

Review Article

## The Falsehood in Sedar Senghor's "Black Woman" and David Diop's "Africa My Africa"

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### Article History

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**Abstract:** In the postcolonial era, students and non-students are being treated to well-crafted poems about the emancipation of Africans. The poems have splendid flavors and the messages are quite suiting. Scholars have grown up appreciative of the nurture and experiences they have enjoyed reading these poems. What has been missed is the fact that some of the poems are flawed. Examples are Sedar Senghor's "Black Woman" and David Diop's "Africa My Africa." The approach of the negritude poems towards cultural independence is misleading. Negritude engages in the celebration of African cultures and traditions. It is a movement whose goals are to project specifically the triumphs and remarkable aspects of Africa and its people. Negritude's main instrument is the word negro, which is black in English. Negro or black denotes negativity most of the time. Its opposite is white, a cherubic color. Negritude now undertakes to switch the natures and attributes of white against black. The idea has left peoples of African descent more vulnerable. This research creates awareness about the dangers of what negritude has planted. It educates Africans about the harm in building on an arrangement devised by racists, who carefully led Africans into believing black identity is harmless. Through analysis of the poems, the work seeks the eradication of the black identity, choosing African or someone's ethnicity as identity. The writer discovered, while living in Europe, the untruths about blackness. Materials for the research work were obtained from newspaper publications, books and journal articles.

**Keywords:** Negritude, Poetry, Colonization, Africa, Racial Classification.

## INTRODUCTION

This article is written based on the assumption that, in their activism, the negritude writers, Sedar Senghor and David Diop, in their poems "Black Woman" and "Africa My Africa," not only miss an opportunity to address the race question, but cause a setback to peoples of African descent in various ways. No gain has been made in the venture. It is indeed puzzling what Senghor and Diop attempted to accomplish by a retrogressive strategy in which assessing humans according to colors is preeminent. The coloring of humans itself is a recent phenomenon, as the colors were unknown in societies whose experiences predate the North Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism. Examples abound. The pattern we observe in Western texts corresponds to biblical definitions and realities of the societies where the stories flourished or were taken from. Literatures published when the Renaissance unfolded in Europe and Puritan New England literatures do not deviate from this form (Benesh). Firstly, identifying humans by colors was a product of Portuguese slave traders' reference of the slaves as negroes or blacks. Europeans being identified as whites followed in colonial America, giving rise to red for natives in the Americas and yellow people for Asians. Designation of Africans by color especially caused a lot of excitement in Europe, with race scientists eager to lower the humanity of Africans. The world was curious about the progress they thought was being made about the inferiority of Africans. Studies were conducted about African bodies. One Johann Friederich Meckelat, for instance, observed that, with the exception of the teeth, blackness penetrated the anatomy of the African. He said that, in a part of the brain of the African physical form, is something called the medullary organ. This organ, in the African, is blackish and is the most prominent aspect of the brain. It is also found in the sperm and the blood of the African (Lewis)

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The enquiries were supported by exhibitions of some Africans, prominent among whom were one Genevieve and Saatre Baartman. While discussing Baartman, Meckelat says that, in close to two years she had been shown around in their city in Europe, people could attest to Baartman's bulky bosom and the hideousness of her face. She walked awkwardly, reminding one of the gait of a monkey, and sticking out her tongue like an Orangutan. This is an effort at racial classification of humans (Slatton 13). Racial classification makes the examination of a person's worth more acute. To formulate something that is so disagreeable is a departure from the principles of describing entities. It is absurd and it is a misuse of language. What is happening is that language empowers one group while it enfeebles another. The emergence of European languages as global languages serves to deepen the problem. Senghor was conscious of the episodes involving individuals like Baartman. In his article entitled "Negritude: Humanism of the Twentieth Century," he cites the disturbing race discourse, paying attention especially to the intrigues of one Gobineau, whom he refers to as "the nineteenth-century philosopher of racial supremacy" (196). One can then establish a link between Senghor's poem "Black Woman," Baartman's experience and Blumenbach's and Gobineau's roles in the racial classification of humans. In his piece, Senghor traces part of the origin of the Western attitude. He explains it by saying, the Europeans and the United States of America were "five or six of them at the height of their power who dominated the world. Without any complexes, they were proud of their material strength, prouder even of their science, and paradoxically of their race" (196).

Senghor was among some African students in Paris in the 1930s who, when confronted in the 'metropolis' with the reality of their existence, became indulgent in what is known as cultural nationalism. The students adopted the idea of negritude to advance their cause. French dishonesty toward the colonized Africans was exposed by the experiences those African scholars observed in Europe. It is attested to especially in the works of Frantz Fanon. What was thought to be inferior would now be elevated above that which prevailed in society. Negritude exponents disregard the good qualities of others. Unfortunately, Senghor and Diop affirm what the race scientists set out to do (Mollaer 76). Schober has this to say about Blumenbach: "Besides his extraordinarily well-known collection of human skulls, the German anatomist and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) was an avid collector of human hair." He writes further.

But a total of about forty samples of human hair taken off people from all over the world actually did end up in Blumenbach's notorious collection alongside his well-known "Golgotha" of 229 skulls, two entire Egyptian mummies, and lots of other body parts, including, for example, the eye of a person with albinism pickled in alcohol.

