

ABSTRACT

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, AFRICANA WOMEN'S STUDIES, AND HISTORY

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EXAMINING THE POTENTIAL EFFICACY OF AN INDEPENDENT AFRICAN-CENTERED SCHOOL IN ATLANTA

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This study examines successful independent, African-centered education during the 1960s-1970s and present-day assimilation. SNCC's freedom schools and the Black Panther Party's liberation schools offered meals, protection, and quality education. This study seeks to discover what happened to such programs and the efficacy of re-establishing independent, African-centered education. Qualitative data based on case study analysis, interviews, website research, and survey questionnaires was collected. Seven African-centered shule were examined. Out of approximately 1,200 invitations, thirty anonymous participants from the Atlanta metropolitan area responded to the nineteen-question survey. Results revealed confusion as to what are genuine African values and how they should be represented in African-centered education. Although, results demonstrate the need for African-centered shule as safe havens, planning for financial sustenance and institution-building is necessary. In addition to the implications and limitations discussed, this study provides strategic suggestions for future research and recommendations for hybrid independent, African-centered programs and curricula.

EXAMINING THE POTENTIAL EFFICACY OF AN INDEPENDENT AFRICAN-
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*... throughout history we have been made to fight each other! We must be organized.
Education is at the very heart of it.¹*

What if, like the eagle, everyday someone pushed you out of your comfort zone and demanded that you fly, never denying your potential to do so? What if your life were filled with amazingly joyful moments, “yes” answers to your every inquiry, and unlimited dreams? Where would you be if your African language were still your own – your name was *Abeni* (we asked for her, and behold, we got her), *Akuchi* (wealth from God), *Kamau* (quiet warrior), or *Nia* (purpose)? As Jay-Z enlightens “what would you do, you knew you couldn’t fail”; what could possibly stop you?² Currently, the education systems contribute to a Eurocentric paradigm, which constantly reminds black students that nothing belongs to them, never really has, or ever will. These systems are designed to control and severely constrain the African-American student. They offer little opportunity for growth, critical analysis, and truth-based learning. This thesis examines independent African-centered education as an alternative to current education models. It argues that there is an urgent need for African-centered education within the metro Atlanta community.

¹ P.L.O. Lumumba. *The Responsibility of the Black Scholar to New Africa*. Seminar at Clark Atlanta University, October, 2018.

² Genius.com. Lyrics from Beyonce Jay-Z “NICE”. Accessed February 9, 2019. <https://genius.com/The-carters-nice-lyrics>.

The African Americans and Africans worldwide must, at all cost, disrupt the flow of *miseducation*. The eradication of miseducation is such an urgent proposition that a line of demarcation exists, which many may not be aware of. On one hand, there are the “woke” who are responsible for the love and care of generations of leaders and learners willing to drastically and dramatically change the conditions causing the *miseducation*. They are also known as revolutionaries willing to fight against the systems that consistently and continually *miseducate* black youth—*by any means necessary*. On the other hand, the *sleepers* are those who refuse to rise from their slumber and rescue the Africans worldwide from annihilation. The current objective is to wake the sleepers from their slumber and simultaneously stir the hearts of those who might be considered *woke*. This study should compel both the *sleepers* and the *woke* to a position of unity (*Umoja*). One major goal of those in this unified position would be the permanent banishment of *miseducation*, for it is that urgent a matter.

During the Middle Passage (1600 – 1900) and throughout history, African Americans and Africans worldwide suffered some of the most horrible atrocities. Throughout the world, many African Americans and Africans worldwide still experience destructive attacks from varying institutions and directions. When one attack occurs, often another attack emerges. This chaotic, frantic position and state of blindsidedness often leaves African Americans and Africans worldwide traumatized, distracted and incapable of burgeoning an adequate defense against whomever may be the enemy. However, Vincent Harding in his reference to the ‘70s as the *Black Decade*, prophetically decrees:

We see no evidence that the mainstream of white America has the will, the spirit or the energy to create an alternative to the chaos of the West. We therefore move and build in the midst of this Black Decade, for we sense that our time has come. Education in every formal and informal sense – shaped by political and spiritual realities – stands near the heart of the matter. So, we struggle to shape it for our people – for our world.³

For the purpose of creating a starting point, the focus of this research is the city and surrounding communities known as metro Atlanta, Georgia. Could an independent African-centered school succeed in Atlanta? What must be done to guarantee such success? Is there a need in Atlanta for an independent African-centered school? Who stands to benefit from the success of an independent African-centered school in Atlanta? What is the benefit? The subject matter in response to these questions will be addressed in this thesis “*Examining the Potential Efficacy of an Independent African-centered School in Atlanta.*”

Purpose of the Study

This research is based on the hypothesis that an independent, African-centered school (shule) in Atlanta has the potential of not only being successful but being highly beneficial to its immediate students, connected families, the Atlanta community, and eventually, Africans worldwide (beneficiaries). The purpose of this research is to provide evidence of how beneficial an African-centered school can be to these beneficiaries/stakeholders. Far too many African and African American families have accepted existing standardized and mediocre forms of education. If given the opportunity, there are those who would immediately enroll their students in an African-centered

³ Vincent Harding. Fighting the ‘Mainstream’ Seen for ‘Black Decade’. *The New York Times*, January 12, 1970. Accessed February 9, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/01/12/archives/fighting-the-mainstream-seen-for-black-decade.html>.

education program but have been unable to find a program suitable and comparative to education offered in public, chartered or other private schools. There are others who may not believe there is a need for African-centered education and remain confident that the existing Eurocentric education system meets the needs of students. This thesis will examine how students, families, and communities can benefit from independent, African-centered education. This thesis provides research that demonstrates African-centered education can be an effective alternative to the present education system.

Statement of the Problem

This thesis will examine the potential efficacy of an independent African-centered shule in the Atlanta community. In order to effectively conduct this examination, the most critical problem facing African-centered education should be identified as *financial sustenance*. This problem is critical for public, private and chartered schools. However, for an *independent* African-centered shule to exist, there must be a strategic plan that focuses on financial sustenance. Historically, financial sustenance has been a consistent reoccurring quandary creating a dilemma for the African American community. Before shule administrators and teachers can consider pedagogy and curricula, the issue of financial sustenance must be addressed. Some of the financial questions to be answered consist of: 1) Where will an independent shule be located? 2) Will the shule be strictly tuition-based or will the organization receive funds from external sources that do not threaten the independence of the African-centered shule? 3) How do independent African-centered shules balance quality and budget? This thesis argues that as the African American community has advanced economically, there is potential for far-reaching success of an independent African-centered shule more than any other time in history.

Having addressed the financial sustenance problem, this thesis examines other issues that must be identified in the examination of the potential efficacy of an independent African-centered shule.

From “schools-to-prison pipelines” to the various forms of *miseducation*, the problems are many. In addition to the documented problems related to effectively educating African Americans, African American students are still expected to demonstrate success according to European standards. It must be noted that instead of succumbing to unfair expectations, traditionally African American students have demonstrated resistance. If the African American student can excel in the midst of so many challenges and obstacles, how much success can be achieved with the challenges and obstacles removed?

One of the most critical problems is the lack of education designed for the protection and liberation of the black community. Recently, a very important phrase has come into use within the black community. The phrase “stay woke” is critical to understanding the problem that is the basis for this research. First, the term assumes that one is already experiencing a form of *wokeness*. The term serves as a warning and a challenge. *Stay woke* is equivalent to terms such as *watch out – keep watch – be alert – be vigilant*. Having a past that reflects the horrors of slavery, the assassinations of leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and many others, one might question why the challenge to *stay woke* is even necessary. Based on the history of African Americans in the United States, the need to *stay woke* is necessary.

There are new generations of black youth who may not fully relate to slavery, the Black Power movement, and all of the powerful narratives detailing the plight of blacks

in America, mainly due to timing. Specifically, actor and R B singer Tyrese Gibson and hip-hop mogul, Snoop Dogg, both have publicly snubbed depictions of slavery in the motion picture industry and demand that African Americans be portrayed in a more positive light.⁴⁵ However, there are others in the African American community that expect history to repeat itself, should there not be a strategic and powerful effort to teach the accurate history and truth about America's horrid past. African-centered education must serve as a tool to ensure African Americans *stay woke*. They must never forget the past and all that their ancestors endured.

Even as the African American community desperately attempts to recover from the June 17, 2015, mass shooting of Tyanzi Sanders, Susie Jackson, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton Doctor, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman Singleton, Myra Thompson, and Clementa C. Pinckney (the *Charleston Nine*) by white supremacist, Dylan Roof, there is a need to be watchful – to *stay woke*.⁶ Even as the *Black Lives Matter* movement challenges police shootings of African American victims throughout the United States, there is a need to be watchful – to *stay woke*. Even some politicians do not have the interests of the black community in mind. For example,

⁴ Andrea Park. *Snoop Dogg slams "roots," "12 Years a Slave"*. Accessed November 8, 2019. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/snoop-dogg-slams-roots-12-years-a-slave/>.

⁵ Daryl Nelson. *'How Many More?': Tyrese Gibson Questions Hollywood's Fixation on Slavery Movies, Wants to Focus More On Ones About Black Success*. Accessed November 8, 2019. <https://atlantablackstar.com/2019/10/15/how-many-more-tyrese-gibson-questions-hollywoods-fixation-on-slavery-movies-wants-to-focus-more-on-ones-about-black-success/>.

⁶ Samuel Momodu. September 30, 2017. Accessed February 23, 2019. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/charleston-church-massacre-2015/>.

one could argue that the President is a racist. The need to *stay woke* is further illuminated based on the following recent statistics:

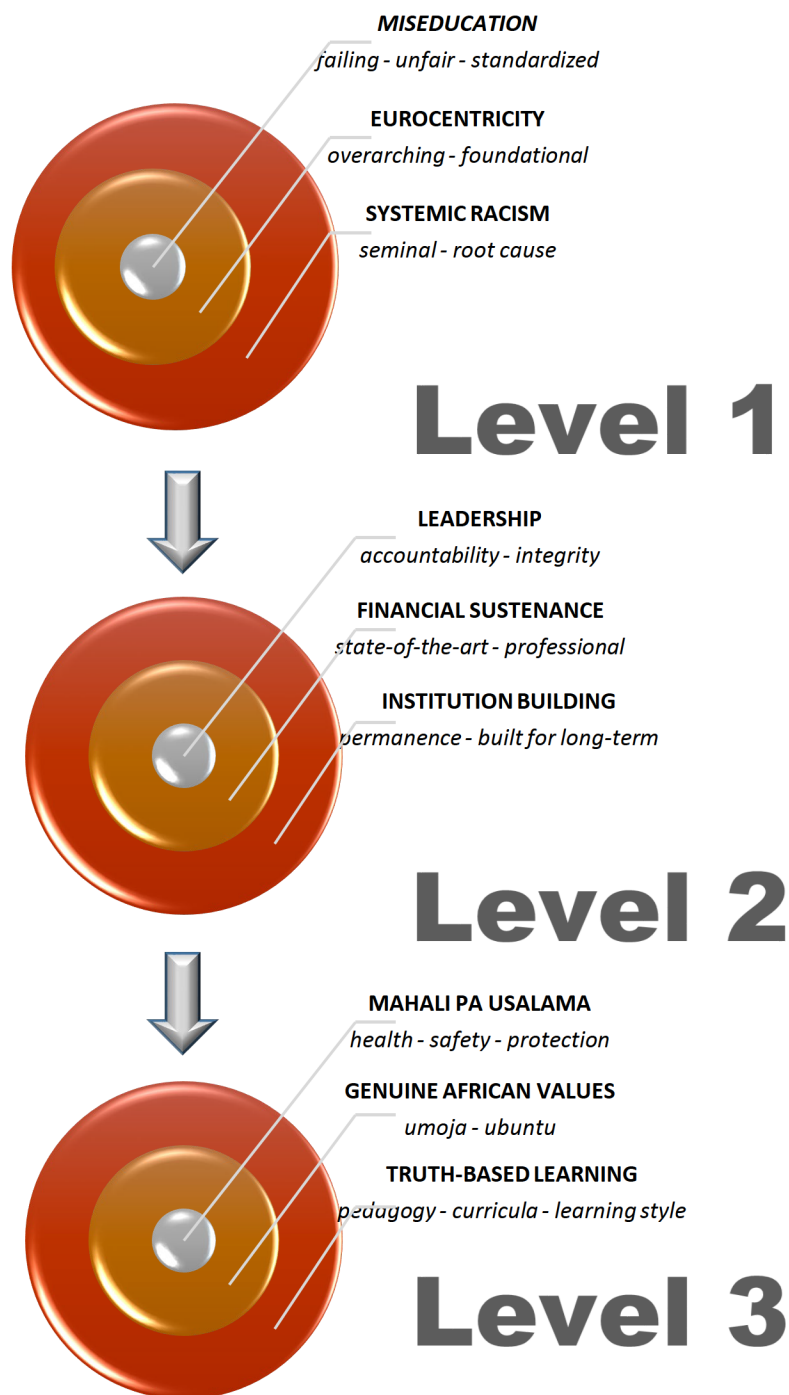
The current state is: One of out of three Black men will be captured and held in some type of state bondage in their lifetime. Black people make up 32 percent of all people killed by police, despite being only 13 percent of the population. We also make up 39 percent of those killed by police, where the victim is *not* accused of attacking the officer. Half of all people who died at the hands of police are surviving some type of mental disability. Racial minorities make up 62 percent of all unarmed people killed by the police, and this does not include those who are killed for exercising their right to bear arms.⁷

There are many more examples that demonstrate evidence of the need for African-centered education. There are many more problems, not only in Atlanta and the United States, but there are also global issues remaining severely problematic. Awakening the genius within, young, vibrant African American students can solve many of these problems and the problems of the global community as well with proper education.

Background of the Problem

Figure 1 illustrates how the problem should be analyzed. In order to ascertain the most critical problem as identified in this thesis, it is essential that seminal and overarching problems be explained. An attempt at identifying the specific problem is futile without first identifying the multiple and overarching, foundational issues that fuel the problem. These issues, at the core of this thesis, energize the specific problem of financial sustenance for an independent, African-centered shule.

⁷ Tabias Olajuawon. "*Thinking Blackly*": *State Violence, U.S. Law, and Legal Death Dealing*. <https://blackyouthproject.com/thinking-blackly-state-violence-u-s-law-and-legal-death-dealing/> (accessed May 15, 2018).



This thesis exposes overarching, seminal problems (Level 1) but focuses on the critical problem of financial sustenance that leads to institution building. The study findings suggest that creating a plan for African-centered education must include: (1) effective leadership and management; (2) agreement on what genuine African values are; and (3) pedagogy and curricula developed that are rooted in a truth-based learning approach. Fig.1.

Figure 1. Analysis of the Problem

This thesis does not seek to debate the overall condition of education systems in Atlanta nor the United States. However, the education of African American students in the Atlanta metropolitan area is at the core of the overarching foundational problem.

Durden reports relevant statistics:

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in its quest to measure academic achievement, has reported differences between the fourth and eighth grade scores of Black students and those of White students. Those results showed that, on average, Whites had higher scores in reading and mathematics. Specifically, in the area of reading 42% of Black fourth graders scored at or above basic skills level compared to 76% of White students on the NAEP. Similar results were found in mathematics for twelfth graders on the NAEP assessment in which White students scored on average 30 points higher than Black students.⁸

The research of the Center for Law and Social Policy concurs with Durden and contends: “For African American students, reduced and constrained access to educational opportunities begins in the early years and persists throughout the PreK-12 education system and beyond.”⁹ Recognizing the evidence that current education systems are not meeting the needs of the African American student, the next level in the chain of problems is an examination of alternative solutions. This is where the research arrives at African-centered education. Further, such *independent*, African-centered education must be void of the negative influence that plagues other education systems previously discussed. At this point, the problem is identified as establishing independent African-centered shule that provide an effective alternative solution to the identified overarching, foundational problems.

⁸ Tonia Renee Durden, “African Centered Schooling: Facilitating Holistic Excellence for Black Children”, *The Negro Educational Review*, 58, nos. 1-2, 2007, 23-34.

⁹ CLASP.org. *Improving Education Outcomes for African-American Youth: Issues for Consideration and Discussion*, 2014.

Methodology

This research entails a model (Model A) based on an existing independent African-centered shule, case studies of two unique existing institutions, and data collected from websites of five additional shule. The method for collection of qualitative data is based on case studies, interviews, website research, and survey questionnaires. There was no quantitative data collected. Except for Model A, all of the African-centered shule examined are based in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The shule have been identified as Shule 1, Shule 2, Shule 3, Shule 4, Shule 5, Shule 6, and Shule 7 (see Appendix B). There is a suggested model (Model A) that is for those furthering this present research and educators seeking to develop an actual independent African-centered shule. It is critical to the safety and survival of existing independent African-centered shule that any further identification of the shule is withheld. Appendix B contains the basic data from the research of all shule. The research findings are presented in Chapter V (Findings) and a more detailed discussion of the findings for Shule 1 and Shule 2 can be found in Chapter VI (Discussion). Live interviews were conducted based on Shule 1 and Shule 2. These schools range from strict independent African-centered shule to African-centered schools that are more focused on students' assimilation into the dominant society.

Survey questionnaires have been distributed to participants in the research via an online surveying system. Primarily, the research seeks to prove the most effective system through which an independent African-centered shule can best serve the black community of metro Atlanta; however, it is hopeful that the research will advance the enhancement, creation and development of other independent, African-centered learning institutions throughout the diaspora.

The method for collection of qualitative data is based on case studies, interviews, website research, and survey questionnaires. There was no quantitative data collected. With the exception of Model A, the actual African-centered shule examined were all based in the Atlanta metropolitan area. For Shule 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, data was collected from website research (see Appendix B). In most cases, many attempts were made to conduct observations and live interviews but were unsuccessful. As of the date of completion of this research, the responses from Shule 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were incomplete.

The questionnaire featured nineteen questions (see Appendix B). Thirty individuals responded to the survey as anonymous participants. The results most relevant to the present research are mentioned in Chapter V and discussed further in Chapter VI. Specifically, the most relevant questions and the responses from the questionnaires are discussed in more detail in Chapter VI (Discussion). It is recommended that a broader investigation utilize a survey tool to gather more data focusing on the Atlanta metropolitan area. This data would normally be collected in a feasibility study, marketing strategy, business plan, or proposal for the actual development of a shule.

Definitions

For the purposes of clarity and unity, when identifying black people in America or, more accurately, Africans born in America, the term *African American* will be used. When used together, *African Americans and Africans worldwide* will be used to identify Africans born in America, Africans born on the continent of Africa, and Africans throughout the diaspora. The Swahili word *shule* (singular and plural) is used throughout this study as opposed to use of the word *school*. *Miseducation*, for the purposes of this thesis, is defined as the opposite of African-centered education and is useless in the uplifting and development of the African American student. This definition is based on many of the thoughts expressed by Carter G. Woodson in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. Woodson strongly argued that the educational processes offered by the oppressor exalts that oppressor while simultaneously devaluing the worth of the African American. The Swahili phrase, *Mahali pa usalama*, refers to safe havens or places of rescue. *Ubuntu* (from the Bantu linguistic group) is an African concept of “personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community... each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others, and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed. A person depends on other persons to be a person.”¹⁰ *Indigenous* refers to the root, that is, of something natural or innate. It is an integral part of culture. The term “indigenous knowledge systems” then, is the combination of knowledge systems encompassing technology, social, economic, philosophic, educational, legal, and governance systems. It is knowledge relating to the technological,

¹⁰ Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*. (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2009), 1-2.

social, institutional, scientific, and development including those used in the liberation struggles.¹¹

Significance of Study

Man-made and natural catastrophes are destroying the world. Climate change, terrorism, poverty, hunger, and disease are problems that affect the United States and the entire world. In 2012, the Copenhagen Consensus Center listed ten top problems that have the potential of being solved:

1. Armed Conflict
2. Chronic Disease
- 3. Education**
4. Infectious Disease
5. Population Growth
6. Biodiversity
7. Climate Change
8. Hunger and Malnutrition
9. Natural Disasters
10. Water and Sanitation¹²

Of course, there are many more problems needing solutions. However, black minds are arguably an untapped resource due to the fact that a deceitful system of *miseducation* purposely denies the truth of black genius in recent times, as well as in the past. Until the black genius of the past is revealed as truth, black genius of the future is shackled. Even in the midst of racism and *miseducation*, blacks have historically leaned on resilience and triumphed extraordinarily. From black human computers Katherine Johnson and Dorothy

¹¹ Catherine A. Odora Hoppers, “Indigenous knowledge, the African renaissance, and the integration of knowledge systems”, *Globalizing Africa*, 2003, 411.

¹² Borgenproject.org. *Top Problems in the World that Can Be Solved*. Accessed February 24, 2019. <https://borgenproject.org/top-problems-in-the-world-that-can-be-solved/>.

Vaughan¹³ to Morehouse College student, Stephen Stafford, age 13¹⁴, and so many more, in spite of the overabundance of obstacles in their way they refused to succumb to mediocrity. This is only the beginning of how the entire world can benefit when African-centered education becomes available to the masses.

The implications of this research are vast, but the question must be asked *what about the children themselves?* The stress and horrors of child rape, sex trafficking, conflicts, wars and potential wars, terrorism, bullying, disease, scarcity, dispossession, drugs, hunger, schools-to-prison pipelines, police brutality, and so much more, threaten the lives of children, not only in the Atlanta area, but globally. Safe places have apparently vanished. The concept of the village has been lost in America. The absence of the place and priority for children was noticed even upon the first arrival of Africans to America:

We noticed that, unlike at home, we heard no children. In our villages, on any given day, children's shouts and cries filled the air. There was no end to their merriment. Whether playing games or questioning elders, they stood as the announcement of our abundance. They were never silent. Even at night, they screamed as boys chased girls and girls feigned disinterest. There were far more children than adults in our village. In every village. Each age set consisted of thirty or forty children who belonged to everyone. They roamed the earth as if it were their inheritance. Indeed, it was. *Elders* taught that land, animals, trees, rivers, everything in nature was theirs. Not to own, but to coexist with. In the stall, we heard no children. We knew they existed – we recalled the pale boy on the ship—but we didn't understand their calm. Didn't they play games and dance

¹³ Christopher McFadden. *The Complete List of Genius Black American (African-American) Inventors, Scientists, and Engineers with Their Revolutionary Inventions That Changed the World and Impacted the History – Part One*. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://interestingengineering.com/the-complete-list-of-genius-black-american-african-american-inventors-scientists-and-engineers-with-their-revolutionary-inventions-that-changed-the-world-and-impacted-the-history-part-one>.

¹⁴ Atlantablackstar.com. *20 Black Child Prodigies Mainstream Media Doesn't Talk About*. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://atlantablackstar.com/2013/09/24/15-black-child-protoges-mainstream-media-doesnt-talk/4/>.

beneath the sun? Didn't they run about meandering between trees? Where were they?¹⁵

Even if the rest of the world refuses to see the importance of our children—even as families are still being divided with no concern for the welfare of children—that is not and never has been the way of the African. If nothing else, this research must provide evidence of the need for restoring adequate learning systems as well as safe places for African American children and African children worldwide. Finally, in establishing a framework for this thesis, this introductory chapter has briefly stated the purpose of the research, the background and research problem, definitions of words and terms used in this study, the methodology of this research, and the significance of the research. An examination of scholarly research that advances the argument of this study and provides evidence of gaps or opposing views follows in the literature review.

¹⁵ Daniel Black. *The Coming*. New York, (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 149-150.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our communities are hurting. Our systems need fixing. We can't wait on the government, institutions, social programs and policies to meet the needs of our communities. It is in our hands. Ludacris

Introduction

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, this study seeks to examine the potential effectiveness of an independent African-centered shule in metro Atlanta. Two dimensions of study uniquely converge in this examination of independent African-centered education: *Afrocentrism* (a subject within African American studies) and *education*. Assisted by a definition of these concepts, a critical examination of previous literature on the concepts follows. This chapter will explore existing literature related to the concepts: (1) schools as safe havens (*mahali pa usalama*); and (2) *miseducation*. Finally, gaps in the research related to *hybridism* in African-centered education and the appropriate identification, articulation, and implementation of genuine African values will be analyzed. Research questions are provided at the conclusion of this chapter.

Afrocentrism

This section defines *Afrocentrism* and examines how Afrocentrism relates to education. Understanding Afrocentrism, referenced as *Afrocentricity* or *Africentrism*,

according to Akoto, “requires the illumination of the cultural, socio-economic, and historical underpinnings of the concept”.¹ Afrocentrism is synonymous with *African-centered consciousness*. Historically, Afrocentrism has been considered the foundation of “the cultural nationalist movement of Afrikan America,” and Akoto argues that it is through Afrocentrism that “Afrikan America found its collective voice”.² What is missing from life or education void of Afrocentrism is the ability to see “the world through the glasses of one’s own culture and history”.³ Asante concurs and argues that in the adornment of Afrocentrism one gains:

... a new perspective, a new approach, a new consciousness invades our behavior and consequently with Afrocentricity you see the movies differently, you see other people differently, you read books differently, you see politicians differently; in fact, nothing is as it was before your consciousness.⁴

Through Afrocentrism, the African American finds “a history and cultural dynamic that is uniquely Afrikan”.⁵ However, existing in America without the powerful influence of Afrocentrism is a severely damaged existence. Akoto breaks down Afrocentrism:

We are because of our history, because of our collective responses and interactions with our physical, social and economic environments over eons. To deny the cultural, spiritual, psychological, and physiological consequence of that history is lunacy. To consciously affirm that cultural dynamic in thought and behavior and then institutionalize that dynamic is the essence of Afrocentricity.⁶

¹ Kwame Agyei Akoto, *Nationbuilding: Theory Practice in Afrikan Centered Education* (Washington, DC: Talkingstick Publishing, 2018), 67.

² Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 68.

³ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 68.

⁴ Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1989), 7.

⁵ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 68.

⁶ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 68.

It is unfortunate, at best, that a cloud of hopelessness hovers over the African American community. Whether in this life or the next, absorbing and clinging to Afrocentrism promises healing, a restoration of hope and consciousness. Afrocentrism is life-giving and transformative. In Asante, we find, "... it is necessary to place Africa at the center of our existential reality, else we will remain detached, isolated, and spiritually lonely people...."⁷ Afrocentrism connects the African American to the great ancestors and "takes a simulsense form once it is a fact in one's life; it is not linear, cannot be analyzed in a single line, and is inherently circular."⁸ Asante decrees a simple, yet complex, challenge that serves to connect Afrocentrism to education and elucidates the call for African-centered education stating:

There is little need to make grandstands on issues. Our facts are in our history, use them.... When you sit in classes and listen to lecturers speak of Keats, Yeats, Twain, Wordsworth, Frost, Eliot, and Goethe, you had better be able to call upon Baraka, Shange, Welsh, Gillen, Cesaire, Abiola, Ngugi, and Okai. Not to call upon these spirit voices when you are bombarded with alien shadows makes you a victim of the most destestable isolation and alienation from your own past and present.... Pure Afrocentricity is a compelling force.⁹

Current State of Education

As it relates to this research, a brief examination of the current state of education in the United States will provide substantial evidence as to the necessity for independent, African-centered education in the Atlanta metropolitan area. In a recent Washington Post

⁷ Asante, *Afrocentricity*, x.

⁸ Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 1.

⁹ Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 42.

article, Strauss argues that although most of America tends to agree that its schools are failing, failing U.S. schools may not be the reality. Strauss contends that “sweeping large-scale reform is hardly the remedy for what ails our most vulnerable schools – the schools where our poorest and least advantaged students are all so often concentrated together”.¹⁰ It is not the goal of this research to propose remedies for what ails education in the United States. What the research reveals is that whether anyone in America agrees or disagrees with the position that education in the United States is failing, there is evidence that education systems in the United States are failing African American students and the African American community. First, based on the research, it has become apparent that education is not a perfect science. Similar to the practice of medicine, the practice of education seeks to be revisited repeatedly with the hope of refining the old methods and perfecting the new. In addition, education is a tool that can be wielded by anyone for evil purposes as well as for good. Therein is the danger of such a practice. Before effectively examining those dangers, this study seeks to fairly ascertain a workable definition of education. In 1938, in a lecture sponsored by Kappa Delta Pi, an honorary educational society, John Dewey challenged educators:

What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan.¹¹

¹⁰ Valerie Strauss, How are America’s public schools really doing? *Washington Post*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2018/10/15/how-are-americas-public-schools-really-doing/>.

