

# **African Cultural Education: A dialogue with African migrant youth in Western Australia.**

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**I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.**

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## Abstract

'African Cultural Education: A dialogue with African migrant youth in Western Australia', examines cultural issues that concern a specific group of African migrant youths. The ten youth participants three of whom are male and seven female share their concerns and desires about issues relating to their cultural identity. As a minority group in a predominantly Eurocentric society they are faced with cultural challenges, which influence their being namely: Racism and the pressure to assimilate.

The thesis adopts an Afrikan<sup>1</sup> Centred Cultural Democracy approach: which proposes that African people must construct a 'new' African identity and must begin to perceive and interpret the world in its entirety from an African psychological, spiritual, and cultural frame of reference. This approach requires an ongoing critical assessment of both subjective lived experience and objective conditions. Through the Ujamaa circle process the youth participants along with the facilitator examined challenges to their cultural identities and alternative liberatory options. Growing up in a culturally alienating Eurocentric culture, they felt the need for an African cultural space, in which they could explore issues affecting them as African descendants. In particular racism and assimilation were of major concern to them. They were of the opinion that there should be an ongoing African Cultural Education Program to facilitate cultural re-evaluation and continuity.

It is the study's conclusion that cultural education for a minority African migrant group in a dominant Eurocentric culture is essential for their identities and continued root-cultural connectedness. Within the African Cultural Education conceptual framework, in addition to African cultural re-evaluation, it is possible to critically explore oppressive and domineering practices of the mainstream culture. It is also possible that the African migrant youth may become equipped with alternative worldviews from an African perspective, which will enable him/her to make informed judgement and response towards

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<sup>1</sup> Afrikan is used when referring to Dr. Akinyela's cultural democracy theory.

inappropriate mainstream attitudes and values. Participation in the arena of cultural politics will therefore be based on informed practice.

## **Acknowledgements and Dedications**

This thesis would not have been possible without the African migrant youths who shared their stories during the Ujamaa Circle process. My thanks to you all.

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Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, my thanks to my supervisors, Dr. Nado Aveling and Professor Jan Currie.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents: my dad the Late Dasani Were and mum F. Namusobya Were. Dad had a large collection of books in his living room, which he encouraged me to read. In those days to own a home library in a village seemed odd and out of place. Mum on the other hand told me folk stories about our ancestors and also taught me to sing and dance. Through this type of environment my values and humanity were developed and established. I therefore grew up with two forms of education: the formal through school and the informal through the home library and my mother's evening cultural classes. Thank you for being good parents.

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## Preface

The tragedy of the Negro in America is that he has rejected his origins — the essentially human meaning implicit in the heritage of slavery, prolonged suffering, and social rejection. By rejecting this unique group experience and favouring assimilation and even biological amalgamation, he thus denies himself the creative possibilities inherent in it and in his folk culture. This “dilemma” is fundamental: it severely limits his ability to evolve a new identity or a meaningful synthesis, capable of endowing his life with meaning and purpose.

(E. U. Essien-Udom, 1962, p.vii)

Do African migrants in Australia face the same risk, of living in self-denial, as noted by Essien-Udom of the African-Americans? Having arrived in Australia in 1991 with a relatively young family, my wife and three children missed Africa dearly. With all the relatives and village spirit missing in our new place of settlement we felt that our children were destined to be something miserably different. In our new place of settlement everyone was an individual. At the time of our resettlement, in Australia, the images of famine and wars in Africa were quite frequent in the Australian media. The forty-hour famine, fundraising campaigns by organisations such as World Vision displayed images of starving Africans in schools where our children attended. This became irritably disturbing for us as parents of African migrant background. The psychological humiliation of being African was obvious and we were not sure of what impact it would have on our children. Consequently we resolved to focus on teaching our children the positive aspects of African culture and being. We sang beautiful songs of Africa and told them stories about their ancestral heritage. The more we did this the more confident our children became. As our children became older we taught them to play musical instruments and other aspects of African culture. Occasionally when we had time we performed in festivals with our children. We believe that Africa is a beautiful continent and that its people and cultures are also beautiful. Through our initiatives our children therefore have learnt an alternative reality about Africa to that portrayed in the Australian media.

That was relatively easy, however, as the children grow older the challenge for them is to practise aspects of their root culture in the wider community without hindrance. Will the mainstream accept them for who they are? There is no easy answer to this question and yet their being is real for them. They are four girls proud of their root culture and taking on some aspects of the mainstream culture as well.

There are challenges for the African migrant because of Australia's problematic race relations (Markus, 1994), which cause some anxieties in their being. As African migrant parents we keep asking ourselves: Does Australia hold a future for our children or are they better off in Africa? We do not have the physical outlook that can easily blend with the majority mainstream. A dark skin easily gives you away such that anyone can easily

ask you the common question “By the way, where do you come from?” It is a constant reminder that you do not belong even if you were born in Australia. These are some of the dilemmas that motivated this study. While these concerns are personal, I also believed that there were other families within the African community with similar concerns about the cultural identity of their children.

Moreover, the risk of losing cultural connectedness to the root culture was another concern. Cultural disconnectedness as noted by Essien-Udom (1962) may limit the creative possibilities of one’s being. Is it possible to have compensatory cultural practices in which some of the African cultural symbols and practices are re-appropriated? How do we reconfigure our identities in the diaspora such that cultural connectedness to the root culture is continued? Because of the difficulties Black/African people have experienced in the diaspora (Udo-Ekpo, 1999; Chessum, 2000) such questions became significant in my initial planning of this study. The more I examined the literature about the African diaspora the more I found evidence to suggest that the anxieties I held about the cultural well-being of my children were also true of the experiences of many other black migrant families. Aspects of their root cultural identities could possibly not be sustainable without a conscious philosophical approach (Asante, 1988). These are some of the dilemmas that motivated this study. While these concerns are personal, I also believed that there were other families within the African community with similar concerns about the cultural identity of their children.

## **Chapter Overview**

In chapter 1 I discuss the background to the research, and the motivating factors for its significance. As a recently resettled and marginal group of people in a predominantly Eurocentric society, African migrants are experiencing tensions that are challenging their cultural identities. The problems of racism and the pressure to assimilate and subsequent root-culture loss seem to be major issues of migration experience. On the basis of these challenges I suggest that it is necessary to investigate the need for African cultural education, and the approach to its implementation. The dialogical approach known as the Ujamaa process is discussed. The

theoretical background to the Ujamaa process also known as the Afrikan Centred Pedagogy is discussed as well. It is an empowering theory that promotes collective consciousness towards community problems

In Chapter 2 I present some of the pertinent literature that deals with the concepts of African identities, migration and racism. I consider these three phenomena to be central to the migration experience. Culture is assumed to be dynamic within a particular context of its origin and history, but as we move out of our traditional cultural locations into a dominant culture, contradictions that threaten our minority being begin to emerge. I apply Bhabha's (1994), theory of liminal existence to examine challenges to minority being in a predominantly Eurocentric culture. I also examine racism and the challenges it poses for the African migrant community. This chapter provides a theoretical background for the discussion of the issues arising from the Ujamaa process.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the research design whose approach is based on Dr. Akinyela's Afrikan Centred Pedagogy theory and Ujamaa Circle process. The rationale and procedure of the method is discussed. The approach was dialogical and empowering to the participants. The participants assumed a cultural space in which they had opportunity to discuss issues affecting them as African migrants.

In Chapter 4 I examine the issues arising from the Ujamaa process, namely cultural identity and values. The identity perceptions of the participants and the implications for an appropriate culturally empowering environment are explored.

Chapter 5 examines the challenges to resettlement experienced by the participants. Their concerns are summed up into two main categories, namely: racism and assimilation. The unresolved problem of "who is Australian?" is also discussed. Australian colonial history is assumed to be partly the cause of the racial challenges experienced by the African migrant participants.

In Chapter 6 I present the desires expressed by the participants that they feel will help them to strengthen their cultural identities. The impact of the Ujamaa Circle process, on the participants, is discussed through their statements. I apply Dei's model of dealing with racism to examine possible approaches to racism and assimilation threats.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion. It sums up the intended objective of this study and the answers to the research question. The conclusion reaffirms the evidence from the Ujamaa Circle and the literature to assert the significance of an African Cultural Education program as a means of cultural re-evaluation and continuity in the diaspora.



## Chapter 1

### The African and migration: Framing the Study

Dad was well into the Australian way of living and we all spoke...English... and we had a white housekeeper...he always said, you have to learn Australian, you have to learn how to become a good Australian. And we were so busy trying to become good Australians that we forgot ...that we were Chinese.

(Janis Wilton, 1994, p.88)

## The Diasporic Context

Udo-Ekpo (1999) in his book: *The Africans in Australia: expectations and shattered dreams* noted two contrasting views about the future of Africans in Australia. The first view was that:

The presence of African migrants in Australia is likely to generate some positive results for both Africa and Australia over the coming decades; provided there is a significant increase in family reunion, new migrant and refugee intake, and cooperation, *with the African countries*<sup>1</sup>, across a broad range of interrelated areas such as agriculture, mining, trade transportation, energy technology transfer, and community development projects. (1999, p. 228)

This view has a global context and therefore implies solutions to African migrant settlement linked to policies of intercontinental/international cooperation. This calls for political lobbying by the African community in Australia and African governments through diplomatic channels to facilitate the process of intercontinental/international political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. Given the current condition of the African migrant, this approach may take some time to implement effectively. African migrant institutions are still young and less influential to ably lobby politically the Australian federal and state governments than other, more established lobby groups. Also African diplomatic presence in Australia is fairly limited. The second view was that:

The future of African migration and settlement in Australia cannot be conceptualised without a clear understanding of the issues presently confronting the community in Australia: issues of racism, long term unemployment, housing, education, health and family reunion. (1999, p. 229)

This approach suggests a focus on African migrants' condition and the immediate factors influencing their well-being in Australia. While there have been some success stories, a significant number of newly arrived migrants interviewed in Udo-Ekpo's study have painted a bleak picture of their experiences in Australia. Udo-Ekpo indicates that there were strong negative feelings of rejection, marginalisation, and sense of hopelessness within the group he interviewed. Their feeling of hopelessness produced passivity and a

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<sup>1</sup> Insert in italics is mine.

sense of fatalism. He further suggested that if not checked its cumulative effects could show up for years, well into the next generation (Udo-Ekpo, 1999). These observations as well as my personal and family experiences provided the background for thoughts about African cultural education as a possible pathway for examining the migrant condition, and facilitating cultural continuity and renewal.

In this thesis I posit, therefore, that African Cultural Education is critical for the survival and successful participation and integration of the African migrant identities in Australian life. Participation in Australian pluralistic society ought to be rooted in the Africanness of the migrant Africans. Their historical and cultural knowledge should be part of their integrative process of settlement. This may broaden the intellectual understanding of who they are and consequently improve their life chances by drawing on the African heritage as an integrative resource into the mainstream.

### **Centrality of Culture**

The challenge to resettlement was contextualised in culture. This was important because, one of the major problems confronting African migrants entering a dominant Eurocentric culture is that of cultural loss. Ngugi has noted that, 'culture carries the values, ethical, moral and aesthetic, by which people conceptualise, or see themselves and their place in history and the universe.' (1981, p.77). Culture is a whole way of life with attributes, which define human experience and history. So when we talk about the African culture (or cultures), according to Gyekye:

It is a complex of ideas, beliefs, values, outlooks, habits, practices, and institutions that can justifiably be said to have been endogenously created as well as those that can be said to have been inherited or appropriated exogenously: the latter having gained footing in the indigenous culture—having taken root in the entire way of life and thought of the African people. (1995, p.xii)

Gyekye's definition has implications for African migrants who are immediately confronted with contradictions in cultural, economic and social aspects of life, in their new place of settlement. By moving out of an African value system to an Australian one, they are immediately confronted with

dilemmas of cultural change. What do they retain and what do they abandon? How do they know that they are making the right decisions about their cultural options, given that their past has been grounded in a collective—family, village, clan, and ethnic systems?

On arrival in the new country of settlement, the dominant culture quickly takes over and the migrant African begins to feel the pressure for cultural change and conformity to the mainstream culture. The schools, public institutions and media demand cultural conformity to the dominant culture. This instant cultural invalidation of one's culture leads to frustration and disempowerment because all potentially useful cultural experience embedded in the individual assumes apparent irrelevance. Consequently this may result in the individual's abandonment of potentially useful cultural values from his/her root culture. This may be illustrated by the current challenge to preserving African languages in the diaspora. In African migrant communities, African languages are gradually falling out of regular use, and the young people are more inclined to western values and influences. This is perhaps understandable because they spend a lot of time in environments where the African languages are not used and valued. The danger of language loss is highlighted by Ngugi when he notes that 'language has a dual character; it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture' (1981, p.13). The abandonment or lack of a systematic sustenance of African languages through some kind of institutional structure is inevitably going to result in cultural loss.

The dangers of cultural loss are highlighted by African-American community initiatives towards African cultural renewal in their communities today. Asante, a leading African-American, Afrocentric scholar wrote about cultural loss in the African-American community as follows:

We know little about our own classical heritage and nothing about our contributions to the world of knowledge. To say that we are decentred means essentially that we have lost our own cultural footing and become other than our cultural and political origins, dislocated and dis-oriented. We are essentially insane, that is, living in absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source. (1987, p. 48)

It is this 'source' that is referred to as the root culture in this thesis. The root cultures ought to be re-evaluated and continued amongst the younger generation of African migrants who have been brought or born in Australia.

Resettlement in a different and dominant culture presents challenges that call for compromise, reconciliation, and ongoing re-evaluation of experiences as part of reframing a new cultural outlook. As African migrant parents with four children at school, we are confronted with challenges of nurturing our children in African ways, and at the same time attempting to sieve through what we think is best for them from the dominant cultures. The major concern is those influences, which contradict or undervalue our African heritage. The school resources and the curriculum are mostly lacking in African knowledge. For understandable reasons perhaps since Africans are recent migrants to this country. African themes are based predominantly on animals, disease, wars and missionary anthropology. School curricula are mostly lacking in positive African themes, which are essential for strengthening identity and self-esteem of African children. This is complicated further by a biased reporting about Africa. Most African images in the press are accompanied by negative reporting (Soule and Muzuwa, 2003, p. 2). The media stereotypes, about the continent may be internalised by the Australian public as well. This is likely to create attitudes that may affect the social relations that exist between African migrants and the rest of the Community. It may influence the attitudes of other students towards African descendants in schools and attitudes of potential employers towards African Community members. There is, therefore, a need for an approach to educate the community about African affairs, which is rooted in the African experience and cultural history.

### **Challenges for Migrants**

Udo-Ekpo's findings suggest that the things that concern African Australian Immigrants range from racial violence to unemployment, poverty to loneliness, and the meaninglessness of migrant life in Australia (1999). These types of experiences make it even harder for the families to successfully support their children in economic, social, and educational needs.

Kayrooz and Blunt, (2000) have noted that the key issues for parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are:

- Intergenerational conflict;
- The development of a bicultural parenting identity;
- A strong ethnic identity;
- Clashes between the school system and parental cultural values;
- Knowledge of services and ways of gaining parenting support.

Omar, (2004), has confirmed similar challenges amongst the Somali migrant community in Australia. The African migrant community needs to engage with these issues. The cultural sensibilities brought to bear on these issues will be useful in the development of the African community in Australia. African values and experiences should contribute towards policy formulations and practices, which will benefit both the African community and the mainstream.

According to Levine's model of parental behaviour, (in Kolar and Soriano, 1998) there are three goals shared by all the parents, irrespective of culture. The first relates to the health and survival of the child; the second is about teaching the child those skills that are necessary to survive economically; and the third is to encourage those attributes that are valued by a particular culture. The first goal is generally well provided for by the mainstream institutions and services, although the psychological aspects still require a lot of input from the African Community. There is a need to develop a knowledge base to provide culturally specific advice about psychological needs of African community members. All the three goals are relevant to this thesis because of the challenges and complexities involved in providing a culturally appropriate education.

In a quickly changing world with uncertainties about employment and career, the cultural knowledge of parents may make a difference for a migrant child. The African migrants like all other cultures are blessed with a rich history and culture; used creatively and intelligently it can become a basis for progressive thinking, empowerment and continued cultural connectedness. But most importantly, it may provide praxis for community development. The

challenge, however, is negotiating the cultural continuity within the dominant culture. There is perhaps a need for an educational framework to facilitate the practice and continuity of African culture in the diaspora. It is this that forms the basis for my study. In the next section I examine the research questions that explore the possibility of developing a framework for African Cultural Education.

### **Empowering Research Approach**

The Ujamaa Circle process was adopted for the research. It was developed by Akinyela's (1996), Afrikan Centred Pedagogy approach, which encourages critical and problem solving strategies as a way of dealing with day-to-day oppressive social-relations. It was initially applied to marginal Black families in America as a means of finding group solutions to community problems.

The main research question was: Do African migrants in Australia need African cultural education? And if they do, what should be the approach? Other questions, which I explored in the Ujamaa process included: Who am I? What are the cultural challenges of being African-Australian? How do you deal with the challenges? What does it mean to be an African? How should we examine African history? What are African 'elders' doing about African Cultural Education? Can you remember of any particular time when you were made to feel, that you should know more about the African culture? How did you behave when you felt the need to know more about the African culture? What is the African diaspora? What is globalisation? What is lifelong learning? What are the problems common to all Africans? Do African migrants need a cultural education? How would the African cultural education benefit the African community? How would it benefit the wider community? What should be the goals of an African cultural education program? How can these goals be achieved? These were some of the questions that were discussed during the Ujamaa research process.

Confronted by poverty and mindful of the globalisation process which has paved the way for the advancement and expansion of the western capitalist hegemony and the demise of 'weaker' cultures, I felt that the problems of the

African migrants in Australia ought to be viewed in that context. Moreover, the research questions and the research process were intended to empower the participants and promote critical reflection and awareness about the issues arising from the research process. Therefore, the research questions had to be grounded in the participants lived reality and of relevance to their lives even long after the research process was over. It drew on their lived experiences and needs. As Freire notes 'As men<sup>2</sup>, simultaneously reflecting on themselves and on the world, increase the scope of their perception, they begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena.' (1970, p.70). The participants needed to disentangle the issues in a manner that would lead to practical solutions or at least to drawing up a feasible agenda that would facilitate ongoing dialogue about the matters arising from the Ujamaa process. Freire further notes that:

In problem posing education, men develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (1970, p.71)

Consequently this was to be both an educational and a data collection process, in which both the researcher and the researched were equal partners in search for answers to the research questions, and in the end departing with an awareness of individual and collective responsibility.

### **The Afrikan<sup>3</sup> Centred Pedagogy and the research process**

Afrikan Centred pedagogy was an appropriate theoretical paradigm for framing the research question and developing the research process. Afrikan Centred Pedagogy places the lived experiences and cultural understanding of African descendants in the diaspora at the centre of social analysis of cultural and political issues, which affect the lives of the African people. (Madhubuti, 1994; Akoto, 1992; Shujaa, 1994). It is a critical pedagogy that values the significance of the whole life experience as a part of the educational process.

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<sup>2</sup> My interpretation of Freire's 'men' is that it implies both men and women. I guess Freire was writing at a time when these gender terminologies were not as sensitive as they are today.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to be confused with 'Africa' the continent. Dr. Akinyela's Afrika is not intended to be a substitute for Africa because according to him the theory may apply to non-African communities as well.



It places an emphasis on and challenges discourses of power inequality with a bias towards the oppressed and marginalised. Afrikan Centred Pedagogy is concerned with institution building, strengthening and development that will encourage collective action for social change.

Afrikan Centred Pedagogy is focussed on the relationship between Black individuals and institutions as they develop within the context of a dominant Euro-American/Australian culture and construct strategies of survival, socio-cultural growth and development. This pedagogy is interested in the cultural strengths embedded in everyday black life. It is also interested in black ethos, the psycho/spiritual consciousness and sense of connectedness (Akinyela, 1996).

## Chapter 2

### African Identities, Migration and Racism

Asian children as a group function in a very similar way to the indigenous children because they bring to the school a very real alternative culture, an alternative identity, an alternative sense and source of personal well-being and personal strength, to the majority culture. When threatened by the majority community or its institutions the Asian youngster can withdraw both geographically into his own community, and also psychologically, into his own sense of personal worth and well-being. The different language, different religion, different culture, and a different set of attitudes, provides an Asian child with a psychological haven in a sea of racial hostility.

But the West Indian is not in that position. Although there are dangers of pushing this too far, the position of the Black West Indian is similar to that of the American Black. His position represents a variant on the dominant culture, and the dominant culture is rejecting, and there is a danger of the community rejection being transferred to self-rejection. There is no religion, no language, no different set of values to fall back on. There is less sense of cultural separateness as a minority.

Professor Alan Little

## **Introduction**

In this chapter I examine African culture in its root and diasporic context. The root culture is constantly changing and consequently presents diverse manifestations of cultural identities. When migrating, Africans take with them their various African identities to their new countries of settlement where they are confronted with new experiences, and may experience 'cultural shock'. In crossing borders, migrants cross into a dynamic state where their values and identities are constantly challenged. A dynamic trend is set to deal with this cultural shock.

Bhabha's (1994) theory of borderline existence is used to examine these dynamics since it provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the process of cultural adjustment. Racism is also discussed since it is a major phenomenon in the African diasporic experience. Lastly using the evidence from the literature, I examine how some migrants deal with the challenge of cultural adjustment. The discussion in this chapter provides a theoretical background for examining the issues raised by the ten participants in the Ujamaa process.

### **African culture: a broad overview**

African culture<sup>1</sup> may be conceptualised in various ways and below I examine some definitions of culture and then discuss the African culture in relation to these definitions.

According to Giddens:

The concept of culture consists of the values the members of a given group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create. Values are abstract ideals, while norms are definite principles or rules which people are expected to observe. Norms represent the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of social life. Used in a societal context, culture refers to the ways of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits. It also covers the goods they create which become meaningful for them such as bows,

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<sup>1</sup> African culture mainly refers to sub-Saharan Black Africa. Culture, including the notion of cultures is not totally unified.

arrows, ploughs, factories and machines, computers, books, and dwellings. (1993, p. 31)

This definition presents culture as values, norms and material existence of a given group or society.

For Mbiti (1975), a prominent African theologian and philosopher, every group has a culture, and culture is changing all the time, whether slowly or rapidly. Culture also defines intellectual achievements of a group, through art and literature, dance, music and drama, in the styles of building houses and of people's clothing, in social organisation and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and in their economic life.