The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707–78), who made a name for his botanical and zoological taxonomies, also divided humans into four races—namely, 'the Europaeus with long, blond hair [...]', the Americanus with straight, thick black hair [...], the Asiaticus with abundant black hair [...], and the Afer with 'frizzled' black hair' (Schober).

In this article, discussion of other races is determined by the contextual importance of the races. They are mentioned because black and white cannot be discussed in isolation. Black, white, brown and yellow belong to the color chart that forms the basis of this undertaking. Black and white are the only surviving races or color designations of humans, apart from creating a balance in racial discourse as a result of being two opposing colors. Clearly, the true meanings of white and black are concealed from Africans. Blackness is akin to an infection. It interferes with other people's perception of the African and his attributes. White and black as markers were reserved for Jesus Christ or God and the devil respectively. In Christian theology, death is seen as a place of renewal and it is assumed that the deceased will be accompanied by goodwill. It is continued with the colors of ambulances and hospitals, who bear the white color. The trend spills into Western dictionaries. Many Africans want to escape the unpleasant condition by bleaching their skins. Africa's present condition causes physical and psychological pain to peoples of African descent. The economic performance of Africa and Africans globally is appalling; the political situation dissatisfying. Africans should renounce the use of white and black as human identities, rather than attempting to infuse the words with new meanings. Why this is necessary is that, in marriages, for instance, it will be unexpected for a woman to choose any color apart from a white, bridal gown (de Souza).

### **What Is Negritude?**

Negritude, as a word, was created by Benjamin Rush, who lived between 1745 and 1813. He played a role in the American war of independence. He declared that negro, which he termed negritude, was an unpleasant biological condition of the human anatomy. Antenor Firmin, in 1885, resurrected the word while responding to a publication by Count Arthur Gobineau entitled "Essay on the Inequality of the Races." Firmin titled his "On the Equality of the Human Races." Firmin took a stance different from Rush's as he countered Gobineau's position on race. He retained Rush's word, accepting the identity for Africans but made it convey a different meaning (Fluehr-Lobban). As part of his response, Firmin encouraged mankind to work towards the good of everybody. He wrote, returning to the truth they will realize that human beings everywhere are endowed with the same qualities and defects without distinction based on color or anatomical shape. The races are equal; they are all capable of rising to the most noble virtues, of reaching the highest intellectual development; they are equally capable of falling into a state of total degeneration. Throughout all of the struggles that have afflicted, and

still afflict, the existence of the entire species one mysterious fact signals itself to our attention. It is the fact that an invisible chain links all of the members of humanity in a common circle. (Fluehr-Lobban)

People who read him found comfort in his sermons. The negritude that was contrived in this form was intended to take off people's minds the assumed negativity of the word and to make it positive. It suggested pride in what peoples of African descent may shy away from. European anthropologists, biologists and geographers resorted to all forms of false narratives about Africans, unremorseful over slavery and colonialism. The discrimination against Africans was disturbing. Also, Paul Broca and Jean Price-Mars rejected Gustave Le Bon declarations that the African was inferior to other people. Interestingly, Senghor refers to Price-Mars as the father of negritude (Fluehr-Lobban).

Three students of African descent, who felt the same way as Frantz Fanon, tried to challenge the attitudes to the Africans. Negritude, as was used by Firmin appealed to those scholars, who were Seddar Senghor, Aime Caesaire and Leon Damas. Leon Damas was from French Martinique, Aime Caesaire was from Guyana while Senghor was from Senegal. Two sisters, Paulettte Nardal and Jean Nardal helped to change the orientation of the three scholars, who were regulars at the Charmant Salon in Paris owned by the two sisters. The sisters recounted the experiences of African Americans who were coming out of slavery, and who changed the pitch of the racial struggle for equality. Clearly, the Harlem experience determined the cause of the negritude movement which the three students in Paris formed. It was an intellectual movement that argued that colonialism disrupted civilizations and ways of life in Africa. Africans were uncomfortable with the degradation they and their people experienced all over Europe. The lies caused resentment of Africans globally. Senghor, Caesaire and Damas were motivated by the grievances of their fellow Africans. Their activism created a good impression on the minds of many Africans. It was also an exercise meant not only to engage adversary, but to get the attention of colonized Africans, and to prepare them for the tasks ahead, among which were the quest for independence and forging of nationhood in the years and decades ahead (Sheffield 4).

Negritude was meant to divert the minds of Africans and the world from the inferiority gag that had encircled the Africans. Its goal was also to undermine the structure already institutionalized by many countries such as the USA, Brazil, South Africa and later Germany. There was still racism in many nations that was concealed from the public glare because it had not been pronounced officially. Negritude was meant to convert what was termed a negative word to a positive one. It would also nullify the claims of those who may have superior tendencies. Those events gave birth to cultural negritude (Sheffield 4-6, Fluehr-Lobban 97, Rexer 1-3).

It was meant to show that Africa had many accomplishments before the advent of colonialism. There should be an obsession with Africa as well as reasonable flattery. It shuts out non-African entities and personalities while Africa asserts itself as all of Africa's glory is on display. The intention was also to make them establish a bond with Africa and to strengthen that bond. They were poised to use art to redefine Africa, giving Africa a new direction, leading to its rise to a befitting status in technological and scientific advancement. It would guarantee a new offensive on the cultural front. Negritude enables political expression. The Africans challenged the colonial circumstance. It came to be recognized as African socialism. The concept states that Africa had an indigenous political and social system that predated the coming of the colonialists. Colonialism in fact tampered with African civilization and partly reversed all the gains recorded in precolonial Africa. The reader of a negritude literary work understands what the African society had undergone as a result of colonialism. The reader also becomes aware of the scope of loss; that hardly anybody would choose the European ways over the African promise. The negritude stance is in fact revolutionary in tone (Sheffield 4-8).