¹¹ Philip Jackson, *What Is Education?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 4.

John Dewey's own definition of education suggests, "Education is a continuous reconstruction of our experiences – education reconstructs and remodels our experiences towards [a] socially desirable way."¹² A very troubling pursuit, understanding education to be a practice, concise definitions are hard to locate. Nevertheless, three Eurocentric scholars, whose education methods and theories serve the basis for today's American education systems offer the following:

Socrates: Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man. *Plato:* Education is the capacity to feel pleasure and pain at the right moment. It develops in the body and in the soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection which he is capable of. *Aristotle:* Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty, especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consists.¹³

It is not the goal of this study to simply articulate how education in the United States is failing the African American student. However, in determining the current state of education in this country, these definitions of education explain why education in this country is ineffective in educating the African American student. Education experts understand that education is a concept yet to be appropriately defined. The research on education reveals that education is ever-evolving. When education scholars concede that "education is a continuous reconstruction of our experiences", one must inquire "exactly whose experiences are being continuously reconstructed and why?"¹⁴ Of course, in the

¹² "Nature of Education," accessed February 21, 2020, <https://examplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/nature-of-education-pdf.pdf>.

¹³ Nature of Education, examplanning.com.

¹⁴ Philip Jackson, *What Is Education?* 4.

Eurocentric setting, it is the Eurocentric society's experiences – the Eurocentric teacher's experiences not the African American experiences being continuously reconstructed. African American students are expected to fit within the parameters of what a Eurocentric education system demands. Even Aristotle proclaims education should create a sound mind that is able to “enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth”.¹⁵ An effective education system must ask the question: “whose truth is the *supreme* truth?” What is true for African American students is not always true for the rest of the world. As much as dominant society may desire everyone's truth to be the same, research proves the opposite. In current education settings, not only are such systems in place that determine what truths are to be taught, but teachers are also responsible for determining the “type of truth that has prominence at any given moment”.¹⁶ The following provides further guidance and explains what teachers actually do in their process of educating:

Teachers structure the classroom activity by selecting the material to be studied, assigning seatwork or homework, lecturing, leading discussions, and so on. In doing so they largely determine the type of truth that has prominence at any given moment. But that control is only external; at least ideally, the same thing goes on internally during periods of self-instruction. Objection and dissent then take place without being openly voiced. Control of truth's traffic passes to the individual, where it belongs in a free society. Its final manager, under the best of conditions, turns out to be none other than thought itself, thought doing its own thing, exercising its freedom, turning on its axis, realizing its potential.¹⁷

¹⁵ Nature of Education, examplanning.com.

¹⁶ Jackson, *What Is Education?* 21.

¹⁷ Jackson, *What Is Education?* 21.

Understanding that education is an evolving science in the United States lending itself to a Eurocentric paradigm, there is additional research regarding how this education paradigm is considered *miseducation* for the African American student.

Miseducation, De-education, Myths and Lies

To be young, gifted and black oh what a lovely precious dream-to be young, gifted and black, open your heart to what I mean. In the whole world you know there are billion boys and girls who are young, gifted and black, and that's a fact! Young, gifted and black we must begin to tell our young--there's a world waiting for you, this is a quest that's just begun. When you feel really low, yeah, there's a great truth you should know, when you're young, gifted and black, your soul's intact. Young, gifted and black, how I long to know the truth, there are times when I look back and I am haunted by my youth. Oh but my joy of today is that we can all be proud to say: to be young, gifted and black is where it's at! Nina Simone¹⁸

Although Strauss reported that failing schools in the United States is basically a misnomer, Asante suggests that schools as institutions assume the characteristics of the “nation in which they are developed”.¹⁹ He argues further that education has the power to negatively affect the lives of “already politically and economically marginalized people – African Americans”.²⁰ Asante contends:

- (1) Education is fundamentally a social phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is to socialize the learner; to send a child to school is to prepare that child to become part of a social group.
- (2) Schools are reflective of the societies that develop them (i.e., a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White supremacist educational system).²¹

¹⁸ https://www.google.com/search?q=to+be+young+gifted+and+black+lyrics+by+nina+simone&rlz=1C1EJFC_enUS837US837_oq=to+be+young+gifted+and+black+lyrics+by+nina+simone&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l2.8639j0j7_sourceid=chrome_ie=UTF-8.

¹⁹ Asante, “The Afrocentric Idea”, 174.

²⁰ Asante, “The Afrocentric Idea”, 170.

²¹ Asante, “The Afrocentric Idea”, 170.

Herein lies the truth, especially based on Asante, that if schools that seek to educate are reflective of a systemic racist society, then the education stemming from those schools is racist. This practice is the source of *miseducation* and powerfully steers in the identification of the need for African-centered education. The following is an examination of *miseducation*, its roots, evolution in this country, and how it is influenced by the characteristics of this nation. At the core of *miseducation*, is the Eurocentric education system that highlights whites and/or Europeans at its center. Asante claims that what is found in most Eurocentric classrooms is:

...whatever the subject, Whites are located in the center perspective position. How alien the African American child must feel, how like an outsider! The little African American child who sits in a classroom and is taught to accept as heroes and heroines individuals who defamed African people is being actively de-centered, dislocated, and made into a nonperson, one whose aim in life might be to one day shed that 'badge of inferiority': his or her Blackness.²²

There are many processes and methods historically and currently used to *miseducate* African Americans. One of the most detrimental methods of miseducating the African American is through the process of *inferiorization*. With the result being subjugation of the less powerful group by the dominant group, inferiorization is a "preferred tool of war for the conquering group to maintain the compliance and subservience of the vanquished group".²³ As the elements of resistance are purposely not communicated to today's African American, most would believe that the docile African slave was brainwashed into conformity. However, it is the writing of Akoto that warns

²² Asante, "The Afrocentric Idea", 171.

²³ Akoto, "Nationbuilding", 41-42.

today's African American that they are still being subjugated while the Eurocentric and white dominant group continue to govern. Akoto argues:

This process of inferiorization is accomplished primarily through the agency of formal education/indoctrination; not through armed might, but through non-Afrikan or alien culturally centered educational systems, including the philosophy, the pedagogy and the curriculum.²⁴

To rise above after being disabled by inferiorization is extraordinary. In fact, there are far too many forms of propaganda and systems in place including “religious proselytization, electronic media propaganda, and the financial thrusts mentioned above”.²⁵ What happens when the bully is not only at the school, but the bully is the school? What happens when, due to the crunch of society on a child's family, there is nothing to reinforce any positive aspects of that child's behavior. No one shows up at parent-teacher meetings – awards programs – no one cheers when he or she scores a touchdown. The African American child suffers from severe multiple events that exponentially increase the inferiorization process. Historically, this weapon of destruction was used by white slaveholders who:

Demanded more, infinitely more from their slaves than labor; to assure a sense of duty and servility, the enslaved had to be convinced that their owners were all-knowing, all-merciful, and all-powerful. Consequently, slaves were bombarded with words and deeds telling them they sprang from savages and could be nothing but slaves. Enslavers reasoned correctly that any people believing these tenets would be loyal and grateful to those guiding them through their hopeless existence.²⁶

²⁴ Akoto, “Nationbuilding”, 41.

²⁵ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 41.

²⁶ Norrece T. Jones Jr., *Born a Child of Freedom Yet A Slave* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), 21.

Equally as dangerous and disgracefully rearing its ugly head in today's decisions on how to effectively educate African American students is the process of *infusion*. Akoto's research provides a rare glimpse into how this tactic related to *miseducation* is diametrically opposed to independent, African-centered education. Similar to Harding's "rivers", Akoto introduces "two currents in the contemporary Afrikan-centered education movement."²⁷

That current which has sustained the historic focus of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, race consciousness, and commitment to nationhood, has concerned itself with developing independent institutions, supported wholly by the Afrikan community. This current can be identified as the independent current within the movement and is a component of the comprehensive nationalist Pan Afrikanist ideology described above.²⁸

Recently, lemon-infused drinking water has become a trendy proposition for those seeking weight loss and healthy alternatives to highly sweetened soft drinks. Prior to the infusion of the lemon, the drinking water is clear. After slicing small portions of lemon and squeezing the juice of the lemon into the water, not only does the water carry the flavor of the lemon but takes on the yellow color of the lemon. The flavor-seeker simply has a non-sweetened version of lemonade – not water. This is a gentler description of how infusion works. The character of the water has been changed. As the previous description is an analogy, likewise Akoto warns those who would be creators of independent, African-centered shule:

A parallel current in the Afrikan-centered education movement, best termed infusion, can be characterized as a radicalized integrationist thrust. It is motivated by the same economic and psychic dependency that Booker T. Washington, Garvey, DuBois, and Malcolm X criticized. Its ideological aims are unclear, and it

²⁷ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 53.

²⁸ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 53.

pays lip service to the need to consolidate and expand the independent institutional base of the Afrikan nationality. This thrust has a serious liability, in that its most vocal advocates are themselves frequently dependent upon white controlled institutions for their sustenance and intellectual validation.²⁹

It is *infusion* that provokes the assumption that not all African American students can attend independent, African-centered shule. Infusion says there are not enough independent, African-centered shule and such will never exist. It is *infusion* that compels the advocate for independent, African-centered education to settle and sit down. Rather than build institutions for independent, African-centered learning, those tired of the battle will settle for African-centered curricula in existing public school systems or African-centered charter schools boasting multi-cultural, inclusive, and diverse student populations. Where the FBI and COINTELPRO successfully penetrated the Black Power movement, it is today's infusionists that knowingly and unknowingly seek to destroy any potential for independent, African-centered education: "They will attempt to set in motion the same corrosive dynamic that resulted in the weakening of the Black consciousness movement in the seventies".³⁰

There are a number of anti-Afrikan code words and phrases that have become the favorite tools of Eurocentric propagandists. The conceptual or propaganda tools of choice to date include 'multi-culturalism,' the 'charm of Americanism,' 'splendid diversity,' 'separatist impulse,' 'Balkanization,' and 'pluralistic society.' ... By engaging in fruitless debate and being maneuvered into reactionary postures, the infusionists inadvertently allow Eurocentrists to determine the content, direction and priorities of their efforts, and perhaps more tragically, the debate itself provides standing and credence to the same Eurocentrists (white and colored) who have already been discredited in their failure to effectively educate our children.³¹

²⁹ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 54.

³⁰ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 54.

³¹ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 55.

Akoto's work is a rare but powerful influence in the family of research advocating for independent, African-centered education. There is minimal research that articulates how processes such as *inferiorization* and *infusion* serve the *miseducation* of not only African American students, but the entire African American community.

Miseducation, for the purposes of this thesis, is defined as the antithesis of independent, African-centered education and is useless in the uplifting and development of the African American student. This definition is based on many of the thoughts expressed by Carter G. Woodson in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. Woodson strongly argued that the educational processes offered by the oppressor exalts that oppressor while simultaneously devaluing the worth of the African American.

How well does the African American student fare in the *miseducation* systems?

Durden reports the following based on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) statistics:

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in its quest to measure academic achievement, has reported differences between the fourth and eighth grade scores of Black students and those of White students. Those results showed that, on average, Whites had higher scores in reading and mathematics. Specifically, in the area of reading 42% of Black fourth graders scored at or above basic skills level compared to 76% of White students on the NAEP. Similar results were found in mathematics for twelfth graders on the NAEP assessment in which White students scored on average 30 points higher than Black students.³²

The research of the Center for Law and Social Policy concurs with Durden and contends: "For African American students, reduced and constrained access to educational opportunities begins in the early years and persists throughout the PreK-12 education

³² Tonia Renee Durden, "African Centered Schooling: Facilitating Holistic Excellence for Black Children", *The Negro Educational Review*, 58, nos. 1-2, 2007, 23-34.

system and beyond.”³³ The choices are limited--options for African Americans are few. Though politicians and educators are reluctant to admit, the public-school system in the United States is not only failing African American students but all students currently attending. Haki and Safisha Madhubuti argue further: “too many of our children are trapped in urban school systems that have been ‘programmed’ for failure.”³⁴

Edward Wilmot Blyden, former President of Liberia College, as one of the most dynamic pioneers of African-centered education addresses its significance, he stated:

The object of all education is to secure growth and efficiency, to make a man all that his natural gifts will allow him to become; to produce self-respect, a proper appreciation of our own powers and of the powers of other people; to beget a fitness for one’s sphere of life and action, and an ability to discharge the duties it imposes. Now if we take these qualities as the true outcome of a correct education, then everyone who is acquainted with the facts must admit that as a rule, in the entire civilized world, the Negro notwithstanding his two hundred years’ residence with Christian and civilized races, has nowhere received anything like a correct education.³⁵

In the seminal work of Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, there are warnings from 1933 regarding the *so-called* education of the Negro. The work is biting and considered flagrant by some; however, there are few works as provocative in regard to education and *miseducation* than Woodson:

The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up

³³ CLASP.org. *Improving Education Outcomes for African-American Youth: Issues for Consideration and Discussion*, 2014.

³⁴ Haki R. Madhubuti and Safisha Madhubuti, Ph.D., *African-centered Education*, 1.

³⁵ Edward Wilmot Blyden, LL.D., *The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans: Inaugural Address*, Cambridge, USA: University Press, 1882, 8.

to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race.³⁶

From reading being a forbidden activity for slaves to the Eurocentric classrooms throughout the United States, simply being educated in such a system is not only inadequate and ineffective, but far more oppressive in this society. Though the inclusive culture of classrooms exists within public, private and chartered schools, African Americans must be wary of the true goals behind allowing blacks to participate in Eurocentric education. Woodson prophetically challenges such an awkward education:

The 'educated Negroes' have the attitude of contempt toward their own people because in their own as well as in their mixed schools Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton and to despise the African.... The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies.³⁷

Understanding the truth of Woodson's testimony, why is it that African Americans allow their children to be subjected to such *miseducation*? Possibly, the reason that African American parents allow their children to be educated in racist Eurocentric learning systems is that there are few, if any, options. Woodson declares that options must be created and the time for such work is long overdue:

It is strange, then, that the friends of truth and the promoters of freedom have not risen up against the present propaganda in the schools and crushed it. This crusade is much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom.³⁸

³⁶ Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1933, xiii.

³⁷ Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, 1-2.

³⁸ Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, 3.

Although the Eurocentric school system in the United States consists of *overt* racist practices such as disparate discipline and suspension rates, the school-to-prison pipeline, disparate placement of black students in special education, and teacher bias; there is also evidence of *covert* racist practices in the actual curricula and teaching pedagogy. A number of schools in cities such as New York (NY), Atlanta (GA), Staunton (VA), Bronx (NY), Rock Hill (SC), Brambleton (VA), and Moss Point (MS) allowed racist accounts of slavery to be taught to multi-racial classes. Some of the incidents were reported in recent news and on social media. Of course, many of the incidents throughout the country were not. In some of the cases, teaches were fired and/or reprimanded. In many of the cases, they were not. In a recent report by the *Southern Poverty Law Center*, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, explains one aspect of this source of *miseducation*:

Slavery is hard history. It is hard to comprehend the inhumanity that defined it. It is hard to discuss the violence that sustained it. It is hard to teach the ideology of white supremacy that justified it. And it is hard to learn about those who abided it.... Our preference for nostalgia and for a history that never happened is not without consequence. We miseducate students because of it.³⁹

Colonial Education Systems Introduced in Africa

As educating black slaves was illegal and forbidden in the Americas, discussion is warranted that examines how Eurocentric education systems practiced by the colonizers in Africa transferred into the *miseducation* systems still practiced in Africa, as well as in American schools today. The seminal research of John Henrik Clarke and Cheikh Anta Diop provide evidence that there were thriving civilizations in Africa for hundreds of years prior to the civilizing of Europe. Clarke reports: "...one-half of human history had

³⁹ Splcenter.org, Southern Poverty Law Center, *Teaching Hard History*, 5.

occurred before the people now referred to as Europeans played any significant part in the shaping of world history.”⁴⁰ How is it that history was forced to ignore these truths and so many others about Africa? What is the nature of the colonizer who convinces not only the entire world but the victims themselves that Africans are the lowest of society? This diabolical ploy is one of the colonizer’s many tools of *miseducation* used to completely dehumanize the African. How did the European come from such a low place in history to impose upon the world the understanding that “everything great, everything fine, everything really successful in human culture, was white”?⁴¹ *Miseducation* makes this impossibility possible in the minds of both the colonized and the colonizer.

The research reveals that although the entire world suffers from various forms of *miseducation*, it is Africa, the African, and African people throughout the diaspora who suffer catastrophically now and have suffered throughout history due to the exploitative *miseducation* conducted by the white dominant group. It is with utmost urgency that the African American and Africans all over the world grasp the fact miseducation reinforces the belief that Africans are inferior and worthy only of subjugation. The white, dominant oppressor continues to reinforce his monstrous role as being superior and supreme in all things. Dr. Frances Cress Welsing sounds the alert and warns:

In a social system designed to achieve white domination, the experience of that system molds white children so that they may function in the role of the oppressors, or the ‘functional superiors’ (because that is what white supremacy is supposed to mean: that whites *will* function in a superior way as compared to non-whites). Through structured superior functioning, whites will be able to oppress

⁴⁰ John Henrik Clarke, *Notes for an African World Revolution: Africans at the Crossroads*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991), xiii.

⁴¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An inquiry into the part which Africa has played in world history*. (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 20.

others. The same social system simultaneously will mold all children classified as 'non-whites' or 'others' to play the role of the 'functional inferiors,' or the oppressed.⁴²

Slavery and colonialism are the direct result of *miseducation*. The white oppressor miseducated himself to believe it was his God-given responsibility to lord over the savage African. In this believed superior role, the colonizer realized the significance of transforming African minds to believe more in the power of the colonizer than in the power of the African. Matunhu acknowledges the role of missionary education in the origin of the *miseducation* process in Africa:

Missionary education curriculum was the main instrument used to destroy the pre-capitalist social structures in Africa. The education system brought about mental impoverishment of Africans by deemphasizing the importance of African values and culture at the same time glorifying that of the whites. The basic idea was to disorient the minds and identity of the blacks. The process of brain washing the Africans created a fertile ground for the exploitation of the continent's human and non-human resources. There cannot be an argument over the fact the dependency theory is exploitative hence impoverishing.⁴³

Matunhu so powerfully clarifies how the exploitation of Africa is the result of *brain washing* and *miseducation* of the African. Rodney endorses Matunhu's commentary and adds:

In the final analysis, perhaps the most important principle of colonial education was that of capitalist individualism.... In Africa, both the formal school system and the informal value system of colonialism destroyed social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility.⁴⁴

⁴² Frances Cress Welsing, *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors*. (Washington, DC: C.W. Publishing, 2004), 240.

⁴³ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Great Britain: Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, 1972), 290.

⁴⁴ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, xxi.

The African approach to learning is based on education's relevance to survival. In the former *Northern Rhodesia*, the *Bemba* learned based on education's connection to their daily existence:

...children by the age of six could name fifty to sixty species of tree plants without hesitation, but they knew very little about ornamental flowers. The explanation is simply that knowledge of the trees was a necessity in an environment of 'cut and burn' agriculture and in a situation where numerous household needs were met by tree products. Flowers, however, were irrelevant to survival. Indeed, the most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to Africans.⁴⁵

Throughout the African continent, there are African-centered indigenous knowledge banks based on African culture. Where the Europeans believed the Africans to be savage and uncivilized, the truth is the Europeans failed to understand African culture and thus, African learning systems. Rather than build on the fact that Africans were highly educated, both the European, the African, and the African American chase after European history as the panacea for all. We are reminded and challenged by John Henrik Clarke to "look back and see [*Sankofa Theory*]. When we (as Africans) had all these skills for running nations and running them well and weren't asking for any outsiders to educate our children, how did we lose it and how will we regain it?"⁴⁶ Instead of treasuring African learning systems and African education methodologies, the European, westernized, colonized forms of educating are favored above all. These are not only tentacles of colonialism but tools of oppression. Some of the features of indigenous African education include:

⁴⁵ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 290.

⁴⁶ John Henrik Clarke, *Notes for an African World Revolution: Africans at the Crossroads*, 11.

- Close links with social life, both in a material and spiritual sense;
- Collective nature – many sidedness;
- Progressive development in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional, and mental development of the child;
- Conscious division between teachers and pupils; and
- Specialized functions such as hunting, organizing religious ritual, and the practice of medicine definitely involved formal education within the family or clan.⁴⁷

However, there is a European-colonized version of educating the African that all Africans throughout the diaspora must be cognizant of:

The main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect, that meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole. It was not an educational system that grew out of the African environment or one that was designed to promote the most rational use of material and social resources. It was not an educational system designed to give young people confidence and pride as members of African societies, but one which sought to instill a sense of deference towards all that was European and capitalist.... Colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion, and the development of underdevelopment.⁴⁸

The research reveals that, hypothetically, the only effective method of detaching African American students from *miseducation* is through African-centered education. That is, a form of education that is, first, and most importantly, rooted in truth and evidence of truth. This expository education must have Africa at the center of it with Africa as its focus. This education must explore African language, African ideologies, African culture, African history and an entirely unique African-centered curriculum. This education must serve Africa, African Americans, and Africans worldwide developing critical thinking and exemplary scholarly achievement in the geniuses who will

⁴⁷ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 240.

⁴⁸ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 241.

participate in the development and rescue of the entire world. However, such rescue must first begin with protecting African American students through *mahali pa usalama* (safe havens) within independent, African-centered shule.

Mahali Pa Usalama: Theoretical Background

A wide range of theoretical models have been explored in the examination of African-centered education. However, it is the village-community safe haven theoretical framework that is most significant in examining the potential efficacy of an independent, African-centered school. As African American youth are in peril due to a plethora of issues including various forms of racism, dehumanization, stereotypes, violence, trauma, poverty and much more, those charged with creating an independent, African-centered shule would have to consider the long- and short-term effects of such dangerous conditions on African American students. A recent study claims “racist experiences increase inflammation in African American individuals, raising their risk of chronic illness”.⁴⁹ Other relevant research argues “the cause of low birth weights among African American women has more to do with racism than with race”.⁵⁰ The critical issues causing African American youth to be in peril begin at pre-birth stages and continue throughout their lives. At the least, African American youth should find some solace in their being allowed to learn in a protected environment without having to worry about their safety.

⁴⁹ April Thames, Michael Irwin, Elizabeth Breen, and Steve Cole, “Experienced discrimination and racial differences in leukocyte gene expression,” *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 106, no. 1019, 277-283.

⁵⁰ Richard David and James Collins Jr. Disparities in infant mortality: what's genetics got to do with it? *Am J Public Health*. 97, no. 7 (July 2007): 1191. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2005.068387. PubMed PMID: 17538073; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC1913086.

The Swahili term *mahali pa usalama* refers to the concept of safe havens.

Although the safe haven discussed in this research is focused on a village and community perspective, nonetheless “despite some protests that they shouldn’t have to be involved in such matters, schools today are making extraordinary efforts to be safe havens in our society—places where human life is held dear and where children can thrive”.⁵¹

Although Scherer states further “all children deserve a safe haven”, this research provides evidence that the African American child is rarely viewed as worthy of such protection.

Where current research focuses on internal safety and protection within U.S. schools, the research that is much more relevant to the efficacy of independent, African-centered education requires an investigation into the *in-school* and *out-of-school factors* that threaten the health, safety, and lives of African American students. First, the highly significant task of developing a village-community that addresses out-of-school factors and promotes, advocates and causes the safe passage of African American students to and from an independent, African-centered shule must be examined. The next concern would be the identification of in-school factors beginning with pedagogy and curricula that are tools of evidence, fact, and truth-based learning. It is the learning and application of what is learned that can free the African American student from all forms of captivity, fear and oppression.

Several school boards and school administrators have recently apologized for inappropriate attempts at educating students on issues such as slavery and so much more. One of the primary goals of an independent, African-centered school would be to

⁵¹ Marge Scherer, “Perspectives / Schools as Safe Havens,” *Educational Leadership*, 55, (1997): 5.

effectively educate students on evidence, fact and truth-based history. Relevant research by the Southern Poverty Law Center reports that the ineffective and inappropriate teaching of subject matter related to the role of African Americans in American history “isn’t a regional problem. It isn’t a Southern problem. It’s a national problem”.⁵² With understanding of how problematic the existing education systems are for African American students, it is essential that the history and evolution of African-centered education be explored.

Although many would consider discussion of anything related to the Black Panther Party (BPP) as controversial, the BPP’s goals of educating black youth are equally as brilliant and powerful today as they were in previous years. Williamson writes:

Educational researchers documented the intense alienation, dissatisfaction, low academic achievement, and sense of inferiority experienced by Black pupils and pondered how best to increase the academic achievement of Black students. Increased community control of schools became a proposed solution. A thoroughly democratic idea, community control allowed community residents to participate in policy making and more fully link the school to the community. Such schools sought to improve education by diversifying content and enriching the affective schooling experience. Through the inclusion of Black-centered materials, use of students’ backgrounds as a springboard for learning, incorporation of different perspectives of reality into the classroom, and connection of education to real-life situations and the community, students gained self-esteem, feelings of belonging, and cultural pride—all of which were lacking in mainstream schools. Such an education produced a well-rounded and intelligent individual ready to use his or her knowledge to initiate social reform and improve the conditions of the community from which he/she came.⁵³

In addition to the BPP, African-centered learning institutions have enjoyed waves of popularity and success. Many have endured financial hardship and changes in leadership

⁵² Splcenter.org. *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018.

⁵³ Joy Ann Williamson, “Chapter Six: Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist: the BLACK PANTHER PARTY’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS,” *Counterpoints*, 237, (2005) 137-157.

and personnel but still are in operation to this day. Several have evolved into charter schools. One of the significant aspects of this research is to examine how best to rekindle the fire and learn from the experiences of these institutions. Critical to the efficacy of an independent, African-centered school is effective management, ethics, integrity and accountability, not only in daily operations and financial administration but also in leadership. Finally, the identification of benefits and implications to all of the stakeholders involved in an independent, African-centered school is warranted.

For so many reasons, investing in the education of young African Americans is a worthwhile venture. After facing extreme adversity and discrimination against women of color, Katherine Johnson excelled extraordinarily "... calculating the trajectory for America's first space trip with Alan Shepherd's 1961 mission, an early step toward a moon landing".⁵⁴ In addition to her multiple degrees and awards including the prestigious *Presidential Medal of Freedom* (the United States' highest honor for civilians), Johnson "went on to do the calculations for the first actual moon landing in 1969".⁵⁵ Based on the fact that she achieved so much in spite of so many challenges, Katherine Johnson is a role model for today's African American students as the world pleads for more women in STEM fields. It is quite probable that facilitating the education of African American youth through an independent, African-centered education system would be highly beneficial to all involved. In addition to the potential benefits within the Atlanta metropolitan area and the United States, the effective education of African American

⁵⁴ NASA.gov. *Katherine Johnson: A Lifetime of STEM*.
<https://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/a-lifetime-of-stem.html>.

⁵⁵ NASA.gov. *Katherine Johnson: A Lifetime of STEM*.

students can greatly benefit the entire international community and the environment as well. However, the internal benefits that an African American student can gain as a result of an African-centered education is most important. “The benefits of an African-centered education are clear, as it develops African-centered consciousness and self-identity, produces Black leaders and institution builders, and empowers children with pride as a safeguard against racism”.⁵⁶ An overview that investigates how the above theoretical models and concepts interact, overlap and influence this present research follows.

African American Youth: Factors

*Either they don't know, don't show, or don't care about what's going on in the hood....*⁵⁷

The extremely treacherous current state of existence of African American youth is finally a topic that is being examined in scholarly literature. It is unfortunate that such critical research is necessary; however, far too many lives have already been lost and are at risk of being lost. The creation of African-centered learning centers (*shule* from Swahili) serving the village-community as safe-havens (*mahali pa usalama* from Swahili) is a unique concept that deserves further research.

Historically, we have the model of the Black Panther Party's liberation schools, “fashioned after the freedom schools of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).⁵⁸ Although the safety and protection of African American students was a

⁵⁶ David Love, *Too Many Afrocentric Schools Are Underfunded and Neglected – Why Saving These Schools Should be a National Priority*. <https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/03/01/too-many-afrocentric-schools-are-underfunded-and-neglected-why-saving-these-schools-should-be-a-national>.