Cultural expressions influence and shape the life of individuals in their society, and in turn individuals make cultural contributions to their community through participation in its life and in some cases through creative work. African people have their own cultural heritages. Some aspects of their culture are fairly similar over large areas of the continent. There are also many differences that add to the variety of African culture in general. For example, in many parts of Africa one finds round houses, the keeping of cattle, sheep and goats, and the growing of bananas, millets, and yams as staple food. The custom of a husband having more than one wife exists in practically every African society (Mbiti, 1975).

The sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values of traditional African life. However according to Nabukera (2000), the institution of extended family is beginning to collapse because of poverty and global cultural influences. For traditional Africans, the community is basically sacred, rather than secular, it is surrounded by religious forms and symbols. Traditional African families share life intensely in common. Families and members of kin—groups from minimal to maximal lineages generally live together and form community (Ejizu, 1994). It is possible then, according to Mbiti (1969), to speak of the African culture (in the singular) remembering however that there are many varieties of it. Gyekye, a Ghanaian philosopher, makes similar remarks when he suggests that:

The generally ambivalent attitude toward the question of similarities or identities in the culture of Africa evinced, wittingly or unwittingly,

by some scholars seems to suggest that unqualified statements about Africa's cultural unity on the one hand, and its cultural diversity on the other hand, would simply be exaggerations. It seems to me that the truth lies somewhere in the middle: while there are diversities in the cultures of Africa, there are also some similarities; however, by "similarities" I do not mean that African peoples lead absolutely unified cultural lives. (1995, p. xxxi)

Gyekye's (1995) opinion about the African culture is confirmed by the observation Udo-Ekpo (1999) made of migrant Africans in Australia. He stated that:

Although African-Australians come from different countries, regions, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and have tended to remain focused on their ethnic communities, they now share a common heritage and consider themselves as Africans even though a great many have taken up Australian citizenship and have no real desire to return to Africa in the near future (1999, p.ix).

I take a similar position that within the diversity of the African migrant cultures there are similarities and differences, which may collectively be loosely referred to as African culture.

African culture is also manifested in the African-American community, as noted by Mitchell, while talking about communication amongst the African-American people.

African-American lyricism is traceable to Black African culture. Moreover, Africa is at the heart of all African-American behaviour. Communication styles are reflective of the internal mythic clock, the epic memory, and the psychic stain of Africa in our spirits. ...While African-Americans may not consciously identify the lyricism with Africa, it is nevertheless a significant part of the communicative pattern, adding the elements of indirection and polyrhythm. In effect, the oral tradition and the call-and-response are both related to the African origin of the cultural behaviours, in this sense they may be parts of the same phenomenon. (Mitchell, cited in Asante, 1987, p.48)

So there seems to be some enduring aspects of African culture, which are distinct both in the root culture and the diaspora. However, since African culture does not function in isolation its contact with other cultures affects and influences its outlook. Hence Akinyela notes:

Definitions of culture are usually either anthropological, focusing on what particular cultures look like, or they are sociological, focusing on lists of elements of culture. Most definitions of culture assume that culture is self-expression of monolithic, ethnic/racial values through phenomenon such as art, food, music, clothing, religion, or

other outward form. In that vein, Karenga (1980) lists seven elements in his Afrocentric Kawaïda theory which he says every culture possesses—mythology; history; social organisation; economic organisation; political organisation; creative motif; ethos. (1996, p.145)

For Akinyela cultural phenomena take their form in the dialectical tension that exists in the asymmetrical power relations between groups and within groups. Culture is constructed as the more powerful and less powerful segments of society contend for positions of power and privilege among themselves. This means that any given culture is actually a complex of cultures between unequal class, gender, religious, language, and sexual and other elements within the group (1996). This is especially true for a migrant group in a minority status.

The concept of African culture as defined by Mbiti (1975) is dynamic. Within that dynamic process, there is appropriation, recreation and loss of symbols. Moreover, in a globalising world the cultural boundaries are becoming increasingly fluid. However, within the globalisation process, new thinking amongst African scholars is emerging to deal with the challenge of cultural intrusion and change. Such intrusion has in some instances been accepted without critical evaluation. This has resulted in colonial mentalities that Wiredu defines as:

That, which makes a formerly colonised person over-value foreign things coming from his erstwhile colonial master. “Things” is to be interpreted widely to include not only material objects but also modes of thought and behaviour.

It is this that Wiredu believes is causing a crisis in African identity.

Africa’s problem of identity in the contemporary world does not lie in a cultural traditionalism but in a critical and reconstructive self-evaluation. (1992, p.64)

Tragedies in Africa and colonial impositions have weakened the traditional institutions<sup>2</sup> and culture. Abraham, cited in Wiredu and Gyekye, suggests that:

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<sup>2</sup> Nyerere has explored this problem in the chapter entitled ‘Education for Self-Reliance’ of his book entitled *Freedom and Socialism: A selection from writings and speeches (1965-1967)*. For him colonial education in Tanzania was not for transmission of values and knowledge of the Tanzanian society from one generation to the next (as was the case in pre-colonial education) rather it was a deliberate attempt to change those values and to replace traditional knowledge by knowledge from a different society.

Wherever western educational, economic and social practices have been established in Africa, there too the greatest dislocation from traditional cultures has occurred. Among administrators, managers of national economy and all who work in it, among educators and those they teach, in the armed forces, in religious institutions, in art and literature, and in family relations, problems take shape, and the manner of their resolution becomes determined, without significant consideration of the canons of traditional cultures. (1992, p.16)

This is even of greater concern for those in the diaspora because as they move further away from the root culture, they are getting further disconnected from their roots.

### **Shifting cultural identity outlook**

In this section I look at the shifting outlook of the African migrant as a consequence of relocating into a dominant Eurocentric culture, which embraces a capitalist, individualistic, competitive system. This system presents contradictions and challenges to African migrants because it is minimally compatible with the African communalistic, extended family, and kinship system.

For African migrants in Australia, who are confronted with new and challenging experiences that may be referred to as 'cultural shock' to successfully move out of this phase require a degree of effort to conceptualise the past and present as a means of appreciating the dynamic present. It is not always easy as testified by Jaskic, a young Chilean interviewed by Benmayor and Skotnes:

Building a new identity, or at least an identity in addition to the sense of my national origin, was one of the unexpected challenges of my experience of immigration. During my first years in the United States I found strength in my nationality. In fact I think I became conscious of it only when removed from my own cultural context. At first, I found it shocking that I could look at my own experience from the perspective of someone outside it. I was particularly troubled by the perception that Chile was just another country. I had to recognise, not without tremendous discomfort, that my struggle to stay in touch with Chile occurred at a level independent from the myriad contacts I made as part of my daily routine. I was an island of on going separate experiences. I was even aware of being an island. But what was important to me was to hold on to my background and to my network of friends and family as firmly as I could. (1994, p.29)

The challenge of moving from 'home' to a new country entails cultural adjustment. As Jaskic notes, it was very important for him to keep in touch with his root culture through a network of friends and family. Jaskic's removal from his root culture made him more conscious about his Chilean culture. This is probably not surprising since he was born and raised in Chile, but as Erickson (cited in Harris, 1995) notes, ethnicity and 'race' do play a role in one's identity development. Erasing Chile out of Jaskic's memory would have meant a loss of part of his culture and identity. Ngugi has also noted that: "culture carries the values, ethical, moral and aesthetic by which people conceptualise, or see themselves and their place in history and the universe" (1981, p.77). Accordingly, one's root culture continues to be an essential part of cultural identity in the diaspora. Jaskic made adjustments to his identity and self-definition by accepting his new location and trying to participate in it as much as he could without necessarily losing his Chilean culture. He notes that:

As an immigrant, I understood that while return was not impossible, I had to come to terms with life in another culture, and participate in it as fully as I could. It was during this process of adjustment that I realised that the experience of exile can deepen one's knowledge of one's country, and even add a critical element to that knowledge. I thought about Chile so much that even my intellectual orientation changed. In an effort to remain in touch with Chile, and once I could resume my studies, I did not return to the study of philosophy merely for its own sake or for its methodology. Instead, I decided to study the development of Chilean philosophy. I wanted to trace, step by step, the origins and fate of the discipline in the national context. This became my way of coming to terms with what had happened to us as a nation, and more specifically to my teachers and classmates. (Benmayor and Skotnes, 1994, p. 30)

This seems to have been a constructive way of dealing with the challenges to his cultural identity. By grounding his intellectual thought in the root culture and engaging in academic work, which addressed philosophical issues of his original homeland, Jaskic was able to reflect more critically about the history of his country. He maintained a spiritual and cultural link to his root culture through his academic work. Writing was another method that Jaskic used to assist him in strengthening his identity. "Writing allowed me, especially in



Argentina, to maintain a sense of self and to find a voice that would reaffirm my Chilean identity in an alien environment” (Benmayor and Skotnes, 1994, p. 30).

There are lessons to learn from Jaskic’s experience, because he was determined to continue cultural links with his motherland that gave him a sense of purpose and identity. He did not lose sight of his Chilean-ness despite relocation to Argentina and eventually to the USA. Through a philosophical quest about Chile, Jaskic was socialised into the American culture while maintaining contacts with his root culture.

### **Bhabha’s Theory and the Politics of Cultural Identity**

Bhabha’s theory of borderland lives informs this process of cultural identity and the self-definition of minority groups. It consequently provides a conceptual framework for theorising about minority identity development in a Eurocentric environment. Bhabha suggests that:

The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The right to signify from the periphery of authorised power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are “in minority.” (1994, p.2)

Bhabha’s theory suggests that the root culture is fundamentally important in shaping the identity of a migrant since it provides raw materials for cultural re-inscription. For African migrants, the African culture is the root culture from which to draw the tools for subsequent hybridisation with the contact cultures. This is not automatic as it involves tensions that need to be evaluated and challenged as a means of asserting one’s preferred cultural outlook. For Giroux (1995, p.9), Bhabha’s borderline concept suggests a sense of flux, movement, and in-between-ness in which it becomes increasingly difficult for any singular notion of ethnicity, class, gender, or culture to “inhabit any claim to identity in a post-modern world” (Bhabha, 1994, p.15). Mainstreaming and incorporation of minorities into the mainstream is challenged since every culture is viewed from its own location of negotiation. While Bhabha’s

approach to identity self-definition offers a lot of opportunities for freedom and empowerment in defining cultural identities, it discomforts conservatives. Conservatives see the emerging claims to difference as a threat to the national identity of the host culture. Difference becomes transgressive because it infringes on the norms of the monocultural *status quo* and in doing so unsettles and calls into question the institutions, histories, languages and social relationships that produce the process of “othering.” Knopfelmacher, for example, rejected the view that people from a non-English-speaking background have a right to learn the language of their original homeland. He states:

I favour the retention of Australia as an Anglomorph, as a British, society. I don't believe that the ethnics in this country want their children to have classes in Turkish or Czech or what have you. They want their children to be equipped for the competitive existence in an Anglo-Australian society, which they are by and large getting. They should not be getting more of it (language learning), insofar as their interest in learning Czech or Greek or Turkish. It is a nostalgic request of the fourth generation that has already made it. (Cited in Theophanous, 1995, p.44)

By implying that the Anglo-Australian world represented the ultimate and that there was no need to develop alternative cultural understanding and continuity of other ethnic constituents of Australia through language, Knopfelmacher presents a major contradiction typical of conservative Anglocentric thinking. It seems to me that Knopfelmacher had a very Anglocentric view of the meaning and purpose of human existence and culture. A worldview beyond that of Anglo-Australia was meaningless and irrelevant.

Giroux is convinced that the contradiction lies with the empowering nature of difference:

What must be clear here is cultural differences that cannot be managed, assimilated, or incorporated as fashion and spectacle become dangerous because they offer the possibilities through language, social movements, and radical cultural work to challenge borders that are racist, sexist, hierarchical, and oppressive. (1995, p.ix)

An alternative worldview enables minority individuals and communities to challenge the status quo. Minorities can also consciously influence the

process of hybridisation by presenting themselves as major contributors to the national culture. For example, as an African migrant of non-European descent, I should not be automatically categorised as Black. I may prefer to and be referred to as: African, Tanzanian, Ugandan, or African-Australian. Black reduces me to a common denominator, which subsequently undermines my root cultural identity. Because, Indians, Aborigines and Africans are labelled Black, such labels become confusing. The label, Black, carries within it contradictions and it may be intended as a racist label. The vital forces of cultural tradition and identity suddenly vanish and become insignificant and meaningless because of the imposed racial label and the associated race relations, which undermine or undervalue the minority cultures. Continued connectedness to African culture is important as it provides a continuous source of inspiration and resources for strengthening cultural identity. In the next section I examine some views about the shifting cultural trends on the African continent that may be of relevance to the African diaspora.

### **Trans-ethnic Cultural Communion**

Abraham (1992) suggests that there is in Africa today an unabated and constant need for a consensus on the nature of the societies it should have and for positive impulses towards fostering such societies.

The cultural features and practices, which make up Africa today reflect the degree of diversity whose acceptance is necessary both for the growth of trans-ethnic national cultures and for regional, inter-regional, and international cultural communions. There is a clear realisation that, without such inter-ethnic cultures, provincial cultural differences are apt to sprout separatist tendencies and actions, which have led to apprehension, oppression, civil war and general unrest. (In Wiredu and Gyekye, 1992, p.32)

The concept of inter-ethnic communions is ideal for migrant Africans in Australia as well, because the African migrant community presents a diversity of ethnicities. The basis for such trans-ethnic cultures exists in the internal similarities among African cultures and in the similarities between historical experiences of the cultures. If the internal similarities are sufficiently acted upon by elements of cultures from Europe, Asia and The Americas, which are

present in Africa and belong in the historical experience of African cultures, the similarities can be enhanced (Abraham, 1992). It becomes possible, then, for the diasporic African to positively enhance the migrant African cultural identity through appropriation of some aspects of the contact cultures and re-evaluation of the traditional root culture. African cultural identities in Australia may evolve into a coherent and well-defined, hybridised, dynamic cultural form.

It is possible to apply Bhabha's third space metaphor based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on inscription and articulation of cultural hybridities. He describes this third space as the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between-space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national and anti-nationalist histories of particular groups of people. By exploring this third space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as a dynamic culture (Bhabha, 1994).

The third space phenomenon is of relevance to the African migrant situation in Australia. It calls for identity negotiations from within the African migrant communities as well as negotiations with the outside (non African) contact cultures. The space provides opportunity for cultural re-evaluation and cultural identity reconstruction. The reality is that resettlement in an essentially Eurocentric Australia presents cultural challenges that impact on the African identity. Moreover, there seems to be a need for conscious ongoing debate and dialogue within the African migrant communities regarding the question of African identity. As Asante has argued elsewhere in the African diaspora, there is a passionate engagement with this subject (1987). There is a need for this kind of reflective debate<sup>3</sup> about African identity because it can inform strategies for emancipating the African-Australian people, economically, socially, culturally and politically. What defines Africans as a group of migrants

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<sup>3</sup> Wiredu in *African Philosophy: Selected Readings* by A.G. Mosley (1995, p.162) notes that: 'what is immediately pertinent is to remark that unanalysed exhortations to Africans to preserve their indigenous culture are not particularly useful—indeed they can be counterproductive. There is an urgent need in Africa today for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture from those aspects that are worth keeping.'

may provide a basis for group association, identity and support networks to challenges like racism that I discuss in the next section.

## **Racism in Australia**

Racism in Australia had its origins in western notions about race in which the Europeans believed in the superiority of their civilisation and culture. Through Christianity, technology and their capacity to wage war Europeans sustained this belief. So Europeans had a feeling that superiority was not just a product of their culture but was somehow inherent in them as a people and they began to believe that some groups had the ability to advance in civilisation while others seemed incapable of progress (Markus, 1994). The 'other' groups assumed some of the infamous labels like: noble savages, tribal, primitive, uncivilised and backward. Yeboah (1988) traces its origins amongst the enlightenment philosophers/thinkers, who provided a conceptual framework, to missionaries and travellers. The latter relentlessly constructed myths about the 'African savage', and other indigenous cultures hence took it upon themselves to civilise the 'uncivilised'. In its modern form (reduced in its primitive form to neo-Nazi groups in Europe and to nationalist groups such as the Australian Nationalist Movement in Australia), European racism holds that there are biologically distinct human populations called races whose genetic character determines both physical appearance and intellectual and moral qualities. Race as a genetic attribute is seen as the most important defining characteristic of human beings. In other words racism sees culture as a function of biology (Markus, 1994). Motivated by such an ideology:

The New South Wales Coloured Races Restriction Bill of 1896 excluded all persons belonging to any coloured race inhabiting the Continent of Asia, or the Continent of Africa, of any island adjacent thereto, or any island in the Pacific or Indian oceans. (Markus, 1994, p.114)

Rowley (1970) confirms these developments of a racist culture in the Australian society when he notes that by 1911 the whole corpus of the racist theory had been established in the European folklore, supported by the emotional reactions of the whites against an obvious out-group. Contempt of

Aboriginal inferiority in cultural achievement made it possible for early students to describe their rituals without taking the further step that would have discovered the depth of meaning expressed. It is from this background that I examine the problem of racism in Australia as it relates to the African participants in the Ujamaa circle.

According to Baker:

Racism is a worldwide phenomenon. It is not an attribute solely of Australians, or of Anglo-Saxons, or of whites. Racism — where a group of one colour, or common social or communal heritage, viewing itself as superior, uses its power to suppress and/or exploit those of another colour or community group — is worldwide. Racism within the 'fragmented' Anglo settlements namely the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa derives from their English heritage, a background, which because of its cultural and class basis, rejects the native or non white as equal (cited in Steven, 1972, p.19).

The focus on white racism has evolved, basically, from historical studies of European expansion, settlement and domination over other (normally non-white) societies. Under numerous guises (e.g., 'white man's burden', 'civilizing' the native, the 'superiority of white civilisation'), European nations earlier settled and /or took control of vast chunks of the world, seeking land, minerals and trade. By the conquest or other means, they exploited and dominated native non-white continents or lands. Whatever form domination took, a white dominance situation prevailed, and racist notions emerged as a justification for white privilege and power (Baker, in Stevens, 1972). These tensions are still felt today in communities where 'Black' and 'White' live together.

In the *West Australian* newspaper an article confirmed the need for reflection on the problem of racism by the African migrants. With a heading "Racist posters surface in Winthrop," the following is an extract:

Hundreds of anti-Asian and African posters have appeared in Somerville Boulevard, Winthrop, in the suburb's second outbreak of racist propoganda in six months. ..."The ANM (Australian Nationalist Movement) Story — READ IT NOW" urged some posters. Others carried offensive caricatures of Asians and Africans behind red "no" signs with text reading "No Asians "and "No Africans." (Parker, G., 2004, p. 6)

The Australian Nationalist Movement was active in anti-Asian racist activities during the 80s, which resulted in the jailing of some of its leaders. Their recent revival of racist activities was evidence of continued race tensions in Australia.

A Swedish sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal, noted of the conditions of the African-Americans in the United States, in the late 1930s as equally applicable to the treatment of Aborigines in some parts of Australia:

It is the custom in the South to permit whites to resort to violence and threats of violence against life, personal, security, property and freedom of movement of Negroes. There is a wide variety of behaviour, ranging from mild admonition to murder, which the white man may exercise to control Negroes.... The practice...continues to flourish because of the laxity and inequity of the administration of law and justice. It would not be possible except for the deficient operation of the judicial sanctions in protecting Negroes' rights and liberties. Both the practice of intimidation and violence and the inadequate functioning of justice in the region are expressions of the same spirit of relative lawlessness; both are tolerated and upheld by the same public opinion. (Cited in Markus, 1994, p.40)

The practise of intimidation and violence is still rife, in contemporary Black and White race relations, as Udo-Ekpo notes with one of the clients he interviewed and quoted in his book. Kassu aged 31, an Ethiopian who migrated to Australia in 1990s notes, "You can see people watching you and following you with their eyes when you walk into a place. They call you names," he said. "They apparently see us as the enemy; or at best as an exotic kind of being who does not belong here. I don't think they will ever accept us as equals" (1999, p.217). This sense of suspension between two societies, African and Australian, and the uncertainty in the new environment presents enormous impediments to the process of cultural adjustment. Like for the African-Americans, the African migrants are involved, subconsciously though it may be, in assertion of membership in one and in denial of membership in the other, or in a feeble assertion of both, or in denial of their affinity with both (Essien-Udom, 1962).

## European Scholarship and Racism

Yansane has suggested that several forces have contributed to the disorganisation of African traditional societies: autocratic colonial administration, missionaries, a new economy and a new educational system (cited in Asante and Asante, 1999). Following conquest and partition, European interest in African culture declined. Colonial officials in far-flung posts dutifully compiled and studied oral traditions of the cultures over which they governed but mainly with the objective of administering the cultures more effectively. Christian missionaries mastered African languages in order to proselytise them more thoroughly (Hull, 1972). This has implications for a critical examination of discourses about the African people and heritage.

Mbiti (1969) for example, in describing the early approaches and attitudes to African culture by European scholars noted that it was dominated by attitudes, in this early period, based on the assumption that African beliefs, cultural characteristics and even foods were all borrowed from the outside world. German scholars pushed this assumption to the extreme and have not all abandoned it completely to this day. Hegel is one such scholar who represented a very negative view of African civilisation at the time. Hegel in his lectures on Philosophy of History and lectures on the Philosophy of Right: in the former, Hegel positions Africa outside of History, as the absolute, non-historical beginning of the movement of spirit. Accordingly, Africans are depicted as incapable of rational thought or ethical conduct. They therefore have no laws, religion and political order. Africa, in human terms, is for Hegel a wasteland filled with “lawlessness,” “fetishism,” and “cannibalism”— waiting for European soldiers and missionaries to conquer it and impose “order” and “Morality” (Eze, 1997). This type of academic discourse<sup>4</sup> about African culture and people helped to shape the racist attitudes that we see today amongst people of European descent towards Africans. Critiquing European colonial

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Harry Johnston in discussing sub Saharan Black Africans suggested that the ancient Egyptians whom he presumed to be of Caucasian stock were instrumental in saving the Negro and the Bushman from relapsing into such a beast-like condition of life that: ‘if much longer pursued, it might have cut off this great division of the human race from complete community with us in all the attributes of humanity’ (p.28).



discourses about African people and culture is a must, if racist attitudes are to be addressed thoroughly in the academy and in day-to-day social relations.

