

Resurrecting the African Self: Burying the “necro”

In order to solve some of the problems and reestablish the sovereign personality of the Black person, it is critical to penetrate through that “Negro” barrier into the Original Man. This is done by resurrecting the real inner self. Many Black activists have traditionally made the mistake of trying to eliminate the Negro façade by altering its outer appearance. They have dressed the “Negro” up in African clothing, given him a new haircut and taught him a couple of African dances and assumed that this would begin to alter the death process of the Negro. Even in African Cultural Nationalist settings, too much attention has been directed to the external manifestations of the “Negro”. The adherents to this newly restored African orientation are exposed to certain external stimulation in an effort to resurrect their Africaness. These well-meaning Nationalists have been attempting to destroy the “Negro” from its strongest front –the external.

Unfortunately, many of the children and the adults initiated into these external alterations quickly resume their “Negro”: practices as soon as they find themselves in another non-African external environment.. All of the cues in the external dominant society are telling black people not to be themselves and rewarding any behaviors that are inconsistent with their own advancement and self-interest. Any manifestation of an independent self definition coming from a view of oneself in a broader global and universal context is severely condemned as irrational, fanatical or radical. In order to resurrect the real African inner self, the Negro has to be uprooted – not from the outside, but from the inside. The first step to the inside requires that we know the identity of that inner core that Africans have invariably characterized as spiritual.

Activists and others have tried, unsuccessfully, nearly every material definition imaginable in order to help African people resurrect themselves. Black people have tried everything from “afros” to dashikis and back to processed hair – the whole gamut of the material. We have tried almost all of the external revisions possible to get us back to being ourselves. None of these external or cosmetic solutions have worked. In order to reconstruct our true selves we must identify that inner substance that makes us who we are. Once we have restored our true selves we will be characterized by our commitment to maximize our individual and collective survival.

Conclusion

A basic assumption of this discussion is that none of these methods will ever work until we recognize the essence of who we are as a spiritual people. We must conceptually appreciate that the outer material begins with an inner thought. We must trust the direction of our intuition. We must seek successful, wise leadership from among ourselves. We must restore the valid cultural rituals that bring us together for constructive purposes. We must make a clear distinction between being spirited and spiritual. “Spirited” is the emotional response to music, parties and religious arousal-tactics. This is thoroughly emotional and usually unproductive. True spiritual growth is guided by the knowledge, which cultivates the growth of the mind. Being spirited has kept us in our long-standing condition of mental slavery. Being spiritual will release us for transcendental growth and self-mastery. “The Original Man” is really a mentality and it must be restored by knowledge rooted in an authentic reconstruction of who the African person is.

Such knowledge becomes the foundation for establishing the new cultural forms that maintain the true inner self. This knowledge must be universal as reflected in the Divine order of the natural world. It must be knowledge that draws upon appropriate interpretation and application of the ancient religious wisdom of Black civilizations. It is only with such knowledge that the dead mental life of the Black person can be resurrected. With such a resurrection, the black man's personality may once again become a functioning entity and engage in the kind of constructive processes that facilitates all human beings to achieve the vision of their greatness.

From the paper "African Roots of Black Personality" (1979), Concepts of African Personality, Akbar Papers in African Psychology, pp. 103-104