Negritude is dismissed by some people, who feel it arose out of genuine grievances, but adopts the wrong approach. Some commentators see it as a scheme that neutralizes the arrogance of the Europeans and invests in the African cause and concept with higher attributes. In negritude, the activists exercise the right to name things the way they deem fit. For instance, in the poet persona's judgment in Caesaires poetry, 'Blanc' denotes negativity. Therefore, negritude discriminates and attempts to undermine Western concepts, subjecting Western meanings to reviews. However, the harm the idea has caused the African in the global assembly is that it did not discard the injurious Western concepts but tried to squeeze out the venom in them, by passing commentary on them, a practice that consolidated the subjugation of the African. Negritude adherents became advocates of the crusade by European race scientists like Gobineau. Whatever the motivations behind any idea, failure to distinguish the colors of Africans and identify them with one color betrays the ignorance of the advocate of such view. People exhibit tendencies associated with how they are identified. If negritude scholars indulge in acts not beneficial to Africans, then the negritude spokespersons can be considered failures.

In Western cultures, black denotes uncleanness, immorality, evil, vacuity and demise. In some instances, it is used to express ability, courage and virtue. Black is chosen in times of mourning by many cultures. Its opposite, white, speaks of innocence, honor and worthy values and impotency. Most religions adopt white in similar forms as described above. For the purposes of expressing profound meditation, naturalness and promise, these religious use white to perform rituals. Christian, Jewish and Hindu apply white as sign for celibacy, virginity, moral status and harmony. For instance, the image

of the white dove conveys an ideal state, grace and high standards. This is what is intended when hospitals and health centers throughout the world glow with white and, sometimes, with an addition of a strip of blue. Interestingly, in China and many Asian societies, white is the color of mourning. The reason is that death is not seen as impairment in those societies but as a passage to glory.

Today, many Africans believe the African people are excluded from the gifts of life on account of their 'black' ancestry. Therefore, they assume, Africans must endure a life of distress more than any set of people. Psychoanalysts, anthropologists and historians conclude that the classification of peoples of African ancestry is responsible for this attitude. The word shapes the image of the African. In the languages and cultures of the Europeans, the word elicits aversion for the African associated with it, as its properties are transferred to the African. It is unhelpful that Africans are not challenged to discard the use of this negative word. Instead, some consider skin tones in their marital choices. African Americans experience mental distress when discussants persistently give attention to expressions like 'having a milk bath' (Griswold *et al.*)

In Africa, children with lighter skin tones are more favoured by their parents over other siblings. It should be emphasised that nature does not validate the attempt to ascribe a color to all Africans as demonstrated among siblings. It is illogical to make such submission amidst differences in color (Gates Jr. and Curan).

Colonialism introduced a system whereby people are preoccupied with their differences; people being called whites, yellows, reds and blacks. It is objectionable to put a wedge among people by classifying them according to colors, especially when there is a hierarchical order in such ordering. Besides, the application of the colors in the identification process is hardly consistent with reality. Worse still, the purpose of the scheme is to exploit and dehumanize some groups of people. When this is so, do the victims rise up to challenge or upturn the act? Yes, the Asians and the indigenous peoples of the Americas did. For peoples of African descent, it has interestingly taken more frightening dimensions; transmitted by the victims. Unarguably, the histories of African peoples at a given period are unclear. When African languages and cultures are scrutinized, an emerging fact is that, unlike the trend in Europe and elsewhere, there was disinterest in identifying things according to colors (Gates Jr. and Curan).

When Christianity was introduced in Europe in the 1st century, concepts and objects were already distinguished by colors in the Hebrew Bible. Did the Europeans acquire that practice from the Christian religion? If the identification according to colors was developed differently, why is there marked resemblance in their applications in Hebrew and Aramaic? If the European languages and cultures imitated Christianity while setting aside their indigenous forms, then the adjustments would have been problematic.

In the Bible, white denotes the garments of the Godly, angelic state, proximity of the Lord and the location of the place of final judgment. Yellow depicts leprosy, red signals bloodletting, life and armed conflict, while black describes hardship, endurance, suffering and unwanted situations. European cultures establish the meanings of these colors in the Western dictionaries, which have been globally adopted. A people's experiences are usually the germs of the dictionaries of the language indigenous to those people. The contents of a dictionary cannot be tampered with, as the meanings are fixed. It would amount to reaching judgment on something that predated the one you disapprove. Negritude activists act in error when they contest the definition of a word whose meaning was manipulated centuries after the word had come into existence. In pursuance of their advocacy, they should seek discontinuation of the new form. Language is what formed the people and their worldview. The procedure of eliminating the venom of offending words equates revision of the language in question, which would be purposeless. The European environment was a local one that was unaffected by ambitious voyages that commenced years later. Thus, such formulations were unknown to texts like *Second Shepherd's Play* and *Everyman*, the poems "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan, "Beowulf," "Paradise Lost" by John Milton or in the poetry of 17th century works of John Donne, George Herbert or the Cavalier poets. It is an aspect of the emerging American literature around the 15th century as a result of the influence of colonialism. The texts are free from the fixation on identity. Coloring does not feature in *Everyman* and in *Second Shepherds' Play*, as well.

