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The Role of the Kenyan Diaspora in Constructing a New Political Culture and Identity

Eric Aseka

Abstract

This paper focuses on the need for and the prospects of a congenial politics of identity construction in Kenya as spearheaded by the country's diasporic communities. It identifies and interrogates the intersection of consciousness and historical experience as the basis of such identity construction. It posits the leadership function as a critical component in this process and points out how mismanagement of the African polity has led to swelling ranks of refugees. These émigrés have contributed to the making of a global Africa embodied in the Black Diaspora. This diaspora can help reconstruct the politics of identity within Kenya as it diagnoses and explores cultural logics of power informing national politics.

This paper focuses on the relevance of Kenya's history and nationalist struggle to identity formation and proceeds to argue that identity is a social construction. I conceive the intersection of consciousness and historical experience as the basis of such identity construction. Thus identity is a product of complex processes of historical interaction between people, institutions, and their social practices in expressing selfhood. The construction and expression of identity can either fortify or undermine national solidarity depending upon how the leadership function is played out. Solidarities based on national identity are built up during social struggles for emancipation, yet these solidarities have often been abused and wasted away by leaders with narrow political agendas. Alternative identities have been cobbled out that tend to weaken national solidarity by playing out an ominous politics of exclusion thereby undermining the prospect of consolidating

citizens' sense of nationhood and its associated bonuses of harmony and social cohesion. Otherwise, this politics generates multiple terrains of conflict.

The precariousness of contemporary politics of identity in Kenya seems to affirm the philosophical insights of Frantz Fanon when he states in *Black Skin White Masks* that the colonized subject cannot make a meaning for himself. Leadership and intellectual projects of social transformation are supposed to be critical projects in national development which, if carried out on the basis of a nearsightedness of exclusionary identity politics, inevitably lead to forms of resentment and resistance that generate and sharpen terrains of social conflict. There is no way sustainable economic growth can take place in an environment that is filled with deleterious social conflict of the type occasioned by tribalism and other related absurd forms of social behavior and action. That is why it is necessary to diagnose and explore cultural logics of power and give an account of the extent to which culture is constitutive of other identities as well as demonstrate how these identities and their cultural repertoires may be engaged to constitute useful social capital that can be harnessed in national development.

The fact is that forces of globalization are producing new kinds of social identities and movements for political and economic change. In view of this, the whole process of leadership must be seen in terms of the position it should occupy in mediating the encounter between the global forces and the concrete social and political settings in which our historic local cultures are evolving.

The leadership function should be energized by consultative proclivities and synergistic decision-making if the intellectual and material outputs of various components of our national citizenry are to be meaningfully brought into play in national reconstruction and development. It is in this sense that the need to identify the role the intelligentsia and particularly the diasporic intelligentsia should play in a new cultural politics of national construction becomes apparent.

The reservoir of professional and intellectual capital in diaspora in the West and elsewhere needs to harness its locational advantage as well as material endowment in helping not only to reshape identity politics in Kenya but also to ignite the country's troubled locomotive of development. The diasporic cadre of the intelligentsia can help push horizons of discourse along these charters that will help the Kenyan political elite to get out of tribal politics and parochial agendas that exacerbate conflict and violence.

In this sense, the key contribution of this paper is to provoke a new quest for theoretical and empirical exploration of the changing nature of our cultures in their encounters with the global in circumstances that necessitate a changed perception of citizenship and identity transformation. The contemporary Kenyan society like other societies is steeped in grave challenges of globalization in relation to a wide range of social relationships and issues. It is, therefore, germane

to explain and problematize the concept of identity and the attendant ambiguities of social challenges where there is no sense of national vision. The concept of identity needs to be reworked to create a national sense of purpose, and political community and also form a new basis of fostering social cohesiveness.

If reprehensible attitudes and practices associated with the domestic political class can be avoided by the Kenyan diasporic caucus, authentic processes of development and social change as well as public policy recommendations that can shape new identities in Kenya's public life may be generated. We need to focus on the concepts of development in terms of our Africanity rather than our differences. Our citizenship is complex in the sense that if Africanity is a form of articulating our human beingness as Africans, then it bespeaks our African identity. Our identity is not a matter of blackness, brownness, or whiteness. It is not a matter of our ethnic or religious belonging despite the fact that ethnicity and religion have been labeled as critical markers of identity in improperly mediated perceptions of the essence of being.