⁵⁷ Doughboy. *Quote from Boyz N the Hood*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101507/characters/nm0001084>.

primary concern for the Black Panther Party and their liberation schools, there is an insufficient amount of scholarly research that indicates safety and protection of African American students. News reports and social media are flooded with documented school shootings and police shootings of unarmed African Americans. Nevertheless, scholarly research that addresses methods for guaranteeing the protection and safety of African American students is minimal. The factors that are detrimental to the health and safety of African American students should be categorized into two groups: *in-school factors* and *out-of-school factors*. For example, an in-school factor would be teacher bias. Examples of out-of-school factors are: (1) toxic stress; and (2) police shootings of African Americans. Specifically, out-of-school factors would be those factors that affect the entire African American community. Those are factors that an African American student would encounter before entering a school, as well as while on the school premises.

Out-of-School Factor 1. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Transgenerational Legacy of Slavery, and Generational Remembering

Dr. DeGruy's brilliant research differentiates Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) and provides a detailed account of a slave's existence. According to Dr. DeGruy in relation to PTSS:

Who can imagine what could be the feelings of a father and mother, when looking upon their infant child whipped and tortured with impunity and placed in a situation where they could afford it no protection. But we were all claimed and held as property; the father and the mother were slaves! ... I was compelled to

⁵⁸ Charles E. Jones and Jonathan Gayles, "The World Is A Child's Classroom: An Analysis of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School", in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, eds. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), 101.

stand and see my wife shamefully scourged and abused by her master and the manner in which this was done, was so violently and inhumanely committed upon the person of a female, that I despair in finding decent language to describe the bloody act of cruelty. My happiness or pleasure was then all blasted; for it was sometimes a pleasure to be with my family even in slavery. I loved them as my wife and child. Little Francis was a pretty child; she was quiet, playful, bright, and interesting. But I could never look upon the dear child without being filled with sorrow and fearful apprehensions of being separated by slave holders, because she was a slave, regarded as property. And unfortunately for me, I am the father of a slave.... It calls fresh to my mind the separation of husband and wife; of stripping, tying up and flogging; of tearing children from their parents, and selling them on the auction block. It calls to mind female virtue, virtue trampled underfoot.... But oh! When I remember that my daughter, my only child, is still there, destined to share the fate of all these calamities, it is too much to bear.... If ever there was any one act of my life while a slave, that I have to lament over, it is that of being a father and a husband of slaves. –Henry Bibb, 1849 (ex-slave)⁵⁹

Recently, there have been congressional hearings and many conversations discussing reparations for slavery. Little has been stated regarding the effect of such a horrific history. DeGruy, like the rest of the medical world, acknowledges the need for many who suffer from PTSD, especially military veterans. However, it is her work that identifies PTSS among the descendants of slaves that is most relevant to this present research. Though many would agree to forget about the tragedies of slavery, likewise, many would also challenge African Americans to *move on* or to *get over it!* However, it is not the fault of African Americans that they are haunted by tragic memories that Dr. DeGruy considers a *legacy of trauma*. The unique existence of the African American qualifies him/her as a storehouse of memories of previous events inferring that:

Behavior can be affected by events in previous generations which have been passed on through a form of genetic memory, animal studies suggest. A body of research shows that your DNA may contain a biological memory of the stress your grandparents endured. Can trauma, stress, and even nightmares be passed down from generation to generation? Scientists say yes. ‘Epigenetics is how your

⁵⁹ Dr. Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury Healing*. (Oregon: Uptone Press, 2017), 95.

environment influences your genes,' Tara Swart, a senior lecturer at MIT, tells Fast Company: The two most famous studies are about Holocaust survivors, people who became pregnant around that time, and then people who became pregnant just before, during, or after the famine, which was in the Netherlands around the same time. Those [studies] showed that people who were in starvation or stress just before they got pregnant, because they had either switched on or switched off certain stress genes, the baby was actually born with a different stress threshold than its mother's genes would have normally given it... significant life-threatening experiences alter genetic coding, and this is heritable in subsequent generations. Therefore, it stands to reason, that a child conceived (Post Trauma) will acquire this adaptive genetic information.⁶⁰

DeGruy offers a formal definition of PTSS stating:

PTSS is a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to this condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them... Multigenerational trauma together with continued oppression and absence of opportunity to access the benefits available in the society lead to PTSS.⁶¹

A team of researchers at Emory University found: “transgenerational epigenetic inheritance’ – that the environment can affect an individual’s genetics, which can in turn be passed on.”⁶² In agreement with DeGruy’s research, one of the Emory researchers, Dr. Dias, concluded that “this might be one mechanism that descendants show imprints of their ancestor”.⁶³ Dr. Alison Heru concurs with DeGruy’s findings and argues that “a body of research supports the notion that untreated intergenerational trauma tied to generations of slavery in the United States continues to negatively affect many in the

⁶⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 101-102.

⁶¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 105.

⁶² Brian G. Dias and Kerry J. Ressler. “Parental olfactory experience influences behavior and neural structure in subsequent generations.” *Nature neuroscience* 17,1 (2014): 89-96.

⁶³ James Gallagher. “*Memories’ pass between generations.*” <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-25156510>, 2.

black community.”⁶⁴ Much closer in content to DeGruy’s research, Barbara Fletchman Smith contends “although trauma has not passed through to everyone with a slave ancestor, some people have not been able to recover from the terrible experiences passed down the generations, consciously or unconsciously”.⁶⁵

Both Fletchman Smith and DeGruy provide evidence of the horrors of slavery being passed on not only through DNA and epigenetics but also through memories. More identifiable are the plethora of trauma that are reflected in a variety of examples including: (1) belief systems and behaviors; (2) family structure or absence of family structure; (3) direct instruction and observance; and (4) extended family and community. Fletchman Smith shares insight into two examples of how PTSS impacts the African American family:

The first area of suffering was the reduction of African male power directly through the genitals—not through the penis but through the testicles, which bear the man’s seed. This was accomplished in two ways. Firstly, the children produced by the African male were not his. He was robbed of them and they belonged to his owners, the slave masters. There was no such thing during slavery as the African father.⁶⁶

With the father being absent in so many ways, protection for the African female was absent as well.

Disturbance was also a response to being separated from their infants and children and being made to return to work before they were ready. There was inadequate resting after childbirth before the return to the cane fields, to continue bending and stooping. The ordinary care that a woman could expect at such a time from

⁶⁴ Dr. Alison M. Heru, “*Preventing the intergenerational transmission of trauma.*” <https://www.mdedge.com/psychiatry/article/57864/preventing-intergenerational-transmission-trauma>.

⁶⁵ Barbara Fletchman Smith. *Transcending the Legacies of Slavery*. Great Britain: Karnac Books Ltd., 2011, 33.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Transcending the Legacies of Slavery*, 3.

her mother, husband, family and friends was absent, and—naturally—women reacted to these terrible conditions. Sometimes the woman’s seemingly crazy outburst was a response to being separated from a lover, or to her child being sold off to another plantation, never to be seen again. These newer losses on top of the original loss of family of origin would have been all the more hard to bear.⁶⁷

Clearly, African Americans, as descendants of slaves, must be educated through systems, methods, and strategies that are sensitive to the effects of multiple traumas. However, beyond the psychological trauma, there are health issues that also must be identified as a justification for schools as safe havens. Often, these health issues occur prior to the actual existence of the affected child.

Out-of-School Factor 2. Pre-Birth and Dehumanization

David and Collins’ critical research suggests that racism, *not race*, is the cause of low birth weights in African American women. *Science Daily* interviewed one of the authors, Richard David, who states: “For black women, ‘something about growing up in America seems to be bad for your baby’s birth weight’”.⁶⁸ David and Collins’ study further argues that racism is horribly detrimental to children of American black women and contributes to “major causes of death in the child’s first year”.⁶⁹ In correlation with DeGruy and Fletchman Smith, remarkably, David and Collins found evidence of institutional racism in addition to the interpersonal racism. “In David and Collins’ study of black women who gave birth in two Chicago hospitals, 16 percent said their partner

⁶⁷ Smith, *Transcending the Legacies of Slavery*, 33.

⁶⁸ Science Daily. *Disparities in Infant Mortality Not Related to Race, Study Finds*. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/07/070730173400.htm>.

⁶⁹ David and Collins, *Disparities in infant mortality: what's genetics got to do with it?*

was in jail during the pregnancy.”⁷⁰ Before the African American youth are allowed to possess a human existence, he/she is threatened by transgenerational legacies of slavery, post-traumatic slave syndrome, and racism. Even more dangerous to the African American youth is the dehumanization process that leads to even further peril.

Today, there is limited understanding of how and why human beings were captured, stolen from their land, raped, tortured, and forced to become slaves in a foreign land. Today, chattel slavery is rarely discussed and even African Americans choose to avoid conversations about slavery. However, there has been an increase in talk of reparations—recently a lot of talk. In understanding African American youth and the potential efficacy of an independent, African-centered shule, those must be humanized who historically and to this date have been *dehumanized*. Duru contends that “the idea of the Black males as being a ‘natural slave’ existed before the development of U.S. chattel slavery”.⁷¹ Duru further explains the dehumanization process:

Having been tagged as sexually potent animalistic criminals, blacks were subjected to chattel slavery in the new world. They did not, however, have the fortune of shedding the stereotypes upon introduction into slavery. On the contrary, the institution of slavery further entrenched the stereotypes. Indeed, the very existence of blacks as slaves reinforced the perception of their bestiality... the slave is outside of the culture and therefore is nonhuman; is deprived of the freedom and therefore is a beast.⁷²

In Newkirk’s *Spectacle*, the author shares one event of such degrading dehumanization as evidenced by the public display in the Bronx Zoo of Ota Benga:

⁷⁰ Science Daily, *Disparities*.

⁷¹ N.J. Duru, “The Central Park Five, the Scottsboro boys and the myth of the bestial black man.” *Cardozo Law Review*, 25(4), 1315.

⁷² N.J. Duru, *Cardozo Law Review*, 4.

‘Bushman Shares a Cage with Bronx Park Apes’ was the headline in Sunday’s *New York Times*....’ The human being,’ the article said, ‘happened to be a Bushman, one of a race that scientists do not rate high in the human scale. But to the average non-scientific person in the crowd of sightseers there was something about the display that was unpleasant.’ However unsettling, the exhibit on the respectable grounds of a world-class zoological park had been sanctioned by Hornaday, one of the world’s leading zoologists, and by Henry Fairfield Osborn, among his era’s most eminent scientists.⁷³

Not only did dehumanization allow black humans to be enslaved, it allowed black humans to become beasts who existed at the whim of those who were considered truly human and white. The popular belief was, void of whiteness, the black creatures surely were inhuman and created, through a curse, to serve and be subservient to white humans. Newkirk goes further in guiding understanding into what happens to the black creatures constantly on display in a dehumanized existence:

We cannot know exactly what Benga felt, but research on the psychological trauma associated with shame suggests that it is not substantially different from the effects of physical torture. Studies also consistently show a strong correlation between event-related shame and post-victimization symptoms including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, withdrawal, and phobias. One researcher, J.P. Gump, found that the most profound shame results from the destruction of your subjectivity when ‘what you need, what you desire, and what you feel are of complete and utter insignificance.’⁷⁴

Ota Benga was not shot on the streets of the United States by police. Ota Benga was never lynched by an angry mob. Ota Benga, the innocent Pygmy from the Congo, captured and stolen away from his home and family, “... faced with the prospect of never returning to his homeland, he took his life”.⁷⁵ With the recent Netflix broadcast of Ava

⁷³ Pamela Newkirk, *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga*. (New York: Amistad, 2015), 13.

⁷⁴ Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 12.

⁷⁵ Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 243.

Duvernay's *When They See Us*, the movie allows the world to view how the dehumanization of African-American youth plays out in more recent times. Ironically, Central Park is approximately 28 minutes away from the Bronx Zoo. The Central Park Five, now referred to as the *Exonerated Five*, were between the ages of 14 and 16 years old. In Giorgis' article in which she reviews the movie, she offers a brief opening description: "Ava Duvernay's miniseries about the so-called Central Park Five illustrates, with excruciating clarity, the consequences of *dehumanizing* language".⁷⁶

The New York City teenagers Yusef Salaam, Korey Wise, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, and Antron McCray were not born in the wild. The boys, who were all arrested in 1989 after a 28-year-old white woman was brutally raped and abandoned in Central Park, called the sweltering metropolis their home.⁷⁷

Although the Five were found guilty of a crime, DNA evidence and a confession from the actual rapist proved they did not commit the crime. The young boys suffered the horrors of incarceration and became men while surviving imprisonment. On the other hand, Trayvon Martin was not that fortunate.

Winters explores the dehumanization of another black body put on display. As with Ota Benga, Trayvon Martin's dehumanization ended in death as well.

For over a year, laypersons and scholars alike watched as those in the media continued to publicly dissect Trayvon Martin, the Florida teen who was killed by a neighborhood watchman. His body, school like, choice of attire, friends, and family were all put on display for public consumption and gratification. While we watched in awe as the hydratic head of White supremacy sprung its ugly head once again, even in the death of a minor, our nation's youth watched close by as adults mutilated Trayvon's humanity before a live viewing audience.... And, borrowing from media cues and deeply entrenched Eurocentric ideologies about

⁷⁶ Hannah Giorgis, *When They See Us and the Persistent Logic of 'No Humans Involved'*, 1. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/06/when-they-see-us-and-persistent-language-black-criminality/590695/>.

⁷⁷ Giorgis, *When They See Us*, 1.

people of African ancestry in the U.S. and abroad, Trayvon was sold as a fully-grown man full of trickery, savagery, and Black masculine rage; enough rage to kill an adult male with his bare hands. In juxtaposition, George Zimmerman, his adult assailant and murderer, was characterized as a self-sacrificing hero; a protector of property and white women from aggressive criminally inclined Black males.⁷⁸

However, Trayvon, killed no one—Trayvon *was* killed.

The undeniable evidence of dehumanization leads to the criminalization of African American youth who, like Trayvon and the *Exonerated Five*, are erroneously viewed as adults. A recent study suggests that African American youth “... are 18 times more likely than White children to be sentenced as adults and who represent 58% of children sentenced to adult facilities”.⁷⁹ The research of Goff et al. is extremely unique in that it identifies “the strong historical association between Blacks and apes specifically—and not Blacks with simply any animal—may still influence the unique ways in which individuals dehumanize Blacks”.⁸⁰ What is most significant about the research of Goff et al. is how the evidence proves the need for African American youth to be protected. In their exhaustive research on African American dehumanization, the researchers “... examine the possibility that the protections of childhood are diminished for Black children in contexts where they are dehumanized... dehumanization is a necessary

⁷⁸ Venus E. Evans-Winters, “Introduction: (RE)Teaching Trayvon”, in *Youth, Media and Culture: (Re)Teaching Trayvon: Education for Racial Justice and Human Freedom*, eds. Venus E. Evans-Winters and Magaela C. Bethune, (The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014), 1-2.

⁷⁹ Phillip Atiba Goff, Matthew Christian Jackson, Brooke Allison Lewis Di Leone, Carmen Marie Culotta, and Natalie Ann DiTomasso, “The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(4), 2014, 526.

⁸⁰ Goff et al., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 528.

precondition for culturally and/or state-sanctioned violence”.⁸¹ The damage of dehumanization and viewing young black children as adults is alarming.

Origins: Fear of Monsters and Beasts

Is it possible that an African-centered school with the goals of educating and protecting African American students could have saved the life of George Stinney?

George Junius Stinney was born October 21, 1929. He was accused of killing two young white girls in Clarendon County, South Carolina, and on June 16, 1944, became the youngest person ever to be executed in the United States in the twentieth century.... Despite protests, lack of due process, and lack of physical evidence of his guilt, George Junius Stinney Jr., a poor, illiterate black boy, was executed at the South Carolina State Penitentiary within eighty-four days of his trial.... George Junius Stinney was posthumously exonerated in 2014. It is always tragic when an individual is put to death, whether at the hands of a frenzied mob or an established institutional brute. How much more heartrending must it be for black youth today when they are faced with the awful truth that an astounding number of the people who have been executed throughout this country’s history, have been poor, uneducated, and disproportionately black.⁸²

Stinney was viewed as an adult. Stinney was viewed as a criminal. Similar to the stories of the *Exonerated Five (The Central Park Five)*, Trayvon Martin, and so many others, Stinney’s death may have been the result of something much more infectious and horrendous than bias, racial stereotyping and racial profiling, *fear*. Fear may be the force that fuels racism, bias, racial stereotyping and racial profiling. Such lends to the injustice and disparities of incarceration, hunting schema, invasive suspicion, use of force, police shootings, lynching, hate crimes, and so much more. In what some may consider an

⁸¹ Goff et al., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 527.

⁸² DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 89.

opposing view but aids in understanding the reality of the fear that burdens the police, there is truth in what only Frantz Fanon can offer.

For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence.... As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence.⁸³

Surely, Fanon's critique can only be true for blacks in Africa, for America is not a colony and thus, does not house colonized people. Yet, the debate exists that America is a colony and, therefore, does house colonized people. However, deeper than guilt-ridden fear of the colonizer is simply a fear that the image of a black human, whether child or adult, male or female, brings to those charged with protecting the very people they fear. A voice from the other side, lends personal testimony to the accumulating evidence of fear-based policing. In his book, *Breaking Rank*, former chief of police for San Diego and Seattle, Norm Stamper, who is white, exposes the fear that causes so many police officers to consciously or unconsciously participate in what is theorized as *the hunting schema*:

Simply put, white cops are afraid of black men. We don't talk about it, we pretend it doesn't exist, we claim 'color blindness,' we say white officers treat black men the same way they treat white men. But that's a lie. In fact, the bigger, the darker the black man the greater the fear. The African American community knows this. Hell, most whites know it. Yet even though it's a central, if not the defining ingredient in the makeup of police racism, white cops won't admit it to themselves, or to others.⁸⁴

⁸³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 3.

⁸⁴ Norm Stamper, *Breaking Rank* (New York, NY: Avalon Press, 2005), 362-363.

It is the prevalence of fear that fuels the hunting schema. Naomi Zack defines *schema* as “a psychological combination of pre-existing beliefs, contextual events or conditions, and actions, such that the existence of the beliefs in a relevant context predisposes an individual to act in certain ways”.⁸⁵ Testimony after testimony in the multitude of police shootings reveal officers who felt threatened or believe that black men posed an immediate danger to the officers’ lives. In many cases (i.e. Walter Scott, Antwon Rose, Eric Garner, Stephon Clark and Eric Logan), the black men were unarmed and attempting to flee hoping to prevent the inevitable. Naomi Zack’s research links the *hunter schema* to racial profiling stating:

... young African American males are uniquely picked out as dangerous prey that young white males are permitted to hunt in some circumstances. The hunting schema kicks in when racial profiling is kicked up from routine intrusive surveillance to a violent or potentially violent encounter... Racial profiling itself already has emotional and physical components that can over-ride even the most racially neutral police training. Broad cultural stereotypes about dangerous young black males evoke fear, generally, and there is no reason to believe that white police officers and auxiliary police personnel are immune to such fear—their fear mirrors, as well as it influences, fear in the wider white population.⁸⁶

In referencing the Trayvon Martin case, it is evident that George Zimmerman (age 29), a neighborhood watch captain, feared Trayvon Martin (age 17). Based on the jury’s acquittal of Zimmerman, the jury agreed that “prior racial suspicion and profiling, a right to follow a suspect, and a naturalness in killing a suspect under those circumstances” was

⁸⁵ Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights: The Injustice of U.S. Police Racial Profiling and Homicide*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield, 2015), 79.

⁸⁶ Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights*, 80.

justifiable.⁸⁷ Zack's research further explains the correlation between the hunting schema, fear and police shootings of innocent black victims.

The young black men who are killed are unwitting victims, of an unrestrained, predatory, cultural practice of young men in the United States. Such episodes of legal homicide reflect or are reflected in a genre of human entertainment that has existed at least since 1924—humans hunting humans. (Some students of the history of race relations in the United States may not consider it coincidental that this genre began as lynching was phasing out.) The hunting of humans by other humans would be criminal homicide in most other contexts. But in the context of young white police officers killing young black males, it is protected by prosecutors, judges, and juries, and accepted by the majority of the white majority, because of respect for the authority of the police and widespread belief, based on the disproportional imprisonment of blacks, that young black males are likely to be criminals indeed dangerous animals according to long-standing racist mythology.⁸⁸

Fear in the minds and hearts of police officers dangerously informs perception as evidenced in the police shooting of Tamir Rice (age 12). The police officer who shot Rice reported that the 12-year old had a weapon and was about *twenty years* of age. However, the evidence proves the 12-year old *child* was simply playing with a toy gun in the park. Was this a demonstration of fear operating through racism, racial stereotyping, racial profiling or bias?

Shaun Gabbidon defines racism as “the use of race as the basis for discriminating against another group of people”.⁸⁹ Fanon offers a *colonized* interpretation of systemic racism:

The generic duality that spans the global world of colonized societies is ‘a world divided in two... inhabited by different species.... The singularity of the colonial

⁸⁷ Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights*, 79.

⁸⁸ Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights*, 81.

⁸⁹ Shaun L. Gabbidon, “A Brief Introduction to Race, Crime, and Theory”, *Criminological Perspectives on Race and Crime*, Abingdon: Taylor Francis, 2010, 2.

context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to.'⁹⁰

DeGruy offers another definition of racism:

... the belief that people differ along biological and genetic lines and that one's own group is superior to another group. These beliefs are coupled with and compounded by the power to negatively affect the lives and limit the options of those perceived to be inferior.⁹¹

There is a wealth of pseudo-science that has influenced historic racism, as well as racism that is practiced today. Dr. Arnold Toynbee's racist viewpoints are intensified through an extremely damaging quote: "It will be seen that when we classify mankind by color, the only one of the primary races, given by this classification, which has not made a creative contribution to any one of our twenty-one civilizations is the Black Race."⁹²

Based on these definitions of racism, it is apparent that the perceived superiority of one group (the white dominant) will cause that group to enforce limitations on the oppressed or the perceived inferior group (African Americans). Police acting as agents for the dominant group are those enforcers. So, in addition to the fear, there is a deeply seated governor of responsibility in the minds of the police that forces them to act out racism in their daily operations. In recent news, Presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg has come under fire for his pseudo-apology for implementing *stop-and-frisk* policy when he was Mayor of New York City. The way this pseudo-apology is viewed by many

⁹⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, xiii.

⁹¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 15.

⁹² Dr. Arnold Toynbee, *The Study of History, Vol. 1*, 1947, 233.

African Americans, especially those victimized by police and how the victimization relates to this research is best depicted by late-night host Trevor Noah:

... First of all, the fact that he says if you look at criminals and victims of crime, et cetera, you can xerox – you can just copy and paste it and put it out there. It shows me that you didn't even care about the differences between black people. You made it seem like black is crime when, in fact, black is most affected by crime. That is the thing that you did there. Alright? That's the first problem I have. Secondly, the fact that people don't seem to realize the ramifications of treating people like that. Imagine if you are a black kid living in Mike Bloomberg's New York City. Every day you're getting frisked and thrown against a wall. Huh? Put over the hood of a car. Every day this is what cops are just – this is your life. Now imagine if you are a black kid who lives in this world. A cop gets you, pulls you, throws you into a wall. 'You got something?' 'No.' You carry on. Next day it happens again. Maybe next week, maybe next month, whenever it is. At some point, what do you say? Fuck the police. Alright? And then you get people like, 'Why don't you respect the police?' Why don't they respect me? They don't protect and serve me. These people come and throw me against the wall and treat me like a criminal. You know what I mean? And then what does that kid do one day? They see the cops, they go, 'Screw this. I'm not staying around for this.' They run away. The cops pursue. Now they catch you. What are you – you're evading arrest, you're resisting arrest. Now you get arrested for resisting arrest. Then you go to jail. You can't afford bail. Now you're in prison. What does prison turn you into more likely than not? A criminal. Alright? And even if you don't become a criminal because of that, you are still in the system now. We've seen how these kids get locked up. They can't afford to come out. Now they are living a life of crime without being a criminal. And then you're just like, 'Oh, but these kids spend all their time in jail.' How did they get to jail? 'Why were you running from the cops?' 'Because I was tired of being thrown against the motherfucking wall.' So my problem with Mike Bloomberg is he's not saying, 'I'm sorry for targeting black people. I'm sorry for treating black people like second-class citizens. I'm sorry for gaslighting black people for so long.' No, he's just like, 'I'm sorry that stop and frisk happened to affect black communities.' And it's like, no, it didn't *happen*. You designed it to.⁹³

⁹³ Youtube. "Bloomberg and The Legacy of Stop-and-Frisk – Between the Scenes | The Daily Show: Trevor Noah". Last modified February 19, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVzWqGAUFel>

It is remarkable that Bloomberg is one of many presidential candidates who developed racist policies geared towards African Americans. This is systemic racism and for the purposes of this study, considered to be an out-of-school factor. However, as Noah states, such policies have a terrifying impact on the lives of all African Americans, especially young African Americans who are innocent yet perceived as criminal. This is not specific to New York City. This is a problem worldwide.

In addition to racism, fear is further fueled by the belief that black people are natural criminals, even *evil*. The *Hamitic Myth* is an extremely powerful belief that is the result of biblical misinterpretation but also fuels African Americans being viewed as evil, diabolical criminals. Gabbidon states:

Such a virulent myth set in motion the belief that all black people were ‘evil’ and criminal... that all barbarous people descended from Ham, while all civilized men were the issue of Shem and Japheth. From this point forward, the myth was used to justify the enslavement and colonization of blacks around the globe. Given the myth’s connection to the ‘evil Canaanites’, it was also implicitly used to explain blacks’ involvement in deviant or criminal activities.⁹⁴

As the labeling of criminals is far too often manifested in the minds of humans, it is imperative that learning institutions are created to serve as safe havens for those dominant society perceives as criminals. Therefore, the racial bias and racial stereotyping must be examined. In addition to the Hamitic Myth, Gabbidon presents the work of Tannenbaum explaining labeling theory:

The process of making the criminal ... is a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious, it becomes a way of stimulating, suggesting, emphasizing, and evoking the very traits that are complained of. If the theory of relation of response to stimulus has any meaning, the entire process of dealing with the young delinquent

⁹⁴ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives*, 7.

is mischievous in so far as it identifies him to himself or to the environment as a delinquent person.⁹⁵

It is important to note that the independent, African-centered school being discussed in this research can never reach any level of efficacy if within its curricula relief for such maladies cannot be found. Gabbidon's research on deviants and delinquents elucidates how perceptions, imaginations and fears contribute to bias.

If racial minorities are labeled as 'deviants' and receive an added measure of attention from justice system officials, it stands to reason that they are likely considerably represented among the falsely accused.... In a similar vein, if both race and deviance are 'master statuses,' then black criminals not only are in the classic 'double bind,' but also likely represent the worst fears of whites and other who internalize these labels.⁹⁶

Today's news and social media are ablaze with terrifying video footage of the recurrence of *Blackaphobia*, a concept birthed from Armour's 1997 research on *Negrophobia*.⁹⁷ In addition to the police shootings, today's Blackaphobia includes store management calling the police on black men sitting in Starbucks, a white passerby calling the police on an 8-year old black girl trying to sell water, bank employees calling the police on a black man attempting to cash a check—and the list goes on and on.⁹⁸ Gabbidon expounds on Armour's research and explains how dangerous *Negrophobia* can get:

⁹⁵ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives*, 100.

⁹⁶ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives*, 104.

⁹⁷ J.D. Armour, *Negrophobia and reasonable racism: The hidden costs of being black in America*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

⁹⁸ Brett Molina, *Cashing checks, napping, more activities leading to police calls on black people in 2018*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/12/20/black-people-doing-normal-things-who-had-police-called-them-2018/2374750002/>.