### **Racism in the African Diaspora**

Nascimento in reference to the African descendants in Brazil notes that they were socialised into forgetting any links with the African continent.

In Brazil the ruling class always particularly after the so-called abolition of slavery, 1888, developed and refined innumerable techniques of preventing Black Brazilians from identifying and actively drawing on their ethnic, historical and cultural roots, cutting them off from their trunk of their cultural family tree. Except in terms of its recent expansionist economic interests, Brazil's traditional elite has always ignored the African continent. (Asante and Asante, 1999, pp.174-175)

According to Nascimento the condition of the Black people in Brazil has not improved significantly, since 1888. Africans were never treated as equals by the minority white segments nor are they today. The white minority community has maintained an exclusive grip on all power, culture, health, education and national income. The contemporary condition of Black people in Brazil is worse than it was in the post emancipation days. Black people remain largely excluded from the economy at the margins of employment or left in situations of semi-employment and underemployment. The majority of the urban, Black people in Brazil are *Favelados* (Slum dwellers), and many other African descendants, still live in the countryside, slaves to a feudal land holding system and social system, in a situation of total destitution, as peasants sharecroppers or migrant workers (Nascimento, 1999).

Nascimento, however, believes that Black people require a scientific knowledge that allows them to formulate theoretically a systematic and consistent form — their experience of almost five centuries of oppression, resistance and creative struggle. Richards also notes that:

Throughout their sojourn in America, African-Americans have been taught the separateness of themselves from Africa and Africans. The teaching has been so ingrained that even in those communities, which are “most African”, there is the greatest scandal of “being African”. (1999, p.207)

Richards maintains that Africa survived the middle passage, the slave experience, and other trials in America because of the depth and strength of African spirituality and humanism. This spirituality allowed the survival of African-Americans as a distinctive cultural identity in 'New Europe' and that this spirituality and vitality, which defines the responses of African people to western culture is universally African. And yet she notes:

We look around us and, while in the Caribbean and in the Black communities of South America, African retentions are quite visible, Black existence in North America is problematical. "How are we African?" We Blacks ask. We do not know where to look for likeness? Not knowing ourselves, we have not known how to reorganise manifestations of our heritage. (1999, p.208)

The African spirit symbolises Africans as a people. The ethos of a people is related to special characteristics, which identify them as a group, setting them apart from other groups. It has to do with the way certain things make them feel good or displease them. It is the bedrock of their aesthetic appreciation of beauty. Ethos and worldview are intimately related because they both help to create culture. Richards (1999) believes that one thing that culture does for its members is to present them with a systematic way of ordering experiences. These experiences together make up their phenomenal world. Culture, therefore, is not an ordered behaviour and it is not created individually. All groups of people who have been historically related over long periods of time share a way of viewing the world and the realities with which it presents them. A worldview results from a shared cultural experience just as it helps to form that experience. It gives people a systematic set of ideas about many things. Its significance is profound and it has far reaching effects on those who share it. It affects their perceptions of nature, of themselves as human beings, of each other and their relationship to all being. A worldview helps to inject meaning into life and to determine which experiences and events are meaningful and which are not. That is why Teffo (1999) argues that all is not lost in African culture. A conscious, critical and elaborate detour into African culture will yield a wealth of cultural values. When these values are revisited, revitalised and incorporated into our modern, super-industrial societies, then some of the problems affecting Africans may be solved.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to discuss the concept of culture, identity and racism as they relate to African migrants in Australia. Culture was viewed as dynamic and that for African migrants in a predominantly Eurocentric culture, cultural identity assumes a duality that creates tension within the individual. For the African migrant, there are other factors, historical in nature, which directly or indirectly impinge on his/her being. And because of the significance of these factors in a re-evaluative sense of the African culture and identity, this thesis takes the view that they constitute part of the challenge of dealing with the tensions of ambivalence in the diaspora. It has been assumed that there is a third space (Bhabha, 1994) in which the migrant can deploy self-empowering roles in order to reclaim and achieve a desired cultural identity outlook. Evidence drawn from some studies, for example, of Jaskic, suggest that African migrants not only need to be well informed about the cultural challenges that lie ahead of them but also to draw on their heritage as a way of continuing the African spirit.

Racism is a worldwide problem and the African migrants in Australia are confronted with this problem in their daily life. It presents challenges that ought to be examined critically considering that it often results in victimisation of those presumed inferior. In addition to the anti-racist policies in place, I am of the view that African culture may provide empowering strategies that African migrants can draw on for inspiration. There is no permanent solution to this contradiction, of racism, because of its political nature; however, more enduring solutions lie in educational and self-empowering strategies, which explore critically its enduring nature and at the same time continue to create alternative self-empowering approaches as noted of the Asians in Britain.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design

Afrocentricity proposes a cultural reconstruction that incorporates the African perspective as a part of an entire human transformation. Critical theory suggests a pathway, it does not lead us down the path, because it is trapped in the quick sand of its own ethnocentric view, but its attack on the traditional ideology of empiricism is “right on.”

Molefi Kete Asante, 1987, p.5

## **Methodology**

In this chapter I discuss the rationale for the research method and the procedures. It concludes that the Ujamaa circle is an empowering research and learning process, drawing on the participants and me. The participants and I engaged in a process of discovering ourselves through discussion and dialogue about African culture and related issues.

The study group was composed of ten participants, from the twenty-five invitations sent out. They ranged between twelve and twenty-five years of age, all from the East African migrant community in Perth. The period of residence in Australia by the participants varied: four were born locally by parents who were of African background, and six were born in Africa. I chose East African migrant families because I knew many of their parents. In addition to the ten participants I had a family member who played the role of a research assistant. She assisted with the shifting of equipment and taking extra notes during the sessions.

### **Selection of Method**

Different discourses and epistemologies serve as both counter knowledge and liberating tools for people who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from the Euro-American “regime of truth” (Foucault, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). An epistemology is a “system of knowing” that has both an internal logic and external validity. For example, literary scholars have created distinctions between literary genres such that some works are called literature whereas other works are termed folklore. Literature of the peoples of colour is more likely to fall into the folklore category. As a consequence, folklore is seen as less rigorous, less scholarly and perhaps less culturally valuable than literature. The claim of an epistemological ground is a crucial legitimating force (Ladson-Billings, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, pp.257-8). That is why I felt that the research method should be one that encouraged dialogue, deeper reflection and meaning amongst the participants about African culture and histories. The epistemological challenge that is being mounted by some

scholars of colour is not solely about racism but also about the nature of truth and reality. Accordingly Rosaldo (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) argues that in what he terms the classic period (from 1921 to 1971):

Norms of distanced normalising description gained a monopoly on objectivity, their authority appeared so self evident that they became the one and only legitimate form for telling the literal truth about other cultures. All other modes of composition were marginalised or suppressed all together. This paved the way for the systematic destruction of minority groups and undermining their cultural bases. (2000, p. 259)

While African migrants may enjoy certain benefits and more improved economic conditions (compared to their previous circumstances back in Africa) they are still confronted with cultural tensions that are associated with minority marginality experience (Udo-Ukpo, 1999). They occupy a liminal position and may not necessarily seek to shift from the margin to the mainstream. Thus the work of the liminal perspectives is to reveal the ways that dominant perspectives distort the realities of the other in an effort to maintain power relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream (Bhabha, 1994). Critical paradigms are therefore empowering and normative of subjective reality. Accordingly the Ujamaa Circle discussion and the dialogical approach (as developed by Akinyela, 1996), was chosen as a research method because it is grounded in a critical Afrikan<sup>1</sup> centred theory, and has the potential of empowering the participants.

### **A Critical Afrikan-Centred Theory**

According to Akinyela (1996) critical African centred theory is aimed at creating effective strategies of liberation from the everyday domination experienced by Black people. This theory is concerned with developing a humanitarian worldview, which begins with an appreciation of the dynamic and diverse history of pre-colonial Africans. As well as the importance of the resistance to domination exhibited by enslaved Africans and the continuing and ever new approaches to life, which are expressed by Black people today. This theory has four major dimensions. First, at issue, is a discussion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Afrika with a 'k' is used where it applies to Dr. Akinyela's theory.

nature of culture. Secondly, is the interest in a theory of the construction of knowledge. Thirdly, the theory is focused on understanding the social dynamics of collective consciousness and identity, and finally it is critical that an outline is made of a dimension of power negotiation and power sharing in a culturally diverse society, which moves beyond multiculturalism, to the politics of cultural democracy.

Akinyela notes that most definitions of culture assume that culture is self-expression of monolithic, ethnic/racial values through phenomena such as art, food, music, clothing, religion, or other outward forms. However critical African centred understanding of culture posits that cultural phenomena take their form in the dialectical tension that exists in the asymmetrical power relations between and within groups. Culture is constructed as the more powerful and less powerful segments of society contend for positions of power and privilege among themselves. This means that any given culture is actually a complex of cultures among unequal: class, gender, religious, language, sexual and other elements, within a group (1996).

Culture is constructed in the constant process of dynamic change motivated by shifts in asymmetrical power relationships within complexes of various subject positions. The resulting material manifestations of cultural phenomena, for example the artistic, social, and political expressions of groups and individuals, are behaviours of resistance and survival, which assist and motivate cultural actors to make sense of, and give meaning to their collective existence.

Critical Afrikan-centred theory maintains a historical view of knowledge. Knowledge is socially constructed and culturally mediated within societies and affected by historical context. Human beings construct knowledge in their critical reflection upon lived experiences out of which they are able to define and name their own social and political reality. And these social group issues are the motivating force of history and the locus of the construction of knowledge. Using information gained from “old knowledge”, subjects reflect, share and strive to understand as a community. In the act of challenging new situations and problems, “new knowledge” is constructed, which will eventually itself become “old knowledge” to be challenged by new situations.

Consciousness according to Akinyela (1996) is the personal awareness possessed by individuals of shared collective experience and connected interests with a group in the context of common social political and cultural conditions. Consciousness is constructed in social engagement of humans with each other and the environment. Material conditions play a part in shaping consciousness and for the African migrants in Australia, racism, poverty and unemployment present environmental realities that may impact on their consciousness.

Cultural democracy is a key element of critical Afrikan centred theory. It is a means of cultural power negotiation within a diverse population. In practice cultural democracy provides possibilities for subordinate cultural ethnic groups to appropriate power for themselves within a multicultural society (Akinyela, 1996). The theory, therefore, provides the conceptual lens for examining the cultural perspectives of a minority group. The concept of cultural democracy is a policy, which recognises the destructive and oppressive nature of cultural invasion. Cultural democracy is the human right of each ethnic/cultural group or person in a culturally diverse society to have equal access to life chances and sources of social power. Cultural democracy is a term borrowed from the educational theory of Ramirez & Castaneda (cited in Akinyela, 1996).

## **Procedure**

How was the Afrikan centred theory applied to the development of ideas about African cultural education?

The approach was based on Akinyela's Ujamaa Circle process as used with African American families. Ujamaa (oo-jah-ma-ah) is a word from the Swahili language of East and Central Africa and can be translated as "Familyhood". The gatherings for this process are called Ujamaa Circles. A person who sets out to become a facilitator for this process should know and practise the applications of educational and social cultural principles which when correctly understood and applied will guide Circle participants to develop a sense of connectedness.

This support and information group process avoids pre-packaged models or recipes and formulas. It does not focus on teaching any skills or techniques



other than critical thinking and connectedness, though it does not exclude skills and techniques, which might be helpful to daily living. A primary concern in developing the principles of the Ujamaa Circle process was that they reflect the issues and experiences, which arise out of the culture and the daily reality of the Circle participants. Although the Ujamaa Circle process is an African centred system, because economic inequality, cultural domination and marginalisation affect people of different cultures in similar ways, and the creation of hidden testimonies are a natural resistant response to domination, there is no claim of an exclusively African cultural value to the process. The Ujamaa Circle process has been utilised in several cross-cultural situations successfully (Akinyela, 1996).

The Ujamaa circle process teaches through structured dialogues. Dialogue, or focused two way conversation which encourages questions and answers from participants can be a strengthening educational tool with which participants are able to uncover knowledge about a subject. Often this is knowledge they never knew they possessed. Participants are also able to discover new knowledge, which is gained from other participants and the facilitator. Through dialogue, participants are able to define new ways of participating in the educational process.

Out of the structured dialogues, I was able to hear the participants's own stories about their everyday life and experiences and develop cultural educational themes from these stories. The stories of individuals in the group supplied source material for the development of an approach to African Cultural Education. These individual source materials were generative stories in the process. The cultural education ideas, which were developed from the generative stories, were called codes and the collective problem solving was called decoding. Codes were presented in the form of poems, pictures, music or other creative methods representing the issues discussed in participant's stories. Through the codes participants were presented with real life issues from their own experiences from which they could learn. By using this method, I worked within the cultural reality and experiences of the participants. Through the dialogue about the codes it was possible to deal with real problems and issues, which confronted the participants. The Ujamaa Circle

process helped participants to develop attitudes of self-determination and skills for self help.

Within the circle, a framework was created through which conditions, that create disempowerment for African migrants were viewed and comprehended.

### **Attributes of the facilitator**

According to Akinyela, (1996, pp.178 -181) the facilitator should have the following attributes:

- The Ujamaa Circle facilitator makes the Ujamaa Circle an exciting and safe place to be.

The Ujamaa circle is a place where participants can practise critical thinking skills and reflect on issues of their lives, which affect their family, school and other relationships in a safe and nurturing environment. The facilitator is a teacher-student, while participants are student-teachers.

- Is willing to share with the circle participants

This means she/he should be willing to be engaged with the group and share his/her own stories, experiences and feelings. In this way the facilitator is a model for openness.

- Is responsible and authoritative without being authoritarian

The facilitator role as teacher, require that she/he be prepared for the sessions. Encourage the quiet one to have an input, by asking if they have any comment. Ujamaa Circle encourages participants to problematise and examine issues as someone who makes decisions about survival.

- Keeps the focus on content and process

Making sure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard in the Circle. Pose questions, raise problems, give suggestions and focus on keeping flow of information between participants running smoothly.

- Learning to listen and learning to question

The two most important skills of a facilitator is the ability to be an engaged listener and the ability to ask questions, which will challenge Circle participants, to think more deeply about their life experiences, and how

they affect family interactions. Dialogue in the Ujamaa Circle is always by invitation, not by compulsion.

Facilitators never order participants to talk or to participate in any activity in the circle. Threats and lectures are totally out of place in the Ujamaa Circle. Rather than “you have to...if you don't...or you better”, Facilitators are simply required to open the door of participation for each participant with inviting questions, “will you? What do you feel? .... How do you think?”

‘But why?’ is another very important question that a facilitator may use. It opens up the possibility for the participant that perhaps there are deeper things behind the first thoughts, which they might have on a subject. Prompting using words like “because? ...” as an interjection after listening to a participant becomes an open invitation to the participant to consider the feelings and Ideas, which lie after the sentence, which now with the interjection seems so incomplete. They might then follow up with something else.

Finally the best communication is silence. Silence is uncomfortable because it forces as sense of being alone with oneself. But when the facilitator and participants move past the discomfort, the circle participants may discover answers to some of the very questions that produced the silences. These techniques were applied during the six Ujamaa Circle sessions.

### **Preparing for the Circle**

The ten participants were invited to a central location and they participated in six, two-hourly weekly workshops for six weeks. Akinyela (1996) suggests that preparation to facilitate the Ujamaa Circle is as important as actually facilitating a circle. Because it is known that the learning environment is an important influence upon participants' success in the Ujamaa Circle, it is important to make sure that the space in which the circle is conducted is appropriate.

## **Creating and using codes for dialogue**

According to Akinyela (1996), after listening to the thematic stories of the circle, the facilitator will be challenged to bring these themes to the group in such a way as to make the individual themes valuable to each person in the group as a whole. From the previous notes, which have been kept of the previous sessions, the facilitator will create codes for discussion.

### **What is a code?**

A code is a concrete physical representation of a particularly critical issue that has come up during the thematic story telling phase. Codes should be a representation of problems and situations, which are familiar and would be immediately recognised by the group. Codes should not be one-dimensional. This means that they should be represented as a problem with many sides and more than one solution. It should be open ended and simple, and only deal with one issue at a time. The codes produced should also not be overwhelming. They should offer possibilities for group affirmation and should require only small steps for making change. The very solution to the code should emerge from the group in collective discussion (Akinyela, 1996). Codes and solutions to the codes were identified. The participants suggested topics, and possible approaches to African Cultural Education.

### **Learning to question**

Coding is problem-posing education. When a facilitator creates codes for a group, the code becomes an object of learning for the group to focus on through conversation or dialogue. Through dialogue the group is able to define its own learning problems and to reconstruct new ways of approaching an issue along with the other participants and the support and guidance of the facilitator. The facilitator uses the

groups' own stories about their lives and experiences. And develops problems from these stories to be collectively solved by the Circle. These individual source materials are called thematic stories in the Ujamaa Circle group process. The problems that are posed by the facilitator of the group are the codes (Akinyela, 1996).

With codes, participants were presented with real life issues from their own experiences to learn from. By using this method they worked within their everyday cultural context and were able, through dialogue, to deal with problems and issues, which confronted them in their lives. Coding and De-Coding encourages critical thinking and problem solving, about both individual and family issues, which arise in the home, and about the larger social issues, which affect a family's quality of life. This is the strength of this approach as a research tool. It is located within the people's reality. Racism, for example, was one issue or Code that emerged during the Ujamaa sessions and the participants suggested possible ways of dealing with it.

By employing Codes as objects of discussion and by involving the Ujamaa Circle in an inductive process of questioning, the discussions remained focussed on personal experiences. At the same time the personal experiences were introduced into the broader cultural context and participants worked out solutions together.

According to Akinyela Codes can be represented in the form of:

- A short skit
- A poem
- A film clip
- A music/voice recording
- A drawing or photograph
- A brief reading from a book, magazine or Newspaper

Before presenting the Code to the Group, the facilitator clearly defines for the group what the subject discussion will be for this presentation. In one of the sessions I used African cultural artefacts, African cultural publications, and newspapers to discuss issues of cultural concern.

## The Decoding Questioning Cycle (Data Collection)

Critical consciousness is not something, which occurs spontaneously. It is an intentional act. Problem posing education utilizing the developed codes follows a seven-fold process, which carries students from the familiar, individual and concrete to the abstract, collective and analytical. In this way participants learn that knowledge is gained in the community. They also learn that their own problems are not peculiar to themselves, nor are they insurmountable. In the process participants are asked to observe or listen to a code:

- ✓ Describe what they see or hear: This means simply reporting what is observable without giving input as to the meaning of what is seen and heard. Write responses on board or chart.
- ✓ Define the problem with what is heard: Now participants are asked to interpret and problematise the code. Write responses on a board or chart.
- ✓ Share similar experiences: By sharing similar experiences or knowledge of similar situations, the group becomes aware of the social nature of the situation and can collectively break through the feeling of isolation and alienation. Write responses on a board or chart.
- ✓ Question why there is a problem: What is at the root of the problem? Is it only personal or are there social conditions, which influence or enhance the problems? Write responses on a board or a chart.
- ✓ What can be done to resolve the problem: This is a chance for the group to create visionary solutions. If problems have been identified by the group, and the source of the problems and their implications explored, the solutions can be found at this point. Write responses on a board or chart.
- ✓ Define the benefits in the resolutions given: Now the group is redefining the situation and reconstructing their environment. They are not only seeking solutions, they are examining the implications, of the solutions, which they raise.

- ✓ Describe how the new situation might look: This is the naming of the groups own reality. They are daring to visualise, what a different world would look like. They are taking responsibility for their own lives and forging new directions for them.

### **Final Action**

The final action as the group's facilitator will be to present participants' letters of completion, which outlines information covered by the group. The purpose of the Ujamaa Circle process is to create a situation where families, which have been disconnected, and thrust into new environments, are strengthened to create a change for themselves in an intentional act of community.

This approach as a means for developing a cultural educational approach proved quite useful. Bringing the voices of the participants in the research process meant that the outcomes represented their most relevant needs. The transcriptions from the audio recordings of the sessions and reflection notes about the sessions constituted the basis for analysis, discussion and development of an African Cultural Education approach. In the case of assimilation pressures, for example, the participants came up with the solution of a cultural school for learning, practising and talking about African cultural issues.

### **An overview of Ujamaa Circle sessions**

#### Session 1

The objective of this session was to establish the identity perceptions of the participants and the significance of African culture in their self-definition process.

Some of the questions included the following:

Who am I?

What makes you feel African?

What is African in you?

What is Australian in you?

What are the cultural challenges to living as an African, Australian, or African-Australian?

Have you experienced racism?

How should the problem of racism be dealt with?

How do you deal with the challenges of duality?

Are there other ways of dealing with the challenges? Give suggestions.

What is African time?

In what ways will the concept of African cultural education benefit: the community, the African community and the wider community?

How is knowledge about African culture going to benefit us as a community?

## Session 2

The objective of this session was to describe the emerging themes and relate them to globalisation, diaspora and lifelong learning so that the process of shifting identity definitions could be viewed from a broader perspective. The participants looked at the themes that emerged from the previous session and diverse resources of African culture, namely: books, CD's, and videos. They examined what other people had done in the area of African culture. Most of the resources were materials that were written or developed by African people or people who were interested in African culture. The participants had the opportunity to browse through the materials and then comment about them in the context of the emergent themes from the first session. The emergent themes included the following:

- African history
- Cultural renewal and continuity;
- Current affairs/contemporary issues;
- Negotiating cultural identity;
- Aesthetics;
- Language.

Some of the questions included the following:

What is globalisation?



What is diaspora?

What is lifelong learning?

Do you know when Africans were taken to America?

Have you read some of these books (African cultural books)?

Does anyone want to say something about Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and Louis Armstrong?

What do you know about the Mau Mau rebellion?

Is it important to study biographies or autobiographies of African people?

What is the importance of learning African history?

Is African history of any use to our present existence, as African migrants?

Suggest ways in which African history may be used to improve our being?

How many of you have listened to Lucky Dube's music?

How many of you have seen Lucky Dube in live performance?

How can we as African migrants use Lucky Dube's resource?

How can you use jazz for self-empowerment?

The awareness of the existence of diverse resources about African culture helped the participants to conceptualise African cultural issues more broadly.

### Session 3

The objective of this session was to examine the issues affecting Africans in the diaspora and African continent.

What do you think are the main issues affecting Africans wherever they live?

What are the main problems of the African continent?