Black and white are rarely cited in "Beowulf," a work of significant volume. Absence of humans of colors is indeed revealing, with color only tied to animals and ideas. A repulsive bird of prey is linked to the black color, as seen in the lines "So slumbered the stout-heart. Stately the hall/rose gabled and gilt where the guest slept on/till a raven black the rapture-of-heaven/Sblithe-heart boded" (Beowulf 64). We encounter the words "black thoughts" (Beowulf 79.), which reveals the meditations of the person concerned.

Consistently, definitions of white and black do not deviate from their considered essential characteristics in "Canterbury Tales" by Geoffrey Chaucer. There is the comment which corresponds with another "[...] spirit of, following ever and ever the white lamb celestial. [...]". It implies a state free from wickedness. Black performs its conventional task

of indicating a hair color. White is used when reference is made to a person's body. An instance is found in the following passage:

[...] And buckler he bare beside him, He was a prattler and a buffoon, he was as wanton and hot as a sparrow, with scald black brows and scurfy beard. Children were afraid of his face. His neck was as white as the flower-de-luce and eke he was as [...]. (Mackaye 4)

Thoughts are organized in like manner in "Pilgrim's Progress," where comments about black appear. Thus, we have "So he began and said, This night, as I was in my sleep, I dreamed, and behold the heavens grew exceeding black; also it thundered and lightened in most fearful wise, that it put me into an agony" (*Desiring* 36). Black conveys in this instance a manner or a situation. In the context under examination, the demoted Satan is associated with the color black. The image is one of deception that applied to lead Christians astray.

In the same way Columbus referred to the indigenous people of America as Indians, so did early writers in colonial America. It was quite unlikely to refer to anyone as white, since the form was not in existence at the time. The writers and peoples of that period were familiar with English as human identity; just as the identities African, Dutch, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese were familiar and in use. Thus, William Bradford writes, "Our fathers were English men which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness" (Bradford 49-51, David 49-51). As it was customary for the people of the period to write, Thomas Shepherd remarks, "Their cheef Sachem was Sassakus, a proud, cruel and unhappy and headstrong prince, [...] an aged Sachem Montianuck, nor fearing the revenge of the English, [...]" and "his proceedings for one whole winter so successful that having besieged and killed about four men that kept Seabrook fort, he adventured to fall upon the English in the river at Wethersfield" [...] (Bradford 49-51, David 55-51). The European population in the area in New England at the time was mainly English and Puritan.

Life had been established at the time on a system that was free from the color formulations for designation of humans. The indigenous people's identities were limited to 'natives' or their ethnic identities of Pequot and Narragansets. This is clarified by an excerpt in "God's Promise to His Foundation" by John Cotton, where Cotton states, "Sixthly, and lastly, offend not the poore Natives" (Cotton 3-5). In the writer's perception, the norm, akin to separating English from French is followed; therefore, English, Pekwot and Indian are used. This is why we have "In delivering us from the Pekoat furies; These Indians were the stoutest, proudest and most successful! in their wars of all the Indians. Their cheef Sachem was Sassakus, a proud, cruel and unhappy and headstrong prince" (Bradford 49-51, David 49-51.)

Identification of people by habits is also applied, prompting the use of 'Salvage' to describe the native people rather than color. Slaves of African descent were absent at that stage, which was why the word Negro was not associated with any set of people.

Mary Rowlandson, in 'The Soverreignty and Goodness of God,' refrains from identifying the natives as savages or heathens but with the dominant word Indian, when she writes, "On the tenth of February 1676, came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster. Their first coming was thought Sun-rising. [...]" (Cotton 5-10). The merit of calling them Indians may be contested, but that was the persistent term, a term founded on mere assumption.

Other writers at the time do not deviate from this practice. It is the course followed naturally by the most visible writers at the time; Increase Mather, his son Cotton Mather and his grandson Samuel Mather. Discussing the local person's tendencies, Cotton Mather calls him 'knifeman' in his 'The Triumph of the Reformed Religion in America (60-63).' It is an attempt to portray the role of knife in the life of a native. This is how he renders it: "[B]ut our shiftless Indians were never Owners of so much as a knife, till we came among them; their Name for an English-man was a Knife-man; Stone was instead of Metal for them" (Engler and Scheiding ed. 53). In turn, the local people called the settlers, 'Wannux' or English. Resort to color was unthinkable. This is clearly explained in the excerpt from In 'Arma Virosq: Cano: Or, the Troubles Which the ...' [...] "a Dog barking awaked another Ceberus, an Indian that stood Centinel, who immediately cried out, Wannux, Wannux, i.e., English, English!" [...] (Mather 60-64).

Unlike in Western societies, the African culture and life depart from the experience that was discussed above. They acknowledge difference in the colors of humans, but do not have representations for major colors, names for colors and do not engage in the coloration of human beings. Use of colors for entities as obtainable in Western cultures and in the Bible was non-existent in African cultures. The African cultures had sophisticated linguistic systems before the colonial period. Speakers played with words. Speeches were executed philosophically in grandeur, because of the linguistic systems.