‘Negrophobia’ and the incorporation of what has been referred to as ‘reasonable racism’ or the notion that, because of their perceived dangerousness, the irrational fear of blacks might be justified in situations where whites take preemptive action (shooting) to ward off their prospective attacker(s). So, for example, in a situation where a white person shoots a black person who he or she *thought* was a perceived robber, based on statistics and stereotypes that feed into ‘*Negrophobia*,’ Armour argued that some courts might actually buy into such an argument, which one could interpret as the implicit acceptance of ‘reasonable racism’ or ‘rational discrimination’. In other words, given the over-representation of blacks in robbery arrest statistics, it is all right to blow a black man away if he looks like a potential robber. But the obvious problem with such a premise is that, in the socially constructed minds of many whites and some racial minorities, all blacks and Latinos look like potential robbers [emphasis added]. In the end, as noted by Covington (1995), crime becomes racialized or, put another way, crime becomes associated with particular racial/ethnic groups.⁹⁹

Some might consider these findings mythical or even unbelievable. However, we have the recent documented case of Trayvon Martin and the historic case of Emmett Till. Two young boys who lost their lives by simply being black in America. Gabbidon cites the work of Katheryn Russell-Brown, who created the term *criminalblackman*. Her research focused on hoaxes or crimes fabricated with the blame being placed on innocent black men. The assumption, in the mind of the perpetrator of the hoax, is that due to the negative images of black men, the hoax would be believed. Negrophobia, Blackaphobia, criminalblackmen, and similar terms may seem out-of-touch with today’s society—possibly the terms may even be considered humorous to blacks and other cultures. This type of racial bias that historically has led to the destruction of black communities such as Rosewood, Florida and Greenwood (Black Wall Street), Oklahoma. It is the present rebirth of such bias that provokes the targeting of black people by police.

⁹⁹ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives*, 110.

Additional evidence of bias can be found in Emma Pettit's research, "*One Trigger Finger for Whites and Another for Blacks*": *What the Research Says on Race and Police Shootings*." In this study, Pettit examines the work of Lois James that contends: "disproportionate representation of African Americans in fatal shootings by police officers is not a fact people debate."¹⁰⁰ James' research argues that police officers operate through their implicit racial bias "ingrained in their thinking and decision making".¹⁰¹ She argues further that "negative stereotypes about minorities influence when and how often officers choose to use their weapons."¹⁰² Joshua Correll, Bernadette Park, Charles Judd, and Bernd Wittenbrink conducted relevant research that reveals:

In four studies, participants showed a bias to shoot African American targets more rapidly and/or more frequently than white targets. The implications of this bias are clear and disturbing. Even more worrisome is the suggestion that mere knowledge of the cultural stereotype, which depicts African Americans as violent, may produce Shooter Bias, and that even African Americans demonstrate the bias.¹⁰³

There is much more research on fear, racial bias and racial stereotyping demonstrating how these concepts influence the criminalization, victimization, and shootings of African American youth. Research is needed that examines the impact

¹⁰⁰ Emma Pettit, "One Trigger Finger for Whites and Another for Blacks": *What the Research Says on Race and Police Shootings*., *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 62(41), 2.

¹⁰¹ Emma Pettit, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2.

¹⁰² Emma Pettit, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2.

¹⁰³ Joshua Correll, Bernadette Park, Charles Judd, and Bernd Wittenbrink, "The Police Officer's Dilemma: Using Ethnicity to Disambiguate Potentially Threatening Individuals", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(6), 1327.

schools, as safe havens, could have on protecting African American youth from such atrocities.

Reconceptualizing the Village-Community

We won't be going in there alone – I meant my ancestors – I will call into the past far back to the beginning of time and beg them to come and help me... I will reach back and draw them into me, and they must come for at this moment I am the whole reason they have existed at all. (Amistad)¹⁰⁴

There has been far too much reliance and alliance with sources of perceived *aid* to the African American community. A shedding is needed of the belief that a white hero will come and save African Americans from the very *miseducation* that the white dominant society created. One of the most powerful voices advocating independence is that of Stokely Carmichael (one of the many great activist-ancestors), the creator of the slogan “Black Power” who later changed his name to Kwame Ture.

If one goes into any Negro community, whether it be in Jackson, Mississippi, Cambridge, Maryland or Harlem, New York, one will find that the same combination of political, economic and social forces is at work. The people in the Negro community do not control the resources of that community, its political decisions, its law enforcement, its housing standards; and even the physical ownership of the land, houses and stores lie outside that community.¹⁰⁵

An independent, African-centered shule is inseparable from the community. Equally as significant is the understanding that education in traditional African settings (The Village) was and is inseparable from the village. In other words, an African-centered shule cannot exist without the village-community. In Malidoma Patrice Somé’s “*Healing Wisdom of Africa*,” essential commentary is found to reveal the Dagara people

¹⁰⁴ Youtube.com. *Amistad (5/8) Movie CLIP – A Call to the Ancestors (1997) HD*. Accessed October 21, 2019. <https://youtu.be/y8Jkls3xgvg>.

¹⁰⁵ Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation” in *Black Fire: an anthology of Afro-American writing*, eds. Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2007), 123.

of West Africa and the importance of an African *center*. With so many efforts to criminalize African American youth and view them as monster-beasts, a genuine African-centered education and a *mahali pa usalama* would serve as a refuge where African American children can discover their purpose. This is one of the critical components of the village-community in which the independent, African-centered shule would exist. Somé introduces the Dagara village-community and expounds how one find's purpose in Africa through the following:

The Dagara believe that everyone is born with a purpose, and that this purpose must be known in order to ensure an integrated way of living. People ignorant of their purpose are like ships adrift in a hostile sea. They are circling around. As a result, tribal practices emphasize the discovery, before birth, of the business of the soul that has come into the world. A person's purpose is then embodied in their name, thus constituting an inseparable reminder of why the person walks with us here in this world.¹⁰⁶

Somé explains that his Catholic priests took him from his village, through a deal that his father did not fully understand. The Catholic Mission was the place where Somé lived and was educated and acculturated until the age of twenty years old. After twenty years in the colonial system, Somé shares the following recovery and healing he experienced:

The region of my psyche that had been put to sleep at the schools of Western thought was suddenly restored. I was reconnected to the deep regions of my psyche and to all living things. I rediscovered my home in the natural world, which is the true home of all beings on earth. And I was reconciled to my family and to the village community into which I had been born. I was alive and in awe of what I felt. My indigenous life was allowed to resume.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Malidoma Patrice Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose Through Nature, Ritual, and Community*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, 9.

This awakening, experienced by Somé, is one of the primary functions of education through an independent, African-centered shule. Of course, such an awakening is a hybrid version of Somé's experience, especially for African Americans. Reclamation of historical memory is critical to connecting African Americans to traditional and indigenous heritage. "Reclaiming historical memory is an essential component of liberatory education and liberatory psychology".¹⁰⁸ It is critical that independent, African-centered education pioneer "providing children with the tools for deconstructing miseducation and misrepresentations of the African experience, reconstructing knowledge of African history and philosophies, and constructing a better life for the community...." Likewise, it is the goal of African-centered education to restore all that has been stolen and educate each African American student to his/her highest potential. This arduous goal is only achievable when independent, African-centered education is focused within the village-community. Somé adds:

Community is important because there is an understanding that human beings are collectively oriented. The general health and well-being of an individual are connected to a community, and are not something that can be maintained alone or in a vacuum.... The problems experienced in the West [United States], from the pain of isolation to the stress of hyperactivity, are brought on by the loss of community.¹⁰⁹

What is extremely invaluable to African people is the concept of *Elders*. In the traditional African village-community, Elders are honored and respected. More

¹⁰⁸ Randolph G. Potts, Emancipatory Education Versus School-Based Violence Prevention, in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, eds. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland, New York: Teachers College Press, 2008, 204.

¹⁰⁹ Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, 22.

importantly, they are *listened* to purposely. One of the critical responsibilities of the Elders is to listen to the Ancestors and the Creator, and therefore, such a process warrants that the village-community hold the warnings and vision of the Elders as sacred. Dr. Daniel Omotosha Black, in one of his most powerful works, *The Coming*, further illuminates the role of Elders:

And after dancing, we sat at the feet of our elders and absorbed wisdom like tilled earth absorbs rain. We were taught the values of honesty and integrity, hard work and discipline. We heard stories of lazy farmers who planted crops but failed to weed them and consequently harvested very little. We heard stories of children who lied so often that, soon, no one believed anything they said. We heard stories of pretty women who became self-absorbed and ended up alone. We heard stories of ants that, in their diligence, never let others deflect them from their mission. We were told to beware of people who boasted about themselves. We were told never, ever, to eat without first giving thanks. We were told to respect life and all life forms. Day and night, our heads were filled with insight enough to last a lifetime. Every child heard it. We had no choice. In this way, they gave us the tools of wisdom. Yet, at times, we didn't use it.¹¹⁰

Revisiting the role of Elders would be an essential component in the development and restoration of the village-community, of which an independent, African-centered shule would be a part. In this African American setting, the Elders' primary role would be to provide council, wisdom, guidance, and leadership where governance is provided through group leadership as opposed to a single leader. This issue of autonomous leadership will be addressed later in this research. The question might be asked "how would it be possible to reconstruct or reconceptualize the African village-community in America when so much of African culture was left behind when Africans were stolen from Africa and brought to America?"

¹¹⁰ Black, *The Coming*, 16.

First, it is the belief of those who value *Afrocentricity* (or *Africentricity*) that many of the customs, beliefs, behaviors, culture and practices of African people were *not* left behind in Africa and are fully capable of being restored here in America. In recognizing the transferring of traditional African culture to the new world, Molefi Kete Asante identifies a continuum that challenges academia and the world:

The recognizable modalities of black Americans constitute a continuum from Africa to the New World. In the words of Baraka there exists an “epic memory” that supports the African American thrust into America. It is a deep remembrance of habits, styles, mannerisms, and behaviors which reflects itself in language, music, and people customs.¹¹¹

It is the application of this continuum that will allow the creativity and due diligence required in such a project as an independent, African-centered shule. The white paradigm and European influence can have no bearing on anything having to do with the construction and development of the shule. This is why the word *independent* is a critical concept that must be given proper attention. Asante warns and provides specific instruction:

Nothing that is done can ever be glossed over again; it must be considered in terms of its implications for the future. Our time is now.... Walking the way of the new world means that we must establish schools which will teach our children how to behave like the kings and queens they are meant to be [emphasis added]. It is the process of creating Afrocentric schools. Indeed, many of the ‘so-called’ leaders must be re-educated, re-oriented, and restored to their center.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 65.

¹¹² Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 39, 47.

With regard to reconstruction and reconceptualization of the African village-community (see Figure 1), *Sankofa Theory* must be applied. Specifically, in relation to *maafa* the following can be inferred:

The multifaceted, historical system of domination experienced by African people is described by some African scholars as the *maafa*, a Kiswahili word that means ‘disaster’. A central feature of African-centered models of education is countering the *maafa* through reconnecting students with African and African American history, traditions, values, and principles. The Akan symbol *Sankofa* represents the African teaching that knowing one’s history is essential for understanding present circumstances and successfully moving forward into the future. For children of African descent, understanding both the African cultural legacy of intellectual achievement and the contemporary structures of domination are essential in preparing them to confront conditions that are destroying their communities.¹¹³

Although the concept of *Sankofa* is mentioned in a great number of works of research of African culture, the concept is rarely identified as a theory worthy of validation and testing. It is the implementation of an independent, African-centered shule that can provide evidence of the power and effectiveness of *Sankofa Theory*. This present research again relies on the work of Daniel Omotosha Black, as *Sankofa* is explained through the voice of *Amma*. In the process of her defiance and before being sold to the lustful white slave holder:

The strangest symbol she carved into the wooden wall was called *Sankofa*. It resembled a bird whose head was bent backward toward its tail feathers. We frowned, but Amma said her people took its meaning quite seriously. It was about the power of the past. It stood to remind the Akan that they could always correct their mistakes. It was about the beauty and power of wisdom. How the past functions to help create a glorious, more excellent future. How experiences build insight and help construct sharp perception. In essence, Amma said it meant ‘go back and get it’. It reminded her people that often, we miss things in life that we later need. Humility insists that we simply return and fetch it.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Potts, *Emancipatory Education Versus School-Based Violence Prevention*, in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, 204.

Asante concurs with Amma and states: “only now armed with the past, can we look to the future.”¹¹⁵ DeGruy’s interpretation concludes “We must return and claim our past in order to move toward our future. It is in understanding who we were that will free us to embrace who we now are.”¹¹⁶ In the process of applying *Sankofa Theory* to the village-community concept, Asante’s continuum approach is actually a bridge from this New World (African Americans) back to the Old World (Traditional Africa). It is important to note that such a continuum is a spiritual journey that refuses the constraints of time and allows travel back to spaces where European colonizers have not yet infiltrated. Combined with actual research and historical narratives, reconstructing a village-community in one world can be a duplicate (although not perfect) of the village-community that formerly existed in another world—Africa.

As Africans arrived in the New World, disembarked from the slave ships, the African-soon-to-be-slaves, noticed something strange.

...unlike at home, we heard no children. In our villages, on any given day, children’s shouts and cries filled the air. There was no end to their merriment. Whether playing games or questioning elders, they stood as the announcement of our abundance. They were never silent. Even at night, they screamed as boys chased girls and girls feigned disinterest. There were far more children than adults in our village. In every village. Each age set consisted of thirty or forty children who belonged to everyone. They roamed the earth as if it were their inheritance. Indeed, it was. Elders taught that land, animals, trees, rivers, everything in nature was theirs. Not to own, but to coexist with. In the stall, we heard no children. We knew they existed—we recalled the pale boy on the ship—but we didn’t understand their calm. Didn’t they play games and dance beneath the sun? Didn’t they run about, meandering between trees? Where were they?¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Black, *The Coming*, 203.

¹¹⁵ Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 9.

¹¹⁶ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 3.

Attempts at reinvention of the African village-community have sustained African Americans in the recent past. Post-slavery and Jim Crow, even with the threat of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and lynching behind them, African Americans held tight to the concept of the village-community. Back in the 1970s, church was a Sunday morning mandatory activity. Most African Americans spent hours, upon hours in church on Sundays. Many attended Bible study, choir rehearsal and a number of other activities on weeknights. Church life was inseparable from the village-community. The role of elders was not as significant as in African tradition, although older people were shown far more respect than in today's society. From the gatekeepers to family and extended family, there was a network of safety that was less formal but impenetrable.

Lee Street

If *Little Lisa* had missed a homework assignment, the schoolteacher communicated that fact to her parents (most families had two parents back then). By the time Little Lisa got home from school, her parents were anxiously waiting. If Little Lisa was seen on Lee Street during school hours, *Ms. Robinson* (a neighbor and close friend of Lisa's family) would stop her and inquire as to why she was not in school. If the explanation made no sense, Ms. Robinson would call *Big Lloyd* who was on the corner doing what the *Lee Street Gang* did – protect the neighborhood. Big Lloyd, while chastising Little Lisa for being out of school, would walk her to school post-haste. Little Lisa had no fear of Big Lloyd. She related to him as if he was a big brother. She had no idea that he was dangerous, and she felt no threat from him or the *Lee Street Gang*.

On the way, Big Lloyd and Little Lisa ran into *Reverend Jones* who double-checked with Big Lloyd to verify why the girl was not in school. After ensuring the Reverend that he would get Little Lisa to school safely, the two crossed paths with Little Lisa's grandma, *Mrs. Williams*, coming out of the A P grocery store. Of course, Grandma questioned Little Lisa concerning her whereabouts, but Big Lloyd covered for Little Lisa and comforted Grandma with assurance that he would get Little Lisa to school safely. By the time Little Lisa got home from school that day, not only had the school principal contacted her parents about her

¹¹⁷ Black, *The Coming*, 150.

near absence, but Reverend Jones and Mrs. Robinson had verified the principal's story. The only reason Big Lloyd hadn't said anything to Little Lisa's parents was because he considered reporting Little Lisa to her parents an act of snitching. In the village-community, you don't snitch – no matter what – you never snitch.

In identifying the roles of the village-community players, neighbors (*Mrs. Robinson*), schoolteachers, gatekeepers (*Big Lloyd*), spiritual leaders (*Reverend Jones*), and Elders (*Grandma Williams*), all formed a village-community network of protection around *Little Lisa*. Back in the '70s, this was a very effective form of safe-haven for black youth. However, this begs the question: *What happens to the village-community when any of those village-community players are removed from the village-community?*

Gabbidon's research revealed that as African American communities struggled with "significant concentrations of poverty", the "working-class and middle-class African-Americans abandon these areas".¹¹⁸ In this abandonment process, "this removes important 'social buffers' (role models) who show neighborhood kids that there are successful people who go to work day in and day out".¹¹⁹ This means that Lee Street (in the above scenario) loses Mrs. Robinson, Grandma Williams, and possibly, even Reverend Jones and his entire church. What happens to Big Lloyd in this case? According to Gabbidon's research, experts argue that "in some communities, the removal of offenders actually exacerbates the level of social disorganization."¹²⁰ In the event that Big Lloyd is not only removed from Lee Street, but he is incarcerated, the social disorganization increases. "Every entrant into prison is someone exiting a neighborhood;

¹¹⁸ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives on Race and Crime*, 56.

¹¹⁹ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives on Race and Crime*, 56.

¹²⁰ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives on Race and Crime*, 60.

every release from prison returns someone to a neighborhood... incarceration affects the heterogeneity of communities.”¹²¹ So, what happened to Little Lisa?

Little Lisa never saw Big Lloyd again. The family moved out of the village-community to the suburbs. Little Lisa, now an adult wasn't convinced that the move to the suburbs was a good thing. She had such fond memories of the village-community. She promises herself every day that she will return to Lee Street and buy up all of the property where her friends lived. She found out where Reverend Jones's church moved and still attends every Sunday.

Lee Street (a real-life community with a fictional name) was never the same.

There is additional research that suggests that as employed *O.G.s* (original gangsters or older, seasoned males, in-gang or non-gang) return to the village-communities, social disorganization subsides. Also, village-communities are strengthened.

What occurs in the return of the *O.G.s*. is the depositing back into the village-community those who now assume the role of Elders. The Elders are critical to the village-community now and have always been. Within society in the United States, recognition of the Ancestors or the Ancestral realm is often perceived as taboo and is frowned upon in most Christian circles. This is why religion cannot be a factor in the hybrid form of village-community. History has proven that organized religion is one of the most dangerous tools of division ever used to annihilate a people. In America, the role of Elders has diminished. As the village-community in America is no longer the most powerful system, as depicted in the Lee Street scenario, it's significant to note the importance of Elders to the village-community.

To be young or old in the modern world is to be at risk. People who wish to embrace their elderhood must first listen to the pain around them. They must notice in the young and the adult the parts that are craving visibility. We must learn how to sit quietly with our youth and to listen quietly to what they have to

¹²¹ Gabbidon, *Criminological Perspectives on Race and Crime*, 60.

say. This is the job of elders. This calm, almost meditative approach to youth can also be a model for self-calming to other people who are too troubled to be quiet. Calmness is the beginning of the ability to hold the space, the beginning of an elder's contribution to the community.¹²²

The various components and roles of the hybrid village-community in the United States must be restored as part of the development of an independent, African-centered shule. The shule must be an integral functioning organism within the village-community as much as the village-community is to the independent, African-centered shule. The village-community and the shule must be one in the same. Rickford examines such a relationship in *We Are An African People*:

... a revolution *by* education required a revolution *in* education. Schools would have to be dramatically reimagined if they were to be engines of the new society rather than bulwarks of the status quo. They would need to become 'liberated zones' that could function as self-contained communities and embryos of the coming nation.¹²³

Education in America for African Americans was never intended to educate for liberation or freedom. All forms of education toward subjugation have the intention to *miseducate* and were never intended to unveil the genius of the black, African-conscious student. Kwame Ture concurs and expresses the need to form black institutions.

"Traditionally, for each new ethnic group, the route to social and political integration into America's pluralistic society, has been through the organization of their own institutions with which to represent their communal needs within the larger society."¹²⁴ Ture further

¹²² Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, 138.

¹²³ Russell Rickford, *We Are An African People*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 12.

¹²⁴ Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 122.

elucidates the cause and intentions behind education towards *miseducation* in the United States:

The history of every institution of this society indicates that a major concern in the ordering and structuring of the society has been the maintaining of the Negro community in its condition of dependence and oppression. . . . This fact cannot be too strongly emphasized—that racist assumptions of white superiority have been so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society that it infuses its entire functioning, and is so much a part of the national subconscious that it is taken for granted and is frequently not even recognized.¹²⁵

What is critical to the creation of an independent, African-centered shule is an African-centered learning system featuring curricula that dispels myths and lies and compels brilliance. Most importantly, evidence, fact, and truth-based education would be mandatory. Where the Eurocentric learning systems have miseducated and conditioned African American youth for subservience and docile, oppressed behaviors and thought processes, the independent, African-centered shule must *deeducate* and fuel the minds of the young African American genius. Specifically, African-centered shule must implant hope, excellence, extraordinary forward-thinking, and magnificence beyond anything imagined.

Correcting the flaws and fallacies in colonized, European or western-centered education can only be accomplished through evidence, fact and truth-based, African-centered education. Education is the emetic for *miseducation*. This is the remedy. This is the medication. This is the antidote.

¹²⁵ Stokely Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 123.

African Values – Hybridism

This study relies on seminal research to enlighten the discussion on how genuine African values can be revisited for the purpose of enhancing truth-based learning in independent, African-centered shule. It is significant to note what the literature informs as to which genuine African values must be designed in a hybrid model integrating forms of African-centered education of the past with a new, fresh African-centered education for today's African American student. To begin, the research of Haki and Safisha Madhubuti, provide additional evidence of the dire need for African-centered education with:

African American people need an African-centered pedagogy because racism and worldwide Eurocentric hegemonic attitudes and practices are still the order of the day. The existing pedagogy in public education remains European-centered. Despite the upward mobility of many middle and upper-middle class African Americans, the majority of African Americans remain in poverty and do not achieve educational parity in American schools.¹²⁶

Another remarkable ancestor, John Henrik Clarke, concurs with the Madhubuti's and willfully imposes African-centered logic to further assist in understanding how essential independent African-centered shule are:

In all English-speaking countries the mind of the intelligent Negro child revolts against the descriptions of the Negro given in elementary books, geographies, travels, histories.... Having embraced or at least assented to these falsehoods about himself, he concludes that his only hope of rising in the scale of respectable manhood is to strive for what is most unlike himself and most alien to his peculiar tastes. And whatever his literary attainments or acquired ability, he fancies that he must grind at the mill which is provided for him, putting in material furnished to his hands, bringing no contribution from his own field; and of course nothing comes out but what is put in.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Haki R. Madhubuti and Safisha Madhubuti, Ph.D., *African-centered Education: Its Value, Importance and Necessity in the Development of Black Children*, Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1994, 14.

In addition to the overt and covert racism in United States' schools, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports increases in suicide rates for young black people as a result of racist in-school bullying (in-school factor). Although there are systems in place in United States' schools that seek to prevent bullying, suicide (out-of-school factor) is a much deeper issue that can only be addressed by teaching African American students their history. Asa Hilliard's profound research reminds of the following:

Study is a requirement for our redemption. Yet, every discipline that we study must locate itself firmly within the African tradition. This defines us as a people. While we must be aware of other traditions in order to appreciate the whole human story, we must be aware of how those traditions intersect with African traditions. It makes no sense for an African to begin an intellectual quest from someone else's standpoint.¹²⁸

Exposing African American students to the truth that reveals an extremely misconstrued identification of Africans, not only in America, but also in Africa and throughout the world is of utmost importance in any African-centered format. Asante makes this argument:

... in education, *centricity* refers to a perspective that involves locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives. Centricity is a concept that can be applied to any culture. The centrist paradigm is supported by research showing that the most productive method of teaching any student is to place his or her group within the center of the context of knowledge. For white students in America this is easy because almost all the experiences discussed in American classrooms are approached from the standpoint of white perspectives and history. American education, however, is not centric; it is *Eurocentric*.... Afrocentricity is

¹²⁷ John Henrik Clarke, "Reclaiming the Lost African Heritage", in *Black Fire: an anthology of Afro-American writing*, eds. Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2007), 13.

¹²⁸ Asa G. Hilliard, III., *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, (Gainesville, FL: Makare Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person. In education this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African world view.¹²⁹

The evidence, fact and truth-based education that would be mandatory in an independent, African-centered shule would seek to *deeducate* students in critical aspects of African history (*Afristory*). Based on accurate accounts of *Afristory*, the memory discussed in previous sections would connect to the stored truth in the consciousness of the truth-seeking student. A new identity would be forged with a certain level of invulnerability allowing African American students to grow from perceived *super predators* to extraordinary scholars. Those in opposition to such a transition and healing may be unaware of the damage done through erroneous historical accounts:

Our temporary loss of memory causes us to forget that African people were brought here in chains but were very richly endowed. African captives were not ignorant, ‘savages,’ or ‘pagan’. Some knew the Koran from memory and could write in Arabic. Some could read and write in indigenous West African scripts. All were highly educated and profoundly spiritual, sharing in a complex culture which had granted survival for thousands of years. Some Africans even made Atlantic Ocean crossings and were in America before the time of Columbus. Others made the journey before the time of Christ, leaving portraits carved in stone in Mexico and writings in other places.¹³⁰

Throughout history the leadership of African people has begged for a serving of education from the colonizers. This is evidenced by point four of the eight points addressed by Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at the Paris Peace Conference: “4. That Negroes be permitted the same educational facilities

¹²⁹ Asante, “The Afrocentric Idea”, 171.

¹³⁰ Hilliard, III, *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, 43.

now given to Europeans.”¹³¹ This integrationist-assimilationist approach is insufficient and unacceptable on its face, although it is a step in the right direction. What is needed is an overhaul of the entire education system. James Boggs adds to the fervor and explicates why integration, assimilation and African-centered education in combination can never work.

Yet American radicals have sought to propagate the concept of ‘Black and white, unite and fight’ as if black and white had common issues and grievances, systematically evading the fact that every immigrant who walked off the gangplank into this country, did so on the backs of the indigenous blacks, and had the opportunity to advance precisely because the indigenous blacks were being systematically deprived of the opportunity to advance by both capitalists and workers.¹³²

The new hybrid system should completely remove all aspects of Eurocentricity replacing lies with truth. James Boggs’ work in “*Black Fire*” clearly articulates the unique characteristics that an independent, African-centered shule must embrace and those characteristics that constrain many of the African American organizations of the past and present stating:

‘The City is a Black Man’s Land’ (*Monthly Review*, April 1966) laid the basis for the development of the type of organization which would be in tune with the struggle for Black Power. Such an organization must be distinguished clearly, and not only from the traditional civil rights organizations which have been organized and financed by whites to integrate blacks into, and thereby save, the system. It must also be distinguished from the *ad hoc* organizations which have sprung up in the course of the struggle, arousing the masses emotionally around a particular issue and relying primarily on the enthusiasm and good will of their members and supporters for their continuing activity. By contrast, an organization for Black

¹³¹ Randolph Persaud, “Re-envisioning Sovereignty: Marcus Garvey and the Making of a Transnational Identity.” In Dunn, K. Shaw, T. (eds.) *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory* (New York, NY: Palgrave Publishers, 2001), 122.

¹³² James Boggs, “Black Power—A Scientific Concept Whose Time Has Come” in *Black Fire: an anthology of Afro-American writing*, eds. Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2007), 116.

Power must be a cadre-type organization whose members have a clear understanding, allegiance and dedication to the organization's perspectives and objectives, and who have no illusions about the necessities of a struggle for power.¹³³

As it relates to the development of a hybrid African-centered shule, Rodney asserts that African-centered curricula must be developed through an international relations lens but with effective appropriation of an African-centered approach.

Neither rhetoric nor coercion will serve us now. We must decide whether we shall remain crippled and underdeveloped or move to participate in our own healing by taking on the challenge to re-develop ourselves, our people, our endangered nation and the earth. But there is a world waiting for us; indeed, many worlds await us. One is the world of our children, not yet born, or just beginning, but wanting to live, to grow, to become their best possible selves. This will not happen unless... the center is transformed and fundamentally changed. That will not happen unless we are transformed, re-developed and renewed. The future of our children depends upon these rigorous transformations.¹³⁴

The revolutionary is reminded that in view of this present education system "if the white man wants to hold on to it, let him do so; but the Negro [the African] so far as he is able, should develop and carry out a program of his own".¹³⁵ Breaking free from the tentacles of colonialism and existing Eurocentric education norms is a daunting task but an urgent one. In speaking about revolution, Clarke warns and challenges:

...we're not handling it scientifically. We're not taking care of our productions, but it's there. In the 21st century there will be a billion African people in the world. We haven't planned well how to take care of them-- how to feed them. We haven't planned the sea captains that will take the ships across the sea to deliver the goods we're going to have to have. We haven't planned the airports to land the airplanes we're going to have to have. We haven't realized that there's a whole continent called Africa that belongs solely to us. We haven't recognized the fact that we're the only ethnic group on the face of the earth with an entire

¹³³ Boggs, in *Black Fire*, 116.