How can we link these ideas to the concept of African cultural education?

At community level what should be the goals of African cultural education?

What is philosophy?

What is African philosophy?

What is knowledge?

What does it mean to be an African?

What does international mean?

How can the African cultural education be used at an international level?

What sort of international goals would you have for African Cultural Education?

#### Session 4

This session examined aesthetics: African musical instruments, African Art, and African newspapers. The participants discussed the potential value of these resources. The participants also planned an African cultural education program. The following questions were used as prompts for the discussion:

Can you tell us about the Uganda Consulate in Australia?

What is your general impression about the availability of this resource, The African newspaper?

Is there something you found interesting in the Uganda newspaper?

Do we have any African restaurants in Perth?

Does it still look like that in Africa (after observing an African painting)?

What else can we say about the African painting?

Have you seen Dorinda's television series on SBS, about African cooking?

What can you say about the West African gourd-percussion?

Have you ever played the African drum?

Do you know Solomon, the African drummer in Perth?

#### Session 5

This was mostly a planning session during which the participants looked at the information that had been collected so far and used it to develop some ideas about an African cultural education program. They assumed that such a program would run during school holidays.

The following were some of the issues considered during the planning sessions:

African history;

To keep kids off the streets;

Holiday semesters;

Allocation of topics to the parents to talk about;

Family trees and related genealogical issues;

Learning about ethnic groups of Africa;

African medicine;

Research topics and presentation;

Learning about being African;

Counselling and meetings.

## Session 6

This session was an opportunity for the participants to present on African cultural topics of their own interest. The session provided an opportunity for collecting more information from the participants regarding possible approaches to African cultural education. The choices of topics and styles of presentation by the participants were varied and the responses by the peers to the presentations were informative.

Hasahya presented a brief history of reggae and then played the song of Bob Marley, One love. Music as one aspect of African cultural education was evident.

Namu's story was inspired by a talented South African Artist, Hugh Masekela, who has made an effort in incorporating his traditional South African rhythms with those in the diaspora. A song entitled Strawberry on one of his CDs inspired her to write a story about living and growing up in the diaspora, Australia. This was the story she presented to her colleagues.

Mtino, made a presentation about black music. For him 'black music served the same purpose as poetry. Often described as the art of rhythmical compositions written or spoken for exciting pleasure, by beautiful, imaginative or alleviative thoughts'. He played to the group his favourite rap song, I can, by NAS. The music is about empowerment, through education, moral and historical links to Africa. It targets young people, to look at their rich African history as a source of inspiration.

Namulwa presented something about one of the first African female leaders, Hatshepsut the queen of Egypt. This was the youngest of the presenters and her work on early Egyptians was interesting.

Tofa talked about African story telling and linked its significance to African traditional education. Tofa viewed African story telling as a way of documenting African history. Colonial interference in traditional knowledge was also discussed, by reference to colonial renaming of African physical features, like Lake Nyanza, which was renamed Victoria by the colonialists.

Belinda made a video presentation about a talk show, by 'Queen Latifah'. One incident involved an African-American man (who had a white partner) and couldn't stand the idea of marrying an African woman, because he felt it was like marrying his 'sister'. He felt that African women were lazy and white women were more caring. There was a white man who said that he would rather let his child die than receive an organ donation from someone who wasn't Anglo-Saxon. Also there was another white man who said that white women were ugly and didn't know how to raise their children properly (had an African-American partner). Issues of race relation and inter-racial relations directly impact on value systems of a culture, therefore, this program was good as it provided an opportunity for reflection on the American inter-racial relations.

Napoli talked about Martin Luther King Jr., and viewed his biography as inspirational to his being.

Muchere presented about Ernest Green, an African-American who experienced white racism in college, in the fifties, at the time when American schools were desegregated.

Ritali presented something about African cooking; she actually prepared a meal, which she shared with the other participants.

Kaduli presented about the tourism and wildlife diversity in East Africa. She had earlier made a trip to Africa and consequently she had a good collection of wildlife photos from Kenya wildlife parks, which she shared with the participants. The presentations were very diverse and interesting. The potential of knowledge generation from African cultural education was demonstrated during these presentations. This could ultimately benefit the mainstream as well. The presenters were in high spirit, they felt empowered, and enjoyed every moment of their participation and presentation.

This was the last session and it ended with a self-reflection questionnaire that offered a valuable insight about how the participants progressed through the six sessions. The session ended with a summary of the key outcomes of the sessions and the resolutions made by the participants.

## **Conclusion**

The Ujamaa Circle process was dialogical and provided empowering opportunities for the participants of African migrant background to raise issues and propose solutions to the issues raised. The emergent themes from the sessions, and the additional notes about the reactions and attitudes of the participants provided diverse information, which became useful in developing an approach to African cultural education. The outcomes of the process reflected the participants' cultural reality and wishes. These are presented in the next three chapters.

## Chapter 4

### **Cultural Identity and African Values: examining participants perceptions**

The extended family concept solves many problems. First, those of security; when one eats, all eat. If one has a house to live in, all have a house to live in. When one works, all who are physically able work. Most of the needs of the members of the family are met by the family such as care for the aged, seeing that all children have a mother and a father, quality education available for all the children and not just those who can afford such.

Don Lee (1973, p. 134.)

## **Introduction**

This chapter examines the perceived cultural identities of the ten participants and discusses the implications of African cultural values for healthy identity development. Of significance are the multiple identities of some of the participants, which will be discussed by drawing on Bhabha's (1994) theory of borderline politics. Cultural identity negotiation is ongoing and is influenced by various factors including the root culture. The root culture is a term I use to describe the cultural traditions and values practised in the ancestral culture of the parents. It is assumed that some of the root culture is retained by the migrant parents and continues to be transmitted to the next generation. Because of the centrality of the root culture in the migrants' homes, I posit that, African values are essential as a basis for cultural identity negotiation.

## **Migration and root culture**

Migration is an ongoing process in the human experience both at an individual and collective level. There are various reasons for this process as observed in the quote below.

Everywhere modern social relations have penetrated, massive and repeated population dislocations have resulted: from the countryside to the city, between socio-economic regions, across national boundaries, between major ethno-linguistic spheres, from continent to continent. Migrants have moved long distances or short, once or several times. Compelled by war, famine, social disruption, or the hope for a better life, the complex phenomenon of migration has been fundamental to the whole modern epoch. (Benmayor and Skotnes, 1994, p.5.)

As a result of migration, many Africans do not live in their ancestral lands any more; instead, they are resettled in the diaspora. Many are not able to follow the traditions of their original cultures in their new surrounding, so their cultural lines from their ancestors come to an end. Like most urban Africans, their way of life is no longer strictly bound by the ethical and social norms of their original rural cultures. They hold aspirations of individual (as distinct from

family and extended family) success. Their decisions on important matters of their lives are taken without calculation of the interests of their lineage group or kin group (Abraham, 1992). This is very much the case of the African migrants discussed in this chapter who participated in this study. They are either first generation African migrants or descendants of first generation Africans who migrated to Australia. Their links with their ancestral land have now become remote.

The participants in this study are negotiating new cultural identities, often challenging their present self-definitions. Most of them have ambivalent feelings of being African and a bit Australian, carrying diverse hyphenations of their duality claims: African-Australian, Ugandan-Australian, Tanzanian, Australian or Australian-African. The cultural identity locations assumed by the participants are important to them because they give them a sense of who they are. But because of the cultural politics prevalent in a multicultural society like Australia, it is not realistic to assume that these categories are static. They are subjected to other rival cultural forces around them. And as minorities they cannot overlook the impact of such forces. Bhabha (1994) in his theory of borderline cultural politics explores this challenge quite well, demonstrating in his theory how those from the minority cultures can exploit these tensions to their advantage. The next section looks at the perceived identities by the participants and explains the reasons for preferences of such cultural identities.

### **Perceived Identities by the participants**

There is a range of cultural identity dispositions assumed by the participants that seems to suggest varying responses to the Australian migrant experience. They all claimed some degree of affiliation to their African cultural identity and they were keen on learning and preserving African values. There is a continuum in these identity categories. I start with those identifying most closely with their African country of origin and proceed to those identifying most closely with Australia. Mtino feels Tanzanian, and for him that is the only perceived identity.



Nationality: Tanzanian. Born in Dar-es-salaam. I have lived in both Australia and Tanzania. Our parents moved us back to Tanzania so that we could get in touch with our country. Although I have lived a majority of my life in Australia, I still regard Africa as my home. (M/16/14)<sup>1</sup>

Despite being raised in Perth, Mtino feels African, more specifically Tanzanian. He is strongly attached to his African roots. For Mtino, the African heritage constitutes his cultural identity, which sounds a bit unrealistic given that the 14 years he has spent in Australia must have influenced his cultural outlook. His school experience and association with Australian peers in the community should be having some influence on his identity. Nevertheless that is the way he feels. He said:

I don't think that we can ever deny our heritage, because it is an important part of our being. Perth has been very good to our family, but it is not my home. (Mtino/M/16/14)

Heritage carries the cultural history and values of a people. It therefore provides resources and ways of perceiving and interpreting their being. A heritage contains the ways of making moral judgements and developing social norms. The significance of a heritage in influencing the social behaviour of individuals is important because within a given heritage normative practices are in place to maintain harmony of individuals within their communities. It is this, I suspect, which Mtino treasures so much for it defines his humanity and therefore cultural identity.

Tofa too perceives his identity to be Tanzanian-African. He believes that there are significant benefits from the root culture.

You can gain priceless things from knowing about your heritage such as inspiration, knowledge, pride, respect and a greater understanding of yourself and your people. (Tofa/M/14/14)

The cultural history of one's people is a source of inspiration and pride because within this cultural history you find your heroes, stories of wisdom and empowerment. In a traditional African cultural education, these heroes are preserved and passed on to the subsequent generations through written and oral folklore. Moral codes are taught through traditional education. This is probably what has enriched and inspired Tofa's worldview and appreciation of

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<sup>1</sup> This represents participants' categories (Name/gender/age/period of residence in Australia)

his people's culture. He seems to be aware of the role that African heritage has played in his well-being. For Tofa aspects of African culture should be examined in a historical perspective so that an ongoing self-definition is possible.

I feel it is important to learn about African culture so that we know how far we have come. And how far we shall still have to go, personally and as a united people of the world. Though I was born in Australia and have lived most of my life here, I still regard myself as Tanzanian-African. (Tofa/M/14/14)

There are lessons to be learnt from the African culture, which for Tofa may provide possibilities for self and collective improvement. Isn't this the ideal thing to do in a changing world? The cultural dynamics around the world demand an ongoing re-evaluation and strategic focus on cultural practices, which are fundamentally essential for cultural continuity. Tofa was born in Australia but nevertheless the movement back and forth to Africa has strengthened his links with his African roots.

Born in Australia. Nationality: Tanzanian, we moved back and forth between Australia and Tanzania. Our parents used this time to teach us about our heritage and get us back to our roots. (Tofa/M/14/14)

African cultural renewal has been possible through the physical experience of the Tanzanian culture, and that probably explains why he is well grounded in a Tanzanian cultural consciousness. The pride in his Tanzanian culture seems to be unshaken. This is necessary for strengthening his identity.

Kaduli perceives herself as both a Ugandan and an Australian. It is a duality in which she feels more Ugandan than Australian.

I guess for me it's not confusing but I am more Ugandan, because even if I was not raised there, the culture that I know or the culture that I have been taught is Ugandan. So I see myself more Ugandan than Australian even though I am Australian. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

On the basis of the culture she has been taught by her parents Kaduli feels more Ugandan than Australian. She acknowledges that her Ugandan values are at the core of her identity. Another interesting point about Kaduli is that she was not raised in Uganda but rather in Kenya until the age of 15, yet she believes that the culture that she has been taught is Ugandan because her

parents are Ugandan. This suggests a strong parental cultural influence on Kaduli that has made her proud of where she came from. She has not lost sight of her Ugandan cultural identity despite growing up outside Uganda. Having lived in Kenya for most of the 15 years of her life, her Ugandan identity claim might also include some Kenyan cultural influences.

Ritali (F/20/11) like Kaduli feels more Ugandan. "I think I am Ugandan and it is more due to the fact that I am proud of where I came from. So I am more willing to say that I am Ugandan than Australian." She has clearly indicated her pride in her root culture and for her that defines her cultural identity despite residing in Australia for 11 years. The Australian in her is less significant.

Namu feels that she is a 'balanced' African-Australian as she is selecting values from both cultures. Like Kaduli, there is evidence of home cultural influences on Namu, who is proud of her African roots despite leaving Africa at the age of four.

I see myself as African-Australian because like I was born in Africa. But I have grown up here and the values I get are from both cultures. I think they are at the same level. They are at the same level because I have not grown up in Africa. I have grown up here but I still love Africa. (Namu/F/16/12)

Unlike Kaduli who arrived in Australia at the age of 15, Namu's 'balanced' acceptance of both cultures would be expected since she arrived in Australia at the very early age of four. Her appreciation of African culture is probably different from that of Kaduli, as she never lived in Africa old enough to appreciate and internalise the traditional African heritage.

Hasahya (F/14/12) perceives a dual identity too. "I see myself as African-Australian because some of my values are Australian but my parents teach me more African values." She has acknowledged her parents as the main source of African values. This is indicative of the importance of parents as cultural teachers. Namulwa (F/12/12) similarly perceives a dual identity when saying, "I consider myself African-Australian as well because when I need to act Australian I can do so. I feel more African and that's the way I feel." Is Namulwa implying that she can easily distinguish and act the two different cultural orientations? Her remarks above seem to suggest so and if that is the

case, then this confirms Bhabha's theory of being able to live multiple identities. She is developing an identity, which will be unique to herself, but at the same time, picking values from both the African and Australian cultures.

Balinda (F/14/14) was born and raised in Australia; however, she still identifies with Uganda, the country of her parents' origin.

Although I have lived practically all my life here and I have never been to Uganda, I still consider myself African-Australian. I have got more Australian culture but I consider myself Ugandan. My culture is Australian, but I am Ugandan. (Balinda/F/14/14)

Balinda is conscious of her Australian identity but still believes that she is Ugandan. So she has embraced both identities by declaring herself African-Australian. Balinda values both cultures and hence the willingness to assume a dual identity. It would seem that the retention of her Ugandan identity is to do with her parents having come from Uganda. Therefore, it is of both symbolic and spiritual significance. She values the continued connectedness to her ancestral heritage. She is a girl who could be described as someone with a mostly Australian culture but who feels Ugandan as well.

Muchere too was born and raised in Australia but she feels African as well.

My name is Muchere and because I was born in Australia although I have lived in Africa a bit, I actually see myself more Australian, although I know I am African. Well it's a bit of both I guess, and well because I don't know much about African culture I have to say that I am more Australian, culture wise. But kind of as I get older, I begin to feel the importance of having the African in me. Especially when people ask a lot and then you start to feel proud of Africa. And I plan to go back, and learn more about the Ugandan culture as well. I want that to be a real big part of my life. (Muchere/F/19/19)

Muchere accepts her duality and wishes to strengthen it by learning more about her African roots. It is worth noting that Muchere is increasingly valuing her African roots despite being born and raised in Australia. She knows that she is African as well as Australian. So what makes her feel attached to her African roots? It seems to be something to do with her belief that her root culture is part of her identity. Therefore regardless of whether she is well acquainted with the African heritage or not, it is something she is aware of as part of her identity. Hence it must be valued and continued.

Muchere notes below the significance of African culture to future generations.

The culture may be lost for generations to come. We need to have awareness and an understanding of our culture so that we don't have conflicts between cultural identities. We are all originally from Africa but we are Australian. (Muchere/F/19/19)

Understanding African culture may help to resolve the contradictions that may arise for these particular participants during the process of cultural identity self-definition. The root culture should not be forgotten and the Australian culture must be valued too as both are important constituents of the migrants' multiple identities. As noted above, the African heritage is important for Muchere, and constitutes part of her identity. The total cultural loss of a migrants' root heritage is not healthy as it may lead to a loss of self-confidence. At the same time, migrants are likely to experience tensions between cultural values and as Muchere puts it "conflicts between cultural identity." This is probably the reason why Muchere is determined to return to Uganda and learn a little bit more about the culture of where her parents came from so that she can achieve a greater appreciation of her root culture. There may be advantages in revisiting her ancestry as the cultural renewal may strengthen her spiritual links to Africa.

Napoli (M/16/11), who was born in Uganda, despite living in Australia for about the same period as Namu (F/16/12), feels more Australian than African. "I am African-Australian, I see myself more Australian because I have grown up here." Napoli seems to feel more Australian as the African cultural influence is a little bit remote. It seems that Napoli's upbringing has not emphasised the learning and practise of African culture. This is suggested by the way he responds to the following question: Can you remember any particular time when you were made to feel, that you should know more about African culture? The response was:

I can't remember any particular time when I was made to know more about African culture. The reason is because I want to learn about it but I am not taught. (Napoli/M/16/11)

And yet Namulwa's response to the same question was: 'I live with African cultural teachers.' Hasahya also responded to the same question by saying that: 'No, but we learn lots about Africa at home'. So it seems that while other participants suggest evidence of African cultural education in their homes, Napoli suggests an absence of a similar experience in his home. It is possible that with time, like Muchere, he may seek to find out more about his African roots.

In this section I have explored the identity perceptions of the participants in the study and it would seem that most of them, regardless of whether they have lived in Africa or not, value their African roots. Their African heritage is seen as an essential part of their identities in their new global location. So some of the participants are accepting their hyphenated identities as a means of defining and enhancing their identities. Some of the participants have demonstrated that being in touch with Africa or having parental cultural education in Australia has strengthened their African identity. In the next section I explore how the participants in the diaspora are preserving their African values.

### **African Cultural Values**

How relevant is the African heritage in the diaspora? It seems the identities we assume as migrants are influenced by our root cultural beliefs and external experiences in the new environment of settlement. Depending on how quickly migrants are accepted in their new environments there is a possibility that they can rethink their hyphenated identities. This is only possible if their heritage is equally valued. On the other hand, if there are tensions that arise from rejection or resentment of the migrant's culture, then most likely the hyphenations will be retained. African cultures in Australia are not likely to be easily accepted, as evidence of the African-American experience seems to suggest (Coombs, 1972). It took the efforts of diverse civil agencies and political activism before African-American culture became acknowledged as part of the American culture. Therefore while the preservation of African culture/heritage in the diaspora does seem to provide possibilities of self-empowerment and identity through alternative worldviews and truths, there

are real challenges to the actual practice and continuity of some aspects of the African heritage. Nevertheless, there are liberating possibilities through an alternative worldview because the normalised oppressive practices of the dominant culture are challenged.

Namu, for example, makes a point with regard to African cultural understanding as a tool for responding to African cultural ignorance of those operating from the mainstream frame of prejudice.

African culture makes you feel proud of who you are, so like when people talk about you or they ask a question that you find really silly you feel like confident to answer back.  
(Namu/F/16/12)

African cultural literacy seems to lead to personal pride and consequently a boost in self-esteem that young African migrants need to offset challenges to their identity and being. African cultural literacy may be used to challenge established stereotypes that are used by those who presume to be culturally superior. They can be challenged about their prejudice towards African culture and perhaps taught to be more objective in their views about Africa. Therefore African cultural literacy is a moral necessity since it provides possibilities for empowerment and challenge to irresponsible discourse about Africa or African migrants. Moral engagement partly entails questioning certain aspects of social behaviour that impact on others negatively. It may also promote human freedom. So if cultural stereotyping is a tool, that racists use to undermine the humanity of others, then alternative worldviews can be invoked to challenge such people. This is important because of the minority status that the African migrant culture occupies in Australia. It is marginal and therefore vulnerable to 'extinction.'

### **Recontextualisation of African culture**

Cultural disconnectedness through migration calls for a rethinking and a recontextualisation of African cultures. After relocation from the original root culture into a new cultural environment, the original values are put to test. Moreover they are pitted against the dominant culture, running the risk that theirs may become irrelevant. So there is a need for a strategic ongoing re-

evaluation and continuity of the root cultural values as a means of strengthening self-identity and at the same time attempting to integrate into the mainstream without losing the root culture.

Kaduli benefited from one, such, opportunity in her cultural renewal, which was organised by the Ugandan community.

I guess I have started to value, like what we had last weekend. The gathering or whatever, because there is no other gathering that you go to and see an African fashion show, the dancing and stalls. So I intend to go to more of these, if there is something like that about Africa. Not only just to support, but also to learn of who I am. So being more into the community, if you want to put it that way. So it helps me to learn what Africa is all about. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

In addition to home experiences, African culture and values can be learnt through African community events. The social-cultural gatherings organised by African migrants are valuable opportunities for Kaduli to appreciate and develop her African cultural identity. Kaduli has an opportunity to learn about what it means to be African. Participation in these events challenges the individual to engage and reflect on them. It is a learning experience through which the participant builds or resolves certain contradictions regarding his or her cultural identity.

Ritali has taken this a little bit further. Through dance and rhythm, she explores African culture.

Learning to balance the two cultures has been a challenge, but I believe I will gain results eventually. My interests include dancing, music, sports and socialising with my friends. Although my education is very crucial, I want to pursue my dancing. Dancing brings out the African in me and I want to hang on to it as long as I can. Being born in Uganda, my values have obviously been obtained from that background. (Ritali/F/20/11)

Ritali's cultural identity and her self-definition are enhanced by her involvement in African dance choreographing. She may not be strictly following the traditional ways of her ancestors but nevertheless her inspiration is guided by these very traditions. Through the exploration of African dances in the diaspora, for example: the African-American hip hop, Ugandan, central and southern African dances, Ritali has developed a greater appreciation and understanding of African cultures. The enhancement of her Africanness



through dance is, as important as her mainstream education. She is searching for a cultural equilibrium that she hopes to achieve one day. By searching for her cultural identity through exploration of African dance is one way of building an individual's culture, identity and values. Acquisition of African cultural values is as important as some aspects of mainstream culture. The two need to be intelligently integrated by the migrant, so as to ensure successful settlement in the diaspora.

Kaduli has emphasised the need of taking mainstream education as part of the process towards wholeness.

