authority?

Sesanti interprets Pan-Africanism as the destruction of Eurocentric domination over African agency. Against the claim in this editorial that Pan-African unity is blocked by complex African cultural diversity, Sesanti objects that cultural unity is amply demonstrated by the underlying linguistic identity which runs through all African languages and national life. Links in African languages reflect the reality that all Africans are cultural brothers and sisters. Pan-African unity may be threatened by divisions imposed by European colonialism but Afrocentric education can overcome this problem.

To this effect, Mogobe Ramose develops in the subsequent contribution an ontological critique of Pan-Africanism, pointing to its failure to address the political, economic and epistemic injustices that interpellate African-ness. Ramose argues that Pan-African-ness is a far more appropriate philosophical basis for ethical inquiry into the problems that arise from such injustices. Pan-African-ness is based, not on the principles of an abstract ideology, like Pan-Africanism, but, rather, in a specific historical context of political, economic and epistemic injustices, and as a specific set of countervailing African-humanist ethical and epistemic practices of *Ubuntu* which prioritise vitality of community.

Ramose begins his voyage of discovery on an apt oceanic metaphor, whereby the idea of a unified Pan-African identity is formed, in diasporic origins of sea-borne colonisation and slavery, which prompted questioning of the right of the coloniser to conquest and a corresponding call for epistemic and social justice. Ramose consciously resists academic conventions he identifies as epistemologically defective from his specifically embodied Pan-African perspective. He objects, like Sesanti, to Eurocentric, Western scientific categorisation of discrete African cultural identities as an obstacle to Pan-African unity, with the analogical observation that, though

the three main oceans of the world are separated as 'isms', we cannot deny that they also flow into one another as one.

In defining the meaning of African-ness, he claims, 'African philosophy is predicated on the recognition that motion is the principle of being' and, 'there is a fundamental ethical dimension to the motion of forces, especially in the sphere of human relations,' engaged in perpetual exchange. This unity is affirmed as a fundamental insight of African philosophy as exemplified by Ubuntu. Pan-African-ness, as opposed to Pan-Africanism, recognises motion as the principle of being. It does not deny the preservation of identity but understands identity always in relation to an ethics of justice.

More so than economic dependency, Ramose argues, it is *epistemic dependency* - imposed on Africans by slavery and colonisation - which primarily separates Africans from one another, through ideologies such as competitive democracy and state sovereignty. Unlike Pan-African-ness, Pan Africanism is likewise bound by illusory categories of separation predicated on capitalist conceptions of ownership. With political independence, African rulers, suffering from epistemic dependency, maintained illusory national borders imposed by colonial powers, ignoring Nkrumah's Pan-African appeal to surrender sovereignty in favour of unity. Pan-African-ness responds to such narrow nationalism, maintaining that African political and economic freedom depends on epistemic independence.

Staking a claim to such epistemic independence, Lawrence Ugwuanyi's critique of Pan-Africanism from the standpoint of Afro-modernity responds to what he sees to be a significant shortcoming, in most influential writings on Pan-Africanism, of insufficient critical questioning. These writings, he observes, stem from the social and 'narrative' sciences and not from the critical humanities, such as Philosophy and Critical or Social Theory. Subordinating African diversity and difference to a unified ideology of identity, he argues, Pan-Africanism undermines two cardinal precepts of 'Pro-African' modernity, which insist on autonomy and self-will in the self-definitions of African peoples.

Against the claims by Sesanti and Ramose for underlying African cultural and linguistic unity, Ugwuanyi argues that 'Pro-Africanism' is needed to meet the challenge of Afro-modernity, which must find space in traditional African conceptions of the social self for independent subjectivity, diversity and critical questioning. Africans are

not traditionally integrated into large political units such as the modern Europe nation states which imposed such forms on Africa, he observes, lamenting the pervasive ethnocultural divisions which enabled colonialism and still sustain her relative weakness.

Ugwuanyi distinguishes between colonial African modernity, whereby African agency was turned against its interests, and the endorsement of African freedom in post-colonial African modernity. He criticises Pan-Africanism for failing to break with the former and realise the demands of the latter for the self-reliant and self-driven development of African people. This is in evidence, for example, in the institutional failures of the African Union, which are designed to develop the political economy of Africa along a European path without taking sufficient care to enhance African self-reliance. To meet the challenge of under-development in Africa, Ugwuanyi argues, Pan-Africanism must be constituted by constant critical questioning and a 'negotiated ethics of difference', which encourage rational autonomy, self-directed, endogenous development models and tolerance for ethno-cultural diversity.