¹³⁴ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, xxvi.

¹³⁵ Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, xii.

continent all to ourselves. All ethnic groups on the face of the earth must share a continent with somebody else. We own Africa, lock, stock and barrel. Every grain of sand, every leaf of grass. And that everybody there who cannot be called an African is either an invader or a descendent of an invader. And that the destabilization of Africa is not accidental. Look what's at the front door and look what's at the back door!¹³⁶

The hope of Africa lies within African Americans and Africans worldwide. Why would one expect the colonizer to come to Africa and develop Africa for the African's benefit? You would not expect a neighbor to come knocking on your door begging to clean your house for you. That neighbor has his own house to clean. That neighbor has his own filth and dirt that requires he manage his own affairs. Clarke so appropriately asserts "People don't beg other people to restore their history; they do it themselves".¹³⁷

Catherine Odora-Hoppers, in an interview in the Global Engagement Series, concludes:

Long ago, we fought or we were defeated or something like that. And those who got subjugated lost everything. They lost their language, they lost their beliefs, they lost their everything. When you were defeated, you lost everything.... Now, how about knowledge then. Is knowledge supposed to be only from the conqueror? Really? Or should we expand the base of knowledge to include the knowledges of the defeated also?¹³⁸

Education centers must be established globally with curricula that not only encourage critical thinking but creative thinking – not individuality for the sake of individualism but teaching community for the sake of the environment and for the benefit of the world. Why must one have loss for the other to win? African concepts such as

¹³⁶ Clarke, *Notes for an African World Revolution*, 251.

¹³⁷ Clarke, *Notes for an African World Revolution*, 19.

¹³⁸ Catherine Odora Hoppers Interview, *Global Engagement, Human Rights, and Cognitive Justice*. Global Engagement Speaker Series. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLD7zZhmknRbUXKYYW6hT3dGiQ8FhKDAgQf v=axiRFI8ihaE>.

Ubuntu will help the world understand the need to discard unhealthy competition. *Ubuntu* and other African concepts will provide the guidance that reveals how we all can find ways to win. *Ubuntu* and so many other components of African culture will influence curricula void of narcissism and the evils of capitalism. In conjunction with *Sankofa Theory*, it is critical that the history and evolution of independent, African-centered education be examined.

In formulating pedagogy and curricula for the extremely unique independent, African-centered shule described in this study, it is critical that a team of scholars be sought after to assume this responsibility. This daunting and major component of legacy and institution building cannot be taken lightly. Carruthers provides guidelines for the development of an African-centered curriculum:

(1) Africa should be studied through primary data (e.g., its literature, its documents, and its oral tradition), (2) Africa should be presented as a continuous component of world history with cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions, (3) Africa should be presented with balance (e.g., antiquity and contemporary; agricultural, pastoral, and urban; oral and literate; and problems and successes), (4) Africa should be studied from a comparative, multicultural framework (e.g., in comparison to Europe, Asia, etc.), (5) ancient Africa must be presented in terms of race specificity (e.g., the current sociopolitical constructions of race dictate that the Ancient Egyptians were Black people), (6) Africa must be studied with respect to all disciplines (e.g., science and mathematics as well as language and art), and (7) Africa must be presented in truth (e.g., Africa must be presented as it is and was without falsification).¹³⁹

As the need arises for highly skilled STEM students to occupy high-paying jobs, not only should the implementation of African-centered education be considered a benefit to the United States but the international community as well. The *New York Times*

¹³⁹ Jacob H. Carruthers, *The African-Centered Curriculum and the White Supremacy Control of African-American Education*. Lecture/speech given at the Fulton School in Philadelphia, 1990, 7-8.

recently reported that Disney, “would donate \$1 million of the proceeds from ‘Black Panther’ to STEM programs at the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, in a nod to one of the movie’s key themes: how technology can empower young people from marginalized communities”.¹⁴⁰ The entire world has awakened and recognizes the need for STEM academics in learning systems globally. In addition, the wealth of colleges and universities in Atlanta are fervently seeking students to join their ranks. More importantly, there are diseases needing cures, inventions needing genius, and poverty-stricken communities needing economic growth. All of these ills and many more can be eliminated or minimized through the effective education of African American students.

Research Questions

The literature review examined several theories, past and current research, and compelling concepts responding to the broad and more comprehensive research question: “Can an independent African-centered shule be successful in the Atlanta metropolitan area and is there a need for such a shule?” The overarching research question influenced the direction of this study and the following research questions were also explored:

- Based on models of the past freedom and liberation schools of the ‘60s – ‘70s, can a hybrid form of independent, African-centered shule as safe havens be created and implemented for long-term success?
- What must be done to guarantee such long-term success?
- What are the issues and problems that explicate the urgency for the development and implementation of an independent, African-centered shule in the Atlanta metropolitan community?

¹⁴⁰ Jonah Engel Bromwich, “Disney to Donate \$1 Million of ‘Black Panther’ Proceeds to Youth STEM Programs”, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/movies/disney-black-panther-stem.html>.

Conclusion

*Societies that do not master science and technology will either be slaves, surviving at the mercy and sufferance of others, or will perish altogether.*¹⁴¹

This chapter examined the potential effectiveness of an independent, African-centered shule in Atlanta with a focus on two dimensions of study: Afrocentrism and education. The research provided definitions and critically examined previous literature on the concepts establishing the relationship between Afrocentrism, education and the focus of this study: African-centered education. This chapter explored existing literature related to the subtopics: (1) schools as safe havens (*mahali pa usalama*); and (2) *miseducation*. The research introduced categories such as: in-school factors and out-of-school factors. These categories assisted in elucidating the multiplicity and severity of the problems facing the African American community and African American student.

Gaps in the research related to *hybridism* in African-centered education and the appropriate identification, articulation, and implementation of genuine African values were explored. The research questions were presented in the above section. As presented in this chapter, the literature provides evidence that schools as safe havens (Mahali pa Usalama), offer promise that the multiple and horrific threats to African American youth will be permanently removed and the African American community will begin to thrive again. Disparities in incarceration rates and school-to-prison pipelines will cease to exist.

Finally, the work of Katherine Johnson (recent characterized in the book and movie *Hidden Figures*) was briefly examined. Not mentioned was where she received her

¹⁴¹ Yoweri K. Museveni in *Pan-Africanism: Politics, Economy and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. By Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1996, 193.

education. During the extremely perilous times of racism and discrimination, how did a young black woman receive such a level of superior education compelling her to achieve such extraordinary achievements? Who taught Katherine Johnson? Danita Smith examines the intricate web of scholars who aided in Katherine Johnson's success stating the following:

...at West Virginia State College, she [Katherine Johnson] met Dr. William Waldron Schieffelin Claytor, who was the third African-American in the United States to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics. Dr. Claytor had studied at Howard University, where he earned two degrees and where he, remarkably, was taught by the first and second African-Americans in the United States to earn Ph.D's in mathematics: Dr. Elbert Cox, Ph.D., Cornell, 1924 (faculty member at Howard University); and Dr. Dudley Woodward, Sr., Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1928 (Dean and faculty member at Howard). After studying at Howard University, Claytor received a recommendation, from Dr. Dudley Woodward, Sr., for the Ph.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania. William W.S. Claytor began studying at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1930-1931 academic year and he won one of its most prestigious awards, the Harrison Fellowship in Mathematics, by the time he finished.... Dr. Claytor then went on to teach at historically black, West Virginia State College, where he met the young Katherine Johnson, who was by this time a student there.¹⁴²

What is most significant about Katherine Johnson, William W. S. Claytor, and Dr. Dudley Woodward, Sr. is that these brilliant black scholars achieved such phenomenal success despite unbelievable efforts to prevent any form of achievement. The blatant racism that Katherine Johnson was forced to endure as a black woman could have thwarted the progress of the ordinary student; however, Katherine Johnson thrived. It is on her shoulders that the students who will attend the independent, African-centered shule will stand.

¹⁴² Danita Smith, *Katherine Johnson and William W. S. Claytor: An HBCU Connection*, <https://searchblackandeducation.com/stories/katherine-johnson>.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out that's not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. Malcolm X

Introduction

More than simply interpret the background of this research, this chapter will explore the history of African-centered education. In the elucidation of that history, the foundational benefit of independent, African-centered education will be revealed. Such an exploration will provide a historical context from which the benefits of African-centered education can be addressed. To approach the subject matter effectively, there is a need to begin this discussion by briefly examining education within ancient Africa. An investigation of pre-colonial, indigenous African education and education of African Americans – pre- and post-emancipation will follow.

Education in Ancient Africa

In order to establish a basis for understanding civilization and education in ancient Africa, it is critical to establish that there were extremely civilized Africans thriving in ancient Africa. With regard to ancient Africa and its origins of all civilization, it is in John Henrik Clarke's *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust* that the great Ghanaian scholar, *Dr. Joseph B. Danquah*, is quoted:

By the time Alexander the Great was sweeping the civilized world with conquest after conquest from Chaeronia to Gaza from Babylon to Cabul; by the time this first of the Aryan conquerors was learning the rudiments of war and government at the feet of philosophic Aristotle; and by the time Athens was laying down the foundations of modern European civilization, the earliest and greatest Ethiopian culture had already flourished and dominated the civilized world for over four centuries and a half. Imperial Ethiopia had conquered Egypt and founded the XXVth Dynasty, and for a century and a half the central seat of civilization in the known world was held by the ancestors of the modern Negro, maintaining and defending it against the Assyrian and Persian Empires of the East. Thus, at the time when Ethiopia was leading the civilized world in culture and conquest, East was East, but West was not, and the first European (Graecian) Olympiad was as yet to be held. Rome was nowhere to be seen on the map, and sixteen centuries were to pass before Charlemagne would rule in Europe and Egbert become first King of England. Even then history was to drag on for another seven hundred weary years, before Roman Catholic Europe could see fit to end the Great Schism soon to be followed by the disturbing news of the discovery of America and by the fateful rebirth of the youngest of World Civilizations.¹

As it is necessary to journey back to the beginnings of man, Dr. Clarke refers to Africa's Golden Ages and argues their origins occurred "with the birth of man and the development of organized societies."² Clarke contends Africa had three Golden Ages with the first two reaching "their climax and were in decline before Europe as a functioning entity in human society was born."³ For those who may not perceive the arguments of African Americans as effective, adequate, or, even appropriate for fear of some form of black bias, Dr. Clarke offers space in his writings to quote one of African descent although *white*, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, who suggests:

The critics of Africa forget that men of science today, with few exceptions, are satisfied that Africa was the birthplace of man himself, and that for many

¹ John Henrik Clarke, *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust: Slavery and the Rise of European Capitalism*. (Buffalo, New York: Eworld Inc., 1993), 43-44.

² Clarke, *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust*, 38.

³ Clarke, *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust*, 38.

hundreds of centuries thereafter, Africa was in the forefront of all human progress.⁴

Building on the validity of research, which proves that Africa is the birthplace of all civilization, Cheik Anta Diop valiantly corrects the erroneous European version of world history and establishes evidence of a Black, African Egypt:

The distribution of Blacks on the African continent probably went through two principal phases. It is generally agreed that by 7000 B.C., the Sahara had dried up. Equatorial Africa was probably still a forest zone too dense to attract men. Consequently, the last Blacks who had lived in the Sahara now presumably left it to migrate toward the Upper Nile, with the possible exception of a few small isolated groups on the rest of the continent, who either had migrated toward the south or had headed north. Perhaps the first group found an indigenous Black population in the region of the Upper Nile. Whatever the case, it was from the gradual adaptation to the new living conditions which nature assigned to these various Black populations that the oldest phenomenon of civilization, came about. This civilization, called Egyptian in our period, developed for a long time in its early cradle; then it slowly descended the Nile Valley to spread out around the Mediterranean basin. This cycle of civilization, the longest in history, presumably lasted 10,000 years. This is a reasonable compromise between the long chronology (based on data provided by Egyptian priests, Herodotus and Manetho (Manetho of Sebennytos, an Egyptian priest (third century B.C.), who wrote a chronicle on Egypt in Greek) place the beginning at 17,000 B.C.) and the short chronology of the moderns—for the latter are obliged to admit that by 4245 B.C. the Egyptians had already invented the calendar (which necessarily requires the passage of thousands of years).⁵

Apparently, proof of existence is insufficient in the rebuilding of a people. When a people have been programmed to accept all things Eurocentric as the most superb truth about all that exists, it has also proven to be nearly futile to oppose these myths; however, independent, African-centered education must champion that cause. Now that black African Egypt has been established as being civilized. There must be certifiable proof

⁴ Clarke, *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan Holocaust*, 38.

⁵ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization Myth or Reality*. ed. Mercer Cook. (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 22.

that documents how European myths evolved completely destroying the truth of African legacy. There is more research required to substantially uncover the truth as to how history was so awkwardly changed. One work that is recommended for all African-centered education is Chancellor Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, where he shares his own personal misgivings:

I knew even before leaving high school that (1) *The Land of the Blacks* was not only the “cradle of civilization” itself but that the Blacks were once the leading people on earth; (2) that Egypt once was not only all-black, but the very name “Egypt” was derived from the Blacks; (3) and that the Blacks were the pioneers in the sciences, medicine, architecture, writing, and were the first builders in stone, etc.⁶

Not only does Chancellor Williams exhaustively engage history exposing a vast amount of hidden truths about black Africa, he honorably and correctly establishes black Africans as the originators of writing. What is most remarkable is found in his section entitled “*The Black Revival of Learning*,” which prophetically directs scholars to the desperate need for restoration of independent African-centered learning:

The University [Sankore in Timbuktu] consisted of a (1) Faculty of Law, (2) Medicine and surgery, (3) Letters, (4) Grammar, (5) Geography, and (6) Art. (Here “Art” had to do with such practical training as manufacturing, building and other allied crafts. After the basic training the expertise required was through the traditional apprenticeship system in the various craft guilds.)

There were thousands of students from all parts of West Africa and other regions. We have no record of the exact number. The accounts also mention the large number of scientists, doctors, lawyers and other scholars at the University without giving the exact number – perhaps not considered necessary in the 14th and 15th centuries.

And there is something else that simply had to exist underneath this university system for which there is no record, account, or even a passing reference. This was the West African elementary and secondary school system without which

⁶ Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race From 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1987), 18.

there could not have been a University of Sankore with such high standards for admission.⁷

In Anthony Browder's *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, the author's ongoing detailed research of Kemet explains his admitting: "... despite these technological advances, modern man cannot recreate the technology that built the Great Pyramid, mummified the kings of Kemet, or built the Temple of Ipet Isut (Karnak)".⁸ Browder, who continues his research of Kemet today, visiting Africa at every opportunity, describes what happened to Kemet and Egypt:

When the nations of Greece and Rome fell, they were still able to control their land, history, language and culture. Conversely, when Kemet fell, she was renamed "Egypt" and her history, culture, language and religion were violated in a manner unlike any nation before or since. Throughout the past 1,600 years, Egypt has been raped by wave after wave of foreign invaders, who have robbed her temples, desecrated her tombs and destroyed innumerable artifacts, all in the name of history, science and distorted perceptions of God.⁹

There is a great temptation to dwell in the legacy of brilliance and magnificence of ancient Africa. Examples of such legacy are: the University of Sankore, world renowned intellectual learning centers such as Timbuktu, Jenne, and Gao, and the "father of medicine" Imhotep. However, that evidence should be one of the primary goals for the rebirth of independent, African-centered learning centers and education systems. The reacquisition of these legacies of ancient Africa and black people for the purpose of rebuilding African people and restoring correct and accurate African consciousness is paramount. Tracing the stolen legacies and demonstrating how education survived and

⁷ Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, 205-206.

⁸ Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding The Myths Volume 1*. Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992, 71.

⁹ Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, 173.

transformed in spite of colonialism is essential in understanding the history of African-centered education.

Traditional Indigenous Education in Africa

Surviving the atrocities of colonialism and stolen legacies, how is it possible that anything African remains? As a part of this research, a Ghanaian living in America was interviewed. He was asked if he attended an African school or a colonialized school in Africa. His response was, like most Africans, he attended a colonialized school in Africa. He was then asked if he was aware of any independent, African-centered schools in Ghana. His response was, as expected, “no”. He added that unless African Americans had come from the U.S. and opened such an independent, African-centered school in Ghana, there were none. Surely traditional indigenous education has previously existed post-ancient Africa and, hopefully, remains in existence to this day. It is the responsibility of further research to uncover current indigenous, African-centered education.

It is significant to rely upon Africans born in Africa (indigenous) to share what is true about Africa and African-centered education. One must first shed any form of European or Eurocentric influence in order to understand or have African-consciousness awakened. It is only by attempting to gain insight into African culture and consciousness that learning about indigenous and traditional pre-colonial African education can be internalized. In preparation for understanding Catherine A. Odora Hoppers’ challenges regarding what she refers to as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), two terms must be identified and defined: *ubuntu* and *indigenous*.

Ubuntu (from the Bantu linguistic group) is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community... each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with

others, and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed. A person depends on other persons to be a person.¹⁰

In abandoning Eurocentric western ideology and behaviors to adorn oneself in Ubuntu requires understanding five components:

1. Self-identity is not optimally formed through competition.
2. Community is elusive and requires skill to see it.
3. Ubuntu expands our horizons.
4. Ubuntu deepens our spirituality.
5. The development of a “communal self” requires practice.

Ubuntu must be incorporated not only in the society of the future but also in the process of the struggle toward that future.¹¹

Unfortunately, it is possible that through Ubuntu alone, history and its oppression of Africans will repeat itself. To aid in proper placement of Ubuntu as a cultural learning tool, in her work entitled *Indigenous Knowledge, the African Renaissance, and the Integration of Knowledge Systems*, Hoppers defines indigenous:

Indigenous refers to the root, that is, of something natural or innate. It is an integral part of culture. The term “indigenous knowledge systems” then, is the combination of knowledge systems encompassing technology, social, economic, philosophic, educational, legal, and governance systems. It is knowledge relating to the technological, social, institutional, scientific, and development including those used in the liberation struggles.¹²

It is through the research of Hoppers and others that a keyword becomes “adaptation” in the application of understanding best how to restore and grow independent, African-centered education in learning facilities. Apparently, indigenous African-centered education was, out of necessity, genuinely *independent*. Students

¹⁰ Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*. (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2009), 1-2.

¹¹ Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 4-6.

¹² Catherine Odora Hoppers, “Indigenous knowledge, the African renaissance, and the integration of knowledge systems”, *Globalizing Africa*, 2003, 411.

focused learning on survival and preservation of their communities. Therefore, it's likely that if independent, African-centered education articulated how ancient and current learning systems can be used to equip and empower Africans, independent African-centered shule would be highly beneficial.

From her perspective, as a Black African professor and research chair at the University of South Africa, Hoppers argues:

Embarking on the retrieval, promotion, and protection of indigenous knowledges goes beyond the surface issue of artefacts sold to tourists. It is about excavating technologies such as looms, textile, jewelry, and brass-work manufacture; exploring indigenous technological knowledge in agriculture, fishing, forest resource exploitation, atmospheric management techniques, knowledge transmission systems, architecture, medicine, and pharmacology. It is also about recasting the potentialities they represent in a context of democratic participation for community, national, and global development in real time.¹³

Concurring with Hoppers, another indigenous African, Okoro Kingsley contends:

... traditional African society was susceptible to violent conflict. However it has an inbuilt mechanism to controlling it. This instrument was education [emphasis added]. Notably, African education aimed at developing the total man and making him or her a responsible member of the community. The curricular includes physical, mental, spiritual and moral development of the citizens. The thrust of the moral education was solidarity. This concept is defined in many African societies by different terms. Some of these terms are Ibuanyi danda, ubuntu, Ujamaa, our survey of most African society reveals the fact that socio-political philosophy of traditional African society hinge on the concept of 'social solidarity and belongingness', and such as ingrained in every citizen from cradle. Regrettably, this social philosophy has been neglected in the modern Africa. Therefore, this paper submits that if peace must return to Africa, she must re-introduce or incorporate her moral values into her educational system, with certain modifications to meet the contemporary demands.¹⁴

¹³ Odora Hoppers, *Indigenous knowledge*, 411.

¹⁴ N. Okoro Kingsley, "African traditional education: A viable alternative for peace building process in modern Africa, *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2 (1), 2010, 136.

John Henrik Clarke and many Afrocentric scholars have historically questioned why the colonizer would dare teach the colonized how to gain sustained freedom and growth from impoverishment to wealth. The colonizers taught the Westerners how to lord over Africans while teaching colonial versions of education to Africans. Africans learned how to be controlled, subjugated, and consistently dominated by the Westerner and white-dominant society. More indigenous Africans explicate the current condition of education in Africa stating:

Today, Africa remains the world's poorest continent. There could be several reasons for this but one of the key ones is that education has not been relevant to the needs of the society. Substantial resources have been expended to boost education in Africa, even though such resources may not have been adequate. The basic problem is that educational structures were formulated by colonialists who had a cultural background different to that obtaining among Africans. Decades of self-rule and independence have not succeeded in empowering Africans through enabling them to determine their educational framework. In part, this difficulty is a result of the continued social and economic ties between African countries and their former colonizing powers. Although Africa is politically independent, it remains technologically and economically dependent on countries that colonized it. Current educational structures are meant mainly to foster this bond, rather than reduce it. Reforms in African education were conceived and implemented within the framework of this relationship, hence they did not go far enough to develop and foster African culture.¹⁵

The role that religious systems, including missionaries, played in the formulation of education and learning centers throughout Africa is often misinterpreted. From a Eurocentric or Western perspective, it was the Godly duty of missionaries to civilize and educate the "savage" Africans. Conversely, when Africans were forced into slavery in America, education of the negroes was forbidden. The extraordinary research of Adeyemi and Adeyinka reveals the truth from an indigenous African perspective stating:

¹⁵ Isaac N. Mazonde, *Culture and education in the development of Africa*, 2001, 1.

Before the introduction of Western civilization into Africa, education in the continent was purely indigenous.... With the penetration of the Christian missions from the fifteenth century, Western culture – notably British and French – had begun to move into various parts of the continent. The Christian missions brought with them ideas from Western culture that culminated in the introduction of formal education, with its emphasis on literary and purely academic work. African parents readily accepted this new education and they began to send their children to the schools fashioned after the European curriculum to learn; they gradually set aside the kind of education, holistic, lifelong, and utilitarian, which they themselves had received. However, the valuable nature of African traditional education has been realized to the extent that today, the call in most African societies is for a return to the indigenous education system, albeit in a modified form.¹⁶

Based on the evidence provided, building on ancient Africa and indigenous, African education systems, life would have been quite different for Africans in America. However, as previously stated, education for Africans in America was forbidden. Every attempt was made to prevent communication via indigenous language and anything related to indigenous culture was taboo. The names of the Africans were replaced with names chosen by their white slave masters. The focus of the African was survival while the focus of America was slavery.

Education for African Americans in the United States

The research of Asa Hilliard offers a focal point to this legacy of education for the African American:

... European Americans from the North and South soon reconciled their differences enough for the Reconstruction to take place, followed by the Black Codes, which were followed by the virtual complete disenfranchisement of Africans during the late 1800's and the early 1900s. Education was not withheld at this time any more than it was during slavery. But what was offered was something called 'Negro Education.' Thus, there was a 'special education' program under 'freedom.' The 'freedom' type of 'special education program' had two parts to it. One part was the establishment of special barriers of various kinds

¹⁶ Michael B. Adeyemi and Augustus A. Adeyinka, "Some key issues in African traditional education", *McGill Journal of Education*, 37(2), 2002, 223-224.

to control the amount and type of education that Africans could get (i.e. certification, accreditation, head taxes, etc.). The second part had to do with the development of special content. Africans were to be given ‘industrial education’ to fix their caste position, ‘moral education,’ for pacification, and Western education’ in order to instill in them a sense of inferiority and a belief in white supremacy.¹⁷

It is from the first churches and schools that “Africans built from the ground up with their own hands and resources” that independent, African-centered education has evolved.¹⁸ What education was given and what education was *taken*? What education is given today and what education needs to be taken? In previous sections, both colonial and Eurocentric education have been discussed as the precursors for the Eurocentric education systems in the United States. With the advent and legal order to integrate schools, African Americans became increasingly aware that neither integration nor segregation would work; not only in education but in society as a whole. One of the more radical revolutionaries of those turbulent times, Kwame Ture provocatively argued:

There has been an organized national resistance to the Supreme Court’s order to integrate the schools, and the federal government has not acted to enforce that order. Less than fifteen per cent of black children in the South attend integrated schools; and Negro schools, which the vast majority of black children still attend, are increasingly decrepit, overcrowded, understaffed, inadequately equipped and funded. This explains why the rate of school dropouts is increasing among Negro teenagers, who then express their bitterness, hopelessness and alienation by the only means they have – rebellion.¹⁹

It is the ideology of the 1960s and 1970s that a freshly empowered black consciousness began to fuel the desire for independent black education. Having been

¹⁷ Hilliard, III, *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, 44.

¹⁸ Madhubuti and Madhubuti, *African-Centered Education*, 6.

¹⁹ Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 129.

taught to thoroughly despise their African heritage and culture, many of the activists of those times began to campaign for the construction of black institutions. In 1964, Mississippi was the birthplace of a collective of freedom schools organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists for the purpose of educating black students. However, the network of schools was staffed primarily by white college students. It was the efforts of veteran activist, Jimmy Garrett, that altered the history of black education.

BSU [Black Student Union] programs, he declared, sought to ‘build Black consciousness’ by teaching Black elementary, secondary, and college students ‘their history and values as a people.’ No longer did Garrett see Black and White students as united by common yearnings. ‘Black people are not Western,’ he argued in 1969. ‘They are Westernized. In much the same way as one might get simonized. We are painted over with Whiteness... because the information that Black children receive is alien to them, dealing almost completely with White culture.... There is little in any curriculum that starts with Black people as a specifically cultured people.’²⁰

The Black Panther Party’s 1966 program argued for “education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society...educating ourselves and our children on the nature of the struggle and... transferring to them the means for waging the struggle”.²¹ Building on the work that SNCC had done with its 1964 freedom schools, the Black Panther Party established Panther liberation schools in 1969. As the Black Panther Party was a nationwide organization, their liberation schools began to spring up in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and Chicago and other locations.

²⁰ Daniel Perlstein, “Freedom, Liberation, Accommodation: Politics and Pedagogy in SNCC and the Black Panther Party, in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, eds. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland, New York: Teachers College Press, 2008, 82.

²¹ Perlstein, “Freedom, Liberation, Accommodation, 84.

Gradually shifting from the primary educational focus being the political views of the Black Panther Party, by the early '70s, a major thrust of the Black Panther Party was the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI) with goals designed to:²²

Teach Black children basic skills necessary to survive in a technological society and to teach children to think in an analytical fashion in order to develop creative solutions to the problems we are faced with. IYI students, *The Black Panther* now told readers, received 'the greater portion of their education through direct experience.' The school used field trips, including ones to the zoo, an apple orchard, Mount Diablo, and the trial of the San Quentin Six, to 'teach the children about the world by exposing them to numerous learning experiences.' Claimed IYI director Brenda Bay, 'the world is [the students'] classroom. Through 'individualized instruction,' the school offered children 'equipment to analyze and interpret their experiences.' 'We're not here to teach our children *what* to think,' Panther leader Bobby Seale announced at a 1973 school ceremony. 'We're here to teach our children *how* to think!'²³

By 1974, the IYI had evolved into the Oakland Community School (OCS) and served as evidence of the success and vision of the Black Panther Party's educational goals. Ericka Huggins, who served as director of the school from 1974-1981, expressed one of the bittersweet issues with the school stating:

Children beg to come here. You should see them some days. It's so sad. They're supposed to be in their own schools, but they come here and peek into the classroom doors. Some come here just to go up to our library and read.²⁴

Although there are few remaining *independent*, African-centered schools in the United States, the need for a reconceptualizing and rebirth of such schools is absolutely necessary. Hopefully, that has been proven in this present research. Of course, this study

²² Charles E. Jones and Jonathan Gayles, "The World Is A Child's Classroom: An Analysis of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School", in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, eds. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland, New York: Teachers College Press, 2008, 103.

²³ Perlstein, "Freedom, Liberation, Accommodation: 88-89.