And being that extra little bit different because of your colour, you want the best for yourself. You don't want people to say that; ooh that is exactly how they turn out. (Kaduli/F/26/15)

So it would seem that making use of certain aspects of the mainstream culture is as essential as developing an understanding of the African culture. Participation in mainstream education leads to acquisition of mainstream values that can enable the migrant minority to become both culturally and intellectually competitive within the mainstream. Does this mean that the acquisition of mainstream education weakens the foundations of African values? I would say that it depends on how this process is negotiated. If the consciousness towards African culture is limited, then the role of African values in the individual's life may be diminished. On the other hand, if the individual's consciousness towards African culture is strong, it is likely that the latter will have better integrative strategies of his/her cultural values with those of the mainstream. Such an individual will engage in the arena of cultural politics from a well-informed and critically thoughtful location. Absence of a functional root cultural knowledge lets the individual become a victim of assimilation. Assimilation negates the individual's root cultural potential, and it also assumes that the dominant culture will absorb the individual. This is not necessarily true given that what is sometimes assumed to be a dominant culture is a recreation of appropriated forms of minority cultures. A conscious migrant should be able to actively utilise and support cultural continuity through cultural activities that promote pride in the root culture.

Evidence emerging from the Ujamaa research process suggests that critical knowledge about African culture and values stimulated consciousness

and interest in African culture. The Ujamaa circle provided empowerment opportunities for what Bhabha (1994) calls 'strategic ambivalences and ambiguities' (In Benmayor and Skotnes, 1994, p.190). By pointing to these, and being able to use these ambivalences and ambiguities, instead of representing power as a kind of homogeneous, hegemonic block, the participants explored challenges to their self-definition unhindered. The participants realised, during the Ujamaa process, that it was upon them to take initiatives to discover their own avenues of self-definition. For as Muchere noted:

Everyone should be involved in cultural events. But I think it's fantastic that Ritali can do the dance but other people should do other roles as well. But I guess I mean, I am not personally being actively involved. It's mainly Ritali and that's it, but everyone should contribute. Everyone should have different responsibilities. (Muchere/F/19/19)

It should be a collective responsibility; for it is within the collective that culture is given meaning and significance. Since multiculturalism acknowledges the existence and freedom of diverse cultural practice and beliefs, then why shouldn't the African migrant give meaning to his/her cultural outlook and identity? What I have in mind is that other than symbolic gestures about African culture through African drumming and singing, in addition to the symbolic practices there are more fundamental issues that need to be examined by African people in Australia so as to develop a strategy towards meaningful integration into Australian culture. Such fundamental issues may include the following: African cultural re-evaluation and integration; cultural conservation and continuity; relevant community education to strengthen African identities and values; and utilisation of African cultural potential.

### **Cultural Naming**

There are other aspects of African culture that are important to retain. For example, cultural naming is one aspect of African culture that helps to define one's identity and ethnicity. It is possible to locate ancestral origin through names. Such names are usually linked to social events, the weather, or the time of day. If, for example, you happen to be born at night, among the

Banyole people of Uganda you will most likely be named Wabwire if you are a male or Nabwire if you are a female. This literally means 'The one of the night.' So anyone who bears the name Wabwire or Nabwire is likely to be a Munyole and born at night. On the one hand, you may be called Mugamba (male) or Migamba (female) if born early morning. This is the type of cultural knowledge African people grow up with.

This has implications for the type of African cultural education program that may be appropriate for migrant Africans. For a young Namulwa (late comer) who is growing up in Australia and whose name may have originated in Kinyole culture, it may be of significance to understand the theory, religious and philosophical underpinnings of naming in her root culture so that she can claim a cultural association to the knowledge in the world relating to her name. On the other hand, it is possible for Namulwa to be totally desensitised about Kinyole cultural naming and perhaps never take an interest in such forms of knowledge. This is probably what happens with assimilation whereby the root culture becomes remotely perceived and even assumed to be irrelevant. This may not be the preferable option, for the African migrants, given the negative consequences of the assimilation experiments of Aborigines into white Australia, where they feel alienated and rootless.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored identity perceptions of the participants in the Ujamaa research process. They presented a range of identity preferences that seemed to suggest that they all valued their African cultural connectedness and therefore wish to continue identifying themselves with the root culture. This has implications for a cultural practice, which strengthens their preferred identities. I also suggested that there are aspects of African culture that will have to be retained and I used cultural naming to illustrate this point. I also discussed the need for recontextualisation of African cultures through an ongoing critical re-evaluation process. Such an approach would promote meaningful dialogue on ways of strengthening African identities amongst the African migrants and integration into the mainstream. Such

dialogues are essential for a young migrant community whose internal social-cultural relations are loosely connected.

## Chapter 5

### **Cultural Challenges to Resettlement: dancing in the circle**

In the old days, when we were quite small, people hated you because you were Chinese. They were not only not friendly, they really had a hate for you.... it wasn't good to speak another language ... outside. You just wouldn't. Nowadays tradition, culture has changed and is becoming more broad-minded. So you wish you had that second language.

(Janis Wilton, 1994)

## **Introduction**

In this chapter I examine the cultural challenges to resettlement experienced by the participants in the Ujamaa Circle process and discuss possible causes and solutions. The data suggests that the participants face challenges typical of a marginal migrant group in a predominantly Eurocentric society. They are unable to fully practise and live according to their original culture because of the pressure to conform to the mainstream. Therefore, they are caught up in cultural tensions that require an ongoing assessment and flexibility so that they can accommodate values from the two worlds. By drawing on my personal experience and on the evidence from the participants, I posit that for African migrants in Australia there are socio-cultural relations in place that diminish the value and relevance of their African heritage. These cultural tensions are rooted in the history and policies that culminated in the formation of the Australian nation by the predominantly Anglo-Celtic cultures. Consequently for the African migrants the pressure to assimilate to the mainstream culture is overwhelming. It often makes it difficult to continue many of their African customs and values.

So I begin by examining the question of 'Who is an Australian?' as a way of exploring the contradictions that still linger on in this country relating to who is an Australian and who is not. I use the current debates in the media and personal experiences as my starting point. Challenges to resettlement will be discussed using the voices of the participants from the Ujamaa sessions. These challenges have been grouped under two themes: racism and pressure to assimilate. Before going into the participant voices, I will begin by reflecting on my experiences relating to the question of Australian citizenship.

### **Who is an Australian?**

One morning I was moving around the classroom amongst the year eight students assisting them with their work. Then one student, Samta (white), asked me where I came from? (This was not the first time for this question to be asked.) So I told this student that I was from Pinjarra (my place of residence). Then she quickly answered back, arguing that I was not from

Pinjarra, because I was an African. I replied by telling her that I was actually Australian, as I had taken up Australian citizenship. She giggled and then told me that I was not Australian because I was not white. One other student yelled out at her, saying, "Hey Samta, you're being racist to Mr Wakholi." To which Samta promptly replied, "No I am not." Next to Samta was Kash, a Black Aboriginal girl, sitting quietly. So I looked Samta in the eyes and said, "The first Australians were actually Black." And that was the end of the discussion.

The significance of this incident was not so much the view of this student regarding what it meant to be Australian, but it was more to do with the arrogance with which she presented her views, even when the Aboriginal girl was sitting next to her. She seemed to imply that only White Australians were actually Australian. It did not bother me much as I really felt African more than anything else, but I was more disturbed by what it might mean for my youngest daughter who was born and is being raised in Australia. How was she likely to respond to this sort of student if she were to be confronted by a similar situation? It was easier for me because I was well acquainted with Australian race relations and I could put the argument in its historical perspective.

This 'problem' of who is an Australian is not limited to Samta. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2004, the *West Australian* newspaper ran an article in the letters to the editor section, in which a person identified as Campbell was reacting to a World Refugee Day photograph which had appeared in the newspaper on an earlier date. It was showing an Australian of Asian background carrying a poster with the words "Refugees are welcome. Racists are not!" In a letter to the editor, Campbell responded to the photograph as follows.

I take it that the Asian woman pictured at the so-called World Refugee Day protest in Fremantle holding up a poster appreciates that she and her family have been allowed to settle in Australia and should not abuse that privilege. Her poster accuses ordinary, hardworking Australians of being wrong in rejecting illegal entry and "racist." If rejecting her protest and illegal immigrants makes me a racist, amen to that. The vast majority of Aussies, those who make Australia the great country it is, give an emphatic "no" to illegal entry. If the illegals want somewhere to go, they should try one of the many countries they reject en route to bludge off the Aussie's. (23/07/04, p.20)

There were several responses to this article that present valuable insights about the question of identity and being Australian. The responses to Campbell's article reproduced below resonate well with the identity and cultural challenges to resettlement confronting African migrants. The first one was entitled "Third Generation."

For Joe Campbell's benefit, the "Asian woman" in the World Refugee Day photograph is a third-generation Australian and my niece. I can assure him that her family have "appreciated being allowed to settle in Australia" for almost a century. They settled in Western Australia just in time for her great-grandfathers to fight for Australia in World War 1. She's not abusing any privilege by holding up a poster. Isn't freedom of speech a privilege we "ordinary hard-working, Australians" value? Also, for the record she's a hard-working, high-achieving high school student, but she's far from ordinary. She's pretty special. (Murray, J., 25/07/04, p.20)

The second response was entitled "Same Values."

Unless Joe Campbell is an Aboriginal, he would do well to heed his own advice and appreciate that he and his family have been allowed to settle in Australia and should not abuse that privilege. Whether original settlement in Australia took place a century ago or yesterday, all non-indigenous Australians are, by definition, not in this country by natural right. Those with the good fortune of being born here rightly claim citizenship but that does not put them above those who have gained the right to live here. We all have the same right of free speech (including protest) and the same responsibility not to discriminate against people because of the colour of their skin. (Goh, S., 25/07/04, p.20)

Campbell's comment and the responses from Murray and Goh demonstrate the contradictions in the national psyche about who is Australian and who is not Australian. There are certain physical expectations of what is conceived as Australian by some people. And such conceptions of physical outlook do not necessarily represent the cultural diversity in this country. According to Goh, Aboriginal people can make a natural claim over Australia more than any other immigrants and their descendants. For the non-Aborigine, it is a privilege to be on this land and therefore migrant communities and their descendants have equal claim to this privilege. This argument resonates well with the experience of one of the participants, Muchere (F/19/19), who was born in this country. She said:



But, on the other hand, people can ask you where you are from, and they assume that you are not Australian. So you still have to remind them, that I am Ugandan but Australian as well. People don't really understand that you're Australian and sometimes it becomes a bit personal, how long have you been in Australia? When did you come here from Africa? (Muchere/F/19/19)

Using Goh's argument it follows that unless you are Aboriginal you should not subject another Australian to what amounts to harassment just because he/she happens to have a different skin colour or accent.

Kaduli (F/26/15) too expresses similar feelings about cultural rejection by others:

The reason why I am leaning towards Ugandan is, if I decide that this is what I want to eat I don't have to make an explanation of who I am. I am accepted for just being Ugandan. Yah the explanation thing just bothers me. I don't want to explain why my skin is black. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

The mainstream does not accept her for who she is, she is seen as different and not Australian. That creates discomfort and tensions between her and her Australian friends. Is it a subtle way of pressurising her to conform to the 'mainstream' by making her uncomfortable about her difference? It could as well be that some of the cultural practices exercised by Kaduli are 'unusual' according to what is conventional for her friends. Does that mean that the friends should keep asking questions or sometimes they should just observe quietly? Some of these questions are really a form of harassment, as I have noted from personal experience regarding the question of "Sir, where do you come from?" It is a question that is posed with such regularity that one may easily get uncomfortable about it, as it seems to be a means of excluding me.

Namulwa has also been confronted with irritating experiences of being asked the same question over and over.

It is sometimes irritating when you're asked, where you were born. Or, "Aboriginal people have lots of cousins, have you got lots of cousins too?" Time after time the same question, "Where were you born?" is asked. It becomes annoying. (Namulwa/F/12/12)

There is obviously emotional frustration when young people experience questions that may imply that the questioner is trying to exclude them from

Australian citizenship. The question about cousins for example is really prejudiced in its intent because most people have cousins. So one might wonder what the underlying motivation for making this comment was. Hasahya too recalls another classmate with whom she wanted to make friends but instead the classmate gave her a negative response.

In pre-primary there was this girl whom I was trying to be friends with and this girl told me that I could not go to their house because her mum had said that I couldn't go to her house until when I had washed off the black stuff.  
(Hasahya/F/14/12)

Hasahya was only four at the time but it is significant that she has remembered it. It is possible that the response from her-would-be-friend was not of significance in terms of racism and identity. But looking back and thinking back about that incident today, this is how she feels about it at 14.

I was probably upset because I wanted to be friends with her, and I feel it was not right for her mum to tell her to say to me that I was 'dirty'. She was making her child prejudiced and she was misleading her to think that everyone must be white and white is the best. (Hasahya/F/14/12)

Hasahya's experience was a sad one and provides useful evidence of where prejudice and social-cultural rejection begins. It often begins in the home and more specifically with the parents when they deliberately as well as unconsciously teach their children to be prejudiced about other people who are not like them. This is one aspect of social-cultural alienation caused by negative stereotypes and myths created by those who believe that they are more perfect or superior to others. It is demoralising and sometimes devastating for the victims, particularly if the victims begin accepting these stereotypes and myths as truths about themselves. Racism is therefore a disempowering tool wielded by those who have mainstream power and are willing to misuse it in order to marginalise those who are vulnerable. Another participant, Namu, also had a story to tell.

Namu's class, at her school, had been looking at Uganda in their society and environment studies, and one morning there was this boy called Matt who asked Namu where she came from and Namu replied by mentioning, Uganda. According to Namu, Matt continued bugging her about Africa and eventually asked her why she did not return to Uganda. Namu too asked him why he did

not consider returning to England, the presumed home country of Matt. That was the end of the conversation.

For the participants in the Ujamaa sessions, it is very difficult, as they have to be on the defensive all the time about who they are and their right to belong in Australia. Some young people can stand up to these forms of racial harassment; some may probably not know what to do about it; and the majority probably attempt to ignore it. Whatever the responses, such attitudes call into question the moral standing of such people whose behaviour is probably intended to disempower and marginalise their victims. What is the moral justification for such behaviour? Such actors seem to be aware of the power that whiteness carries and consequently they are able to use it to their advantage. In due course it results in undermining the well-being of the victims who happen not to be white. It is therefore morally wrong to alienate others from their sense of belonging to Australia.

The issue arising, from the above discussion, is that to be Australian you must belong to a certain racial category, otherwise you need to give an explanation to justify your Australian claim from time to time as Murray did in the letter to the editor quoted above on behalf of the Australian of Chinese descent. Muchere and the other participants have had to do this from time to time when asked about where they came from or where they were born. How then do we explain this contradiction of being Australian and not being accepted? The answer might lie in the history of Australian race relations, which were founded on white supremacy ideology and ultimately gave rise to the Immigration Restriction Bill (1901), commonly known as the White Australia policy. One of the consequences of this policy is generations of conservative people who display racist behaviour. They resist multicultural initiatives (Markus, 1994). This continues to have implications for the Ujamaa participants. In their discussions with me they identified racism and pressure to assimilate as barriers to resettlement. I will now discuss in detail the evidence from the data relating to the main issues identified as challenges to resettlement by the participants namely: racism and the pressure to assimilate.

## Challenges to resettlement

Although optimistic about their future in Australian society, most of the African migrants interviewed by Udo-Ukpo believed that they have experienced racism as part of their daily life (1999, p.12). Racial discrimination usually refers to behaviour that disadvantages people on the basis of their race, ethnic origin or colour. Most participants in my study, also, felt that there was a problem of racism in Australia. Ritali, for example, said:

I did not think it was there (racism) but now I am aware because I am in the work force. I lost a job because of what I think was due to racism. I was on probation in a cleaning job and a rumour was passed around that I had hit someone with a rubbish bin and soon after that I lost the job. Someone in the office put in a complaint and I was told, "You no longer work here." There was no phone call but this was what the boss told me when I reported for work the next day. So I told the boss "You should have had the courtesy of letting me know by phone before I reported for work to be embarrassed before my fellow staff." (Ritali/F/20/11)

Proving racism is difficult but the fact that the boss never gave Ritali a reason for dismissal and instead she learnt about the 'reason' for dismissal through another person suggests that there was a degree of injustice in the way the boss chose to dismiss Ritali. It could be argued that if the boss were racist, then he would not have employed Ritali in the first place. The alleged claim of racist dismissal by Ritali may have been based on what she heard from her fellow employee. But even if the dismissal was not motivated by racism, why does Ritali invoke it as the cause for her dismissal? Is it because there is a culture of racism in the workforce? Or is it something she is imagining because she is 'black'? According to Ritali, the boss never gave a reason for dismissal other than stating to her that, "You no longer work here." There was no mention of the bin-throwing allegation that Ritali believes led to her dismissal. Ritali could have lodged a complaint for unfair dismissal but she did not. While we may never know the truth, the problem left certain issues unresolved and Ritali feels aggrieved, as the reason for her dismissal was never clearly explained.

Such are the dilemmas for young people of African migrant background. Ritali believes that African children should be told about what to expect in their

later life, for she was nearly devastated because of her lack of knowledge about racism in the work force. She commented:

Thank God I have got a job now with the taxation office. But nevertheless I feel young people should be taught early what to expect and how to deal with it because it is hurtful and you can just feel like revenging. However if you are made aware you know what to do when you are confronted by it. (Ritali/F/20/11)

The word revenge implies anger. Discrimination of any form is very demoralising particularly if you are committed to good moral attitudes of respect and dedication to work. If good intentions are contradicted by what amounts to irresponsible responses, then it becomes very frustrating and the consequent emotional reaction is likely to be anger, as noted with Ritali.

Muchere, one of the other participants who is an Australian-born third year pharmacy student at one of the universities in Western Australia, had similar experiences when she went for a job interview. She acknowledged that there was a problem of racism in Australia. Muchere felt that she was unwelcome by the interviewer.

Yes, there is a problem of racism in Australia but it is more concealed. I have experienced racism most recently when I was applying for a job at a pharmacy. I put in my resume, which was full of experience. And when I reported for the interview; you know how you walk up to people and immediately you feel that there is something wrong? That is how I felt. Each time I said something this woman interviewing me was on top of me giving me no chance to market myself. I left the place frustrated and did not get the job. A classmate of mine who works at the same place told me later that the proprietors of this pharmacy were racist, that each time some one of, for example, Asian background reported for a job interview, they would simply not employ them. After the interviews with such people, they would talk among themselves how they can only employ 'Australians'. I was really shocked because I had never had this sort of experience before. It has now made me more conscious about racism. (Muchere/F/19/19)

If it wasn't for the classmate, Muchere would perhaps never have known that she had actually encountered a racist experience during the job interview at the pharmacy. Where does this leave Muchere's emotional state? She was obviously shocked and hurt on learning that there was a dimension of racism involved in searching for employment. In fact, this woman never even bothered to inform Muchere about her performance at the interview. With all

the appalling consequences of racism on the victims, you would think that those who practise it might have guilty consciences.

It does seem to be that racism is also used to economically disadvantage certain categories of people. By giving Muchere a job it would bring her to a better socio-economic class level that might threaten the privileges of the 'racist'? I am raising the economic perspective because in many instances those who purport to hate certain cultures simultaneously exploit and appropriate from the very people they claim to hate or presume inferior. This has been the case in all colonised cultures where large quantities of artefacts were removed and taken to European and American state and private museums. Moreover the white community has appropriated African artistic traditions while the authors of the heritage still live in mostly poor conditions. Cultural elitists in the white community are able to use the power of the media, and other forms of mass communication, to manipulate tastes regarding artistic beauty and quality. Most of this manipulation is conducted with underlying economic interests and leads to the promotion of white supremacy.

Whatever the motive in Muchere's interview experience, she has become more conscious of racism since the job interview incident. In her other casual work place, Muchere has observed other practices she believes to be racist.

In the other place where I work casually, we are given half an hour for recess time. However one of the staff was passing a rumour that I was taking more than half an hour for my recess. So I was summoned by the boss and reminded of the half hour recess. So this left me wondering if I am being told this because of my skin colour. The problem with racism, it is very difficult to prove. So you need to be a hundred percent sure before you can report an incident. (Muchere/F/19/19)

Racist harassment imagined or real has now become Muchere's nightmare. The real difficulty is to prove it, which becomes very frustrating on the part of the victim. As some of the actions are psychological and can only be ascertained by a critical mind, but even then such evidence may be dismissed as mere speculation. Legislation alone is not enough to eradicate racism. Moreover, if you do not have a strong socio-economic base, you are not likely to confidently take on the 'culprit' through a judicial process. The victim may not know the appropriate procedural information to deal with the suspect. Particularly if there is an established institutional racist culture as noted in the

pharmacy where Muchere was attempting to find work. Actually Ritali has shared with Muchere what her dad told her about work place racism.

Ritali told me that her daddy had warned her that she was bound to find racism in the work force and that he had experienced racism in the work place. (Muchere/F/19/19)

Does that mean that Ritali's dad has accepted the racist practices that occur on a daily basis in this country? Does he think this is the way things happen in this country so we may as well put up with it? From Ritali's earlier narrative, she seems to have been disappointed and angry about the unfair dismissal from her second job, however she insisted that parents should teach the young ones how to deal with it. According to Ritali, this is the most easily accessible proactive means of dealing with the problem, teaching the young ones about racism. What about using the legal or social justice approach? Muchere feels that you must be one hundred percent sure that the motive was racist. It is almost impossible to have that sort of certainty.

I recall my own experience in which I wanted to join the department of correctional services. I participated in the entire interview process and I felt that I had done well in all the categories of the examination, namely, a psychological written test, a physical fitness test and an interview with the psychologist. However I received a letter telling me that I was not successful that time because all the applications were of a very high standard. It left me wandering whether my racial background worked against me. I felt that I stood a better than average chance because I would bring an African perspective to the service. This was particularly important because some of the young African migrants were getting in trouble with the law and being interned in West Australian gaols. It does become difficult to prove racism as the motivating factor for the actions of certain agencies or individuals, even if it may seem obvious to the victim. Racists can conceal their true character and they may even have the most kindly behaviour and yet at the bottom of their hearts, they carry hate.

Muchere experienced racist stereotyping when she was much younger as well. In primary school she was called what she perceives as racist names and her young brother has had a similar experience.

When I was much younger in Kalgoorlie, kids called me chocolate, Jaffas. Sometimes when I reported to the teacher they got disciplined. Sunny, my little brother has also been called these names, but I have told him that those kids are being stupid and that he should ignore them. (Muchere/F/19/19)

So Sunny has been taught how to deal with this form of racism; however, for a ten year old, we may never know the emotional consequences. It is likely that anything that impacts negatively on an individual's personality may subsequently affect one's self-esteem and confidence. It is easy to tell Sunny to ignore these 'naughty' children but how helpful is this solution to both parties? The culprits remain empowered and the victim accepts subservience to something that is overtly hurting and oppressive. Therefore, there should be other ways of empowering a minority child in order to subvert the racist behaviour emanating from the dominant culture of whiteness. There should also be other ways of educating children from the dominant culture about racism.