Each speech structure had a good supply of vocabulary to choose from, fulfilling all forms of purposes without attributing colors to it, be it humans, animals, plants or inanimate objects. That is why there are expressions like "Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too" (*Apart* 15), which means "live and let live." Attention is paid to a message that is

communicated clearly, and does not need a further description that includes the color of any part of the lizard. The gender of the lizard is not neglected. In English, the speech maker may add 'red' to have 'red neck.'

In Igbo language, colors like blue, green and red did not exist. The word color does not have any equivalent in Igbo. If the writer had been obliged to describe the color of the tree, he would have coined a construction whereby ndu ndu, standing for freshness would have been applied to be green. The formulation would have read "osisi n' ach aka ahilia ndu" or the tree that has the color of a fresh leaf.

Various objects are associated with their physical sizes and appearances, but coloring is not possible. Well known advisory heard at the shrine goes as follows: "You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries" (*Apart* 24). Currently, it would read as follows: 'one white goat, one red hen and a yellow cloth.'

One can correctly make the suggestion that inclusion of 'cloth' indicates that the society being mentioned had contact with the Europeans. Obviously, the vocabulary of the society being discussed is not as broad as that of the narrator, who writes, "They then set about painting themselves with cam wood and drawing beautiful black patterns on their stomachs and on their backs" (*Apart* 30). Cam wood is not foreign to the local society. Therefore, a speaker in that community would have identified the item by its physical nature and by name instead by 'black patterns.'

Without European or foreign contact, color would not have played any role in the commentary. Forms are used in the best way they provide information. Whereas 'Evil Forest,' which evokes fear, is used in *Things Fall Apart*, to appropriately describe a place, in Germany, the type of environment is called the 'Schwarz Wald' or Black Forest. White was even uncommon in Victorian writing. Europeans interacted with Igbos in Igbo land in the 1830s. Exposure to racial identity and culture would have taken root 50 years later. Clearly, Europe did not absorb race identity much earlier than Igbo land. Achebe, the author of *Things Fall Apart*, was telling a story whose setting occurred many years before the time of writing. The colors may have been transferred from the time of writing back into the period of the events of the novel.

At the time of his writing in the 1950s, racial classification of people in terms of white, yellow, red and black, had been deeply planted in Igbo land and beyond. The literary fashion had begun to take the same shape as that of the United States of America. It is marked by the appearance of colored men. In one of numerous instances in *Things Fall Apart*, we have constructions like "During the last planting season a white man had appeared in their clan" (*Apart* 110) and "The other four black men were also their brothers" (*Apart* 116). Various people tried to provide proofs to decriminalize slavery. Yet, people were unaware of any dissimilarity in blood or color. There was a marked shift in people's thinking following pronouncements as a result of the Enlightenment period. Vartija confirms this view when he says, "The Enlightenment is commonly held accountable for the rise of both racial classification and modern scientific racism."

Europeans interacted with non-Europeans, given the age of sea voyages. Those Europeans contributed immensely to the literatures and goods that circulated in Europe at the time. They influenced people's worldviews. They initiated discussions on the classification of humans and racism. It led to curiosity about others, especially the skin colors of the others. The commentaries that followed were dominated by French scholars, who advanced the argument that some people were created white, some yellow, some red and some black. It was first hinged on location, but drifted to both physical place of origin and anatomical.

Many concepts emerged out of the imaginations of adventurers and writers, many of whom exaggerated the facts. In John Smith's "A Description of New England," the writer informs his audience, which is British audience, that ten men cannot consume fish caught by a ten-year old- boy (Smith). The British people were treated to images of humans and creatures with numerous limbs. Besides, 18th century Europe was favorably disposed to what was being exhibited.

European argument was strengthened by the successful subjugation by Europeans of different people around the world. This leadership role called for celebration and inspired many thought processes. Thus, they were seduced by assumptions of being a specially chosen people. They experimented with the theory of natural selection by Charles Darwin and the idea of Manifest Destiny. It all combined to make them nurse the idea of being biologically different from others, drawing them away from opinions of theological and economic considerations being responsible for slavery of the Africans (Pratt 795-798). Europeans stationed in Africa proceeded to give accounts of their experiences while some obtained their information through indirect sources. Some did understudy peoples of African descent they encountered in the Caribbean, where Africans had been reduced to the level of goods owned by others. Many of those Europeans felt they had answers why the African contrasted with the Europeans physically in a lot of ways. (Pratt 795-798).

Since the African stood at the other end of what was thought to be the standard, all other supposed intervening colors were assumed to be superior to black, the assumed color of the African. It was this type of African that was adopted

for the exercises in racial classification by various Western scholars. The Western experts sought to ascertain the anatomical makeup of the African, by examining the African's organs, skin, fluids, etc.

They usually concluded by affirming the inferiority of the African. The purpose was to dismiss criticisms of slavery, colonialism and racial repression. Many observers were obsessed with recognising or detecting strains of blackness in African bodies (Gates Jr. and Curan). Vartija, quoting Richard Popkin, remarks that, when one looks more closely at some of the Enlightenment's most important thinkers, one is confronted with a paradox: from the heart of the venerable Enlightenment humanist tradition sprung the not-so-enlightened theories of the inferiority of non-European.