The essence of being should be conceived in terms of preservation of human dignity and the upholding of a social order in which fairness and social justice to all citizens are respected. Our blackness or ethnic grouping is not an end in itself; it is a mere representation of majority or minority fractions of our geographical location in which our sense of identity is developed. Improper use of majority and other social categories has led to misdeeds that have contributed to Africa's fractured geographies as marked not only by its ethnically and racially diverse citizenship but also by the presence of a wounded cadre of transmigrated citizens we call refugees. Mismanagement of the African polity has led to swelling ranks of refugees, and these émigrés have contributed to the making of global Africa embodied in the Black Diaspora. It is needless to overstress the complexity of ethnic and national identities in Kenya and, in fact, reveal how such identifications have evolved over time amidst the struggles for social justice that decolonization represented. There is more relevance in accounting for how the ends of struggle for decolonization were sabotaged or reconfigured by political agents who undermined the whole purpose of resisting the economic and political changes wrought by colonialism. As such, diasporic Kenyans comprising political and economic refugees have failed to offer an alternative basis for social action even when the country degenerated into a circus of bewildering politics of exclusion which culminated in the eruption of bloody episodes of ethnic cleansing.

The eruptions of political relations culminating in these criminal acts stained the image of the Moi regime, and yet they seem to be recurring in the present era. It is my view that the diasporic community inhabits a different space that could enable it to enter into meaningful dialogue and take the rightful position in fostering positive interactions. There ought to be initiated such interactions

outside and within the country in a new politics of ideological becoming that ruptures vestiges of discriminatory colonial barriers and postcolonial tribal charters outlined by political demagogues. This position requires embodying the idea of change, flexibility, fluidity, and renegotiation of identity in relation to demands of social change and national construction. It implies confronting and challenging dominant cultural elements that stifle cross-cultural conversations that are required for building and solidifying a new sense of political identity. A new politics of ideological becoming must be deployed to bind the wounds of a highly fractious Kenyan society with a goal to spur a new prospective process of identity formation. This process is necessary in confronting the senselessness of ethnic separateness and bigotry which bedevils the psychology of leaders and citizens in different social locations of an otherwise beautiful country.

History, Culture and National Development

If the actions of the diasporic community are to be motivated by an ethical demand, the different social and personal identities that appear more insecure and contested must be renegotiated and reinvented in a national cultural calculus under a new refreshing social stimulus they have helped engineer. Ethically speaking, identities need to be negotiated circumventing the dangers of bigotry and intolerance and their attendant violence since cultural processes are regarded worldwide as increasingly central to the effective operation of business, government, and voluntary associations. There is a need for Kenya's diasporic community to demonstrate a sense of national responsibility by showing an extensive interest in articulating the relevance of place and position as well as the resources required for the construction of a new sense of identity in the country. This is particularly critical as Kenyans begin examining the power dynamics that can be made possible in cultural geographies that have long been fractured by socioeconomic exigencies and discriminatory policies. This community must take stock of the social, human, and financial capital at its disposal and begin to focus on its use and deployment for development purposes.

While figuring out points of entry and engagement of the Kenyan society in order to spur development, it is important to point out that the paradigm of social emancipation developed by Western modernity seems to be undergoing a deep crisis. Social emancipation seems to have lost its appeal and luster in contemporary usage and historiography. Social emancipation can be reinvented based on creative visions emanating from Africa, and this process requires to be understood as a form of counterhegemonic globalization. It should rely on local and global linkages and alliances among social groups around the world in social constellations that go on resisting social exclusion, exploitation, and oppression

as caused by hegemonic neoliberal globalization. Even if the social sciences produced in the northern academy over the years appear to be exhausted in their drive and capacity for renovation, innovation, and renewal, our scholarship must be sufficiently prophylactic in addressing African problems.

This must be the case even if scholars elsewhere have ceased to be the conscience of progressive social transformation and have become devices of legitimizing absurdities inherent in new forms of monolithic empire-driven capitalism. They are bedeviled by apologia for imperialist ills if not consecration of the status quo and the social injustices it reproduces (Rojas, 2003). We cannot afford to be entangled in such elusiveness of behavior that shows an apparent loss of a sense of intellectualism and its social responsibilities.