Muchere has also experienced curiosity about her family name, which can in many ways be construed as a form of racism.

Another time I went to renew my license and when I spelt out my African family name, the attendant clerk said to me 'This is a very unusual name.' I just laughed, but I also felt that it was pretty stupid that they think that way. (Muchere/F/19/19)

When you say unusual name, what does it imply? Is it unusual because it is not "Australian"? Is it unusual because this is the first time you have heard about it? Or is it unusual because it does not sound 'normal'? Let us assume that the name was unusual because it was not familiar to the attendant clerk. If she was genuine and objective in her remarks, she may have put the question across to Muchere seeking to know the origin of the name. For example "Where is this type of name originally from?" If you are sincere in your questioning and seeking to know the truth, it is likely that Muchere may have willingly told her the origin of the name. It could have actually become a beginning of a dialogue about names from different cultures.

Mtino's experience is really a sad and disheartening one in its disabling and devastating nature to an enthusiastic and hardworking student. It led to Mtino abandoning a subject that he not only enjoyed but in which he was also a top



student. Mtino was a year 12 student in a high profile public school and was enrolled in French as an extra subject but was devastated by the attitude of his French teacher towards him. As a result, he is convinced that racism is rampant in this country.

Yes, there is racism in Australia. Racism is everywhere and it happens all the time. And the problems of racism we see today are the result of what happened way back in the history of Australia to Aborigines and the other minority cultures. I have experienced racism from teachers, students and in the community; but I will tell you about one specific event and this happened at school. In class we were doing a French group assignment. The group included two female students and myself. The assignment was being done on a computer and it so happened that one of the female students was looking up swear words instead of doing the assignment. When the teacher found out, she kept the three of us in after school. The next day the student responsible for looking up swear words reported to the teacher. After the meeting with the teacher, she came to me and boasted of how she was not in trouble, and that actually the teacher had told her that she did not expect it to be her, but rather a person like Mtino.

I felt very angry after hearing what this student said to me. So the next day during the French classes, I refused to do class work. The teacher became concerned and asked me to explain why I was not doing the class work. I repeated what she had said of me to the female student. At first she denied saying such a thing and then she later confessed that she had told the student that she did not expect her to behave like that because she knew the student's family quite well. And the only reason why she thought it would rather be me was because it was boy things to look up swear words.

Mtino quit the French classes after that incident. He felt insulted because:

This teacher did not care to know that my parents are very good. Moreover I was a top student not only in French but also in all my other subjects. Therefore, I could not understand why this teacher thought about me that way. (Mtino/M/16/14)

According to the teacher's defence, it was a gender affair but for Mtino there was a racial intent in her utterances about him. Why did she have low expectations of Mtino? Why didn't she have low expectations of the second female student as well? The French teacher obviously did not hold Mtino in high esteem. According to the teacher, he was more likely to look up swear words than the female student. Because of this prejudiced misjudgement of Mtino, his enthusiasm for French was undermined. Again, this is an example of how the same act is perceived as racist by the victim but not as racist by

the perpetrator. We will never know the long-term consequences of this incident; however, what was clear about it was that the teacher expected Mtino to be involved in finding swear words more than the two white students in the group and this attitude by the teacher led to Mtino losing interest in French classes. Despite his middle class and well-behaved intellectual outlook, all this probably meant little to the French teacher. Mtino's background was not valued and the damage was done. Unlike Mtino for whom French was an optional subject, it is possible that there are other students like Mtino who may be wedged out of the educational system through similar, subtle but annoying and demoralising actions. Martino (2003) has noted similar challenges amongst the Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders students. Racist practices of white boys often incite anger that motivates confrontations, often resulting in fights. Mtino has talked through it with his parents and hopefully he is getting on well in his other subjects. But what happens to those young African youths who do not have a supportive intellectual home background or the appropriate cultural capital to deal with these types of issues? Mtino believes that it is not easy to rid the system of racism, and this is mainly because of its historical nature in Australia.

It is not easy to get rid of racism, because it is not easy to change people's attitudes immediately. Aborigines, for example, are treated worse. You only need to ask fellow students their perceptions about Aborigines and you will hear shocking responses. Therefore it is hard to solve the problem of racism in this country. (Mtino/M/16/14)

He is very positive about an educational approach, which he believes may have a long-term impact on those who are racist.

The only possible solution is to try to educate people whenever an opportunity arises, but this always leaves you with a few friends. (Mtino/M/16/14)

However, an educational approach is possible if prejudice or racism is superficial and not grounded in economic interests of cultural domination. It is hard to educate an individual who is operating from a position of superior power relations. And perhaps this is the reason why any attempt to educate the people may be resented by some and as Mtino notes may leave you with few friends.

Namu's experience shows how low individuals can sink in their prejudiced attitudes. Mr. Baker, a relief teacher in Namu's class, could not hold back his dislike for African hair plaits. The following was Namu's experience with Mr.

Baker:

Yes, there is a problem of racism in Australia but people, society, try to hide its existence. I have experienced racism. One specific incident was in year 10, 2002. When I was in a social studies class and we had a relief teacher called Mr Baker, he gave the class a scenario where we were in a group and we were going to some far away place. We had to decide about some seven objects that were important to us. When it was time to share it with the class, he asked me what I thought. I said a hairbrush; then he laughed and said "what about hair plaits? Ooh I hate those things." He didn't look at me directly when he said this. I felt deeply irritated by his remarks. A little angry? Not quite. I felt more for Mr Baker's naivety and childish comments. I knew his remarks were made just out of ignorance. (Namu had African hair plaits at the time).  
(Namu/F/16/12)

Baker most likely intended to undermine Namu's cultural pride. He probably knew that Namu was proud of her plaits that defined her beauty and hence gave meaning to her being. Baker did not see it that way or probably saw it that way but wanted to undermine her cultural base. Why did he have a problem with the hair plaits? Was it racism? Naivety? Or was it simply childish behaviour? One can only speculate about this teacher's attitude, but it is certain that he hated African hair plaits. Would he have been more positive towards Namu if she did not have the hair extensions? Or how would he have reacted to a white girl with African hair plaits? Namu was angry about this incident and felt betrayed for she did not expect a teacher to have such an attitude towards her. So she decided to engage him:

I dealt with it by looking into his eyes for the rest of the lesson. It was a silent protest in letting him know how I felt. It worked because he knew I was looking at him the whole time and he got very uncomfortable. I could tell because he started to get a red face and became erratic with his questions for the relief lesson. I felt it was the best thing to do, as I knew that what he had said was very inappropriate. (Namu/F/16/12)

Namu did not wait to talk to someone else about it but her facial engagement with the relief teacher hopefully made him aware that what he had said of the hair plaits was not right. I suppose we all have reservations about each other's appearance but you do not go around telling them that I

don't like your big nose, or I don't like your hairy body or whatever. It is a fact of nature that we are of varying physical features that have evolved with time. Those unique features define our identities and physical attributes that may make us feel good about ourselves. Baker's behaviour was a clear evidence of a probably racist teacher, who consciously or not, created an incident that alienated Namu. This may have been in anticipation perhaps that Namu may disown her culture and strive to become something else. Fortunately Namu is adamant and very proud of who she is. Like Mtino, she is of the opinion that education is the solution for these types of people:

In this country there should be a plan put in place where students should be taught about other countries and their traditions. In this way, teachers would also be able to learn. Thinking about it, students may be taught stereotypical aspects of their culture. The best thing would be to have a country that is willing to accept and learn about other ethnic groups' cultural values. (Namu/F/16/12)

Education would benefit those with limited knowledge about other cultures. Education could also address the problem of stereotypes. This is where the mythical constructs of the racists, about their victims, are challenged. The underlying power race relations may also be examined in order to deal with the real motivation for racist behaviour. This is a very reasonable contribution by Namu who is appreciative of the need for education for both the young and the adults about other cultures. For Namu, people should enjoy and utilise the cultures they have inherited from their ancestral heritage.

But people need to stand up for who they are and be proud of their cultures, sharing it through their actions, no matter what may try to stop or distract them. (Namu/F/16/12)

She feels proud of her culture. What probably should have happened in Mr. Baker's classroom was a dialogue about hairstyles, including the African ones. Mr. Baker probably would have learnt something from Namu about the creative and spiritual nature of the art of hair plaiting amongst African people. It defines beauty within a given cultural context. If beauty is an ideal by which the development of personality ought always to be inspired and guided (Phenix, 1958), then for many African females hair plaiting is an activity towards such an ideal. There are various patterns of hairstyling that express the aesthetic nature of African beauty. It also defines a life style and female

roles of the African people. Namu learnt the skill of hair plaiting from her mother and she does her own hair plaits. Therefore the craft of hair plaiting gives her an identity passed on to her from her ancestors. That is perhaps what Mr. Baker and the others with similar attitudes ought to understand.

Another participant, Hasahya, also had racist experiences. Hers was in a shopping centre while out shopping with a friend, Balinda.

Yes, I think there is a problem of racism in Australia. Yes, I have experienced racism in Australia. Once my friend (Balinda) and I were walking in Garden City shopping mall and two teenage boys walked passed us saying 'Ewu charcoal.' I felt confused because they were wearing 'Wutang' clothes, which is a Black American street wear brand. I felt that they were stupid. We just ignored them and discussed the stupidity of them later at home.  
(Hasahya/F/14/12)

Hasahya was confused about the racist behaviour of the white youths in the shopping mall. Because they were wearing 'Wutang' clothing, which is associated with African-American youths this made Hasahya think that they wouldn't be racist towards her and her friend. She was mistaken, because probably the 'Wutang' clothing had different cultural values associated with it in Australia. It may be comparable to some of the 'African drumming' that we see in Australia, which is more of a hobby activity. Racism defines power relations and for the young white teenagers to have the audacity to call out racist names at the two African-Australians who are minding their own business is a sign of self-confidence in a negative way. So what about the rights of the individual? Didn't Hasahya and Balinda have rights? Of course they had rights like any other citizen to stroll around and enjoy themselves. It would seem that the boys assumed that the two girls did not have any rights, hence the motivation to undermine their self-esteem by calling out put down names. Otherwise how else do you explain this type of behaviour without thinking about power relations between white and black? The girls eventually discussed the stupid behaviour of the boys and came to the conclusion that:

The problem starts with the adults and they pass it on to children so the adults should change. This is unlikely to happen so we should find ways to educate children about racism and have ways for African children to get help to deal with it. (Hasahya/F/14/12)

Like all the other participants, these two girls see education as the key to undoing the racist attitudes. Hasahya suggests that the focus of education should be on the young ones. She was also aware that African children need special guidance and support regarding racism.

Tofa was another participant who has confirmed the problem of racism in Australia:

Yes, there is a problem of racism in Australia. It is not only against Africans but towards Asians and Aborigines as well. They look down upon them and make stereotyped comments about them. I have personally experienced racism. Once in primary school, grade 3, in Adelaide I wanted to be friends with some boys. When I tried to talk to them they told me that they did not want to play with a darkie. (Tofa/F/14/14)

It must be hard for the young people who experience the negative consequences of Australian race relations. The social rejection because you're a "darkie" is a real indictment of those adults who teach little children to be racist. For Tofa this meant that he had to find another group to play with, so the rift and prejudice between races is internalised early. The "darkie" gets to understand that after all, others do not accept him as an equal. There is something wrong with him that needs to be fixed. This may have immeasurable emotional consequences. Tofa is convinced that you cannot change these attitudes. He is probably right, given that European racism towards the 'darkies' has been around for a long time.

Namulwa makes interesting remarks about how the racists should be dealt with. Her experience with uninformed people confirms the real need for education.

Yes, I feel there is a problem of racism in this country, and my personal experience has been people asking me if I spoke English before I came to Australia; whether I lived in a tree; if there were lions and tigers walking through where I had lived in Africa. (Namulwa arrived in this country when she was five months old so she really knows more about the Australian culture and environment than she would know about Africa). I feel angry when such things are said to me. And I told them that they were not smart and proved that I was smarter than them in not-so-polite terms. In terms of what should be done, "Caning. Bring back the birch! Lousy parents should be told not to teach their children to be racist." (Namulwa/F/12/12)

Namulwa sums up her mood of anger and frustration with such parents who are unwilling to teach the children the good ways of living in harmony with others. The birch might not be a solution as it may drive them into deeper hatred and violence but nevertheless the point has been made. These people need a strong reprimand from the community.

However as Gilbert has noted, "Race relations legislation can officially decide that there will be no untouchable caste in society but such laws won't make a scrap of difference to the self-perception of those who have already been conditioned to see themselves as untouchable. They have already been patterned into living that stereotype and they do live it" (1977, p.3). So how should the community and individuals deal with these sorts of attitudes? In respect to the Aboriginal people, Gilbert (1977) suggests that the Aboriginals should be busy changing this situation. Aboriginals should be building a modern Aboriginal culture, something that is meaningful in today's context. This radical re-education of Aboriginals by Aboriginals at the direction of Aboriginals is vital. Gilbert is talking about community self-empowerment, grounded in Aboriginal people, which is crucial for self-determination. The African community being a more recent addition to the Australian multicultural diversity has to take lessons from the experience of the Aboriginal community because of the similarities of European colonial attitudes towards the two groups. For in addition to educating the aggressor, it is necessary to develop empowerment from within, grounded in the African heritage and historical experience.

### **Pressure to Assimilate**

African immigrants feel the assimilation pressure. This may be direct or indirect but nevertheless it exerts an impact on them to abandon entirely their root cultural ways and values. Kaduli notes some of these pressures to change:

There are things that I do; you learn more from your parents about your culture and this is what I want to be. The challenge with that is you don't live in the culture in Uganda. My friends, ninety percent are white. So, you know it is so hard to explain why I kneel down, and why we eat matooke, and not whatever. It's not hard but it's the explanation bit that I don't want to do. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

What Kaduli is holding on to, that which she has acquired through her ancestors not only contains the social norms of communication between age groups (kneeling, for example) but also the moral values of respect. If you're greeting an elder as a female, you are expected to kneel as a sign of respect. This too challenges the adult to reciprocate a gesture of appreciation, with a smile, or any other expressions of praise and appreciation. So this basis of social interaction sets moral standards for harmonious communication and acknowledgement of leadership, hierarchies and roles in the community.

The philosophical argument might then be that the African migrant female continues kneeling in the diaspora when she meets elders, or it is something that should be discarded because the mainstream culture through its constitution emphasises the rights of the individual. Individuals have freedom to express themselves as they wish, so long as they are not breaking the law. Therefore we must protect the rights of the individual. What then should be the role of customary practices, which hold moral validity within their communities and may seem meaningless to the mainstream? One approach might be that for us to decide whether the female should continue kneeling before the elders, we may have to consider two fundamental issues. The first one is the moral significance of kneeling and the second one is the multiple identities that the African female holds and hence the diverse values that she possesses. And since she is growing up in an environment in which she must make herself 'marketable' in the mainstream to be successful, then the cultural practices will have to be applied flexibly as the need arises. So perhaps a compromise might be that in a fully fledged African community situation the convention would be that the female kneels before her elders but when they meet on the streets in the city another strategy may be applied, maybe a "pretend kneel."

The challenge to assimilate is also noted by Muchere who feels that she more or less has to take on everything from her peers.

Unfortunately, about everything: the food, the dressing, accent, everything and if your friend's family does something in a certain way then you're like ooh yah that's not how we do it or something. Then you decide to do it that way. And if they speak in a certain



way, then you try to copy that because you think that's the right way. (Muchere/F/19/19)

So her friends have a major influence on Muchere's cultural outlook. She tries to copy the way they do things, and why not? If the environment is such that she is a minority, she must to some extent go along with the majority. But is this a fair thing to do particularly when the majority culture is itself partly a conglomeration of Anglicised cultures? Only if she is aware of these dynamics of cultural politics, can she play the game of cultural adjustment without feeling powerless. Maybe the friends she is copying are also copying from her, but is she aware that this might be happening? The ongoing cultural negotiation is definitely two-way, and therefore she ought to feel confident of her centrality in the entire process. The resettlement challenges should be viewed as a game in which she can make choices of what to take and what to leave. And that she has something to offer as well.

Kaduli has noted that the importance of historical experience cannot be overlooked. For assimilation contains contradictions, that are problematic, and those who are expected to assimilate may pay a price. Hence the warning:

There is a saying that you never live long enough to learn through mistakes. So from history, instead of making mistakes we can learn from what our great parents did wrong and just try to perfect our future. So we can learn from our history, and just not make the same mistakes. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

The colonial experience of African people contains evidence of not only cultural, political and economic interference by the colonial European powers but also complete unpreparedness by the African communities in dealing with the invading colonisers. Both at political and psychological levels African nations were manipulated and conquered by the colonisers. Subsequently this resulted in race relations built on the assumption that the European cultures were superior to the 'Native' cultures. The predominantly oral nature of the African knowledge was easily undermined to the advantage of the European colonisers' culture. This resulted in myths about Africans being primitive, savage and tribal (Shapiro, 1956). The European coloniser assumed the 'white man's burden' to civilise the savage through Christianity and other forms of ideological education and colonial political systems. The African

people were gradually decentred from their cultural systems and some of them, after acquisition of western education, despised their traditional cultures (Yansane, in Asante and Asante, 1999).

Yansane believes that several forces have contributed to the disorganisation of African traditional societies, namely autocratic colonial administration, missionaries, a new economy and a new educational system. (1999,p.61)

But he goes on to suggest a sense of optimism in cultural revival by the African people. "But through colonization (and slavery) the African has sharpened his/her own awareness because the new conditions have caused him to desire dignity, pride and identity." The era of independence and neo-colonialism has been marked by the recovery of African sovereignty and the commitment to cultural revival (Yansane, in Asante and Asante, 1988). Kaduli's idea of learning from our past mistakes relates quite well to this historical experience of the African people. The ability to learn from the mistakes of the past may help the African migrant to deal with some of the present cultural dilemmas and contradictions. One such contradiction is that of trying to live in two different cultures:

If you came to school and said you liked matooke (banana meal) or just wearing African attire, then you would be even more different from what you already are. So you try to act normal as the way they are, so that you are not different from any one else because you're already black and you are the only black person in the school. And if you were really into the African culture, you will be more different than what you already are. (Balinda /F/14/14)

Balinda feels that she has to keep a low profile so that her blackness is not too pronounced. The blackness is obviously a bit of a problem for her, as she can't live it freely. Even her cultural practice attempts to conform to mainstream expectations. Hasahya (F/14/12) expresses similar sentiments, "There is pressure to forget your culture because most of my friends are white." Muchere too expressed similar views:

I have been the only African in the whole school. The Chinese people mix with Chinese people. It's hard to maintain the kind of African culture... you know what I mean? This is because there is pressure to conform to everybody else. (Muchere/F/19/19)

For Balinda because she has to conform to everybody else, it is hard to keep the integrity of her root culture, and yet inside her it is something that she treasures. It is something that gives her identity and ways of conceptualising reality from a different perspective. The root culture is therefore crucial in the development of the individual into a healthy person because its rejection may subtly lead to self-rejection and resentment of one's origin. This is what in some instances leads to the intergenerational tensions between the children and their first generation migrant parents.

In fact, there is evidence from the older participants like Kaduli (F/26/11) and Muchere (F/19/19) that as they grow older the African culture becomes increasingly important to them in terms of their ongoing identity negotiation. Muchere for example has suggested that it is important for the parents to teach their children the African languages in the homes:

I guess the challenge is when you are growing up in an English speaking country, your parents have to still keep, I guess teach you the African language as well. (Muchere/F/19/19)

For someone who was born and raised in Australia with very little knowledge of African languages to make this suggestion is quite significant as it seems to reflect her own limitations about African languages. Ngugi (1981) believes that language is both a product of that succession of the separate generations as well as being a banker of the traditions. Language therefore reflects those modifications of collective experience. A collective strategy towards the teaching and preservation of African languages is essential in the African diaspora.

Kaduli has suggested the introduction of the Kiswahili language from East Africa as a community language to be taught to interested families. She notes, 'I think Swahili should be one of them. You can't go wrong with Swahili' (Kaduli/F/26/11). In her discussion of the link between language and Chineseness, Lin Meerwald noted of Georgie, a single woman migrant to Australia who said:

My Chinese identity would be stronger if my Chinese language skills had been better. This would have enabled me to read and discover more about Chinese culture in its original form rather than

the translated versions often done by some Caucasian authors. (Lin Meerwald, 2000, p. 253)

Language therefore is a very important component of cultural identity, and can strengthen one's root cultural knowledge. It is therefore a useful tool for minimising assimilation pressures.

## **Conclusion**

Should the young people of African migrant background be left to assimilate or should they be given some cultural options that will empower them to view cultural issues more objectively and critically? My position on this subject of cultural challenges to resettlement is that there is a need for a cultural education program that not only assists the younger generation of African descent to explore their heritage critically but also empowers them with a resource, which they can use to reach out with confidence during their cultural negotiation process. The approach has to be critical and evaluative as the main objective is not to duplicate and imitate every form of African cultural practice. Rather it needs to be a selective appropriation process purposefully geared towards enriching the multiple identities assumed in a new location. Consequently the in-between-ness will not be a hindrance but an asset for them to be able to assume multiple identities and make the most of every aspect of their identity. In-between-ness provides real possibilities of success if utilised intelligently and creatively. This is because you have diverse aspects of self that are grounded in different cultural traditions that you can utilise to participate in diverse environments.

In this chapter I have explored the cultural challenges to resettlement, experienced by the ten participants. I argued that the challenges should be viewed from Australia's historical perspective of race relations. This is because of the unique nature of Australia's colonial history, which was based on a White Australian policy. Having established the Australian race problem as being historical, I proceeded to examine the participants' experiences of what they perceived as racist experiences. I have proposed a philosophical approach to the African cultural issues, since such an approach may allow for a more critical appraisal of the African culture and its relevance in a new

location. I conclude by suggesting that solutions relating to cultural challenges call for a proactive critical approach and ongoing re-evaluation of the participants' cultural needs grounded in the African heritage. This is necessary because they have multiple identities in their new location. These call for flexibility and balance of values. The African heritage is an important source of those values. The participants highlighted the significance of African culture to their well-being. They felt it was central to their efforts to overcome the challenges of resettlement. In the next chapter I suggest an approach to the African Cultural Education that attempts to address these challenges, namely: racism and assimilation.