One individual often cited is Thomas Jefferson. One clear reason is that he was a leading figure in drafting the American Declaration of Independence. It is puzzling that he placed emphasis on the equality of all humans when he wrote the American Declaration of Independence piece, but he is constrained to extend the same equality to the African. This is what is contained in his article 'Notes on the State of Virginia' written in 1787 (60-70).

Jefferson is unsure whether the black color of the African is derived from the color of the bile, the blood or if it is produced from another means difficult to explain. According to him, sweat issues more profusely from the skin than from the kidney, which accounted for the odour of the African. He attributed everything to a different ancestry for the African (Doron 75-80). He clarifies why the African female is courted by the orangutan, something not unconnected to the woman's ugly nature. The African is what the European is not. The European possesses all the good physical and biological qualities that should be the envy of every race. He asserts that the African had a spiritless face, masked in black, unlike the likeable facial features of the European. The blackness runs right into the soul of the African (Doron 75-81).

In like manner, Johann Friederich Meckelat stated that the African had a dark brain. His findings evoked a lot of interest in Germany and France. Claude-Nicolas Le Cat shared this view, giving more insight. Le Cat held that a dark fluid he termed oethiops flowed from the brain and nerves of the African to the skin Le Cat announced that he had found a form with a grainy covering that gave the African his brutish nature. Piere Barriere, on his part, reported that the black hue was the result of a dark bile that dyed the skin of the African. In 1787, a publication of the *Bibliothèque universelle des dames* described the nature of negre or negro this way: (Gates Jr. and Curan). Promoters of racism organized road shows, where nude African women were exhibited like animals. In 1777, the corpse of an African albino was publicly examined unclad by one Comte de Buffon, who was 70 years old. Buffon's work was inconclusive, as he could not find any reason why the lady's skin color was not charcoal black (Doron 75-80). This was how one Saartjie Baartman was paraded in France and Britain. Baartman had a huge frame. One Georges Curvier cut open Baartman's corpse for his experiments at the woman's demise. Curvier had the following to say about the woman (Fluehr-Lobban 96-100).

#### **"Black Woman" and "Africa My Africa" and Undesired Results**

Those events inspired Sedar Senghor's and David Diop's poems "Black Woman" and "Africa My Africa" respectively. However, their approach yielded undesired results. Edward Said argues that Europeans were influenced by their cultures and values to portray the local peoples they encountered. They disregarded what the people thought about themselves or how they wanted to be known. One of these developments was ascribing colors to the local people. He remarks that the designations were done without good intentions, which invalidates the designations. It is disturbing. Said informs us that the formulations are now glued in the perception of the indigenous people (Senghor 195-202).

Senghor exhibits poor judgment in his reference to a black woman. His idea is a badly conceived one because blackness is a product of malevolence against African people. It is a sinister act by some race scientists, whose actions prompted the founding of negritude movement. Senghor ought to pursue the path of rejection of the intrigues of those people who set out to deny the humanity of the African, by first referring to the African as a black man. Senghor's black woman is misplaced as the concept does not cover majority of African women. Quite a few African women fit into his model, as the skin tones of many African women, even among siblings, vary remarkably. Black or negro remains a curse word that has set back peoples of African descent. A discerning mind cannot contribute openly to the denigration of his own people. What is worrisome is that other peoples who had been categorized as yellow and red people have since abandoned or repudiated or rejected those identities. Senghor's poem was motivated by the hate pronouncements of some scholars. He was not a stranger to the antics of those people, as the age in which they lived was not far removed from his. They also shared the same geographical space at the time. He ensured that Blumenbach must be responded to. Curiously, his method is quite defective. This is the wrong way to engage the type of discourse. What he has succeeded in doing is to reinforce the grievous plans of people who were performing a mischievous act.

The poet speaker in the poem says, "Naked woman, black woman/Clothed with your colour which is life/with your form which is beauty" (Mambrol, line 1-3). The African woman does not have to have black skin color to be beautiful. She is not seeking anyone's approval to be beautiful. A beautiful woman can have orange skin tone and be beautiful. Beautiful women abound in the world, be they Asians, Americans, Japanese or Chinese. Therefore, the African cannot

claim for herself what is shared by women globally. The fundamental message in human coloring transmits information about the negativity and inferiority of blackness. Blackness cannot serve Senghor's purpose. It is misleading to rebrand blackness that was an invention of Portuguese slave hunters. It is displeasing to read an attempt to disprove a position through an acknowledgement of the same belief.