Betrayal of the Nation

In the light of the above, it appears that the contemporary neoliberal discourse has one fundamental blind spot. It treats the present as if the present has had no history (Shivji, 2003). History invokes the notion of change over time, through human agency and the role of material circumstances in human affairs. The nature of being in poverty-stricken and marginalized Africa raises serious ontological concerns if ontology points us to the need to study the nature of being and existence. Every reality generates its own ontology, and, therefore, identities in Africa are hybrid because of biological and cultural mixing over the years, especially when we view the nature of our being from the vantage point of history.

This raises the possibility of “learning from history” so as to suggest the possibility of better understanding ourselves in the present given that in order to understand the present, we must demystify the past. By so doing, we will create a better understanding of the forces and circumstances that brought us to our current situation (Little, 2006). There is need to interrogate history in defining politics of identity and culture while recognizing forces that have destabilized and inscribed in the national psyche a destructive dominant ideology that has led to what Frantz Fanon (1961) calls pitfalls of national consciousness. Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth* that African leadership failed at achieving liberation across class boundaries because its aspirations were primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie, which was a privileged middle class, which perhaps sought to defeat the prevailing colonial rule only to usurp its place of dominance and surveillance over the masses. The opportunities for solidarity in moving the nation forward were squandered.

As Fanon would suggest, colonialism may only be understood as a complicated network of complicities and internal power imbalances between factions within the broader categories of colonizer and colonized. He decries the way in which

nationalist leaders often replicated the systems of coercion and domination that shaped colonial rule. Thus, Fanon (1961) blames the failings of nationalism on the intellectual laziness of the middle class. Fanon suggests ways in which intellectual leaders often betray the national workingclass. The retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action, that is to say, their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action (Fanon cited in Maspéro, 1965). Those in Kenya and those in diaspora need to reflect on this Fanonian indictment. For him, before independence, the leader generally embodied the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. However, as soon as independence was declared, far from embodying, in concrete form, the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader revealed his real inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns that constituted the national bourgeoisie. In a growing retinue of profiteers, syndicateers, and racketeers in the Kenyan political economy lies a cancer of betrayal within African nationalist movements which Amilcar Cabral saw as a decay of unity that undermines the potential for defeating imperialism. Aidoo was to clearly demonstrate in *No Sweetness Here* the disillusionment that arose as a result of the failure of the national liberation struggle to improve the lives of any one but the most elite classes of society (Aidoo, 1997).

For Aidoo, in view of the emerging patterns of global apartheid in which, paradoxically, African political economies lay entangled in persisting neocolonial trappings, independence failed to live up to its promises. Its aftermath marked the beginning of increasing disillusionment as it became clear that for the majority of the people nothing had changed and that domination and exploitation simply continued under a different name (Aidoo, 1997). It is inexpressibly ironical that there developed a form of cultural dependence on the West despite the richness of African culture.

Understanding of cultural dynamics is essential to the proper perception of what needs to be done in confronting and meeting our society's quests and desires to promote health, prevent disease, improve literacy levels, and spur people into productive actions and amicable social relations. There is need for dialogue, debate, and cultural conversations in order to produce social knowledge, which equips us with understandings of our cultures. It should also enable us to devise strategies that provide us with not only the social, cultural, and economic environments that influence human health, economic productivity, and behavior but also with the means of incepting the necessary processes through which these environments can positively exert their influence.

In the language of contemporary globalization, the newly globalized world is

culture-coded. In a sense, culture has replaced society as a key organizing concept for classifying and ordering social reality. From this point of view, and perhaps in a very simplistic sense, global cultural identities are considered more reliable indicators of the state of the world than internal social processes (Mamdani, 2003). From this point of view, politics is said to be a consequence of culture. In the global media, Africans are seen as agents of culture and not architects of their own cultural heritage and future (Mamdani, 2003). It is up to us to change these, somewhat mischievous, assumptions about Africans.

While bearing in mind the notion of the situatedness of the historian there is need to contest beliefs and practices of that ideology upon which the wholeness of perverted identity is constructed. There is need to claim epistemological radicalism that will bring us out of the woods of ambiguous adventure. Our sense of focus and profundity of thought must emerge as a product of our present intellectual situatedness in the concreteness of poverty whereby our quest for national building authentically draws on lessons from an already demystified history. This is because, epistemologically speaking, identities are impure and unstable and the demystification of our past must offer us a basis of crafting a new national consciousness that bellies the requisite political identities that will create and be custodians of a new public morality in Kenya.