Valery Ferim shares Ugwuanyi's worry that Pan-African solidarity since the turn of the 20th century has failed to prevent the ongoing voluntary Westernisation of Africa that is synonymous with globalisation. While the nationalist cry for unity against imperialism is relatively straightforward, Pan-Africanism becomes much more complex after independence, as discrete states rush to protect their sovereignty and catch up to western standards. Ferim acknowledges a basis for unity in shared African values of Ubuntu that favour communal existence, collective rights and duties. But he argues that one cannot presume shared values and African solidarity in such a gigantic land of complex ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. He warns against simplistic bigotry in calls for race-based Pan-African unity, which exacerbate division, downplay African agency, exaggerate external constraints and underestimate the multi-cultural inter-dependence imposed by globalisation.

Ndumiso Dladla attributes sustained racial divisions, in the South African polity, after independence, to our failure - in our commitment to a liberal understanding of the notion as 'anti-racialism' - to draw on an *Africanist* idea of non-racialism. Liberal de-categorisation of race fails to address systemic existential racist injustice, whereas Africanist non-racialism, such as Sobukwe espoused, starts

from key features of African liberatory political praxis and theory, which Dladla outlines. These are guided by the struggles of African people against colonial oppression and by the critical negative task of African philosophy, identified by Serequeberhan, which is to critique pervasive Eurocentrism in modernity's self-consciousness. In his critique of the history of liberal non-racialism in apartheid South Africa, Dladla distinguishes liberal non-racialism from its Africanist counterpart, to explain why liberal non-racialism fails to address the material question of land in post-apartheid South Africa.

Sobukwe's Africanist conception is directed purposefully against the lived historical reality of race. Africanist non-racialism likewise rallies Pan-African unity against the white supremacy of racialism, including multi-racialism, refusing, unlike liberal non-racialism, to turn a blind eye to race. On the Africanist understanding of the concept, non-racialism is an ideal which does not correspond with the lived reality of the institutionalised white supremacy which this conception consciously opposes.

Following Dladla, Lauren Marx revisits the Pan-African writings of Sobukwe to demonstrate the relevance of his idea of non-racialism for lingering racial divisions in South Africa after apartheid, especially regarding education transformation, land reform and race-based injustice. Marx recounts the role Pan-Africanism played in the evolution of Sobukwe's idea of non-racialism, as he was inspired by African nationalist struggles for liberation in the mid-twentieth century in the 1950s, when he formulated his Pan-African vision of a United States of Africa. Marx expands on the point raised by Dladla, that his ideal of non-racialism, directed against actual white hegemony. She claims that his views on early childhood education and state subsidisation are likewise relevant for current problems with our education policy. On land reform, Sobukwe's split with the ANC on the land question points to an enduring problem which the negotiated settlement failed to address, calling for urgent consideration of his objection that the land cannot belong equally to those who stole it. We should also heed his stance against the elite privileges that enable co-option and factionalism.

Throughout these contributions there is consistent emphasis on the public duty of the Pan-African intellectual to lead the epistemic emancipation that underpins all effective effort toward self-reliant social, political and economic African unity. Mkhwanazi especially

regrets the diminished influence of the African intellectual in public life since the transition to independence and therefore outlines a Pan-African platform for practical engagement to better coordinate coherent reconstruction and development of African socio-political life. Such engagement, he argues, takes its cue from Nkrumah's conviction that social revolution cannot proceed without a corresponding intellectual revolution directing thinking to social redemption. He advocates active intellectual engagement in public institutions and organisations to this end, not only in a programmatic capacity but also through active critique and questioning of public policies.

Continuing with Nkrumah's refrain, that African independence depends, not only on the political 'keys to the kingdom', to guide economic development, but also, on active intellectual engagement in public affairs, Mungwini argues that Pan-Africanism has yet to take up the unfinished humanistic project of conceptual decolonisation needed to supplement the African nationalist political project. He argues that 'the implantation of a colonial conceptual idiom on the African mind' sustains enduring neo-colonial patterns of domination. 'It is in the generation of these alternative epistemologies,' he argues, 'that the future of the continent lies'. African decolonisation cannot rely on intellectual resources which have dominated the world but depends, instead, 'on epistemologies born of historical experiences of struggle against domination'.

Christopher Allsobrook
On Behalf of the Editors

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