²⁴ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 103.

is not a business plan, grant proposal, or any similar type of document. This is simply an examination of the *potential* efficacy of an independent, African-centered shule in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Those who have an interest in the development of an independent, African-centered shule should proceed with the intention of creating a hybrid, exemplary model that would exceed all expectations for any form of learning center--extraordinary in pedagogy, design, curricula, teacher quality, technology and every possible component. It is significant that in keeping with *Sankofa Theory*, there be further discussion of the Oakland Community School.

Although the numbers may be statistically different, black people were being brutalized and oppressed then (the '60s and '70s)—black people are being brutalized and oppressed now. In addition to the case studies that will follow in this research, it is important to note some of the concepts and practices implemented in the Oakland Community School as a result of the Black Panther Party's initiatives:

Panther Liberation Schools usually were housed in churches, which participated in the organization's free breakfast programs, community recreational centers, and Black Panther Party offices. In contrast to the highly skilled Freedom School instructors, community volunteers, Panther-in-training and/or full-time members staffed the Black Panther Party's liberation schools' classes. In several instances, high school students instructed liberation classes, while SNCC Freedom school classes were often taught by college graduates.²⁵

As student enrollment increased, the school relocated to new multi-functional facilities that included:

... a curriculum center, art room, eight classrooms, a fully equipped kitchen with a large cafeteria, and a 350-seat auditorium. The school's new setting was part of a converted church complex that also housed the Oakland Community Learning Center (OCLC) of the Black Panther Party. In addition to the IYI, the BPP implemented educational social, and cultural outreach programs under the

²⁵ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 103.

auspices of the Oakland Community Learning Center. OCLC sponsored adult education programming, a free medical clinic, legal aid services, employment counseling, a monthly film series, teen programs, and community forums.²⁶

Today's relevance of the curricula and pedagogy of the Oakland Community School is worthy of thorough examination; however, for the immediate purposes of this research, it is most critical to briefly examine some of the essential management and financial accountability aspects of the school such as:

BPP leaders formed the Educational Opportunities Corporation (EOC), a nonprofit, community-based 501(c)3 entity, to administer the IYI and other OCLC programs. Phyllis Jackson, a party member from Tacoma, Washington, was chief administrator of the EOC staff. Jan Kelly directed special services and Norma Armour coordinated financial matters. Elaine Brown, the leader of the BPP from August 1974 to July 1977, recalled that 'as for the management of the party's increasing income, Norma Armour was maintaining a tight rein. She meticulously accounted for every penny we raised or spent'. Rollins Reid, the director of building maintenance, occupied the final EOC staff position.²⁷

The Oakland Community School evolved into the *highly acclaimed* Oakland Community Schools with highlights of their achievements being:

...children enrolled in the school consistently perform 3 to 4 years in advance of their public peers.... OCS won distinction for its display of an exhibit at the Western regional meeting of Black Engineers and Scientists.... In 1976, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors honored the school for its outstanding contribution to the education of poor and disadvantaged youth.... The party's alternative school received laudatory praise from the California state legislature.²⁸

Although some would consider the following flaws to this nearly perfect history controversial and negative, it is imperative that the information be included in this

²⁶ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 104.

²⁷ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 104.

²⁸ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 111.

examination of independent, African-centered shule. In short, the following are some of the dreadful details regarding the demise of the Oakland Community School:

Shortly after his return to power in the BPP, [Huey P.] Newton began to embezzle grant funds. In November 1977, Oakland city officials alleged that Newton misappropriated funds.... the state Department of Education canceled grants totaling more than \$800,000 a year and the school closed in the summer of 1982.²⁹

Today's climate of lawlessness, lying and lack of integrity is the prevailing *modus operandi* of the dominant society. It is what must be dealt with throughout all African American activities, whether it be in families, communities, or schools. African Americans must not succumb to these toxic behaviors that can only end in the demise of the African American community. This research theorizes that there is a certain *Manafortism* in our midst that allows the dominant white society to operate at extreme levels of lawlessness with minimal punishment, while African Americans are severely punished for lesser crimes. For that reason, African Americans must practice holding leadership accountable. DeGruy charges the African American community to establish accountable leadership and quotes the former Mayor of Atlanta, Maynard Jackson:

First, we must address the, 'scared Negro' who gets placed in a position of power or leadership and becomes so afraid of losing his position that he will sell out the black support base that put him there. Second, we have to stop propping up incompetent leaders, because in doing so we lose our credibility as a group.³⁰

DeGruy continues to highlight where leadership is needed and how that leadership must appear, arguing:

²⁹ Jones and Gayles, *Teach Freedom*, 112.

³⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 190.

We need strong leadership in many areas: politics, jurisprudence, social activism, education, science, and business, to name a few. We need a community of leaders to expand our base of role models, show us paths to success, guide and mentor us. We need political and judicial leaders to keep up the fight for equal opportunity and access. We need social activist leadership to keep us on the path to community growth. We need leaders in education to expand the role and capacities of black educational institutions. We also need these leaders to guide students through high school, college, and on through advanced degrees. Perhaps most of all we need business leaders. We need business leaders who will mentor our people up the ladder of corporate America. We also need leaders who will return to our communities and aid in the creation of black-owned businesses.³¹

Kwame Ture (previously known as Stokely Carmichael), a most powerful ancestral voice, presents the following:

We must organize black community power to end these abuses, and to give the Negro community a chance to have its needs expressed. A leadership which is truly 'responsible' – not to the white press and power structure, but to the community, must be developed. Such leadership will recognize that its power lies in the unified and collective strength of that community.³²

Additional aspects of black leadership can only be examined through the lens of *Sankofa Theory* and the process of listening to African elders and ancestors. It is the revolutionary theory of Kwame Ture, which contends that individual leadership rather than group/team leadership can never be on the agenda of African-centered organizations:

At the same time that it recognizes the inevitability of setbacks, such an organization must build itself consciously upon a perspective of victory. This is particularly necessary in the United States, where the idea of defeat of the black man has been so systematically instilled into the black people themselves that a tendency to self-destruction or martyrdom lurks unconsciously within the organization unless it is systematically rooted out of every member, leader and supporter. The movement for Black Power cannot afford another Malcolm, another Emmett Tills, another Medgar Evers, but must build, first and foremost, the kind of organization which has the strength and discipline to assure that there will be no more of these.³³

³¹ DeGruy, *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 190.

³² Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 131.

One problem is the inability of black organizations to exist as *sustainable*, independent, African-centered institutions. Integrity and ethics are critical to the creation of these institutions, from which the Oakland Community School suffered. As well, financial and leadership accountability are critical to the creation of sustainable, independent African-centered institutions. The Elders, who had specific and strategic roles and responsibilities in the village-community, would need to assume governance and counsel in a truly independent, African-centered shule.

Undoubtedly, most likely the most critical element to leadership of an independent, African-centered shule is the involvement of each student's parents. It is imperative that parents are heavily involved in all aspects of everyday functions and operations of the shule. Individual leadership should give way to *shared* leadership where decisions are made by a caucus or group agreeing to all issues affecting the shule. Succession planning would be a requirement of the institution to ensure continuity and sustainability. The New Concept Development Center (NCDC), founded over 35 years ago in Chicago, provides the following example of an effective management strategy of an independent, African-centered education system:

In addition to the problem of selecting, developing, and maintaining its teaching staff, NCDC also faces the challenge of developing and supporting new administrative leadership. Many independent schools have not withstood the test of time partly because of their overdependence on singular leadership. At NCDC, we do not believe a director can simply be imported from another setting (unless, of course, the candidate has had prior leadership experience in another independent school). All positions below that of the director are thus seen as training ground for future directors. To this end, all decisions related to the school program are first discussed and, if possible, resolved among the school staff themselves. Levels of decision-making responsibility are shared among the

³³ Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 117.

director, the assistant director, and the section heads for the preschool and primary school divisions.³⁴

The brilliant research of Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu exudes wisdom via a wealth of publications. One of the views expressed in *An African-Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory* suggests:

... the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI)... believe that when you teach African American children their history and culture, academic performance and self-esteem will improve. These schools see few fights and suspensions because the children are grounded in their history and culture. They are taught the Nguzo Saba and Maat. These schools understand that you do not address disciplinary problems and violence with a metal detector. That's a band-aid.³⁵

Although Dr. Kunjufu clearly supports African-centered education, he agrees that a major problem with African-centered education in the past has been funding. As most independent, African-centered schools receive little or no funds from external sources and welcome all African American children with no consideration of parents' income, students must be charged tuition. In most cases, the students the schools seek to provide an education for are unable to afford those services. In addition, Kunjufu acknowledges: "many of the directors who administered those schools over the past 20 years, a tremendous labor of love, have grown weary and broke. One of the ways they have been able to overcome this is by becoming African-centered charter schools."³⁶ Note the transition from the terminology *independent*, African-centered schools to *chartered* African-centered schools.

³⁴ Lee, in *Teach Freedom*, 213.

³⁵ Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, *An African Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory*, (Chicago, IL: African-American Images, 2006), 135.

³⁶ Kunjufu, *An African Centered Response*, 136.

Unfortunately, chartered schools are simply extensions of the public education system and seek many of the same goals as that overarching system. The research in this study argues that what will truly benefit the African American community, specifically in the Atlanta Metropolitan area, is a completely *independent*, African-centered shule and not a charter school. This independence relies on funding from tuition and other African and African American sources that have proven to be true to the goals and mission of African-centered education for African American students. This critical aspect of financially maintaining the operations of an independent, African-centered shule relies on the insight of Kwame Ture stating:

We depended upon the goodwill and support of various groups within the white community whose interests were not always compatible with ours. To the extent that we depended on the financial support of other groups, we were vulnerable to their influence and domination.³⁷

What is unique to the timing of African-centered education today, is the remarkable progress that has been made by Africans and descendants of Africans all over the globe. The funding of African-centered education can no longer be an under-researched phenomenon. In the recent past, blacks were completely barred from any form of wealth-building, even to the point of complete massacres and annihilation of entire black communities, as in the cases (among many) of Rosewood, Florida and Greenwood, Oklahoma (Black Wall Street).³⁸ These descendants of slaves somehow managed to reverse their poverty and excel in spite of multiple forms of oppression and racism.

³⁷ Carmichael, *Black Fire*, 122.

³⁸ Victor Luckerson, *Black Wall Street: The African-American Haven That Burned and Then Rose From the Ashes*. Accessed November 9, 2019. <https://www.theringer.com/2018/6/28/17511818/black-wall-street-oklahoma-greenwood-destruction-tulsa>.

Today, many black people all over the world are realizing the benefits of standing on the shoulders of their ancestors. To not reach throughout the diaspora and form alliances, coalitions, and teams of black people to facilitate funding of African-centered education would be a complete failure. John Henrik Clarke explains how this collaboration and alliance-forming is an integral function of *Reclaiming the Lost African Heritage*:

The civilized Negro must lose his contempt for his 'heathen' brethren in Africa and in the jungles of Melanesia and Surinam. He must learn that the fathers of the race had and still possess blessed secrets, wonderful lores, and great philosophies that rank the jungle Negro's civilization as the equal, and in many respects, the superior of any way of life that is to be found anywhere in the world.³⁹

The building of African-centered education institutions must be a diasporic endeavor including *all* Africans. Never before in African or African American history has there been so much opportunity to build bridges and networks reaching out to Africans worldwide to aid in building African-centered institutions. In addition, never before have there been so many millionaires and billionaires who are black. Many of these wealthy descendants of Africa are seeking verified, authentic African-centered institutions through which they can fulfill their philanthropic goals and requirements. In *Noteworthy Findings about the Philanthropy of High Net Worth African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos*, there are verifiable statistics that provide an extraordinary level of promise for the African American community and the black diasporic community as well:

- Blacks/African Americans are significantly more likely to think participating in a social media campaign to raise funds or awareness for a cause that has the potential to have the greatest impact on society.

³⁹ John Henrik Clarke, "Reclaiming the Lost African Heritage", in *Black Fire: an anthology of Afro-American writing*, eds. Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2007, 12.

- Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are significantly more likely to monitor or evaluate the impact of their giving.
- Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos report being significantly more fulfilled by their charitable giving.
- Blacks/African Americans are significantly more likely to feel more fulfilled by their volunteering.
- Blacks/African Americans were significantly more likely to donate to causes related to religion, combination purposes, and higher education.
- Blacks/African Americans are significantly more likely to plan to increase their charitable giving contribution level in the next three years.
- Blacks/African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics/Latino households with children, grandchildren, and/or other younger relatives are all significantly more likely to have family traditions around giving.
- Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are significantly more likely to have involved their children, grandchildren, or other younger relatives in their giving activities in the next three years.
- Blacks/African Americans and Asian Americans are significantly more likely to think that larger donations from the wealthiest Americans are more likely to change the world.⁴⁰

Recently, in an article entitled *LeBron James Joins Other Celebrities Who Launched Schools*,⁴¹ the Associated Press lists a few other celebrities who have created schools: Deion Sanders, Shakira, Magic Johnson, Tony Bennett, Will Smith, Andre Agassi, Sean “Diddy” Combs, Pitbull, and Madonna. There is no mention of Oprah Winfrey who, as many news reports documented, created and funded a school for girls in South Africa. In a 2005 *Black Enterprise* magazine article by Carolyn M. Brown, the following explains the trend toward philanthropy for black Americans:

The editors of *Black Enterprise*, recognize that philanthropy is the giving of money, time, and talent. Numerous people are giving back and leveraging their clout by serving on community boards or encouraging their companies to invest in black causes. But for the purposes of this list [America’s Leading Black Philanthropists] we chose to focus on philanthropy in terms of actual dollars.

⁴⁰ Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, *The 2016 U.S. Trust Study of High Net Worth Philanthropy: Charitable Practices and Preferences of Wealthy Households*, 2016, 108-113.

⁴¹ Associated Press, *LeBron James Joins Other Celebrities Who Launched Schools*, <https://www.voanews.com/a/lebron-james-celebrities-launch-schools/4508036.html>.

Philanthropy is one of the true cornerstones of economic advancement. If we are to tackle the social ills of black America, then strategic giving must continue to be a big part of that prescription. Studies show nearly 75% of charitable gifts in the U.S. come from individual benefactors. Traditionally, when people think of a philanthropist the image of a white male comes to mind. But the ranks of African American philanthropists date back to those of historical significance such as Harriet Tubman. Others include contemporary rappers and sports figure such as Chris ‘Ludacris’ Bridges and Tiger Woods. Black philanthropists range from those of modest means, like the late laundress Oseola McCarty who bequeathed a portion of her life savings to provide \$150,000 in scholarships for minority students, to billionaire talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who has donated more than \$130 million since 2002 to fund myriad causes. Truth be told, African Americans give more than any other group, donating 25% more of their discretionary income to charities than whites, reports the Chronicle of Philanthropy.⁴²

In addition to the more traditional forms of philanthropy highlighted in *Black Enterprise*, more recently, multi-billionaire Robert F. Smith is reported to have promised to pay the student loan debt of the entire Morehouse graduating class of 2019. His goal was to begin a pay-it-forward legacy starting within the renowned learning institution that focuses on educating black young men. In addition to these fund-raising baskets, there is renewed conversation challenging the United States to pay back the ancestors of former slaves in the form of reparations. Additional research has shed light on how such reparations can take the form of funding for African-centered shule and African-centered curricula being taught in other educational systems.

In the 2016 article, *Too Many Afrocentric Schools Are Underfunded and Neglected – Why Saving These Schools Should be a National Priority*, David Love highlighted the following:

The value of Afrocentric education is being highlighted in Chicago, where an African-centered school is struggling, leading that city’s public school system to recommend its closure. This comes at a time when schools in the Black

⁴² Carolyn M. Brown, America’s Leading Black Philanthropists, in *Black Enterprise*, 2005, 1-2, <https://www.blackenterprise.com/americas-leading-black-philanthropists/>.

community are woefully underfunded and so many educational institutions fail to provide Black children with a road map for success. These institutions must be cultivated and sustained throughout the country, as they give Black children the cultural grounding, self-esteem and sense of identity necessary to help them understand their place in the world – and thrive in it.⁴³

Love echoes much of the research discussed in this study and argues further:

In a society in which negative images of Black people thrive, Black children need a form of education that centers on the accomplishments of their own people and exists to elevate them. They are at risk and must be supported if they are going to survive, and if the Black community is to thrive. And this means that, nationwide, schools such as Sizemore [*the Barbara A. Sizemore Academy, an Afrocentric, K-8 charter school*] must receive the financial backing they need to fulfill their important mission.⁴⁴

Due to inadequacies of *miseducation*, many African Americans are unfamiliar with the truths concerning ancient Africa and African institutions. Many have limited understanding of Egyptian civilization and its black, Africanness. Many only know the Egyptian ruins to have been tombs or statues; however, understanding of the other institutions during those times can empower the building of institutions *now*. Before all hope is lost on such a project, Jacob Carruthers offers undeniable truths regarding genuine *institution-building*.

Whenever the African authors of the greatest civilization of antiquity established a temple, they built for eternity. Thus, each temple became an institution. While such establishments were dedicated to the Creator, they were not merely places of worship, they were, above all, places of learning and service. They were educational institutions and social service organizations. They were institutions in the classic sense of the term. When one visits the Nile Valley Antiquities, one does not merely view the ruins of great buildings which are themselves awe-inspiring, one also sees the material evidence of institutions that vitalized and continually renewed a civilization that lasted more than four thousand years, and

⁴³ David Love, *Too Many Afrocentric Schools Are Underfunded and Neglected – Why Saving These Schools Should be a National Priority*, 2016, <https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/03/01/too-many-afrocentric-schools-are-underfunded-and-neglected-why-saving-these-schools-should-be-a-national-priority/html>.

⁴⁴ David Love, *Too Many Afrocentric Schools Are Underfunded*.

inspired the development of most of the civilizations that we consider a part of world history. Those traditions are exemplary models for those of us who would dare attempt the establishment of institutions for African people today.⁴⁵

More of the critical truths from Carruthers must be included as a reminder that it is not enough to articulate the need for an independent, African-centered shule. It is not enough to develop the idea, create the shule and implement its operations. It isn't even enough to graduate African American students with honors. What must occur is often overlooked in the planning stages of too many black organizations. The missing link is the infrequency of building *institutions*. In addressing the issue of "Eurocentric African institutions"⁴⁶, Carruthers torrid remarks are reminiscent of an angry parent disappointed with the behavior of the children:

They are chronically financially strapped when their European sponsors choose to withdraw support. They are usually embroiled in leadership brawls because of competing Eurocentric ambitions. They often fail and wind up in economic social and political bankruptcy. Indeed, recent history is littered with the hideous ruins of atrophied and irrelevant black organizations. Some of these organizations have arisen for good cause and have made substantial progress under the circumstances. Others exist merely because some simplistic Negro said, 'they got one, so we need one too.' One of the inherent weaknesses of these limited purpose imitation organizations is that they often have a secret purpose of integrating with their white counterpart as soon as 'they stop treating us so bad' or 'as soon as they accept us.'... The major problem with such organizations is that they are only quasi-institutions. They do not spring from the fertile soil of African culture. They are hybrid and are thus generally sterile. The real crisis of many modern African institutions is that they are anti-African. They are designed to destroy African life (consciously or unconsciously) and ironically, they suffer the same fate they were created to cause. They are indeed like the African slave traders who, after they had captured scores of Africans and brutally marched them to the sea in shackles, were themselves thrown into the slave ships by their would-be paymasters. How condign can a reward be?⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jacob H. Carruthers, *Intellectual Warfare*, (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1999), 269.

⁴⁶ Carruthers, *Intellectual Warfare*, 271.

⁴⁷ Carruthers, *Intellectual Warfare*, 272.

Professionally drafted business plans and budgets prepared by professionally certified accounting firms and legal teams (black-owned and operated) must become collective sources of documentation and counsel in the preparation for birthing and building independent, African-centered shule. Validated, trained, motivated leadership with track records of excellence, morality, integrity and ethics, must be sought after as teams are developed that will permanently serve to procure funding to ensure these institutions are built upon stable foundations.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No one is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. Nobody is going to teach you your true history, teach you your true heroes, if they know that that knowledge will help set you free.¹

Introduction

This thesis hypothesized that an independent, African-centered school (shule) in metro Atlanta has the potential of not only being successful but being highly beneficial to its students, connected families, the community, and, eventually, Africa. The purpose of this research is to provide evidence of exactly how beneficial an African-centered school can be to its beneficiaries/stakeholders. As stated in the purpose of this study, the goal of this study is to provide evidence that there is a need for an independent, African-centered shule in metro Atlanta and such a shule will be highly beneficial and effective in educating students in the Atlanta African American community. Discussion follows that reiterates the findings and describes the research limitations, implications, and the pertinent recommendations for future research.

¹ Assata Shakur. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/664808-no-one-is-going-to-give-you-the-education-you>.

Description, Definition and Characteristics

Determining the definition and image of African-centered education is fundamental to any argument in favor of the success of African-centered education. Adjectives and other descriptors often preface or follow the term *African-centered education* in an attempt to provide more concise views of African-centered education. For example, Pott provides an explanation of an *emancipatory* African-centered education that: “(1) Addresses social oppression and situates community problems within historical context, (2) acknowledges students as agents for social change, and (3) affirms African cultural resources for healing and social transformation.”¹ Such healing and social transformation is based in the related evidence that shows “positive regard toward one’s ethnic group, as measured by scales of ethnic identity, is related to educational success and other health outcomes”.² Such emancipatory education guidelines should be developed in the curricula that must follow this research.

In countering *maafa*, the Kiswahili term for “disaster”, African-centered education has the power to aggressively reconnect the African American student with “African and African American history, traditions, values, and principles.”³ Murrell concurs with Potts in the claim that the Akan term *Sankofa*, which refers to the act of returning to one’s history in preparation for the future, is critical to African-centered education. The reclamation of historical memory requires African-centered education that

¹ Potts, *Emancipatory Education*, 202.

² Potts, *Emancipatory Education*, 203.

³ Potts, *Emancipatory Education*, 204.

goes back and gets “the pieces of history you missed”.⁴ In early seminal research and discussion on African history being omitted from education, Carter G. Woodson profoundly states:

No thought was given to the history of Africa except so far as it had been a field of exploitation for the Caucasian. You might study the history as it was offered in our system from the elementary school throughout the university, and you would never hear Africa mentioned except in the negative.⁵

In the pioneering research of Molefi Kete Asante, *centricity* is defined as:

... a perspective that involves locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives.... The most productive method of teaching any student is to place his or her group within the center of the context of knowledge.⁶

What follows are ten statements, with related research, that further define, describe and characterize African-centered education.

1. **African-centered education re-centers “African agency from *objects to participants in world history.*”⁷** It is ultimately through the lens of the African (African American and Africans worldwide) student that the extraordinary past and current events related to Africa are viewed. According to Asante, “the

⁴ Peter Murrell. *African-Centered Pedagogy: Developing Schools of Achievement for African-American Children* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 21.

⁵ Woodson. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 21.

⁶ Molefi Kete Asante. “The Afrocentric Idea in Education”, *Journal of Negro Education*, 60, no. 2, (1991): 171.

⁷ Marcia J. Watson-Vandiver, and Greg Wiggan. “The genius of Imhotep: An exploration of African-centered curricula and teaching in a high achieving U.S. urban school”, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 76, 2018: 153.

Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person.”⁸

2. **African-centered perspectives advocate exposing and investigating truths that “center Africa as the starting place of humanity.”**⁹ In the debunking of the lies and myths of Eurocentricity, society is released to embark on a journey into a completely unique African culture. African-centered education “positions African agency within the comprehensive human story.”¹⁰ The past of Africa can never be dislocated from the evidence of human history. Such an endeavor simply cheats all humanity of the accuracy of African contributions to society. African-centered education “posits that people of African descent are valuable contributors to their own history.”¹¹
3. **African-centered education “contends that ‘re-membering’ is a process of resurfacing history that has been silenced or distorted.”**¹² It is only through an African-centered education that the African American student can reconnect, reflect, and reconstruct consciousness and memory. Although most experts would not refer to learning systems as systems for healing, for the African American student, the process of re-membering is a healing process. Smith asserts “... for

⁸ Asante, *Journal of Negro Education*, 171.

⁹ Asante, *Journal of Negro Education*, 171.

¹⁰ Asante, *Journal of Negro Education*, 171.

¹¹ Asante, *Journal of Negro Education*, 171.

¹² Asante, *Journal of Negro Education*, 171.

the Africans transported, it brought about the loss of a historic connection with Africa. Family histories and relationships, names and languages were lost, and this made for profound disconnectedness.”¹³

4. **African-centered education is not an attempt at integration, segregation or assimilation.** There is evidence that proves that, historically, the African American has sought to rise from the horrors of slavery and to acquire equal rights that would allow learning in educational systems equal to those of whites. This is very similar to the African in Africa thirsty for learning through the colonizer’s educational systems. From the eight points addressed by Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at the Paris Peace Conference, point four states: “...that Negroes be permitted the same educational facilities now given to Europeans.”¹⁴ This colonized-integrationist-assimilationist approach is insufficient and therefore unacceptable on its face; however, it is a step in the right direction.
5. **African-centered education equips students to perform critical analysis empowering the thorough investigation of social structures and issues that existed not only in the past but are also present in today’s society.** For a people who were never supposed to learn in America, critical analysis would seem an impossibility without African-centered education. One of the most

¹³ Barbara Fletchman Smith. *Transcending the Legacies of Slavery: A Psychoanalytic View*. (London:Karnac Books Ltd., 2011), 15.

¹⁴ Randolph Persaud. “Re-envisioning Sovereignty: Marcus Garvey and the Making of a Transnational Identity.” In Dunn, K. Shaw, T. (eds.) *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory*. New York, NY: Palgrave Publishers, 2001.

dangerous legacies of slavery was the legal system that prevented slaves from learning. It was illegal to teach slaves to read among so many other shameful legal restrictions. To even touch a book would mean severe punishment and possibly death. African-centered education removes the burden from the descendants of slave masters to teach the descendants of African slaves. African-centered education emphasizes “high achievement and academic content beyond the traditional ‘basics’ . Self-expression is encouraged and students are constantly challenged to think analytically, critically, and independently.”¹⁵ Watson-Vandiver, et al. argue:

African-centered pedagogy integrates the unified African-American experience into classroom instruction by linking African heritage and culture with student achievement.... African-centered pedagogy bridges the chasm between historical and contemporary issues in the African-American community. This involves the close interconnection of culturally relevant pedagogy and the re-conceptualization of African traditions.¹⁶

For example, in recent news, there has been a great deal of discussion of the appropriateness and history of *blackface* in the United States. In examining this issue, African Americans should not be the only ones knowledgeable of the racist practice. African-centered education is the tool that could provide the rest of the world with education on issues such as blackface and so much more. Due to the void of African-centered education, racist practices continue to taint the

¹⁵ Kofi Lomotey. “Independent Black Institutions: African-Centered Education Models,” *Journal of Negro Education*, no. 4, 1992.

¹⁶ Watson-Vandiver, et al., *The Genius of Imhotep*, 153.

possibility of a non-racist existence in America. Watson-Vandiver et al. argue "... African-centered pedagogy acknowledges racial marginalization and realigns hegemony with historical accuracy."¹⁷

6. **African-centered education involves collaborative learning.** The Sankofa

Freedom Charter School describes collaborative learning as:

... approaches to teaching and learning that are: experiential, intergenerational, communal, collaborative, dialogic, family and community based, expressive, purposeful, constructivist, generationally, socially, politically, economically relevant to the lives, experiences, and destiny of African people."¹⁸

Within the collaborative learning approach, most African-centered education is or should be based on a value system developed by Maulena Karenga in the 1960s called the *Nguzo Saba*, which is a Kiswahili term that means *The Seven Principles of Blackness*". The concepts and their English definitions are:

Umoja – Unity
Kujichagulia – Self-Determination
Ujima – Collective Work and Responsibility
Ujamaa – Cooperative Economics
Nia – Purpose
Kuumba – Creativity
Imani – Faith.¹⁹

It is through events such as Kwanzaa celebrations, protocols, dress codes, rituals and other interaction with the community that the African American student is compelled to embrace African culture, Afrocentricity and African consciousness.

¹⁷ Watson-Vandiver, et al., *The Genius of Imhotep*, 154.

¹⁸ Sankofa Freedom Charter School. *African pedagogy: The four fundamentals of Africana pedagogy*. Accessed February 12, 2019. <http://www.sfacs.us/links/african.pedagogy>.