Historical knowledge and consciousness should offer us a basis of intervention for changing the act of constructing falsities and stereotypes while at the same time promoting national security and citizens' well-being. Nietzsche's admonition in *The Use and Abuse of History* stated that you can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present. In rewriting national history, it is the present that always gives the past meaning. Demystification of the past is not a defeatist invalidation of the process of writing history; it is merely a frank acknowledgement of a reality of interpretation (Nietzsche, 1957). Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche both attempted to replace traditional morality with an ethics based on authenticity. The time for authentic leadership and authentic institution building has come.

The Politics of Identity: Nationalism and Patriotism

Kenyans must conceive of authenticity in their actions, according to their social location, the medium of social action, and the purpose or ends of their action. The practical lesson of authenticity ought to be reflected in role performance. There is need for reshaping identity politics in Kenya because it seems to pretend that it can manufacture authenticity through the reliance on stereotypes and urban myths that exclusionist politics perpetuate. The theoretical and empirical exploration of the changing nature of cultures, identities, and narratives in

contemporary society in relation to a range of social relationships and issues needs to be made. Identity is a concept that can encapsulate a lot of definitions and many differences.

We need to be rescued from parochial structures of identity emanating from these ambiguities or multiple baggage-loading. Madan Sarup (1996: p.11) says that identity is a construction, a consequence of a process of interaction between people, institutions and practices. This position embodies the idea of change, flexibility, fluidity, and negotiation of identity, in relation to social change and dominant cultural elements. Because we are in a crisis, we must confront the nature of our identity and sanitize it in a new politics of ideological becoming in this era when there are many politicians but there are few statesmen. Thus, the politics of ideological becoming should inspire a generation of new processes of identity formation by persons in different social locations, who occupy different relationships to structures and systems of power, privilege, and authority.

A new sense of nationalism imbued with patriotism is desirable and can be taken as a fundamental component of the new identity formation. There is need to rethink the dynamics of identity through the inclusion of diasporic based Kenyan public discourses. We should, therefore, show growing concern about how social cohesion and solidarity can be supported in unstable national and global contexts.

The political agenda must be reshaped by a new politics of identity, with new and diverse groups claiming the right to recognition and to being stakeholders in a variety of areas. The diasporic community is one such entity of stakeholders. What need to be explored more fully are the ways in which intercommunity dialogue might enhance collective identity. What role can the diasporic community play in bringing about this conversational bridgehead? The problem or answer lies in rethinking the issue of identity, whose fundamental reference is social location. The current terrain of conflict is largely defined by politics of ethnic and cultural difference.

It appears to be a struggle over definitions of or claims to politically and culturally sensitive categories of being/becoming limited here to ethnic and religious identities that I find objectionable. In this raw sense of the word, identity is the sense of being, or of becoming, a badge that distinguishes one from others in a perception that is entangled in Cartesianism, which is itself bereft of a transcendental motif. Descartes' famous line "I think therefore I am" is a crucial index of the novel stress on identity that has not been mediated by any positive leadership function. He laid the ground of the rationality of reasoning subject as the ground of certainty (see <http://fhss.byu.edu/POLSCI/BOHND/301/Descartes.htm>).

This sense of self provided a basis of animism with its related impunities in social behavior and action. The dialectics of human "animality" are exhibited in the failure to embrace a transcendental perception of being and its social essence.

That is why we need a new phenomenology of politics by which negotiating uncertainties generated by emotions and desires will enable us to tame unruly emotions of tribalism and the passions for corruption that undermine national integrity. Kenyans at all levels of society need to develop a high degree of moral obligation and social responsibility. There is need for a new sense of national identity to emerge in our people that will allow citizens of diverse origins to feel they belong to a nation of diverse cultural heritages yet they are bound by a homogeneous, unified national project of social transformation. Different initiatives ought to be generated to negotiate better terms of national integration and consolidation of independence. Indeed, there exist many theories that inform us how identity is determined. In some of these theories, institutions such as the family, the school, the place of work, and, increasingly, the media play a crucial part in determining one's role. The diasporic community can be an effective institution builder. Role theory makes us aware of the myriad ways in which the behaviors we enact in interaction with others are influenced by the positions we occupy in society and vary as we interact with different persons (cf Mead, 1934).