The following lines remain what a child meditating about the mother should be preoccupied with: "In your shadow I have grown up; the/gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes" (Mambrol, line 4-5). It speaks of the soft and true nature of a mother and how the mother relates with the child. This shadow, though, is geographical rather than biological. It refers to Africa and not the mother that begat him. The next lines make this clear: "And now, high up on the sun-baked/pass, at the heart of summer, at the heart of noon./I come upon you, my Promised Land,/And your beauty strikes me to heart/like the flash of an eagle" (Mambrol, line 6-10). This aspect reveals the author's nostalgic feelings about Africa. "sun-baked" contrasts with the condition in Europe, where, even in summer, the sunshine is not so intense. A place that is sun-baked informs the reader of hills and rocks being burnt by intense sunshine for ages. The writer's thoughts come closer home to Senegal, known for the type of sunshine that should force people indoors elsewhere. He takes pleasure in such condition. There is a kind of welcoming home. The poet holds up his roots as his own paradise. Now, this argument is valid. He quickly vacates the illustration of that view and there is a slip back to anatomical evaluation, which is a supremacist exercise. He notes, "Naked woman, dark woman/Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, sombre raptures/of black wine" (Mambrol, line 11-13). She ceases being a mother, but a potential lover or someone he adores. In his judgment, if she is African, her skin tone must be dark, the poet speaker thereby exhibiting a rigidity nature does not support. There is resumption of reference to blackness in the use of the words "sombre raptures of black wine." It suggests that she tastes like black wine. The speaker and his people therefore, not only take possession of blackness, there is an attempt to promote anything that is related to the color black. By implication, blackness or anything that bears black color has acquired attributes that make it stand out among colors. There is a blend of geographical and biological connotations in the following lines: "In your shadow I have grown up; the gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes" (Mambrol, line 4-5). There is again a switch to the geographical outlay of the poet's ancestral region, which is in the savannah. It is so extensive that, horizontally, there is a meeting point between the sky and the earth, with no tree interference.

The lines "savannah shuddering beneath the /East Wind's eager caresses./Carved tom-tom, taut tom-tom, muttering under the/Conqueror's fingers" (Mambrol, line 15-17) metaphorically introduce a lover, which is the East Wind, whose touch the biological or geographical lover responds to. The woman transforms to an instrument now being manipulated by the fingers of the conqueror. The woman represents a girl who is seduced and yields to a sexual act by a male who woos and wins her love and has access to her. The act is like a permissive subjugation. Definitely, the narrator paints the picture of plants being assailed by a wind. The conqueror might be a prince in one of the ancient empires of Africa, namely, Songhai Empire, Mali Empire and Ghana Empire. This is what is revealed eventually. He has the privilege of evaluating her voice. Also, the voice of a lover, in song or speech, it arrests the listener, especially one who can interpret its message.

He calls out to her, in the usual means of identity of "Naked woman, dark woman." He remarks that she has body texture that withstands for years the invasion of the body by aging as observed in: "Naked woman, dark woman/Oil that no breath ruffles" (Mambrol, line 21-22). In the lines "calm oil on the athlete's flanks of the Princes of Mali Gazelle limbed in Paradise," (Mambrol, line 22-24) she now represents the agile prince of ancient Mali Empire, whose skin tone is almost ageless and perpetually youthful. The terrain is 'sahel' space in West Africa, where deftly-moving creatures roam about. One of such animals is the gazelle. Its birth place is paradise, reminding us of Thomas Jefferson's remark of a different ancestry for Africans.

Ornaments, when lit, like the stars, flourish in the night that is her body. She is night. Her body is night, as the sun is an entity in the same solar system. In its darkness, the eyes glow and light up his way. Traditionally, a woman who has an admirer's attention may not be required to respond to all the praises she gets. The attitude helps preserve the reverence the adoration builds around her. This pattern is unaltered even to the end, when the speaker repeats again "Naked woman, black woman" The closing lines "I sing your beauty that passes, the form that I fix in the Eternal./Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to feed the roots of life" (Mambrol, 31-34) resemble John Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Hopkins 122-128). It is a commentary on the schemes of racists and those who dismiss the African woman's beauty. It means the speaker's words will stand against theirs. He has recreated her and breathed everlasting life into her soul, making her beauty uncontestable.

Ferus now refers to the real black woman, who is Sarah Bartman in her poem „I have come to take ou home.“ Ferus' poem is more realistic than Sedar Senhor's. With love in her, the poet speaker in this poem reaches out her hand to Sarah Bartman. The reader is directed to the veld, where Bartman had once thread her foot on. Ferrus had also taken walks along this place in South Africa. It is plain landscape. The sunshine is gentler here, but the speaker says nothing of the afflictions of the cold in winter. Rather, of interest to the poet speaker, as her outlook is difrent from Senghor's, is he fact

tha it is adorned with soft grass. What the speaker says next is tha what served Bartman as home and is still home to Ferrus. She says, „I have come to take you home. Remember the veld? the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees/the air is cool there and the sun does not burn“ (Ferus, line 1-4). She speaks like a parent or a sibling when she says, „I have made your bed at the foot of the hill“ (Ferus, line 5). This sounds like a place to receive her remains and lay them solemnly. She has moved away all the things that might hinder a good repose, and Bartman will be wrapped in the traditional blanket. Light clothes may not sufficiently shield one from the cold. Besides, Bartman had been paraded unclad in the streets of Europe and her corpse displayed nude in museums in Europe. At home, in South Africa, Ferrus assures her she will get her blankets with ‚buchu‘ and ‚mint‘ that will create a good impression on any onlooker. In South Africa, she will be surrounded with fortune, since the desire for a good life made her accept to be led away. This is what has been established by the entire campaign; for how would anyone sign on to such humiliation? This is what poet speaks means when she says, „[Y]our blankets are covered in buchu and mint“ (Ferus, line 6). When colors are mentioned in the poem, they are not invested with human qualities. They clearly describe shrubs, even though there is a personification of the plants. The lines The poem continues thus, „[T]he proteas stand in yellow and white and the water in the stream chuckle sing-songs as it hobbles along over little stones“ (Ferus, line 7-9). It is a description of the idealic nature of where Baartman comes from. In that home place, there is a stream that gently moves over pieces of stones, with musical notes. This is the type of resting place Bartman deserves. It is what awaits her. The poet speaker wants to pull Bartman away and protect her from the mischief of mankind. The story of Bartman’s predicament unfolds now in the concluding stanzas: „I have come to wretch you away-/away from the poking eyes/of the man-made monster/who lives in the dark/with his clutches of imperialism/who dissects your body bit by/bit who likens your soul to that of Satan/and declares himself the ultimate god! (Ferus, line 10-15, Gordon-Chipembere).