¹⁹ Lomotey. *Independent Black Institutions*, 458.

It is here that the African American adapts a deeper commitment to the community—an unbreakable loyalty. One of the most empowering aspects of African-centered learning is the “incorporation of culture, heritage, community, creativity and historical acknowledgement. This subsequently creates a sense of unity and uplift, which are quintessential components of African-centered education.”²⁰

7. **In African-centered education both the teacher and the student have responsibilities within the reciprocal love connection.** An atmosphere of respect is cultivated at every point. The teacher is responsible for creating a sense of community in the classroom. Students are expected to fully participate and “develop a deep understanding of, respect for, and commitment to themselves and to their peers, teachers, parents, leaders, communities, and race.”²¹ It is no longer that individuality and competitiveness are the primary behaviors. The student is encouraged to consider how the entire community can win as a result of his or her participation.

8. **African-centered education is the only force that can undo *miseducation*.**

Wilson describes *miseducation* as an “act of war, an act of possible genocide.”²²

Woodson, who many experts agree is the originator of the term *miseducation*, submits “Negroes have no control over their education and have little voice in

²⁰ Watson-Vandiver, et al., *The Genius of Imhotep*, 161.

²¹ Lomotey. *Independent Black Institutions*, 459.

²² Amos N. Wilson. *Awakening the Natural Genius of Black Children* (New York, NY: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 2015), ix.

their other affairs pertaining thereto. ...The education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of the Negroes, is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them and now segregate them.”²³ Potts declares:

Providing children with the tools for deconstructing miseducation and misrepresentations of the African experience, reconstructing knowledge of African history and philosophies, and constructing a better life for the community are what Akbar (1998) identifies as three critical methods for Black psychology and education.²⁴

It is with utmost urgency that African Americans and Africans worldwide grasp the fact that as much as the African is miseducated to believe and act out a belief of inferiority, it is at the same exact moment that the white- dominant oppressor continues to reinforce his monstrous role as being superior and supreme in all things. Welsing sounds the alert and warns:

In a social system designed to achieve white domination, the experience of that system molds white children so that they may function in the role of the oppressors, or the ‘functional superiors’ (because that is what white supremacy is supposed to mean: that whites *will* function in a superior way as compared to non-whites). Through structured superior functioning, whites will be able to oppress others. The same social system simultaneously will mold all children classified as ‘non-whites’ or ‘others’ to play the role of the ‘functional inferiors,’ or the oppressed.²⁵

Slavery and colonialism are the direct result of *miseducation*. The white oppressor miseducated himself to believe it was his God-given responsibility to lord over the savage African. In this believed superior role, the colonizer realized

²³ Woodson, *Miseducation*, 22.

²⁴ Potts, *Emancipatory Education*, 204.

²⁵ Welsing, *The Isis Papers*, 240.

the significance of transforming African minds to believe more in the power of the colonizer than in the power of the African. Matunhu acknowledges the role of missionary education in the origin of the *miseducation* process in Africa indicating:

Missionary education curriculum was the main instrument used to destroy the pre-capitalist social structures in Africa. The education system brought about mental impoverishment of Africans by deemphasizing the importance of African values and culture at the same time glorifying that of the whites. The basic idea was to disorient the minds and identity of the blacks. The process of brain washing the Africans created a fertile ground for the exploitation of the continent's human and non-human resources.²⁶

9. **African-centered education is not racist and does not oppose other forms of knowledge.** African-centered education is not an attempt to replace one form of hegemony with another. Through African-centered learning, the lens of analysis is no longer Western hegemony, but truth-based learning is the focus. Watson-Vandiver et al. argue “removing the lens of colonialism is an example of anti-racist education for African-American students.”²⁷
10. **African-centered education can, not only be the source of “genuine love, concern, and respect between students, teachers, and parents [but] can also help improve African-American students’ self-esteem.”**²⁸ There are two critical terms in the previous statement that must be addressed as they relate to African-centered education. *Self-esteem* is the amount of worth or value one

²⁶ Matunhu, 69.

²⁷ Watson-Vandiver, et al., *The Genius of Imhotep*, 159.

²⁸ Lomotey, *Journal of Negro Education*, 456.

places on his or her existence. When historically a people have been considered uncivilized and less than human, adequate correction of such beliefs is necessary to uplift the value, worth, and self-esteem of that people. DeGruy posits:

Vacant esteem is the state of believing oneself to have little or no worth, exacerbated by the group and societal pronouncement of inferiority. Vacant esteem is the net result of three spheres of influence – society, our community and our family. Society influences us through its institutions, laws, policies and media. . . . Vacant esteem, being a symptom of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, is transmitted from generation to generation through the family, community and society. When the parents in a family believe themselves to have little or no value, it reflects itself in behaviors that can instill a similar belief in their children. This belief is passed down through generations in the form of unexamined, and often long-established, child rearing practices. Some of the extreme ways we have worked to make our children submissive and docile provide examples of established parenting practices that can contribute to vacant esteem.²⁹

In fact, vacant self-esteem is one of the major causes of hopelessness and despair in the African American community. If the African American rarely sees his or her existence as valuable, then why would the African American value anyone else's life? Asante offers "...if African American children were taught to be fully aware of the struggles of our African forbearers they would find a renewed sense of purpose and vision in their own lives. They would cease acting as if they have no past and no future."³⁰ A vicious cycle such as this can only be refuted through an enriched education system that intrinsically seeks to develop and strengthen the African American students' self-esteem.

²⁹ DeGruy. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 125.

³⁰ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea in Education*, 177.

The second term that warrants additional discussion is the word *respect*. In the black community, and, again, throughout African American history, respect has far too often taken the form of *disrespect*. DeGruy describes how respect and disrespect have influenced the African American community:

During slavery Africans were not given titles of respect by whites. They were never addressed as “ladies” or “gentlemen,” “Sir” or “Ma’am,” ‘Mister,’ or ‘Miss’ or “Mrs.,” so they conferred their own designation of respect. They addressed one another as “Big Mama,” and “Big daddy,” “Ma-dea,” “Sister” or “Brother” to convey honor. As a continuing legacy of slavery, Afro-Americans today have recognized that the society around them does not always respect them and have developed a hypersensitivity to, and anger about being disrespected.³¹

It is critical for the survival of the African American community that self-esteem and respect be practiced in African-centered learning systems and subsequently throughout the African American village-community. Additional evidence, clarity, and research will support the aforementioned ten questions and their responses in the present research.

Case Study Analysis

Case Study: Shule 1. Imhotep Academy

The sprawling campus of Imhotep Academy lends itself to potential expansion. This being the Academy’s third location since 2014, the facility is bustling with creativity. Upon entry, the energy from the students is learning-focused and powerful. For this particular case study, the information concerning Imhotep Academy is public knowledge and articulated via the Academy’s website:

³¹ Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 165.

<https://imhotepacademyme.wpcomstaging.com/>. The name of the shule, as well as the names of the shule's founders and administration, are stated with permission from the shule administration. In this case, the names of the Head of School-Owner, Charlton Harris, Sr. and the Principal, Dr. Lillian H. Harris, are public knowledge as well. Their relationship is relevant to the subject matter of this research.

The current owner and Head of School is Charlton Harris, Sr. whose father, Donzelle Rosenberg, was one of the original founders. Charlene Rosenberg and former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) member Evette Jackson founded Imhotep Academy in 1993. As many African American families statistically struggle for survival, the bond between the Harris family members can be effective in demonstrating the power of black familial relationships. The legacy of the Elders (the Rosenbergs and Evette Jackson) is significant as well. The following are some highlights that are critical to an adequate description of Imhotep:

- **Classroom Ratio – 1 to 15 – maximum class size = 18. Grades Pre-K 4 through 8.** Although the school boasts student participation at 185, Imhotep manages small classes and essential individualized attention. Imhotep believes that education should begin at 3 years of age. However, the State of Georgia regulates education to begin at 4 years of age. Imhotep must comply. Admission to classes is not based on pre-testing. This allows for a learning mix ranging from the Academy's most gifted students to those who may appear to learn differently.
- **Funding.** Imhotep is a tuition-based program. Fundraising activities support the school but very rarely is there any external funding. The Head of School believes that Imhotep “must put a price on the product”. Based on this belief, to avoid failure, Imhotep cannot and will not rely on or depend on sustenance based on grants or commitments from external sources. The Head of School firmly believes that the Academy and any other African-centered school must have a person or team whose primary focus is fundraising.
- **Accreditation.** In its early years, as Atlanta Prep, there was no focus on accreditation. However, Imhotep Academy is now fully accredited by the State of Georgia and the Georgia Independent School Association.

- **African-Centered Focus.** Imhotep’s leadership’s approach to education is to provide a learning experience to prepare students to be “competitive on the world stage”. With such a focus, although Kente cloth was previously part of their African-centered uniforms, the students now wear simple uniforms that are similar to uniforms worn by students in most of Atlanta’s public and charter schools. Holidays are rarely acknowledged. For example, October 14th was recently acknowledged but only as “Indigenous Day” as opposed to Columbus Day.
- **Staff.**
 - Head of School
 - Principal
 - Directors (2)
 - Para-professionals (Assistants) (3)
 - Technology (1)
 - Physical Education (1)
 - Music (1)
 - Spanish (1)
 - Classroom Teachers (14)
 - Office Staff (2)
 - Cafeteria Monitor (1)
 - Janitorial (2)

From the website:

The Imhotep Center of Education was founded in 1993 in Atlanta, Georgia by Mrs. Evette Jackson, Mr. Donzell Rosenberg, and Mrs. Charlene Rosenberg. Named after the Black Egyptian Multi-Genius, Imhotep, the Father of Medicine, Architect of the first step pyramid, and Chief Advisor to multiple Pharaohs. These pioneers sought to establish an African-centered institution that instilled in their students a strong appreciation of self and placed no limits on their capacity and ability to learn. The school first opened its doors in the summer of 1993 to approximately 35 Ultimate Students and two visionary teachers, and co-Director Wilma Spinks. Uniting with African-American traditions, Imhotep’s foundation is built on the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles), which instill in our students moral values for which to live their lives. Now boasting nearly 25 years of educating thousands of the next generation of leaders, today Imhotep Academy, under direction of Mr. Charlton Harris, continues to build a legacy of Ultimate Students dedicated to seizing the moment, uplifting their community, and making their mark in the world.

Mission

Imhotep Academy is committed to the development of the whole child. We believe that it is our responsibility to develop children mentally, physically, and intellectually to have:

- A passion for learning supported by academic excellence and scholarship
- Moral values and character traits that positively foster future success
- Knowledge of self and community to strengthen confidence, leadership, social responsibility and citizenship
- A healthy, safe, engaged and supportive educational environment

Our Vision:

Imhotep Academy strives to develop scholars and future leaders, while continuing to provide broad and accelerated academic experiences.

Our Philosophy: Imhotep Academy...

- Is dedicated to sound scholarship and academics that foster the development of curiosity and independent thought
- Enables our students to acquire the skills, knowledge and self-respect which are appropriate foundations for lifelong learning and personal development
- Believes that children have special talents and abilities that develop at different rates and that they learn best using a variety of academic disciplines
- Provides a well-rounded program that balances physical development and sound growth
- Provides each student with accelerated academics that challenges students on and above their grade level
- Encourages collaborative, action-based, and constructive learning environments
- Invites parents to understand and actively support the school's vision, mission and goals

Case Study: Shule 2. Aya Educational Institute

Co-founded in 1998 by a unique husband and wife team, the web-based Aya Educational Institute is an independent, African-centered institution located in Atlanta, Georgia. Based on what has previously been stated regarding institution-building and the creation and development of sustainable black institutions, Aya is a remarkable education system focusing on middle and high school students. The Director and co-founder of Aya

Educational Institute welcomed the opportunity for a live interview. Students learn via a web-based platform and log-in to Zoom™ (Zoom.us/Zoom Video Communications, Inc.) classes weekdays from 8:15AM to 4PM. The majority of the students that have graduated received full scholarships and Aya is credited with an 83.3% success rate. However, Aya is not accredited by any accrediting institution. The Director indicated that the “parents provide accreditation” which speaks to the community/family/village-based relationship that is nurtured as a result of the Aya Educational Institute motif. Parents of the students receive monthly training as well. The Institute, as with many independent schools, does not see accreditation as a necessary tool for the success of their students. Based on the 83.3% success rate and their graduates receiving full scholarships, evidence agrees with the view that accreditation is unnecessary. As Aya Educational Institute is an independent, African-centered shule, Aya is fee-based and supported by individual student tuition. In the interview, the rigorous curriculum and schedule of classes were viewed, and the Director articulated the creative methodology behind Aya’s *Warrior-Healer-Builder* model. Based on class titles and descriptions, the education system beckons students’ attention and demonstrates the potential for continued and consistent success. Currently, Aya Educational Institute has an enrollment of 30 students (full and part-time) and 8 teachers with a 10-to-1 teacher/student ratio.

Survey Analysis

The following questions have been extracted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved survey questionnaire (see Appendix A, Survey Questionnaire). In

highlighting these specific questions, it is possible to strategically extrapolate congruence and incongruence with the research problem and questions.

Q14. IS AN AFRICAN-CENTERED CURRICULUM NECESSARY FOR THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT IN ATLANTA?

83% of respondents agreed that an African-centered curriculum is necessary for the African-American student in Atlanta. Some specific responses: “empowering”; “helpful”; and “yes, but not just in Atlanta, everywhere; and improves self-confidence and grounding”.

1: Didn’t know

1: “Would have to know what an African-centered curriculum would entail”

2: No

1: Not Applicable

Q16. DO YOU AGREE THAT THROUGH AN AFRICAN-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT, THE GENIUS WITHIN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT CAN BE NURTURED AND STUDENTS CAN BE EMPOWERED?

80% of respondents agreed that through an African-centered environment, the genius within the African-American student can be nurtured and students can be empowered. Some specific responses: “absolutely, again a sense of self-worth, pride, and courage would do the African-American community more good especially in today’s modern society;” and “yes, it gives the students a strong foundation to stand on, knowing the struggles and history of our people”.

1: Not at all

1: “Maybe – it can help BUT they must also master the skills necessary to navigate a world that has systems and values and culture quite different than African-centered”

1: No

1: “Not necessarily a true genius can learn anywhere”

2: Not Applicable

Q19. IN YOUR OPINION, IS THERE A CRITICAL NEED FOR SCHOOLS TO BE SAFE HAVENS FOR THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT? WHY?

93% of respondents agreed that there is a critical need for schools to be safe havens for the African-American student. Some specific responses:

- “Yes, This Community is traumatized in many ways and Safe havens in our learning institutions can provide opportunity to focus one’s mind and grow free from distractions”
- “yes, There are few spaces in which AA students feel safe. Especially with recent shoo-ins [sic], etc. A space where students are developing themselves personally, should be safe”
- “yes. Students spend more time in schools than home, so being a safe haven must be a requirement”

- “There definitely is a need, because the public school system has failed students of color”
- “Yes. Political and social climates make safe havens difficult”
- “Indeed...they spend all their time there, they need to feel safe!”
- “Schools should be a safe haven for all students!”
- “Yes. Unfortunately, there is still a critical need for many Afrikan children to have a safe place to go to be understood and cherished”
- “In order to teach an African-American student and for them to feel comfortable in a learning setting it should be a safe haven!”
- “Yes, African-Americans in America are very exposed to violence”
- “for everybody not just african-americans”
- “Yes, to end white supremacy and also liberate the enslaved minds”
- “Absolutely. To help in the process of building their self-esteem”
- “More than ever before, I think every child deserves to have an educational facility that is a safe haven”
- “Yes, because on a social level schools natural pull away from teaching African topics and just American topics and this strips away from your identity if it is not being taught in the home”
- “Yes because they spend a lot of time there and it should be a place of enrichment and edification”
- “Sure. Foster a sense of belonging”
- “yes, african-american students have to deal with the stress of being a student and the struggles that comes with being a black student; double consciousness”

1: “maybe - but the world is not safe - the sooner you learn to navigate it the more time you have to master it”

1: No: “No ‘safe havens’ or ‘safe spaces’ are needed to become productive members of society. African-American students must compete and succeed alongside students of every other race, color, and creed. To pretend otherwise is the height of Afrocentric political nonsense”

Responses to the Research Questions Based on Findings

Research Question (1): What are the issues and problems that explain the urgency in the development and implementation of an independent African-centered shule in the Atlanta metropolitan community?

Hope is dwindling. The continued infringement on the souls of African Americans students by Eurocentric methods, practices, behaviors, and society, in general,

is taking its toll. The lives of African American students are in danger as well as their minds. Shores et al. argue:

... in the 2015-2016 school year, relative to White students, Black students were more than 3 times as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension, more than 3 times as likely to be retained a grade, half as likely to be classified as Gifted and Talented (GT), and half as likely to take an Advanced Placement (AP) course in high school.³²

In a recent Washington Post article, Strauss argues that although most of America tends to agree that its schools are failing, failing U.S. schools may not be the reality. Strauss contends that “sweeping large-scale reform is hardly the remedy for what ails our most vulnerable schools – the schools where our poorest and least advantaged students are all so often concentrated together”.³³ It is not the goal of this research to propose remedies for what ails education in the United States. What the research reveals is whether anyone in America agrees or disagrees with the position that education in the United States is failing, there is evidence that education systems in the United States are failing to educate its African American student populations.

This research has successfully argued that the independent, African-centered shule is inseparable from the community. Rickford’s early research concurs with the village-community aspect and describes the interrelation between the shule and the community:

³² Kenneth Shores, Ha Eun Kim, and Mela Still, “Categorical Inequality in Black and White: Linking Disproportionality Across Multiple Educational Outcomes”, *American Educational Research Journal* XX, no. X, (2020): 2.

³³ Valerie Strauss, How are America’s public schools really doing? *Washington Post*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2018/10/15/how-are-americas-public-schools-really-doing/>.

... a revolution *by* education required a revolution *in* education. Schools would have to be dramatically reimagined if they were to be engines of the new society rather than bulwarks of the status quo. They would need to become ‘liberated zones’ that could function as self-contained communities and embryos of the coming nation.³⁴

Asante suggest that schools as institutions assume the characteristics of the “nation in which they are developed”.³⁵ He further argues that education has the power to negatively affect the lives of “already politically and economically marginalized people – African Americans”.³⁶ Asante contends:

- (1) Education is fundamentally a social phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is to socialize the learner; to send a child to school is to prepare that child to become part of a social group.
- (2) Schools are reflective of the societies that develop them (i.e., a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White supremacist educational system).³⁷

Herein lies the truth, especially based on Asante; schools that are reflective of a systemic racist society, then the education seething from those schools is racist. The research has effectively presented the concept of schools as *mahali pa usalama* (safe havens) and addresses many of the woes of the African American community. African American youth are endangered, and subsequently, struggle to survive due to in-school factors such as: teacher bias, school-to-prison pipeline, disparate discipline rates, *miseducation*, Eurocentricity, bullying, and unfair standardized testing. The out-of-school

³⁴ Russell Rickford, *We Are An African People*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 12.

³⁵ Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 174.

³⁶ Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 170.

³⁷ Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 170.

factors include: trauma, disease, police shootings, systemic racism, disparate incarceration rates, and so much more. There is a need for independent, African-centered education that through truth-based learning, African American students in Atlanta can realize their purpose and destiny. Where the dominant society may perceive African American students as inhuman or of no value, the African American community through independent African-centered education can empower these same students and re-center them. This is the root challenge for African-centered education in the Atlanta metropolitan community.

Research Question (2): Based on models of the past freedom and liberation schools from the ‘60s – ‘70s, can a hybrid form of independent African-centered shule as safe havens be created and implemented for long-term success in the Atlanta metropolitan community?

There are many reasons that an independent, African-centered school will succeed in metro Atlanta. This argument hypothesizes that the primary reason an African-centered school will succeed in metro Atlanta is based on the reconceptualization of the village-community, as previously discussed in Chapter II. In addition, Atlanta, as a location, is uniquely relevant to this research due to two other critical factors: (1) The 2nd largest majority black population in the United States resides in the Atlanta metropolitan area; and (2) Georgia was founded as a non-slave holding colony. The latter was short-lived but remains significant when understanding the original intent with the establishment of Georgia as a colony. The *New Georgia Encyclopedia* explains Georgia’s origins this way: “Between 1735 and 1750 Georgia was unique among Britain’s American colonies,

as it was the only one to attempt to prohibit black slavery as a matter of public policy”.³⁸

Of course, much has transpired since Georgia’s unique origins, however, the original prohibition of slavery adds to the promise of Georgia as a birthplace for reconceptualization of the village-community. In addition, although the 2nd largest majority black population resides in the Atlanta metropolitan area, next to Native Americans, blacks have the lowest high school graduation rate (See Appendix B).

Atlanta is also the 2nd largest majority black metro area in the country. Still, African Americans in the city have been moving to the suburbs over the last ten years, and the city's black population shrank from 61.4% in 2000 to 54% in 2010.³⁹

These statistics clearly state the need as well as the potential for success. More importantly, since the research proves a great amount of African Americans reside in metro Atlanta, there is a greater potential for those African Americans to thrive and realize how to best rebuild the African American community. This research provides evidence that only the African American community can reconceptualize the village-community.

The research indicates that the only effective method of detaching African American students from *miseducation* is through African-centered education. This expository education must have Africa at its core. This education must explore African language, African ideologies, African culture, African history and an entirely fresh,

³⁸ Georgiaencyclopedia.org. *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/slavery-colonial-georgia>.

³⁹Google.com. https://www.google.com/search?q=HOW+MANY+BLACKS+IN+ATLANTA&rlz=1C1EJFC_enUS837US837_oq=HOW+MANY+BLACKS+IN+ATLANTA&aqs=chrome..69i57.11046j1j7_sourceid=chrome_ie=UTF-8).

unique, African-centered curriculum. This education must serve Africa and Africans worldwide and must seek to develop both the African student and the African American student. However, this must begin with protecting African American students through *mahali pa usalama* (safe havens) and independent, African-centered shule.

Education centers must be established globally with curricula that not only encourage critical thinking but creative thinking – not individuality for the sake of individualism but teaching community for the sake of the environment and for the benefit of the world. Why must one have lost for the other to win? African concepts such as *Ubuntu* will help the world understand the need to discard unhealthy competition. *Ubuntu* and other African concepts will provide the guidance that reveals how we all can find ways to win. *Ubuntu* and so many other components of African culture will influence curricula void of narcissism and the evils of capitalism. In conjunction with *Sankofa Theory*, it is critical that the history and evolution of independent, African-centered education be examined.

In formulating pedagogy and curricula for the extremely unique, independent, African-centered shule described in this study, it is critical that a team of scholars be sought after to assume this responsibility. This daunting and major component of legacy and institution-building cannot be taken lightly. Carruthers provides guidelines for the development of an African-centered curriculum:

- (1) Africa should be studied through primary data (e.g., its literature, its documents, and its oral tradition),
- (2) Africa should be presented as a continuous component of world history with cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions,
- (3) Africa should be presented with balance (e.g., antiquity and contemporary; agricultural, pastoral, and urban; oral and literate; and problems and successes),
- (4) Africa should be studied from a

comparative, multicultural framework (e.g., in comparison to Europe, Asia, etc.), (5) ancient Africa must be presented in terms of race specificity (e.g., the current sociopolitical constructions of race dictate that the Ancient Egyptians were Black people), (6) Africa must be studied with respect to all disciplines (e.g., science and mathematics as well as language and art), and (7) Africa must be presented in truth (e.g., Africa must be presented as it is and was without falsification).⁴⁰

Correcting the flaws in colonized, European or western-centered education can only be accomplished through an evidence-based, African-centered education. Education is the emetic for *miseducation*. This is the remedy. This is the medication. This is the antidote. Education centers must be established globally with curricula that not only encourage critical thinking but creative thinking – not individuality for the sake of individualism but teaching community for the sake of the environment and for the benefit of the world.

Research Question (3): What must be done to guarantee the long-term success of independent African-centered education in the Atlanta metropolitan community?

There are two extremely critical components that have the potential to guarantee the success of an independent, African-centered school: funding and institution-building. In 1969, Theodore Cross, brilliantly explored black economic potential and warned that his research was “concerned with a different face of poverty—not the view that proclaims that almost everyone in the ghetto is poor—but rather the reverse face of poverty that states that almost nobody in the ghettos of America is rich, or even affluent”.⁴¹ It is through the revitalization and rebuilding of independent, African-centered shule that

⁴⁰ Carruthers, *The African-Centered Curriculum*, 7-8.

⁴¹ Theodore L. Cross, *Black Capitalism: Strategy for Business in the Ghetto*. (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1969), vii-viii.

black economic potential can be explored and understood resulting in consistent and unprecedented wealth-building throughout the African American community. As stated in Chapter V (Findings), one of the guidelines and critical factors in the success of Imhotep Academy (an existing independent African-centered school in Atlanta) is their lack of dependency on external funding. The owner-administrator contends that effective planning demands that the school rely only on students' tuition payments for school expenses. In planning for external funding, there is never a genuine guarantee that such funding will always be available. A critical argument that supports tuition-based sustenance is that if external funders disagree with any actions of the school, external funders could pull their funding and dramatically affect operations. Historically, when this parting of ways occurs, African-centered education suffers. Imhotep also suggests that an individual or team be hired to focus FULL-TIME on funding and all financial matters related to any independent, African-centered shule. As further argued in this present research, it is also critical that governance and leadership of the shule operate at higher levels of accountability and integrity in all matters, especially as it relates to the finances.

The survey results show that the majority of respondents agree that there is a need for African-centered education in Atlanta. The majority of respondents also agreed that such African-centered education is highly beneficial for all stakeholders, especially students. The administrators of both of the African-centered shules featured in the Case Studies also agreed that there is a dire need for African-centered education in Atlanta and more shule are urgently needed. These administrators contend that African-centered

education is a huge benefit for the students and the community. As stated in all of the foundational principles of the seven shule discussed in this research, the administrators believe it is the students that are being educated in African-centered learning who will change not only themselves, their families, their communities, and Atlanta, Georgia, but the entire world.

After facing extreme adversity and discrimination against women of color, Katherine Johnson excelled extraordinarily "... calculating the trajectory for America's first space trip with Alan Shepherd's 1961 mission, an early step toward a moon landing".⁴² In addition to her multiple degrees and awards, including the prestigious *Presidential Medal of Freedom* (the United States' highest honor for civilians), Johnson "went on to do the calculations for the first actual moon landing in 1969".⁴³

In addition to the potential benefits to the Atlanta metropolitan area and the United States, the effective education of African American students can greatly benefit the entire international community and the environment as well. However, what is most important are the internal benefits that an African American student can gain as a result of an African-centered education. "The benefits of an African-centered education are clear, as it develops African-centered consciousness and self-identity, produces Black leaders and institution builders, and empowers children with pride as a safeguard against racism."⁴⁴

⁴² NASA.gov. *Katherine Johnson: A Lifetime of STEM*.
<https://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/a-lifetime-of-stem.html>.

⁴³ NASA.gov. *Katherine Johnson: A Lifetime of STEM*.

⁴⁴ Love, *Too Many Afrocentric Schools Are Underfunded*.

Unexpected Findings

During the research process, there were variations of African-centered values. The connectedness to African culture and consciousness is currently represented in such a vast wealth of practices. Is it as important to wear African garments and hairstyles as it is to assume an African name? Is it essential to recognize European holidays as opposed to establishing holidays that are representative of African culture? Are traditional African community behaviors being developed and engaged such as belief in African ancestors and the critical role of Elders in the village-community? It is recommended that in the planning process, the leadership develop a strategy to ascertain how best to approach African-centeredness during development of independent African-centered shule. It is important, as with any family, the leadership spend the requisite time to determine what is the best fit for that particular family. However, whatever the leadership decides, they must (1) test the strategy and be willing and ready to adapt and change if the need arises—flexibility is critical; and (2) be consistent. Whatever approach to African-centeredness is implemented, the theme must be consistent throughout all points-of-contact and all components of the shule's operations.

What remains debatable is the issue of accreditation. How accreditation affects curricula and pedagogy and the overall African-centered values of an independent African-centered shule must be explored in further research and planning for implementation of an African-centered shule. Based on the findings in this present research, accreditation from external accrediting bodies is not a necessity for nurturing talented students. When the students are well-educated, there are no limitations to their

ability to succeed at institutions of higher learning. However, whether to pursue accreditation or not is an issue that must be resolved in the governance and planning of an independent, African-centered shule. In actuality, the term *independent* should be waived or omitted if external accrediting bodies provide any input into the decision-making or governance of the African-centered shule.