The nature of the life of the people is in their culture and what it circumscribes. That is why there is need for a national culture in which there will be seeded prospects of good life. By its nature, culture touches our lives individually and collectively in various ways, and nationalism has a relationship to culture. As such, there is need for rethinking of our sense of nationalism. As Zeleza says, nationalism has been one of the world's most important ideas and instruments of political leverage and legitimacy whose ideology and institutional anchor is the nation-state (Zeleza, 2006). The nation-state remains a crucial site of organization of social life. It is a meaningful and coherent space of struggle for empowerment for billions of people across the world. Nevertheless, socially, nationalism has diverse ethnic and civic dynamics. Its ideological and intellectual referents and representations also vary. Nationalism should be mediated to provide a basis for building a disposition of patriotism in citizens. Patriotism nurtures pride in a country's virtues while demonstrating an eagerness to correct its deficiencies. Nationalism without patriotism leads to a blind pride in one's country regardless of what it does. Patriotism is a lively sense of responsibility, and indeed Kenyans abroad and those within the country need to embrace a high degree of national responsibility.

Although good policy outputs ought to have cultural relevance in this broad sense, policy is no panacea to all problems relating to culture and its relationships to our social, economic, and political systems if it is not bellied by a profound sense of national responsibility. Such policy simply stands as a facilitatory strategy for building the nation-state and its identity as distinct from other nations without providing sufficient grounding for politics of positive identity formation. This is

a politics that should be cultured in a distinct national consciousness.

Confronting the Reality of Underdevelopment

Who is leading development in Africa today? To answer this question, one needs to interrogate global development and underdevelopment of the type we see in Kenya today whose causation is multifaceted (see Aubrey, http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~ga320592/aubrey/past_scholarship.htm). These concerns are not being addressed adequately given the narrowness of the African productive base, the distorted class structure, the unbalanced markets, and poor labor mobility. The agriculture sector plan of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) provides an extensive assessment of the state of African agriculture and rural poverty, but it is limited in its treatment of the structural factors/forces and external (global) causes of rural and agricultural underdevelopment, which afflict countries like Kenya.

The major threat facing NEPAD in mobilizing resources is its dependency on the Bretton Woods Institutions and donor countries. It keeps hoping that in a partnership with these there will be forthcoming investment finance by so-called donor countries and bilateral and multilateral institutions including the Bretton Wood Institutions. This beggarly approach comes against a worrisome background of ballooning food import bills and external debt (Moyo, 2002).

Unfortunately, underdevelopment has partly been exacerbated by parochial politics of identity, which acutely entrench agendas of social exclusion as opposed to national integration based on a sense of fairness and inclusivity. Because of a lack of a creative leadership of national identity transformation, the politics of identity attending to nationalism was shaped by an intellectual discourse whose consciousness assumed that the impact of colonialism on African societies was mainly economic.

In the decade that followed African political independence, militant nationalist intellectuals of the generation that inherited Africa's colonial legacy focused on the expropriation of the native as the great crime of colonialism (Mamdani, 2005). This generation assumed that political economy was the most appropriate tool to come to analytical grips with the colonial legacy. Needless to mention, Kenya has an imposing colonial legacy in its legal and economic policy framework that needs to be addressed (Aseka, 2005b). The limitations of political economy as a framework for political analysis have somewhat hamstrung development given that development is not so much about allocation of existing resources as about creating and mobilizing resources that are hidden, scattered, or badly utilized (Freinkman, 2001). The above colonial legacy notwithstanding, it is pertinent to point out that the process of state formation generates political identities that are distinct not only from market-based identities but also from cultural identities

faced with a growing tendency to root causes of violence in cultural difference.

However, there was a failure to historicize the political legacy of colonialism, of the colonial state as a legal and institutional complex. It is a complex that reproduced particular political identities in political economy discourses. The tendency was to discuss agency in an institutional void, by focusing on how it was harnessed to the colonial project (Mamdani, 2005). The absence of a properly mediated transition from politics of decolonization to politics of national development calibrated with a sense of patriotism led to failure. It led to the emergence of a material driven politics in the name of communities having a share of the national cake. A culture of predation on the state by leaders was developed in the name of representing community interests. There developed a sense of deprivation for the excluded, which created a quest for power and inclusion in the eating arrangements that was not properly hedged against because of the lackluster mediatory function of Kenya's postcolonial leadership. In this sense, the overthrow of colonialists led to a mere replacement of colonial oppressors and exploiters with African oppressors and exploiters. They were a cadre of nationals who had lost sight of the need for a national project of social transformation. Independence then became a mere experience of political succession without genuine ingredients for a stable political transition based on clear ideological outlines. The quests of nationalism were utterly betrayed in a post-colonial political culture that lacked both patriotism and civility.