Clearly, there is an attempt by some people to have authority over their fellow men, which is what emerges from the Bartman story. Why would racial categorization of an African be the motivating factor for dissecting a human being? The fellow alluded to attained the rank of a god, in his own calculation, and branded Baartman satan. It means that such indecent act can only be done by someone who exists in the dark ages, but who pretends to occupy the apex position among men. It also means that the person playing God had not taken any step towards civilization, but had remained in a state of brutishness. The poet speaker gives back Bartman all that had been taken from her. Bartman had been reduced to the status of an animal, She became a piece of entertainment for the public in Europe. The comment is a rejection of racial classification of Bartman and her fellow Africans. The poet speaker, unlike in Senghor’s poem, cannot adopt the same scheme to polish Bartman’s image. Darkness does not exist as a human but as a phenomenon, as Western culture and dictionaries make provisions for. The conspiracy is revolting. The speaker beholds a beautiful woman, and will sing to this woman of grace. Bartman was a soul burdened by the excesses of some sadists. She may not have known any form of peace, but her sister will give her peace to a good measure.

In „Africa My Africa,” the speaker learns from the songs of his grandmother the worth of Africa and Africans. It runs contrary to the African of the present time. The speaker therefore acquires education different from what he is being taught. The message is cast in love. However, utilizing the imposed idea of the blackness of the African, the poet, like Senghor, has failed to realize the harm in propagating black or negro identity. Curiously, Diop’s words may have been taken from Firmin, who says.

Motivated by an insatiable thirst for truth and the obligation to contribute, no matter how modestly, to the scientific rehabilitation of the Black race whose pure and invigorating blood flows in my veins, I take immense pleasure in navigating through these columns of figures arranged with such neatness for the edification of the intellect. (Fluehr-Lobban).

Interestingly, Firmin and Hannibal Price and Price-Mars regarded the race concept as a myth (Schober).

“Africa My Africa” by David Diop makes a misleading argument. In the poem, the wrong elements are being attributed to Africans. It is unjustified to retain the disparaging term blackness devised by the race scientists to advance the inferiority of Africans by using the words “black blood” in the lines “Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields” (). Tampering with facts in this manner does not benefit the African. The blood that circulates in the body of the African is red. Therefore, producing any work in favor of the grievous work that informed the use of black blood affects the orientation of readers with regard to the reality. It threatens what people may understand as the true color and nature of Africans. It is inspirational to meditate on water running its course in a farmland, and to think of allusion to the labor, which makes it possible. Yet, when red blood expires, it turns black, which is at variance with the normal human blood. Biology cannot be used as human identity, as it has been found that it places a lot of obstacles on the path of Africans. This categorization should be discarded.

## CONCLUSION

Africa has borne the brunt of slavery, European colonization and subjugation by the same Europeans. Africans are drifting back to slavery; from the West and China dictating to Africans, to African youths being disoriented by the

manipulations that are rife in the world. It has led to economic and industrial stagnation. The continent's leadership has no direction. Poverty is eating deep into the communities. The youths are fleeing to different parts of the world for survival. Unknown to them, they constitute part of the problem. They are not truly culturally independent. They embrace racial stratification of humans, whereby Africa now stands in opposition to the rest of mankind. Africans promote the concept of racial identity, which puts them in clear disadvantage. It becomes necessary at this point to reexamine some of the literatures being read by African students and other people. Two poems "Black Woman" and "Africa My Africa" were chosen for this work. The flaws in the poems have been identified. It was discovered, for instance, that the proponents of the idea of the African having black matter in the brain or having black blood have found a voice in Diop's poem. If what the poets use to counter racist schemes by Europeans has its roots in the poisonous products of those Europeans, then it is a wrong approach.

Black, white, red and yellow are colonial constructs by supremacists meant to serve as social control. White was proposed as the most superior color, followed by red, before black. The yellow people, who were Asians and the red people have rejected these forms of identification, knowing the implications. They were once screaming, "Yellow and proud," and "Red and proud," just the way African Americans were singing "Black and proud." With the exception of white, any other category jeopardizes the lives of the people associated with that form. Besides, blackness remains a huge burden anyone can carry. While amplifying their blackness, many Africans detest being called black people. If you find something distasteful, why do you retain it? Why do they not emulate the indigenous people of the Americas and the Asians in freeing themselves from this bondage? This is where governments and individuals should play a role. The issue has lingered for too long. Firmin himself had observed:

Can anthropologists continue to record these figures without modifying those so assertive theories they have erected? Their science will face certain discredit when, in the twentieth century, it is subjected to the critique of Black and White, Yellow and Brown scientists who can write as well and handle as expertly the instruments manufactured by the Mathieu Company [producers of anthropometric instruments], instruments that bring such eloquent results, even in the hands of scientists who doubt their effectiveness (Fluehr-Lobban).

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