Limitations and Recommendations

This present research did not conduct classroom observations; however, there is much more that can be gleaned from actually observing the day-to-day operations of a learning facility. For future research, it is recommended that a team of skilled educational professionals conduct classroom and site visits and observations.

This present research did not seek to develop pedagogy or curricula for African-centered education in general. In addition, there was no investigation into business plans, policies and procedures or operations manuals or any other research related to the creation and development of an independent, African-centered shule. All of the above items stated in this paragraph are recommended for future research.

It is highly recommended that research be conducted in methods of obtaining additional financial resources from African Americans. The legal ramifications of grants and donations and other fundraising activities should be explored. Whether to establish a school as a non-profit or for-profit and research into business planning are necessary areas of future research.

It is recommended that unity of purpose for all African-centered shule and common vision be investigated. Research needs to be performed to ascertain how

African-centered shule throughout Atlanta communicate with each other. Do the leaders of the shule meet and compare methodologies? Are there any forms of comradery or consistent communication informed by the Swahili term (Umoja)? The unifying of African-centered shule is critical to the survival of the African American community.

What is the best method to educate African Americans on the benefits of African-centered education? Advocates for African-Centered Education (A-A.C.E.) propose that a membership organization, which can be researched and developed as not only an organization for educating the community on African-centered education, but also serving as a core network advancing the unity and communication between African-centered shule would be a great option. At the least, A-A.C.E. could establish a website and a monthly newsletter exclusively for the purpose of educating and advocating for African-centered education and networking and communicating effectively.

How can such facilities be professionally, ethically and adequately secured as *mahali pa usalama* (safe havens) for African American youth? What is the best way to prepare African American youth to protect themselves? This must not be underestimated, for independent, African-centered shule must be *mahali pa usalama* (safe havens) in every possible way. This present research does not seek to prescribe a particular program, plan, strategy, or activity that would correct all of the issues relevant to the protection of African American students. However, further research is required and absolutely necessary to discover a program, plan, strategy, and activities that will protect the entire African American village-community. In his work entitled *Nation Building*, Baba Kwame

Agyei Akoto of Nation House Watoto, based in Washington, DC, reminds the village-community of its responsibility in regard to protecting and educating:

The very elements that would assure our children's success and our culture's survival are at risk in the age of video, cable, hand-held electronic games, form-fitting body suits, nudity, random and indiscriminate sex, random morality, random and excessive violence, inconsequential relationships, and general over-stimulation. One of our children's favorite phrases, one that should send shock waves through our consciousness, is 'I'm bored' or 'that's boring.' When that phrase is uttered, it is an indication that we have surrendered some part of their being and our collective souls to the clutches of white Western infamy.

It is the obligation of parents to maintain and build institutions like NationHouse in order to maintain an environment that is safe and protected, and righteous. As a people, we don't have any option but to maintain institutions and communities that are designed solely to assure the survival and development of our people. We must establish and maintain firm guidelines for ourselves as parents and families, and for our children. Failure to do so means that we will lose them.⁴⁵

The success of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School program, although established in 1973, is relevant to this research and offers ideas for future research and implementation:

From monitoring the excessive violence of police, to providing breakfast, lunch, and dinner to Black youth in need of food, the Black Panther Party was truly about the empowerment and upliftment of Black people. Furthermore, the importance of self-determination was present throughout everything the Black Panther Party touched. Yes, the Black Panther Party was about calling out white supremacy and the way in which it continues to exploit and oppress Black women and men for capital gain; but let's be clear, the Party was rooted in community. That commitment to community can be seen in the 60 plus survival programs that emerged from the Black Panther Party—one of those being the Oakland Community School.

The longest standing program of all the survival programs, the Oakland Community School (OCS) was established in 1973 in East Oakland, with the underlying principle being, "We serve the people every day. We serve the people, body and soul." Directed by Ericka Huggins and Donna Howell, OCS provided youth with a culturally relevant education and challenged the public school

⁴⁵ Akoto, *Nationbuilding*, 183.

system's perceptions of what it meant to be Black and poor.¹ Student enrollment at OCS reached 150 and had a daunting wait list that even included unborn children. Students were taught a wide variety of subjects from math to history by members of their community. But it wasn't just about memorizing facts and dates; former OCS students passionately stated during the panel discussion at the conference that, "they taught us how to think not what to think." At OCS, Black youth were not afraid to be themselves or to ask questions. Their self-esteem and confidence were constantly reaffirmed as a result of the staff and faculty members who were led by the heart and invested in their development. OCS empowered Black youth to find their voices and help liberate their spirits.

Point 5 of the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Platform states:

"WE WANT DECENT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else."

As described on the OCS website by Ericka Huggins, a typical day at OCS went as follows:

The students remember starting the day with a ten-minute exercise program. Breakfast, followed by a short, school wide interactive check-in preceded the morning classes. A nutritious lunch at midday and ten minutes of meditation in the early afternoon was followed by classes for the older children and rest for the smaller ones. Dinner concluded the day and the school vans transported the children who could not walk to their homes.

It is important to note that it was the BPP's Oakland Community School practice of providing breakfast for students that led to the nation's requirement to provide breakfast for students in public schools. What's even more interesting is that 50 years ago, the Black Panther Party knew that practicing meditation and mindfulness had a positive impact on student well-being. OCS students also participated in martial arts classes, helped support other survival programs, and had peer led justice committees for dealing with disputes and conflict which serves as further proof that the OCS was truly ahead of time. All of this was created to make up for what the public school system failed to provide for Black youth.

The parallels to our present day realities couldn't be more similar.

Now in 2016, our public school system still leaves out the histories, experiences, and cultures of Black and brown people, pushing forth a narrative that is overwhelmingly white and European focused. In 2016, Black students continue to face assaults on their character as a result of zero tolerance policies that make using a cell phone, wearing one's natural hair, or simply talking— a criminal offense. Rather than prioritize the hiring of quality educators and counselors, our country's leaders believe that police officers should be trained as counselors and mentors— despite sweeping evidence that shows the negative and harmful interactions between police officers and Black youth. Our country's leaders are clearly missing the point. We should be taking cues from those that have come before us and use BPP's Oakland Community School as a model for what empowering and enriching academic environments look like.

What is incredible about the Black Panther Party and the creation of the Oakland Community School is that community rose up to take care of their own community. The Oakland Community School was created because there was a need. There was a need for a safe place for Black students to learn and grow. There was a need for Oakland youth to be educated by people who look like them, people who were from their community. There was a need to challenge the European frame of reference when talking about history. There was a need to liberate the minds of Oakland Black youth. If we educate, heal, protect, and liberate our youth, those teachings will be passed on to the generations to come. Taking care of each other is a model for liberation and for that we are forever grateful of the revolutionary insight of the Black Panther Party.⁴⁶

Further research is needed on the following concepts that would serve as supporting mechanisms to the independent, African-centered shules discussed in this present study.

Curricula Development and Learning System Support (LSS) Ideas

A.M.P.E.D. PLUS™

Acting, Music, Production, Entrepreneurship and Dance, AMPED+ innovative arts curriculum will explore a reconceptualization of arts programs that have functioned as part of public school programs in the past. AMPED+ expands the current understanding of *creative arts* to include acting, music, production, entrepreneurship, dance,

⁴⁶ Shani Ealey. *Black Panthers' Oakland Community School: A Model for Liberation*. <http://blackorganizingproject.org/black-panthers-oakland-community-school-a-model-for-liberation/>.

instrumentalism, engineering (audio, video, software, App design, robotics, etc.), fashion, poetry, spoken word and rap, arts history, genre, music theory, art theory, dance theory, acting theory and drama, business and the arts (entrepreneurship), and more.

Kapable™

For those in the African American community that understand the necessity to compete in this nation and globally, superior-level education attainment, job preparedness and sustained employability are critical! Kapable™ curricula must be designed, not only for the youth but for adults as well who are engaged in seeking careers. As part of the reconceptualization of the village-community, African-centered institutions should also function as career-building centers where all aspects of employment are taught and developed ensuring the rebuilding of families and the entire African American community.

BrainZoo™

LIE-braries, as they currently exist, not only in schools but in the African American community are designed within the Eurocentric paradigm. These institutions are the ultimate in housing historical information and data that support the subjugation of the African American and the elevation of white dominant society. The African American has no time to search and destroy all of the erroneous materials that fuel miseducation that are housed in these huge complexes of inadequacy. However, the African American can begin to build institutions based on the truths of ancient Africa that hold information, data, and technology that is 100% truth and evidence based. This present research does not challenge the hypocrisy of lie-brary disparity that finds inadequate resources in the African American community in comparison to lie-braries that serve the European or white dominant society's communities. That is the work of future research.

In addition to the lie-braries, there is a concept referred to as *brainstorming*. Typically, brainstorming is used to expose ideas and critical analysis especially when attempting to solve a problem or develop a strategy. At some point, most of the ideas and analyses are dismissed through elimination and the remaining ideas and analyses are considered to be the best answer or solution to the problem or method for implementation of a chosen strategy. Based on Kemetic concepts, African-centered thinking is ultimately creative and NO idea is dismissed or eliminated for it is through the process of implementation of ideas that cures for illness and solutions to the world's problems can be found. It is in this ideology coupled with the need for dissolution of *lie*-braries and the negativity of *brainstorming* that the concept of the *BrainZoo™* is promoted. The concept is similar to the understanding that no question is a dumb question. The concept begs for critical analysis skills in all components of the African-centered education process. All questions and ideas birthed in the midst of a *BrainZoo™* are nurtured and developed to their maximum potential. It is within the hallowed walls of truth and evidence based *BrainZoos™* that the genius and brilliance of African Americans can be revitalized.

S.T.E.E.M.W.A.R.TM

Science. Technology. Engineering. Economics. Math. Writing. Arts. Reading. Starting with *STEM* (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) evolving more currently into *STEAM* (adding Arts back into curricula), there is new research that suggests *STREAM* (adding Reading back into curricula) is the most effective way to go. Further research is needed to examine the benefits for African American students when *STEM*, *STEAM*, *STREAM* or *STEEMWARTM* curricula are the focus of an independent, African-centered shule.

It is critical to note that the study of economics is not featured in *STEM*, *STEAM*, or *STREAM* programs. However, through *STEEMWARTM*, for African-centered students, wealth-building and institution-building are essential to this curriculum. Of course, the white dominant society favors that anything related to money, finances and economics, should be coded in such a way that only the elite are able to grasp the coded information. Independent African-centered education will obliterate these barriers to wealth and institution-building. The Williams University (a predominantly white institution) catalog provides economics courses:

Economics addresses issues that are central to our daily lives: our material standard of living, poverty, inequality, unemployment, and inflation, among others. The methodology of economics contributes insights to public policy that can help guide efforts to increase social wellbeing and distribute that wellbeing in a fair way. Microeconomics studies the behavior of individual entities such as households or firms. Macroeconomics looks at the big picture, the economy as a whole, and its growth and fluctuations.⁴⁷

To prepare the African American student for prosperity, success, and wealth, the code that hides wealth and institution-building strategies must be effectively and strategically deciphered.

After-School and Week-End School

With a focus on rebuilding the village-community, the independent African-centered shule must be a 24-7 operational facility. Not only does such a concept lend itself to protection and safety for the village-community, but the schedule allows for never-ending-learning. Similar to the black church of the past, the independent, African-centered shule must provide activities, entertainment, shelter, and so much more.

WondaLand

⁴⁷ Williams.edu. *Economics 2019-20*. <https://catalog.williams.edu/econ/>.

Wondaland is a concept that should be further developed that suggests a fantasyland, world of amusement and discovery, entertainment and fun for teens/tweens – a youth fun world and night club supporting family and community while providing a safe haven for African American youth.

Little Drs.

Possibly one of the most powerful curricula and learning strategies is Little Drs. The goal of Little Drs. is to ignite the love of science, medicine, health and technology by engaging Little Drs. in an entertaining learning adventure that inspires a desire to embark upon a future in the medical and healthcare industry. Using innovative technology and the power of play, Little Drs. will virtually, interactively, and demonstratively learn about the variety and wealth of medical, dental, and veterinary professions.

MuzicWerks™

Designed as an after-school program, **MuzicWerks™** is a hands-on music production education system used in teaching a strategic computer-based music software package. **MuzicWerks™** has already enjoyed success serving several public schools in Fulton County, Georgia.

Adult, Parent and Family Programs

Girls Night Out (GNO) and Rites of Passage (ROP)

In many cases, rites of passage is considered a standard practice for African American and African boys. However, a program for the African American and African girls and adult females should be researched. Each program must be uniquely tailored to the needs of the males and females in the village-community. In addition, the Girls Night Out (GNO) could possibly be a monthly overnight takeover of girls. GNO will forge a legacy in the hearts and minds of these young girls providing an atmosphere for healing, protection, relationships, deliverance and just plain fun!

Zoom/ZoomXChange™

Education – Communication in one of its highest forms. In order to achieve some form of competitive advantage, education must include, not only developing curricula for the intellects of now and the future, but training for adults and non-traditional learners in preparation for employment worldwide. Zoom will direct all of the education and training for all components of the independent, African-centered shule. Creative learning experiences – phenomenal approaches to learning – teaching – communicating. Curricula that are as equally relevant as they are enlightening. Outreach and proactive learning-distribution programs will be the focus of Zoom. Zoom's scripted curricula will be an internationally-franchised course for youth, parents, law enforcement, the incarcerated

and all who are challenged by any of the aspects of the threats to survival. Youth today deal with terrifying concepts such as “cyber-bullying” and other forms of hate, poisoning our streets, schools and communities. Zoom offers learning and relational concepts and training to aid in surviving.

ZoomXChange acts as liaison for those who need employees and employees who seek employment – internationally. The world is shrinking. It will soon be nearly as easy to send an employee to Ghana as it is to send an employee to Miami. With today’s technology, the increasing utilization of the Internet and the world’s need to repair broken employment issues, ZoomXChange will quickly fill the void in international business employment. ZoomXChange will also focus a significant amount of energy in assisting students in procuring internships as well as preparing students for college and universities, especially early and/or dual enrollment.

A-A.C.E.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Advocates for African-Centered Education (A-A.C.E.) should be a membership organization developed as a support to the village-community and as an advocate for African-centered education.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

African-centered education, whether independent, public, private, or chartered, must never cease to exist and must be supported based on this present research. If this present research does anything, indeed, it concludes that independent African-centered education and shule are undoubtedly necessary and globally beneficial. African American learning institutions must be planned, created, developed, and nurtured for the benefit of the Atlanta metropolitan community, primarily, and subsequently, the diasporic African community. Independent African-centered education can only succeed. There is no other option. Based on the evidence in this present research, the survival of African-Americans and Africans worldwide depends upon it. The research provides evidence that not only is there a need for institution-building as described in this research but an independent African-centered shule will be highly beneficial and effective in educating students in the Atlanta African-American community. The overall implications indicate that for those willing to pioneer the exploration of the genius hidden in the hearts, minds, and African consciousness of black students, their efforts will not be in vain. An anxious world awaits.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: **EXAMINING THE EFFICACY OF AN INDEPENDENT AFRICAN-CENTERED SCHOOL IN ATLANTA.**

PARTICIPANTS: education administrators, school owners and founders, teachers, former students and parents connected to African-centered learning institutions or other learning institutions.

NOTE: THIS IS AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY. NO CONTACT OR PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS IS BEING REQUESTED NOR WILL SUCH INFORMATION BE UTILIZED FOR THIS RESEARCH.

1. WHAT IS THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE LEARNING INSTITUTION YOU ARE AFFILIATED WITH (CURRENTLY OR IN THE PAST)?

2. WHAT IS YOUR AFFILIATION WITH THAT LEARNING INSTITUTION (I.E., STUDENT, TEACHER, ETC.)?

3. IS THE LEARNING INSTITUTION EFFECTIVE AND DOES IT MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

4. IF NOT, WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OR ISSUES THAT PREVENT THE LEARNING INSTITUTION FROM BEING EFFECTIVE OR MEETING YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

5. WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AT THE LEARNING INSTITUTION?

6. WHAT PAYMENT IS REQUIRED FOR ATTENDANCE AT THE LEARNING INSTITUTION?

7. HOW IS THE LEARNING INSTITUTION FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED? (I.E., TUITION, FUNDRAISING EVENTS, PRIVATE DONORS, GRANTS, ETC.)

8. HOW MANY STUDENTS ATTEND THE LEARNING INSTITUTION?

9. DO THE FACILITIES, AESTHETIC DESIGN, AND EQUIPMENT (INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY) MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

10. IF NOT, WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE? IF SO, WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT THE FACILITIES, AESTHETIC DESIGN, AND EQUIPMENT (INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY)?

11. IS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE CURRICULUM IS TRULY AFRICAN-CENTERED?

12. IS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SCHOOL IS TRULY AN INDEPENDENT AFRICAN-CENTERED SCHOOL? PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PROVIDE A DETAILED RESPONSE.

13. WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MISSION OR GOAL OF THE LEARNING INSTITUTION?

14. IS AN AFRICAN-CENTERED CURRICULUM NECESSARY FOR THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT IN ATLANTA?

15. HOW DOES AN AFRICAN-CENTERED CURRICULUM BENEFIT STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND THE COMMUNITY OF ATLANTA?

16. DO YOU AGREE THAT THROUGH AN AFRICAN-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT, THE GENIUS WITHIN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT CAN BE NURTURED AND STUDENTS CAN BE EMPOWERED?

17. HOW DOES THE SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS YOU ARE MOST FAMILIAR WITH MEASURE OUTCOMES INCLUDING SUCCESS/FAILURE AND ACHIEVEMENT?

18. IS THE SCHOOL ACCREDITED WITH ANY ACCREDITING INSTITUTION?

19. IN YOUR OPINION, IS THERE A CRITICAL NEED FOR SCHOOLS TO BE SAFE HAVENS FOR THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT? WHY?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS:

Asante sana (thank you so much). Your participation in this survey will help further the advancement of the African-American community as well as Africans worldwide. The information provided will not only provide data to be included in the thesis mentioned above but it will also aid in the formulation of curricula and other necessary tools to reconceptualize effective and extraordinary learning systems and institutions for the appropriate education of African-Americans and African people throughout the Diaspora.

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APPENDIX B

SUPPORTING DATA FOR SHULE

NAME OF SHULE	# OF STUDENTS	STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	FACULTY	UNIFORM / AFRICAN ATTIRE	AFRICAN NAMING OF STUDENTS	AFRICAN LANGUAGE(S)	TUITION-BASED	OTHER FUND-RAISING METHODS	EXTERNAL FUNDING (CORPS., GOVT, ETC.)
MODEL A	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	AFRICAN ATTIRE	YES	Swahili, Yoruba, Zulu, French	YES 100%	Annual Fund-raising Events / Donations	NO

NAME OF SHULE	ACCREDITED?	MISSION	VISION	PHILOSOPHY/ MOTTO	WEBSITE	NUTRITION EXERCISE	GRADES / LEVELS	MAX CLASS SIZE	COMMENTS
MODEL A	NO	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	YES	VEGAN DIET	Pre-School through High School	Unavailable	Unavailable

NAME OF SHULE	# OF STUDENTS	STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	FACULTY	UNIFORM / AFRICAN ATTIRE	AFRICAN NAMING OF STUDENTS	AFRICAN LANGUAGE(S)	TUITION-BASED	OTHER FUND-RAISING METHODS	EXTERNAL FUNDING (CORPS., GOVT, ETC.)
SHULE 1: IMHOTEP ACADEMY	185	1/15 (MAX CLASS SIZE 18)	30	Although Kente cloth was previously part of their African-centered uniforms, the students now wear simple uniforms that are similar to those worn by students in most of Atlanta's public and charter schools.	NO	MULTIPLE LANGUAGES	YES	Annual Fund-raising Events	NO

NAME OF SHULE	ACCREDITED?	MISSION	VISION	PHILOSOPHY/ MOTTO	WEB-SITE	NUTRITION EXERCISE	GRADES / LEVELS	MAX CLASS SIZE	COMMENTS
SHULE 1: IMHOTEP ACADEMY	STATE OF GEORGIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ASSOCIATION	Imhotep Academy is committed to the development of the whole child. We believe that it is our responsibility to develop children mentally, physically, and intellectually to have: A passion for learning supported by academic excellence and scholarship Moral values and character traits that positively foster future success Knowledge of self and community to strengthen confidence, leadership, social responsibility and citizenship.	Imhotep Academy strives to develop scholars and future leaders, while continuing to provide broad and accelerated academic experiences.	Is dedicated to sound scholarship and academics that foster the development of curiosity and independent thought Enables our students to acquire the skills, knowledge and self-respect which are appropriate foundations for lifelong learning and personal development Believes that children have special talents and abilities that develop at different rates and that they learn best using a variety of academic disciplines Provides a well-rounded program that balances physical development and sound growth Provides each student with accelerated academics that challenges students on and above their grade level Encourages collaborative, action-based, and constructive learning environments Invites parents to understand and actively support the school's vision, mission and goals	YES	UNAVAIL.	PRE-K-4 - 8	18	From the Mission: A healthy, safe, engaged and supportive educational environment

NAME OF SHULE	# OF STUDENTS	STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	FACULTY	UNIFORM / AFRICAN ATTIRE	AFRICAN NAMING OF STUDENTS	AFRICAN LANGUAGE(S)	TUITION-BASED	OTHER FUNDRAISING METHODS	EXTERNAL FUNDING (CORPs., GOVT, ETC.)
SHULE 2: AYA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE (web-based)	30 (F/T and P/T)	10/1	10	Non-requirement – web-based (ON-LINE) program	NO	MULTIPLE LANGUAGES	YES	Annual Fundraising Events	NO

NAME OF SHULE	ACCREDITED?	MISSION	VISION	PHILOSOPHY MOTTO	WEBSITE	NUTRITION EXERCISE	GRADES / LEVELS	MAX CLASS SIZE	COMMENTS
SHULE 2: AYA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE	Aya is not accredited by any accrediting institution. The Director indicated that the "parents provide accreditation" which speaks to the community/family/village-based relationship that is nurtured as a result of the Aya Educational Institute motif. Parents of the students receive monthly training as well. The Institute, as with many independent schools, does not see accreditation as a necessary tool for the success of their students.	N/A	7 Points stated on website: AYA IS (1) High Tech / High Culture / High Touch (2) (Afrikan-Centered Academic and Cultural Rigor (3) Community Accountability for Academic and Social Development AYA OFFERS (4) International, Business, and Social Responsibility focus (5) Tools to Heal Alienation, heal Toxic Communication patterns and other wounds born of oppression AYA SEEKS TO DEVELOP YOUTH WHO ARE (6) Successful in this multicultural world by serving our community first (7) Responsible Handlers of Power to challenge and build for and with our people, our recovery, our freedom and our sovereignty	N/A	Yes	N/A	MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL	N/A	Students learn via a web-based platform and log-in to Zoom™ (Zoom.us/ Zoom Video Communications, Inc.) classes weekdays from 8:15AM to 4PM. The majority of the students that have graduated received full scholarships and Aya is credited with an 83.3% success rate.

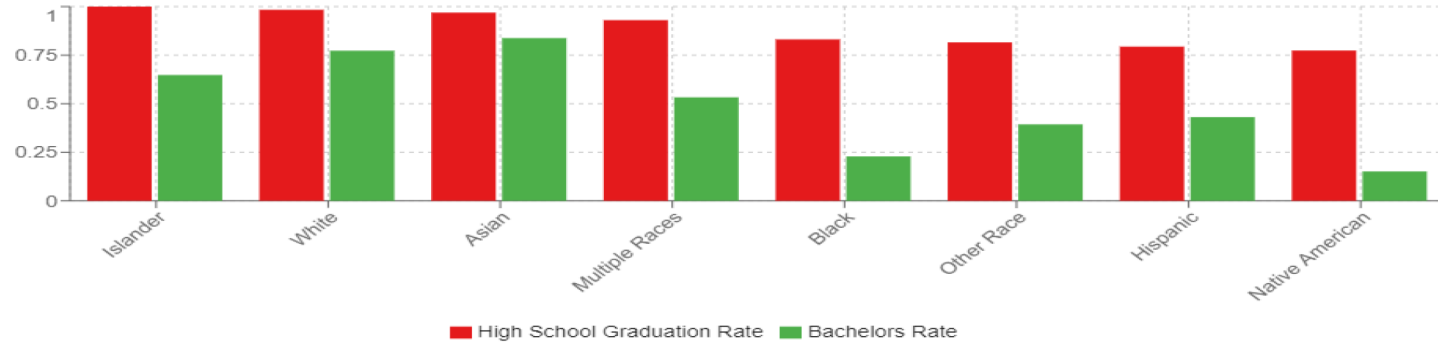
NAME OF SHULE	# OF STUDENTS	STUDENT TEACHER RATIO	FACULTY	UNIFORM / AFRICAN ATTIRE	AFRICAN NAMING OF STUDENTS	AFRICAN LAN-GUAGE(S)	TUITION-BASED	OTHER FUND-RAISING METHODS	EXTERNAL FUNDING (CORPS., GOVT, ETC.)
SHULE 3: Founded 2008.	UNAVAIL-ABLE	STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO UNAVAILABLE. HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING IS ON THE WEBSITE: <i>Full-Time Accredited College Prep Program; \$7500/yr Plus Full Nurture (Social) Package (\$750.00 monthly)</i> Traditional School Day w/ extracurricular courses and field trips Dual Enrollment Options Culturally Relevant Classroom Experience	9	*N/A	N/A	N/A	YES	DONATIONS	NO

NAME OF SHULE	ACCREDITED?	MISSION	VISION	PHILOSOPHY/ MOTTO	WEB-SITE	NUTRITION EXERCISE	GRADES / LEVELS	MAX CLASS SIZE	COMMENTS
SHULE 3: founded 2008 by four mothers who were determined to make sure the education their children received was second to none - birthed as a safe haven for scholastic excellence. The home school as well as the children quickly outgrew the resources of the initial program and by Fall opened its doors as a full time High School program seeking accreditation. Accreditation was awarded in Fall 2011 and is up to date and current-	Georgia Accreditation Commission NCAA Accreditation Pending	To provide a nurturing, supportive, culturally centered, spiritually enriched, learning environment designed to support students and their families. Our ambition is to inspire a commitment to scholarship, family, and community while maintaining a standard of excellence manifested through academics, creative arts and media technology.	I am capable ready and willing to face life's challenges. My mind if focused, my body is disciplined, my spirit is tuned in to an infinite frequency.	"Molding Scholars... Building Legacy	YES	UNAVAIL.	Move on When Ready/ Dual Enrollment/ Early College Approved by Georgia Dept. of Education, 100% College Acceptance Rate	UNAVAIL.	FROM WEBSITE: has graduated 5 classes, all graduates have been accepted at fully accredited 4 yr institutions. Alabama A M University, Including, Fisk University, Dillard University, Atlanta Metropolitan College, and Johnson C. Smith University. Students may transfer with a zero balance. Our students (With a 3.0 GPA in all academic courses) are eligible for Early College. The school reserves the right to review coursework and or test students who are attempting to gain credit for their previous homeschool work-graduates are eligible for the H.O.P.E. Scholarship/Grant.

Note: Rather than invalidate this study by presenting questionable data, although websites were found for at least seven additional African-centered shules or programs, efforts to communicate were ineffective. It is recommended that further research be conducted by a team of experts who would investigate all African-centered shules planned or currently existing in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Such an investigation should do far more than simple email or phone communication: site visits must be performed to ensure that the shules actually exist and are currently operational. One of the most promising websites suggests the opening of an independent African-centered shule in the Spring of 2019. However, response to communication efforts was unsuccessful.

Atlanta Educational Attainment by Race

Percentage Counts



Name	Total ▼	High School	Bachelors	☰
Black	157,133	130,612	35,926	
White	129,544	127,428	100,122	
Hispanic	12,448	9,884	5,365	
Asian	11,050	10,707	9,258	
Multiple Races	5,164	4,804	2,752	
Other Race	3,018	2,462	1,188	
Native American	787	609	119	
Islander	88	88	57	

The highest rate of high school graduation is among islander people with a rate of 100.00%.

The highest rate of bachelors degrees is among asian people with a rate of 83.78%.

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