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PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF PAN-AFRICAN NATIONALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Abstract:

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, Africans and Diaspora blacks struggled to create a Pan-African consciousness of “nationhood” defined by shared ancestry, ethnic and racialized experiences of subordination and marginalization induced by the historical encounters with slavery, segregation and colonialism and neo-colonialism. Such supra-nationalism was deemed critical to survival and eventual triumph. This unifying supra-nationalism symbolized a collective response to shared challenges. Though relatively successful in the 19th and 20th centuries, this supra-nationalistic approach has become problematic with globalization and cosmopolitanism. Race, ethnicity and other primordial frames of identity are becoming obsolete. With globalization, cosmopolitanism and the growth of hybridization, it is difficult to justify the framing of any racial or ethnic derived supra (Pan) identity. Identity is a complex process of becoming; a very fluid process that replicates experiences of in-betweenness. It is therefore difficult to argue for a monolithic experience of “Blackness” or “Africanness”. Yet, many critics continue to invoke the old Pan-African supra-nationalism as the most effective countervailing weapon of resistance in the 21st century. Given the shrinkage of traditional frames of identity, and the complex and problematic character of identity, how viable is a racialized Pan-African nationalism? Are there intervening forces and circumstances which render such paradigm irrelevant? This paper examines and analyzes the problematic of continuing framing of Pan-African nationalism even as globalization shrinks and erodes the boundaries of race and ethnicity on which such nationalism had thrived in the past. Perhaps for Africans and Diaspora blacks, the solution lies in the reframing of a neo-Pan-African nationalism which takes into consideration the growing, problematic, complex and complicated character of racial and ethnic experiences in the 21st century?

Keywords:

Diaspora, Pan-Africanism, Cosmopolitanism, Globalization, Colonialism, Neo-cilonialism