The above concerns are critical given that the world today is rapidly changing under the influence of different dimensions of economic rationalism and globalization. Nevertheless, in Africa, in an attempt to rush to modernity we tend to replicate all the mistakes of the Western world and in the process lose the very elements of our society that could teach us how to avoid those mistakes. That is why cultural identity ought to be viewed as one of the critical ingredients for nation-building and attainment of national sovereignty. In view of this, politics that have generated an ethnic competition for the control of the state **in the name of having a share of the national cake have stupefied** Kenyans to the extent that they have failed to identify, nourish, and monitor those cultural values that are critical in laying a solid foundation for a national work ethic to underwrite national development.

There is need to understand how different strategic logics of political competition create incentives for political actors to emphasize different kinds of ethnic identities. In view of the existence of a diaspora that has roots in these identities, although it is struggling to construct its alternative identity, Kenya needs a different architecture of nationhood spawned by a new sense of national consciousness. Diasporic Kenyans can help the country go beyond a mere movement of skilled nationals, a movement of musical chairs. They can offer a

means of forming new levels of identity, beyond the fundamental ethnic or tribal group identity with their bases of patrimonialism because they are inspired by the new solidarities and links they are forging abroad.

Clearly, diasporic communities must take their positions seriously in orchestrating national transformation. It is when the orchestra begins to play together that something amazing happens. The cymbals, when they sound alone, produce a harsh sound. Ethnic groupings are like such cymbals whose cacophonies are disquieting to the mind. Yet, all of a sudden, this dissonance of their clashing sounds may be transformed into euphony, pleasant music to the ear when taken into the whole movement of the musical score. Political vision provides such a unifying frame for a national society. Society at large needs a vision to unify the different identities that constitute it.

Tribalism is cacophonous, and a significant segment of a country's citizens must be aware of and share the euphony vision of national integration. Towards this end, diasporan intellectuals and investors can begin to translate their vision onto the current psychology of Kenyans that seems to have been rendered criminal by politics of ethnicity, parochialism, and corruption. Our personal identity, or social self, emerges through a complicated socialization process, and leaders as political architects must design a program of civic engagement in which an ideal Kenyan representation of citizenship can be reworked and shaped. The process of socialization involves giving symbolic meaning to people's behavior, and that is why we talk of national symbols which also require clear articulation of their social and political relevance. Giving symbolic meaning is a process known as symbolic interaction without which it becomes difficult to develop cross cultural understanding, a sense of national pride, coexistence, and tolerance. **Socialization is critical to the development of national character because** during socialization, we learn the language of the culture we are born into as well as the roles we are to play in life. Through socialization we come to develop a sense of self especially as we learn how to function in society (cf Mead, 1934). The specific outcomes of socialization are either a healthy attitude or a pathologically deviant attitude. In the nation-state like ours, tribalism has been driven by a deviant attitude.

Internalization of Ideology

Kenya has been characterized by a poverty of ideological production within the ranks of its political class. Althusser's description of processes of the internalization of ideology are important in understanding the formation of political identities in so far as all ideology has the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects. For him, there is no practice except by and in an ideology (Althusser,

1971). Althusser is saying that the groups of ideas constituting an ideology control the way we act, because we always act in accordance with our ideas, our thoughts. People create ideology to help them make sense of our world, to give it some order. Thus, as a lived relation, an ideology is created out of our ideas. According to Althusser, in the present Western society, the most important and the widest reaching ideological state apparatus is the educational apparatus (Althusser, 1971) whose growth and ideational orientation the diaspora community is able to influence in a fundamental way. However, at one extreme of social practice, Terry Eagleton argues that ideology should be understood in terms of a complex set of effects in discourse. In this way, he preserves it as a way of analyzing social practice while avoiding the implicit nihilism of the postmodernists (see Eagleton, 1996). Ideology is all about exertion of hegemony and hegemony is created when subjects are made to internalize the dominant ideology.

As we consider the possibility of creating an alternative framework of national development in Kenya, we need to realize that ideologies that are formed as means of domination and resistance are never simply free to set their own terms. They are always marked by what they are opposing. As such, no ideology takes shape outside a struggle with some opposing ideology (Sarup, 1996).