## Chapter 6

### **African Cultural Education: towards a meaningful integration**

Whoever knows essentially his own nature, can know also that of other men and can penetrate into the nature of beings. He can collaborate in the transformation and the progress of heaven and earth.

(Confucius)

He who cannot draw on three thousand years is living from hand to mouth.

(Goethe)

## Introduction

This chapter examines possible approaches to African Cultural Education. In discussing what an African Cultural Education curriculum might look like, I draw largely on the things the participants in the Ujamaa circle said they would like to see taught more explicitly. The discussion in this chapter is located in postcolonial theory, which is critical of the colonial project and calls for a critical re-assessment of colonial discourses<sup>1</sup> about African culture and people. Moreover, I agree with the strong intellectual passion towards a re-evaluative and modernising approach to African culture (Mbiti, 1969; Asante, 1987; Gyekye, 1997). This is necessary because exposure to western values sometimes renders some aspects of African culture dysfunctional. For example, female circumcision and inheritance of a brother's wife when he dies (without consideration of her rights) are some of the cultural practices that are coming under increasing scrutiny. Critiquing some aspects of African culture as part of the re-evaluative process is included in this discussion. How can Africans accommodate creative reforms in cultural practice within their migrant communities without necessarily becoming assimilated?

The discussion, therefore, takes three perspectives: The first one is a discussion of the evidence from the participants that suggests a strong passion for African cultural education as a basis of self-definition and identity. The second perspective is based on the participants' wish list of themes and their relevancy to re-contextualisation and continuity of African cultures as a positively reinforcing influence on their multiple identities in the diaspora. Re-contextualisation of African cultures through a re-evaluation and revitalisation process may reveal useful knowledge for operating in Bhabha's (1994) borderline politics model. The model suggests that ambivalences within identity can be strategically deployed to define our being. The third perspective proposes an approach to cultural challenges experienced by the participants, namely racism and the pressure to assimilate. Discussion of this

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Samuel Baker a colonial adventurer in Africa, for example, suggested that: "I believe that if it were possible to convert the greater portion of African savages into disciplined soldiers, it would be a most rapid stride toward their future civilisation. A savage who has led a wild and uncontrolled life must learn to obey authority before any great improvement can be effected." (Blyden in Mosley, 1995, p.26)

perspective draws on Dei's anti-racism model of educational approach and the proposals put forward by the participants. According to Dei's theory 'the search for genuine educational options must be reframed in the pursuit of anti-racism praxis so that students can engage in critical knowledge as a way to rupture the social order of things' (1999, p. 396). Freire's (1988) work in: *The Pedagogy for the Oppressed* and Akinyela's (1996) *Cultural Democracy Practises for African families in America* inform this approach as well. This is because dialogue and critical evaluation, of lived reality, underlie all three models. The chapter concludes by suggesting that active preservation and continuity of African culture is necessary for minority migrants of African background in a predominantly Eurocentric society, if assimilation is to be minimised and African centred identities are to be preserved. Continuity and preservation of African cultural identities will have to be grounded in informed cultural practices and dialogue amongst the African community members.

### **A passion for African Cultural Education (ACE)— the evidence**

The need for African cultural education was demonstrated by the participants' reflections about the Ujamaa process. At the end of the sessions the participants were keen to launch African cultural education. Root culture was viewed as fundamentally important to their identity and well-being. The participants expressed the need to explore their ancestral culture as a means of understanding their identities in the diaspora. Tofa, for example, suggested that the present generation of youths should assume responsibility over conservation and continuity of the African cultures. This is important, for as Wunyimarra, an Aboriginal elder, notes about the importance of culture:

We cannot know the place we are going unless we know the place whence we came. The voices of what we were, what we forget and what we can be. Culture is the past, the present and the future, continuity and coherence. Building on the past gives meaning to the present and hope for the future. (Quoted in Tamisari & Milmilany, 2003, p.1)

There is a spiritual significance in continuing the ancestral cultures. A connectedness in time and space is sustained by an informed consciousness about one's culture and history.



The reflections of the participants after being involved in dialogues of a cultural nature suggest enthusiasm towards African cultural revival. They commented:

The affirmation of the fact that life is a lifelong learning journey not only career wise but cultural as well. Unless we come together as one and take steps towards what has been discussed in the Ujamaa forums, it may seem an impossible task, because it cannot be done by one person's effort. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

I have found the seminars on cultural education to be enlightening, as they have opened up several issues that relate to me. Issues that I would not have discussed before with anyone. It has motivated me to want to do something about my lack of knowledge for my own culture. Especially as I am someone who has moved around so much, I am beginning to acknowledge the importance of settling down and becoming at peace with myself and knowing who I am. (Muchere/F/19/19)

I always look forward to coming, because there are new things to learn about African culture. (Ritali /F/20/11)

I believe that I have grown up so much from when I was younger and the idea of the circles is great because there are so many youths out there who will never get opportunities like me to do things that they like, such as music and drama. So the circles have helped me and other African youths to learn more about being African. (Namu/F/16/12)

They have helped me to identify youths with a similar mentality towards African culture. There is urgency and need, for our generation to take a stand towards preservation of African culture through different avenues that have been raised in the meetings. (Tofa/M/14/14)

I think that these sessions are a great idea, because not only do you learn but also you teach people about your experiences and how you deal with them. (Hasahya /F/14/12)

These sessions are very enjoyable and they teach many things, about my culture. The sessions make you know more about our African heritage and make you proud of our continent. When I am older I want to be an architect / actress. (Balinda/F/14/14)

I can't remember any particular time when I was made to know more about African culture. The reason is because I want to learn about it yet I am not made. (Napoli /M/16/11)

The sessions are good, because we get to talk about the community and what we can do about it. We are discussing our

lives as Africans and how we can improve life for us here. This could be good for the future. All in all it's good. (Namulwa /F/12/12)

The participants' reflections show evidence of a number of inter-related themes. These relate to historical connectedness, cultural networking and empowerment. I will discuss them in turn below.

The Ujamaa experience increased self-awareness and the significance of African cultural knowledge amongst the participants. For example Balinda said: 'The sessions make you know more about our African heritage and make you proud of our continent'. The fact that cultural awareness of the root culture increases pride of where Balinda comes from suggests that African cultural knowledge is essential for self-esteem and self-confidence. Tofa expressed urgency for the youth to take responsibility in preservation and continuation of the African culture. Understanding the African cultures, therefore, provides an appropriate context for reformulating identities in the diaspora grounded in the individual's cultural histories. African cultures are important sources for identity self-definition and a useful basis for building grounded identities.

The Ujamaa sessions also provided an opportunity for comparing cultural experience amongst people of the same ancestral background. As Tofa noted of the sessions: 'They have helped me to identify youths with a similar mentality towards African culture.' The sessions were an opportunity for cultural networking and provided a space for dialogue on issues of common concern. For Tofa this was an opportunity to meet and identify youths with like-minds. The Ujamaa sessions offered the opportunity for dialogue on issues of African culture and identity. Hasahya, for example, noted that the sessions were great because 'not only do you learn but you teach people about your experiences and how you deal with them.' It is vital for young African migrant descendants to engage in dialogue with each other as a means of developing meaningful association with the primary objective of being informed contributors to the continuity of their cultures and identities. Consequently such arguments pertaining to their identities and cultures may be approached with greater confidence since there will be a collective consciousness towards cultural issues.

Moreover, the Ujamaa process drew on African culture in order to understand its relevance to diasporic existence and identities. The participants were challenged to contribute critical ideas and opinions, relating the themes to their own circumstances. This had a remarkable impact on the young participants. Muchere summed up the feeling of the group quite well when responding to the question, 'Now that the experience of the Circle is over, can you see any difference in yourself?' She said:

Yes, I am more interested in learning about my own culture and I am much more motivated to learn. I have much more pride in my background, and who I am. I now realise that I can make a significant contribution and difference in other young people's lives through cultural education programs. I find it easier speaking to other Africans. I have greater understanding of African culture than I did before. I now appreciate great Africans who came before me whose struggle enabled me to have privileges I have today. I have become passionate about conserving our culture from our generation to the next generations. I am constantly looking for places and incidents through which I can learn more about my African culture. (Muchere /F/19/19)

She points out how she has been transformed by the experience in a positive way, as she is now motivated to learn more about African cultures. She is also aware of the potential benefits the culture may bring to other youths. Because the Ujamaa process involved a problem posing strategy, Muchere and the other participants dealt with the issues passionately as they related to them personally. According to Akinyela (1996) this is a chance for the group to create visionary solutions. If the group has identified the problems, and the source of the problems and their implications explored, the solutions can be found at this point. Muchere is aware of the implications of not taking on a cultural role of her ancestors, she feels privileged to enjoy what they preserved and passed on to her. Therefore she would like to do the same for the next generation. For Muchere, African cultural education must continue. That seems to have been the feeling of all the participants.

Muchere summed up the significance of a cultural school in the statement below. She said:

What I find interesting is that other cultures have got Greek schools, Chinese schools, and Jewish schools. But there is no African school. So we definitely need an African school to teach us customs and crafts. (Muchere/F/19/19)

It seems to be a good idea because other cultures have used the cultural school concept successfully to preserve their cultures (Castle, 1961). The school is where cultural ideas are introduced, discussed, reviewed, challenged and re-evaluated to determine their relevance in the diaspora. It is within the cultural school that issues pertaining to cultural politics and identity are discussed. African cultural practice ought to take into account the different environments in which we live today and the associated socio-economic demands that call for a different cultural orientation. The community has to pick the good from both and help the young ones to integrate in the Australian mainstream, since Australia has become their new home.

Young people in western societies are taught to be assertive, individuality and personal rights are emphasised. However traditional Africa teaches loyalty and respect to the community and elders. Hull noted that:

Once through the rights of passage an individual had less difficulty with problems of personal identity. Generational conflicts were minimised by the age-sets. Moreover students found it unnecessary to rebel, because their adult status was now clearly defined and universally recognised. Theoretically, initiates had confronted the major intellectual and practical questions of life during preparation for their puberty rites. The individuals continually encountered an array of oral literature that reinforced their understanding of the community's history, culture, wisdom, and laws. Oral literature assumed a variety of forms; it was articulated through songs, folktales, fables, riddles and rhymes, poetry, drama, and proverbs. Sagas of romance, war, courage, and endurance melodically resonated through lengthy songs. (1972, p. 196)

The traditional African community was a comprehensive institution of learning. Boateng confirms this when he states that:

Traditional African education was there not only to be acquired but also to be lived. Unlike the formal system introduced by colonialists, it was inseparable from other segments of life. (1988, p.111)

This has implications for the type of cultural school that might be developed in the diaspora. It may be an institution that promotes learning grounded in contemporary reality of a changing culture due to contact with other cultures. Participants may then explore themes such as: African traditions, history, languages, crafts, fashion, cooking, hair plaiting and drama, Africa's development, politics and problems such as famine and disease and conflict in Africa.

Themes may be tackled at different levels of depth and sophistication depending on the nature of their significance. The scope of engaging a specific topic would depend on the audience, the availability of resources and expertise. Parents would play a big role in imparting cultural knowledge to the next generation. Such knowledge could be moral, spiritual or any other perspective, geared towards strengthening African identities. As Kaduli noted:

We could have each person take a week. And then the person decides what he/she wants to impart to whatever age group. If you want to talk about music, if you want to talk about whatever, any topic that relates to what we have been talking about in Ujamaa circles: culture, food, for example you may want to show us how to make African traditional food. All these are offered for discussion, just for us to come up with something like a curriculum. And the reason I was thinking we could involve like the African community is for funding reasons and just we need everybody to get involved, all the youths. So everybody suggested holiday period as the best, because during school term everybody has like the homework, after school activities. And December is probably like one of the longest holidays, and we couldn't do it in the other holidays.  
(Kaduli/F/26/11)

The Ujamaa sessions were empowering for the participants who were both learners and teachers working together as a collective in search for answers to some of the cultural and identity issues raised. Akinyela (1996) calls the theory underlying this process 'the critical African Centred theory' aimed at creating effective strategies of liberation from the everyday domination experienced by black people. This theory is not only concerned with developing a humanitarian worldview, which begins with an appreciation of the dynamic and diverse history of pre-colonial Africans, but also covers the importance of resistance to domination exhibited by enslaved Africans and the continuing and ever new approaches to life, which are expressed by black people today.

Within this approach of the Ujamaa process are strategies, which may inform an African cultural education approach. Kaduli suggested that:

African migrant families need African cultural education. And that's where you even talk of our difference. It doesn't mean that we'll segregate ourselves, it just needs to be recognised that I'm going to be who I am. I'm not going to have blonde hair. I'm not going to have the white skin, but I'm still capable of doing everything that I need to do to fit in the society that I've decided to immigrate. Something that I've noticed is, we kind of want to just fit in and accept the culture or whatever that we've come into. In the process

you forget where you come from. Like I'm always going to be black, I'm always going to have kinky hair and not blonde hair. So that's where the cultural education comes in to teach me of why I'm different, so we need it. (Kaduli /F/26/11)

African cultural education is something that the participants would like to be a reality. They have suggested that through such a program their African identities will be renewed and strengthened.

### **'The Wish List'**

The participants suggested a 'wish list' of ideas and themes that they would explore as part of the cultural education process in order to understand their root cultures. Their list included learning about African history, myth, art, philosophy as well as a desire to strengthen cultural connectedness with the root culture.

Kaduli, for example, maintained that history should be an important element of African cultural education. She stated that:

History produces mentors, not looking necessarily at Nyerere, or Mandela; more towards like our parents, our fathers, mothers, you know they are our mentors, role models. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

Parents were perceived as important historical figures whose lives and roles may be examined and emulated. They are rich with cultural knowledge and experience that can be drawn on for the benefit of African descendants. Likewise the western education system has drawn on historical role models to become what it is today. Castle, while discussing the history of western education observed that the Greeks began western education. And that the Greeks asked the profoundest questions about education and gave profound answers to their questions both in theory and practice (1961). For Castle

The Greeks gave a good number of good answers to the questions that beset us today, because they examined the nature of human beings with astonishing insight and were courageous enough to follow the logic of their thinking. So accordingly Greek, Rome and Judea continue to inform and nourish Western education.

Since history contains information that can enrich the present generation it may be concluded that the inclusion of African history may enrich the cultural understanding of African migrants and consequently benefit their identities.

Namulwa, one of the participants, in her presentation about the queen of the Nile, Hatshepsut, challenged the traditional view about Egyptian history that disconnected Egypt from the rest of Africa (Diop, 1974). Namulwa noted that Hatshepsut was an important Egyptian Queen of whom Africans should be proud. She noted:

No one knows how Hatshepsut died. Whether it was natural causes or assassination, nobody knows. We also don't know what her stepson, Thutmose the third, thought of her. What we do know is that after she died and when Thutmose was in power he had all monuments of her smashed and her name chiselled out of all legal documents. Hatshepsut is one of the world's first powerful women, and a symbol of respect to all African people. And we should be proud of it, as part of African culture. (Namulwa/F/12/12)

Egyptian civilisation is significant in its human achievements, its enduring pyramids still stand out today on the African continent. Namulwa found pride in this heritage despite its remoteness in time. It gave her a feeling of connectedness, for in Hatshepsut she saw a powerful African woman who passed for a 'man' and led Egypt for some time. The fact that Namulwa was able to explore the history of Hatshepsut's leadership is in itself a process of dialogue with the early African civilisations. Moreover her narrative suggested evidence of mystery around this great pharaoh. A search for interconnections between the past and present, as Namulwa did, is a process of cultural re-evaluation and continuity. It is empowering and culturally enriching. That is why in concluding her presentation Namulwa suggested that Hatshepsut is one of the world's first powerful women, and a symbol of respect to all African people. She may not be of Egyptian ancestry, but she nevertheless re-appropriated this great history to benefit her cultural identity and pride. Namulwa has widened the scope of African cultural education to include Egyptian civilisation.

African culture is embedded with mythical, artistic and philosophical knowledge. Tofa, in reference to African story telling has noted the significance of this medium as a source of traditional knowledge:

Story telling is a very important part of African culture, as stories are told for fun, as in jokes and general anecdotes. Stories are also told to explain things, to gain greater knowledge, to preserve things as a record. And that is basically as with grandparents, explaining to children what happened in the past. In modern society we get a bit of recorded, or written down history. Books that we use in classes now often describe African places with colonial names. Like Lake Victoria in northern Tanzania, was named Lake Victoria in the society and environment books. Except in Tanzania when you go there, people who live around the area tell stories surrounding the lake and how it came to be. And it is called Lake Nyanza, which means great lake. So people there refuse to call it by its colonial name as a sign of pride. (Tofa/M/14/14)

Through African stories Tofa notes that 'greater knowledge' may be obtained from African story telling. For instance he noted that colonialists renamed Lake Nyanza as Lake Victoria. He acknowledges the pride that the local people have in preserving the traditional name of Nyanza as opposed to Victoria. The stories associated with Nyanza were empowering to both Tofa and other young people of African descent. Such knowledge challenges the colonial ideas of 'discovering', for long before Speke and Burton 'discovered' Lake Victoria; there was a community, around the lake, rich with stories about the lake. Through such approaches it is possible to challenge colonial discourse about Africa that undermines the integrity of traditional worldviews and value systems.

In exploring the function of African-American myth, Asante has noted that:

When we examine the nature and utility of myth in African-American discourse, we see that it is about ancestral heroes and heroines. The African-American myth is the highest order of symbolic motifs. Further the myth emerges as a story with a basis in historical or indefinite time, but in all cases the story is of triumphs and victories, even if it is considered in the suffer-myth genre or is found in Ananse-or Brer Rabbit-type tales. (1987, p.101)

Asante believes that the function of African-American myth in discourse is the demonstration of control over circumstances, as opposed to control over nature. The Harriet Tubman story and the underground railroad of saving African slaves is a good example. According to Asante it is through such stories that we can see how myth can provide solutions to crises in the collective life of people. Of Harriet Tubman he noted that:



Harriet Tubman is an extra ordinary mythic figure in our rhetorical consciousness because she is symbolic, that is, an expression of our epic journey. Tubman's transformation from birth to self-imposed exile, to rites of initiation, to triumphant return to the South to deliver her brothers and sisters represents all of us. In that sense she is more than symbol, she is enactment. With the African-American cosmos, Tubman is a combination of intense secular and sacred power. She established her credibility: that is she became a heroic character by carrying out her professed actions. The deliverance of more than three hundred slaves from bondage during the most difficult period of slavery indelibly wrote her name in the mythology of African American discourse. Children are often taught to sing, "I love Harriet Tubman because she first loved me." Tubman embodies the care and concern of a mother figure: she is the Great mother. (1987, pp.104-105)

It is possible to draw inspiration and sense of being from mythical stories. As the story of Harriet Tubman suggests, it is through myth that you can develop deeper understandings of human attitudes and relations about historical issues. Why did Harriet Tubman risk her life for the sake of others? Within African Cultural Education African myths may be explored for meaning and interpretation of African values and human relations. Of special importance perhaps is to demystify the racist myths that have misrepresented the true nature of the African people and culture.

The Arts are an essential aspect of a culture. They may include music, dance, theatre, visual art and literature. The Arts may function as moral tools, personality development, communication or expression of realism (Phenix, 1958). Arts, therefore, have a strong philosophical relevance in which creativity and imagination may lead to amazing products of human expression as Kariamtu Asante, noted of the African dance:

African dance encompasses the traditional and contemporary expressions. The thoroughness with which we document and study the traditional dance will directly stimulate and encourage contemporary expressions and techniques. (1988, pp. 81-82)

Within the migrant community there is a diverse resource of African dances and this presents an opportunity for African youths to draw on this heritage and develop systems of knowledge that may benefit the mainstream as well. Ritali has used some of these African resources. In reference to Lucky Dube, a South African artist, she claims to have utilised some techniques from this

artist to enhance her dance routines. In reference to one of his videos she noted that:

It's a useful resource, in the modification of my dances. I have seen that video and basically, I see how he entertains the crowd. Being an African man it rubs off on me. So I take that, and put it in my performances. (Ritali/F/20/12)

Kaduli has also suggested that African artistic resources may be used for personal needs. It is possible to empathise with some of the lyrics and relate them to personal experiences. She noted:

We could also use the themes personally like, say how Lucky Dube talks about a story and you realise that whatever is happening in your life, for example when your dad abandoned you when you were young, is talked about by somebody else through his music. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

The African arts are a source of African cultural knowledge. Music, apart from its entertainment role, is a tool of cultural continuity, re-invention, hybridity, diversity and social-cultural reproduction, construction and expression (Lwanda, 2003). Mtino noted similar roles of African music in his presentation, about black music, during the Ujamaa sessions:

Black (African) music serves the same purpose as poetry. It is often described as the art of rhythmical compositions written or spoken for exciting pleasure, by beautiful, imaginative or alleviative thoughts. Musicians produce and compose songs, as a medium through which they can express their attitudes and values, towards a specific topic. Depending on the concerns surrounding them at the time, musicians may choose to focus on current issues in their society. African and African descendant music does this. They write about liberation, oppression and how to overcome it. This is evident all round the world, in the music that you hear. In Tanzania we have genera of music called bongo flavour. It is basically about politics and education such as HIV/AIDS. (Mtino/M/16/14)

In many African countries, which have been affected by HIV/AIDS, oral theatre, dance, and music, have been used in community education. This form of education is more accessible to most people in Africa.

Within African Cultural Education, education in the Arts would aim at developing creative and imaginative approaches to construction and

reconstruction of African culture in the diaspora, by incorporating various aspects of African cultural knowledge<sup>1</sup>.

The aesthetic perspectives of African Arts may be developed and utilised to counter the negative and racist stereotypes about African people. Beauty in African worldview is not necessarily the same as beauty as perceived in a Eurocentric context. Therefore, Eurocentric definitions of beauty may not necessarily include the African worldview of beauty. Under such circumstances it becomes necessary for African migrants to develop theoretical sensibilities about African aesthetics in the diaspora. This is important for their self-esteem and cultural survival.

According to Gyekye, African philosophical thought is expressed both in the oral literature and in the thoughts and actions of the people. He states:

A great deal of the philosophical material is embedded in the proverbs, myths and folktales, folk songs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people, in their art symbols and in their socio-political institutions and practices. (1987, p.13)

It is important, then, for African Cultural Education to examine African culture through proverbs, myths, folktales and any other traditional idioms, because this may provide deeper understanding of the African cultures and being.

