The Case Against Afrocentrism. By Tunde Adeleke. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009. 224 pp.

Since the loosening of Europe's visible political and social clutch on the continent of Africa, conversations underlining common experiences and links between Black Africans and Blacks throughout the Diaspora have amplified and found merit in the Black intellectual community. Afrocentrist, such as Molefi Asante, Marimba Ani, and Maulana Karenga, have used Africa as a source of all Black identity, formulating a monolithic, essentialist worldview that underscores existing fundamentally shared values and suggests a unification of all Blacks under one shared ideology for racial uplift and advancement. In the past decade, however, counterarguments for such a construction have found their way into current discourses, challenging the idea of a worldwide, mutual Black experience that is foundational to Afrocentric thought. In *The Case Against Afrocentrism*, Tunde Adeleke engages in a deconstruction and reconceptualization of the various significant paradigms that have shaped the Afrocentric essentialist perspective.

Adeleke's text has obvious emphasis on the difficulty of utilizing Africa in the construction of Black American identity. A clear supporter of the more "realistic" Du Boisian concept of double-consciousness in the Black American experience, Adeleke challenges Afrocentrists', mainly Molefi Asante's, rejection of the existence of American identity within a Black body. He argues against the "flawed" perception that Black Americans remain essentially African despite centuries of separation in slavery. According to Adeleke, to suggest that Blacks retain distinct Africanisms undermines the brutality and calculating essence of the slave system that served as a process of "unmasking and remaking of a people's consciousness of self" (32). He takes his questioning further by elaborating on the reality of the multitude of ethnic groups sprawled across the continent of Africa, plainly stating that identity is found in ethnicity not race. Considering that ethnic information is unavailable to Black Americans, the cultural source of identity construction is further complicated, which Adeleke "solves" by suggesting that Blacks use slavery as the source.

Beyond the use of Africa in identity construction, Adeleke also challenges Afrocentrism's political implications and suggestions toward a Black Nationalism. Before the domino effects of decolonization that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, Afrocentrism found itself being employed as a political tool to liberate Africans under oppressive European rule. Those who joined together under the banner of Afrocentrism were clear on the identities of their adversaries and launched a campaign for international support. Now liberated, Adeleke questions Afrocentrism's nationalist stance. For Afrocentrism to continue to suggest Black Nationalism to a continent and people who are committed to maintaining their sovereignty as independent African nations would be as productive as first president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah's initial plea for the same. Additionally, with the existence of corruption in governments and genocide as a result of tribalism in countries such as Rwanda, how are contemporary Afrocentrists defining their adversary? With an ever-evolving and complicated Africa, Afrocentrism, according to Adeleke, has become counterproductive.

Although at times repetitive with traces of an awkward emphasis on Molefi Asante's scholarship, Adeleke provides a strong argument against Afrocentrism. Despite this strong argument, Adeleke's utopian idea of the irrelevance of race and perhaps a lack of knowledge on the truly deep complexities of Africa's various government systems and social ills are illuminated. Although he legitimizes early Afrocentrism as being reactionary to alienation,

marginalization, and the oppressive conditions of Africans under European colonization, his rejection of the worldview today seems to suggest that these dire conditions do not still exist. Blacks are still marginalized and alienated, just under different circumstances. Western countries continue to have a great influence on the political systems and political leaders of their respective African nations, resulting in corruption. Tribalism is the residue of social hierarchies and systems that were constructed by colonizers. His argument on the non-existence of distinct Africanisms in Black American culture seems conveniently to leave out discussions of the obvious survival of African beats in Black music, such as rap and R & B, and even the survival of language and culture exhibited throughout the South, such as the Geechee people of the South Carolina Sea Islands. Indeed, Afrocentrism carries contradictions that should be addressed and a vision that should be altered, but that does not delegitimize the past and possible future successes of the worldview.

The *Case Against Afrocentrism* challenges what Adeleke considers to be a "backward-looking paradigm" that cannot effectively meet the demands of the descendants of Africa in the changing and complex undercurrents of the human experience (189). It is a complex study that approaches Pan-African claims of a unified African culture in an intellectually critical manner, dissecting the worldview's history and, at times, contradicting essence. This text is a must read for supporters of Afrocentrism and its challengers.

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