Creating a New National Culture Based on a New National Consciousness

National culture as a reworking of nationalism and ethnicity brings about an epistemological need to know who we are in order to act judiciously. Selfhood therefore provides perspective and a sense of identity. These elements are necessary for conscious agency. It is important to look at ideas we hold about the self in a changing world because our notions of self and the symbols we deploy will be of direct relevance to the worlds we build in the future. The breadth and diversity of all that we identify with self and subjectivity will clearly determine our ability to deal with difference, otherness, and multiplicity (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997, p.148).

Unfortunately, matters related to the domain of culture have been prone to restriction. Instead, we talk about food, drinks, song, dance, and ornaments consumed in the nation, by which we keep tourists and national politicians entertained and amused. With respect to the history of Kenyan national culture or nationalism, we need to pay attention to the world that various agents have produced, engaged in, and embodied in the struggle for the Kenyan nation over a period ranging from precolonial and colonial to the postcolonial eras. It means describing richly the work of agents in the form of individuals, groups, institutions, and the state and the social-

structural conditions within which they produced the activities, affiliations, celebrations, emblems, identities, idioms, institutions, memories, monuments, representations, statues, symbols, and texts that embody and engender the entity called the Kenyan nation. Usually there are several coexisting and even contradictory perceptions, which constitute competitive nationalist ideologies. In view of the need to generate a pertinent public discourse on these, the establishment of reciprocal bases of national culture is required, which will entail the cultural authentication of the nation-state.

There is need for an inclusive nationalist ideology that guides people to take an active role in creating national culture. A national culture emerges from the confrontation over what the nation should and will be among competing national ideologies. The character and power of national culture are matters of historical understanding that should guide social practice. They are conscious social constructions, not cultural givens as many would have us believe. Underscoring the fact that any national culture is an outcome of historical practice has an important implication for the perceived relationship between material conditions and national cultural forms. National culture under colonial domination has been a contested culture whose destruction is still sought in systematic fashion.

Conclusion

The problem of national consciousness and of national culture takes on a special dimension in Africa. History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. The triumph of nationalism must lead to a well-designed project of national transformation and development. Talking of culture, it is the national consciousness that is the most elaborate form of national identity. In my view, national consciousness is patriotism, which goes beyond nationalism. It is the only thing that will give us a profounder perception of our roles in national development in an inclusive sense.

The birth of national consciousness in Africa has a strictly contemporaneous connection with the deprivations and abuses that Africans have suffered over the years (cf Fanon, 1961). In this sense, the responsibility of the African as regards national culture is also a responsibility with regard to the global African culture, in other words, Africanness as a form of identity which springs from the twofold source of our common heritage and our common destiny as Africans. Our Africanness is a representation of a geographical and social reality apart from its being an African-centered philosophical perspective and an assemblage of our aspirations in our world of Africa and the far reaches of the dispersion of African people where the diaspora represents global Africa. Africanness is African identity be it American African, African American, or Continental African.

The image of Africanity needs to be redeemed. The provincial thinking of ethnicity and its associated parochialism is retrogressive and, therefore, works against nationalism. Its retrograde instincts with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action in building a true representation of Africanity. As Fanon would perhaps say, they demonstrate an incapacity to see into the reasons for that reconstructive social action. It then appears that our contemporary conditions of existence have generated numerous challenges that foster deep uncertainties that require to be tamed through acts of self-critique as Kenyans. In this critique we ought to realize the importance of alternative knowledge production about our Kenyan society without falling into unfortunate misuses of history and other disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences.

Scholarship is not about swings in intellectual fashion, it is a matter of creating superior thought and knowledge formations that can be useful in transforming society. As a historian, I cannot divorce myself from the outlook and interests of this age. That is why every diasporic Kenyan member of the academy must ask himself or herself what the contribution of his or her scholarship is toward national reconscientization and identity transformation. Kenya like many other Third World countries is faced with gigantic developmental challenges that require urgent tackling. To understand a problem in its deepest sense requires extremely critical ways of thinking, viewing, and analyzing its social, economic, historical, and national context, and that is why diasporans ought to come in as strategic problem-solving agents. In their coming, they should realize that the roots of the national problem need to be examined in both their local and global context before a sustainable solution may be achieved.

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