Also included in the participants' wish list was the concept of cultural connectedness. Loneliness and cultural disconnectedness are some of the challenges that migrants experience. Association through supportive agencies offers possibilities for dialogue and connectedness. Kaduli suggests that:

Having a meeting facility for the African community would improve networking amongst the African migrant people. I am not saying that this will solve all the problems, but we should be meeting and talking about issues affecting us. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

As Ritali notes, there are real benefits with this approach:

Talking helps. I have come to learn that if you're young and have no one to talk to, your parents are sometimes not the easiest

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<sup>1</sup> On the subject of re-evaluating African culture Wiredu a prominent African philosopher noted that: 'what is immediately pertinent is to remark that unanalysed exhortations to Africans to preserve their indigenous culture are not particularly useful—indeed, they can be counterproductive. There is an urgent need in Africa today for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture...from those aspects that are worth keeping.'(Mosley, 1995, p.162)

people to talk to. You need a place to go and someone to talk to.  
(Ritali/F/20/12)

Such a venue, as Kaduli has pointed out, would benefit people like Ritali. It breaks the constraints of loneliness and provides opportunity for social intercourse and cultural connectedness. There is another benefit in terms of career counselling, as Kaduli further suggested:

The day-to-day experiences are helpful in counselling each other on strategies towards career. You can't tell someone that this is what you should get into or whatever, but you can lead them into some direction. (Kaduli/F/26/11)

Networking amongst people of the same cultural background gives them opportunity to support each other culturally. It is quite essential for the young migrants to learn from their cultural peers. While there is mainstream counselling about careers that provides information regarding courses, cultural counselling, in my view, would provide alternative ways of dealing with the contradictions, challenges and survival strategies necessary for the individual of African descent. Being Black does present anxieties in some potential employers and therefore, the experiences of job search, for example, ought to be shared amongst the community members.

The participants also wanted to include current affairs about Africa in African Cultural Education. Current affairs present issues of recent occurrence and contemporary concern. They may be accessed through media, journals, newspapers and any other sources. Migration to a new land presents challenges that require an ongoing update about issues that may influence one's well-being. For the African migrant there are benefits of being informed about African affairs, both on the continent and the diaspora. The politics, socio-economic, cultural, and educational affairs inform the individual about the challenges that face the African continent and people. The individual then may determine his/her possible role in bringing about improvement of the African condition.

The function of role models was also considered to be important for Kaduli who had borrowed one of the books from the Ujamaa resource presentation she read it and shared her opinions with the rest of the members in the group:

I was reading that book about different presidents and lecturers in Africa, who have achieved so much. The great people in Africa, who have achieved so much. There was one thing that just came through the whole book. It's like these people had so many options. Some of them like lecturers, who lecturer at Nairobi University, had options where the universities in America gave them places to teach but they said no. So why should someone give up such a great opportunity to go to teach in America and instead decide to stay in Nairobi to teach? (Kaduli/F/26/15)

By reading the book about African role models Kaduli was able to share with her colleagues the intellectual potential and patriotism that exists amongst some African intellectuals. For Kaduli the idea of Africa having intellectuals committed to the continent despite the temptations to work in better paying western institutions was very important. Such alternative worldviews about Africa develop an individual into an intellectually balanced person. Such a person may be in a position to examine issues relating to Africa more objectively and strengthen his/her multiple subject positions as well. Africa is not a place to be ashamed of despite its political and economic problems. Taken together, the items on the participants' wish list provide a strong basis for an African Cultural Education that fosters pride in African cultural identity. However, since a curriculum must also provide a space to deal with racism and the many pressures to assimilate into the dominant society in the next section I consider some approaches to the challenges.

### **The challenges of racism and assimilation**

Dei (1999) has noted that while the origins of racism cannot simplistically be rooted in capitalism, it can be asserted that the markers of race and difference mirror the distribution of wealth and resources, in as much as the transnationalisation of capital and wealth continues to structure the nature of social relations. It is true of most migrants of African descent in Australia that they continue to experience racism, unemployment and poverty (Udo-Ukpo, 1999). In school systems, Eurocentric practices continue to impose colonial/imperial control on the processes of knowledge production, interrogation, validation and use (Dei, 1999). Consequently knowledge, which

is not relevant to the mainstream agenda, is ignored or simply dismissed. Assimilation operates on this kind of logic, which dismisses and undermines marginal cultures and worldviews.

Dei believes that to challenge this dominance we need to work with a critical discursive framework that seeks to destabilise the power of Eurocentricity. For Dei, the anti-colonial approach recognises the importance of locally produced knowledge emanating from cultural history and social interactions /daily experiences. The generation of new knowledge forms about learning experiences and social practices of marginalised communities and groups contribute to a meaningful transformation of the educational process. This is important because during the Ujamaa process a lot of experiences were shared by the participants, which resulted in the generation of an important body of knowledge.

In one of the Ujamaa sessions Muchere shared with the participants some of the ideas she had read from a Uganda national newspaper about the president's daughter and the shortage of medical doctors in Uganda:

There are two articles and the first one is about culture. It shows the picture of the president's daughter (Natasha Karugire). She is launching her own design line. What I find interesting is the fact that the president himself will be selecting fabric on the catwalk to demonstrate his knowledge of fashion and his design taste. He thinks he is pretty good. It is quite good to see the president participate in such events. The second was about how Uganda has a shortage of doctors, and those who are there are overworked up to about one hundred and fifty hours a week. They are in a bad position because, for example, each doctor sees thirty times the number of patients seen by the doctor in the USA. It causes a lot of stress on the Doctors. (Muchere/F/19/19)

Through such a process Muchere acquired knowledge that informed her of the root culture and some understanding of the issues in the root culture. It could become a source of inspiration for contributing towards a project in Africa and consequently strengthen spiritual connectedness to the African continent. Ritali too demonstrated some widened understanding of some aspect of African politics when discussing the article of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa.

**Facilitator:** Ritali what impressions have you got about the article?

**Ritali:** I came across some dancing thing. It is the African child celebration. They had a variety of dances. The pictures attracted me. But the reason why it is held every year is that it is celebrated in the memory of the Black South African students, who were massacred in Soweto, on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1976. I haven't had of that before?

**Muchere:** Soweto?

**Ritali:** Of that incident, the Sharpeville massacre.

**Facilitator:** Yes, Sharperville massacre.

**Ritali:** So what happened?

**Facilitator:** What happened was that the South African apartheid government drafted pass laws, and segregated residence according to race. So when students and other protestors peacefully marched towards the police station, in the town of Sharpeville, Suddenly the police opened fire on the crowd and continued to shoot at the demonstrators as they turned and ran in fear. Many people died as a result of the shooting. And there is a very famous photograph relating to that incident, where a young man is carrying a body of one of the young victims. So that is the Sharperville massacre a renowned incident associated with apartheid.

**Ritali:** So it was organised in remembrance of that incident.

The dialogue above involves an important historical incident that took place in South African politics. It was a time when the South African white minority racist regime ran a government that marginalised the majority of Africans. The participants learnt something about the Sharpeville massacre during the dialogue. They were interested in what I had to say out of their own interests.

Partington and McCudden, point out that:

The majority of the teachers in the Australian schools are members of the mainstream, and so have a natural affinity for the values beliefs, knowledge and skills of the mainstream (Anglo Celtic). These tend to be based on Eurocentric perceptions of the world, which place more emphasis on European (and, generally, Western) theories and ideas at the expense of other cultures. (1992. p.18)

If this is true, then it is important to have an alternative worldview as a means of developing perspectives that challenge Eurocentric power relations and negative attitudes that constrain minority participation and progress.

Within this approach it is possible to challenge Eurocentric racism. Dei suggests that an antiracist approach calls for:

Understanding of how power and privilege are structured along the lines of difference, explicating and addressing the challenges of being a minority within a dominant society; and exploring what it really means to be 'different'—the strengths, possibilities and limitations. (1999, p.401)

It is possible to deal with certain forms of racism by having a positive self-concept. This is necessary as the empowerment and pride in one's identity should be derived from within self and not externally mandated. Whether a prejudiced person likes your skin colour or not is something that shouldn't preoccupy an individual. Instead the individual should seek to appreciate the goodness in self unconditionally. That is why Kaduli makes the point in reference to African cultural education that:

The reason is to have purpose: the kids learning about the African culture and to get a chance to socialise. I mean once a year we may have a cultural event. But we also need to talk about the daily stuff and to keep up the whole thing of knowing who we are. So in that way instead of just having one teacher you are kind of sharing the duties of teaching. Everybody is good at different things. Namu may teach us about music, I don't know anything about music so... (Kaduli/F/26/11)

Within a communicative solidarity about culture, it is possible to develop sensibilities and consciousness that can strengthen a group and at the same time destabilise racist power relations. If awareness is established that every culture holds a worldview and truths, then the universal claims of Eurocentric thought may be challenged and consequently the assimilative and racist foundations brought under scrutiny. During these encounters the process of identity construction or reconstruction will proceed successfully.

The school concept offers cultural space for the practice of African culture through dialogue on issues of African concern to African descendants. Through this environment they can re-evaluate and reconstruct their cultural values and identities through a collective consciousness. Consequently, a supportive cultural practice will emerge which may guide the community in the diaspora.

## **Conclusion**

The claims of this research are grounded in the voices of the participants. They have generally expressed positive opinions and interest towards African cultural revival and continuity as a means of reaffirming their identities and African culture. At the heart of these voices is the centrality of their Africanness in defining what Bhabha (1994) calls multiple identities. The



practicality and possibility of a dialogical approach has been demonstrated. It has revealed issues of a cultural concern to the young participants of African background and through the process they have endeavoured to propose possible solutions to the issues.

While there is no specified content of what should constitute the African cultural education, the issues have been presented in more general themes. This is intended to give room for flexibility in approach. Community members and other interested parties may wish to adopt some of these ideas to the needs of their communities. The heritage we have brought to this nation is rich and diverse, therefore it should be continued in every possible way. It is mainly in the interest of the future generations whose future cultural challenges are, as yet, unknown but parallels could be drawn by examining the Aboriginal experience. A destabilised culture may result in a decentred people and consequently a destabilised future for subsequent descendants.

From the evidence presented I wish to conclude by stating that the participants demonstrated a need for African cultural education. It is possible that there might be a similar desire in the wider African community. The Ujamaa process created awareness among the participants that resulted in a more conscious focus and interest towards African cultural continuity. African culture may be drawn on as a source of identity renewal and sense of being. This will certainly assist in dealing with racism and assimilative pressures.

## Chapter 7

### **Conclusion—the futuristic agenda**

In the search for peace, justice, and international unity, Africa has an international role to play. Africa constitutes a treasure house of so many authentic human values. She is called to share these values with other nations and by so doing enrich the whole human family and all other cultures. But to do this, Africa must remain profoundly faithful to herself; day-by-day, she must be ever more faithful to her own heritage, not out of any spirit of opposition or antagonism to the others but through belief in the truth.

Pope John-Paul II, on May 6, 1980 in Nairobi.

This dissertation was guided by one overarching research question: Do African migrants in Australia need African cultural education? And if they do what should be the approach? From the evidence presented in the preceding chapters there is overwhelming proof that the participants in the research demonstrated a desire for an African cultural education. Through their own voices they expressed diverse views and opinions on the possibilities of an African cultural education program. There was a strong feeling of enthusiasm and solidarity, amongst the participants, towards the idea of a culturally empowering African cultural education program. This was a significant achievement of the Ujamaa process.

The implication for a positive response by the participants to the idea of African cultural education is to address the various aspects of the program in order to meet the needs and desires of the African youths. There are various aspects of African cultural education, which will have to be explored by the parents, youths, interested intellectuals and agencies. The critical guiding principle will be the African migrant community being at the centre of planning and developing the ideas to be explored. This has to be grounded in their socio-cultural experiences because of the fact that the fundamental objective of African cultural education is to strengthen the African identities and connectedness to the root cultures.

The dialogical approach was successful with the participants and it would seem, therefore, that Akinyela's (1996) Ujamaa Circle process is appropriate for the implementation of an African cultural education curriculum.

In a competitive capitalist world where culture has become a commodity there are ethical implications for the way in which the African migrants may wish to 'market' their culture. Philosophical tools will become necessary for the African migrants to apply in exploring ethical and cultural implications of commercialising their communal cultures. It is possible also that if they do not examine such issues critically they may lose out on opportunities of adapting the culture to a capitalist environment.

A deliberate conscious presence of African cultural education and practice will give diverse African migrants opportunity to share and negotiate cultural norms and practices, which will facilitate cultural continuity and African Identities in the Australian diaspora. Subsequent generations will be assured

of a source of cultural tools that they may adopt according to the needs of the moment. Like the European civilisation draws on Greek and other histories, the African migrant in Australia is neither European nor Aboriginal not even Asian but can only be an African descendant. Africa is the source of the root culture and hence a source of cultural identity and continued root cultural connectedness. Therefore it will be necessary for African cultural education to avail the means for strengthening African cultural identities in the diaspora through appropriate cultural programs. From their strengthened peripheral location they will be able to participate in the cultural politics and integrate into the mainstream without losing their ancestral roots. I now wish to conclude my thesis by quoting from one of the African elders who reminds us of the importance of keeping the African heritage, the late Kwame Nkrumah:

We have provided much material benefit to the British people, and they in turn have taught us many good things. We want to continue to learn from them the best they can give us and we hope that they will find in us qualities worth of emulation. In our daily lives, we may lack those material comforts regarded as essential by the standards of the modern world, because so much of our wealth is locked up in our land; but we have the gifts of laughter and joy, a love of music, a lack of malice, an absence of the desire for vengeance for our wrongs, all things of intrinsic worth in a world sick of injustice, revenge, fear and want.

We feel that there is much the world can learn from those of us who belong to what we might term the pretechnological societies. These are values, which we must not sacrifice unheedingly in pursuit of material progress.

(Kwame Nkrumah, 1953, in Accra, Ghana)

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1. Consent letter (Parent)**
- Appendix 2. Consent letter (Youth)**
- Appendix 3. Consent letter (Youth, 14 and under)**
- Appendix 4. Pseudonyms and identification code**
- Appendix 5. Letter of invitation**
- Appendix 6. Self-Reflection form**
- Appendix 7. Certificate of Participation**



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**School of Education**

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**Murdoch, Western Australia, 6150**  
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Project Title: *African Cultural Education*

Dear Dr/ Mr/Mrs/Ms -----

I am a Masters of Education Research student at Murdoch University investigating *an approach to African Cultural Education* under the Supervision of Dr. Nado Aveling. The purpose of this study is to develop themes, which may constitute the African Cultural Education program, in the diaspora.

You can help in this study by consenting to *your Son/Daughter's interview, and/or participating in the discussions circles*. It is anticipated that the time *to complete the interview will be no more than two hours for each session; the circles will run for six sessions on a fortnightly basis*. Contained in the survey are questions about African culture, level of education, and other questions, which may be seen as personal and private. Participants can decide to withdraw their consent at any time. All information given during the survey is confidential and no names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. *Feedback on the study will be provided to participants, who have not requested anonymity. This will be through a summarised communiqué about the outcomes of the study.*

If you are willing to give consent to your son/daughter's participation in this study, could you please complete the details below. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, Mr. Peter Wakholi, on 95868540 or my supervisor, Dr. Nado Aveling, on 93606261.

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study has been conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677.

\*\*\*\*\*

I ----- have read the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to let my Son/Daughter take part in this activity, however, I know that I may change my mind and stop their participation at any time.

I understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

*I agree for this interview to be audiorecorded.*

I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided the names or other information, which might identify my Son / Daughter is not used.

I also agree that the research results and audio recordings may be lodged with an African Resource Centre and, with my permission, may be used for purposes other than this study

Participant/Authorised Representative:

Date:

Investigator: Dr. Nado Aveling. Date: Investigator's Name: Mr. Peter Wakholi



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Project Title: *African Cultural Education*

Dear Ms -----

I am a Masters of Education Research student at Murdoch University investigating *an approach to African Cultural Education* under the Supervision of Dr. Nado Aveling. The purpose of this study is to develop ideas, which may become part of the African Cultural Education program, in Australia.

You can help in this study by accepting to *be interviewed, and/or participating in the discussions circles*. It is hoped that the time *to complete the interview will be no more than two hours for each session; the circles will run for six sessions on a fortnightly basis*. Contained in the *survey are questions about African culture, level of education, and other questions, which may be seen as personal and private*. Participants can decide to withdraw their consent at any time. All information given during the survey is confidential and no names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. *Feedback on the study will be provided to participants, who have not requested anonymity. This will be through a summarised communiqué about the outcomes of the study.*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, Mr. Peter Wakholi, on 95868540 or my supervisor, *Dr. Nado Aveling*, on 93606261.

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study has been conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677.

\*\*\*\*\*

I ----- have read the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this activity, however, I know that I may change my mind and stop their participation at any time.

I understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

*I agree for this interview to be audiorecorded.*

I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided the names or other information, which might identify me is not used.

I also agree that the research results and audio recordings may be lodged with an African Resource Centre and may not be used for other purposes, other than this study, without my permission.

Participant/Authorised Representative:

Date:

Investigator: Dr. Nado Aveling

Date:

Investigator's Name: Mr. Peter Wakholi



**School of Education**

**Murdoch University**  
**Murdoch, Western Australia, 6150**  
**Telephone: 08 9360 6261; Fax : 08 9360 6296;**

Project Title: *African Cultural Education*

Dear Ms -----

I am a Masters of Education Research student at Murdoch University investigating *an approach to African Cultural Education* under the Supervision of Dr. Nado Aveling. The purpose of this study is to develop themes and content ideas, which will be part of an African Cultural Education program. Such a program will be adaptable to home and Institutional environments. I believe that as a young descendant of African background, you have useful ideas, which will benefit this research project.

You can help in this study by consenting to an interview, and/or participating in the discussions circles. It is anticipated that the time to complete the interview will be no more than two hours, for each session; the circles will run for six sessions on a fortnightly basis. Contained in the survey are questions about African culture, level of education, and other questions, which may be seen as personal and private. Participants can decide to withdraw their consent at any time. All information given during the survey is confidential and no names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. Feedback on the study will be provided to participants, who have not requested anonymity. This will be through a summarised communiqué about the outcomes of the study.

If you are willing to participate in this study, could you please complete the details below. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, Mr. Peter Wakholi, on 95868540 or my supervisor, Dr. Nado Aveling, on 93606261.

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study has been conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677.

\*\*\*\*\*

I ----- have read the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this activity, however, I know that I may change my mind and stop at any time.

I understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

I agree for this interview to be audiorecorded.

I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided my name or any other information, which might identify me is not used.

I also agree that the research results and audio recordings may be lodged with an African Resource Centre and, with my permission, may be used for purposes other than this study

Participant/ Authorised Representative:

Date: Investigator: Dr. Nado Aveling

Date: Investigator's Name: Mr. Peter Wakholi



## Appendix 4

### Pseudonyms and identification code of the participants

Name/Gender/Age/Period of residence in Australia

Balinda/F/14/14

Hasahya/F/14/12

Kaduli/F/26/11

Mtino/M/16/14

Muchere/F/19/19

Namu/F/16/12

Namulwa/F/12/12

Napoli/M16/11

Ritali/F/20/11

Tofa/M14/14

## Appendix 5

### Participant Invitation

Dear Participants,

Ref: Invitation to the Ujamaa Circle discussions at Murdoch University,  
Education Staff Common Room.

Hi,

We are now set for our six sessions about African Cultural Education, and I am looking forward to exciting and fruitful workshops. Come along with your experiences and concerns about African cultural issues. We may not have enough time to explore everything however if we can identify key issues and how they should be addressed, through some kind of educational framework then that will be good.

The sessions will run as follows:

Workshop 1	19/10/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.
Workshop 2	26/10/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.
Workshop 3	02/11/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.
Workshop 4	09/11/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.
Workshop 5	16/11/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.
Workshop 6	23/11/2003	Time 11.00 am. to 1.00 pm.

All the workshops are on Sundays. We shall be assembling at the parking Number 5, at about 10.30-10.45am., and then proceed to the humanities building where the staff room is located.(Check the details on the attached map). **Please be prompt.**

Looking forward to meeting you.

## **Appendix 6 Self-Reflection Form**

Ujamaa Circles individual reflection about the experience

Respondent's names

Tell us about yourself.

My reflections in regard to the workshops are as follows:

Can you remember any particular time when you were made to feel, that you should know more about African culture?

How did you behave, when you felt the need to know more about African culture? Please explain.

Reflections about the Ujamaa Circle process:

1. Before you actually participated in this process, what did you expect it to be like?
2. Was the actual experience different from what you expected? if so how? If not, how did it meet/ or not meet your expectations?
3. If you were in an African cultural discussion before this process, what was the experience like?
4. What was the most significant aspect of the Ujamaa Circle?
5. What was the least significant or disappointing aspect of the Circle?
6. Now that the experience of the Ujamaa Circle is over, can you see any difference in yourself? Please explain.

## Appendix 7

### Ujamaa Circles

#### Certificate of participation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for being part of the discussions regarding the topic of African Cultural Education. Your contribution has been very useful. Each one of us has brought great ideas to this topic and I do believe that we are all fired up to continue with similar discussions. The themes that emerged from our discussions were the following.

- African History
- Cultural conservation and renewal
- Current Affairs (Contemporary issues)
- Negotiating cultural Identity, 'meetings.'
- Aesthetics, (Fashion, Art, music)
- African Religions and philosophy
- African medicine
- Language (Swahili)

You developed a program for the African Cultural Education, which includes varied activities developed from the themes above. The discussions demonstrated the need for us to engage issues of Africa at a deeper level of thought and reflection so that we can bring meaning to our existence and identity. So carry on, and continue this lifelong learning journey.

Remember that you owe something to Africa, even if there may be no immediate acknowledgement and appreciation in what you do. Keep doing it, for it is with such persistence that you will bring meaning to your own existence and perhaps make a difference for those in need. As a minority group in this country, you will always have to actively define and redefine your cultural boundaries, without losing sight of who you are. You have to, because there are certain cultural symbols in you, which you treasure so much and may be completely meaningless to the people around you. What do you do? Do you just abandon them? What do you become after losing everything? Don't lose sight of Africa. Always keep Africa at the centre. And continue giving meaning to its existence.

Thank you for your participation.

P.Wakholi.

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