

## A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF RACISM IN AFRICA

Nyamweya Bonface Isaboke, John Muhenda and Nafula Fredrick Wanjala  
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa  
**Corresponding Author's Email:** [bonnybony7@gmail.com](mailto:bonnybony7@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*Racism is a social construct that has been used to oppress the Black race for a long time. Africans in the diaspora and in the African continent have continued to experience racism in various ways, one of them being through slavery. Racism was non-existent in the African continent, until its contact with both the Europeans and Arabs, especially the former. In the pre-colonial period, Africans experienced racism through their forced trans-location from their motherland to the Americas and the Caribbean in the infamous Trans-Atlantic trade. Africans also experienced racism in form of colonization and continue to have the same experience in its post-colonial period. In relation to its main objective, this article has employed the Critical Race Theory (CRT). This theory holds that racism is the ordinary way our world conducts itself in dealing with the Africans. This in turn has led to the normalisation of racism in our world that at times we cannot detect it. Racism has been used to perceive Africans as being inferior, to enslave them, and enrich the White race materially at the expense of Africans. Racism has exhibited itself in the African continent in the pre-colonial Africa, colonial Africa and post-colonial Africa. The importance of Critical Race Theory is that it explains the race foundation and relations. Hence, this makes it suitable to analyse the history of racism in Africa.*

**Key words:** Racism, slavery, pre-colonial, colonial and colonialism

### **Introduction**

The main concern of this article is to outline the historical basis of racism in Africa. It will attempt to showcase historically how racism has presented itself in the pre-colonial Africa, during colonization and in post-colonial Africa. This enables us to have some background understanding of the origin and development of racism.

### **Pre-colonial Africa in Relation to Racism**

The proponents of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado among others<sup>1</sup> hold that racism is the ordinary way our world conducts itself in dealing with the Africans.<sup>2</sup> This has led to the normalisation of racism in our day to day life such that we may not detect it at times. On the other hand, racism manifests white dominance that serves to heighten the whites' esteem while demeaning the Africans, notwithstanding enriching the whites materially while ensuring that the blacks remain poor.<sup>3</sup> Hence, racism in reality serves an economic purpose of privileging and enriching the whites. According to the Critical Race Theory, racism is a social construct and not biological<sup>4</sup> or ontological.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

In traditional African societies, racism was non-existent. Racism was introduced into Africa by both the Europeans and Arabs. Prior to that, the concept and reality of racism did not exist in Africa and among Africans. According to W. E. Abrahams, Europeans were first to introduce racism into Africa when he indicates: “Europe brought racism into Africa.”<sup>5</sup> This is not true because “...the Arab slave trade, a major component of African history, lasted more than 13 centuries. It began in the early seventh century and continued in one form or another until 1960s.”<sup>6</sup> Although the Islamic law provided some protection for the dignity of the slaves, the African slaves taken were castrated if they were men to be eunuchs while the females were sexually mistreated.<sup>7</sup> This means that the Arabs were the first people to discriminate the Africans through slave trade then later the Europeans.

This means that first way, perhaps, in which both the Europeans and Arabs demonstrated their racism towards Africans was through slave trade. Slave trade in particular, that one involving Europeans, saw the forceful translocation of Africans from their motherland (Africa) to the Americas and to the Caribbean where they underwent untold inhumane sufferings because of their skin colour.

It is not that slave trade did not exist ‘locally’ in some parts of Africa, it did, but it was not based on race. Slaves existed in Africa,<sup>8</sup> but they were not imported from Europe or America or anywhere outside their communities in Africa. They were ‘slaves’ in a different connotation, not of oppression but of specialization. Slaves were only doing their duties for the wellbeing of their families and societies. Cheikh Anta Diop in his *Pre-colonial Black Africa* gives an example of Senegal where slaves were part of the social stratification. According to Diop, when we look into the pre-colonial condition of Senegal, we observe that “society is divided into slaves and freemen, the latter being *gor*, including both *ger* and *nen*. The *ger* comprise the nobles and all freemen with no manual profession other than agriculture, considered a sacred activity.”<sup>9</sup> Although this seems to depict a kind of human oppression, nonetheless it was a social stratification that arose from division of labour and it had nothing whatsoever to do with racism. This is why Diop proceeds to say that, “The *nen* comprise all artisans: shoemakers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, etc.”<sup>10</sup> So the caste system noted in Senegal before the colonial times elucidates the fact that they were called slaves because of their roles in the society.

It can be appreciated that this kind of stratification of people in their societies as servants, soldiers, and the like, was common in many human societies even outside Africa. But there is no society that underrated their fellow society members as incapacitated and less human. Yet

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<sup>5</sup> W. E. Abrahams. *The Mind of Africa*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, 160.

<sup>6</sup> David Gakunzi, *The Arab-Muslim Slave Trade* (Jewish Political Studies Review, Vol. 29, No. ¾ (2018)), 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Recalling Africa’s Harrowing Tale of its First Slavers-The Arabs* (London: New African, 27 March 2018), <https://newafricamagazine.com/16616/> [21/3/2022].

<sup>8</sup> Michael Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, *Pre-colonial Africa* (Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1987), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Diop, *Pre-colonial Africa*, 2.

this is the trend in the period of slave trade whereby the Africans were being lowered to an ontological deficit of humanity.

A keen analysis of history therefore manifests that slave trade was key in the establishment of racism. Before the Africans' interaction with both the Europeans and Arabs, Africans had never experienced racism. Both the Europeans and Arabs expressed their racism inclinations in a practical way through slave trade. It is worth noting that prior to the encounter of Europeans and Arabs, there is documented evidence that Africans had contacts with non-Africans, but they did not experience racism or made to feel that they were inferior. Some of the ancient pharaonic tombs were found with archaeological evidences that there were contacts between the Egyptians, Palestinians, and the Spanish long before slave trade.<sup>11</sup> In line with this, Daniel Domingues informs us that the slave trade from West Africa assumed greater sociological, political, and economic heights with an essential impulse from the European industrialisation that demanded more imports of raw materials like agricultural produce from the Americas where the Africans were enslaved.<sup>12</sup> The labour was provided by the Africans who worked as slaves. As the Africans continued to overwork as slaves for their master (the Whites), a superiority complex was established in the whites and an inferiority complex in the Africans.

Visitors used to come to Africa from all over the world to marvel and witness Africa's grand progress in Egypt and other parts of Africa. Thales and Pythagoras marvelled at the progress that the Africans were making. Others came for trade like the Portuguese, Chinese, Persians, among others.<sup>13</sup> The problem of racism started when some of those visitors of Africa gradually started to envy Africa's resources, advanced skills, and progress. Instead of appreciating them, they now sought to be ruthless intellectual and property scavengers. They began to fashion an exploitative system that rendered the African race a global model of mockery. The commercialization of slave trade opened this highway of intimidation and looting of Africa's dignity and property.

Gradually, racism was constructed as a kind of economic domination. Cheryl Harris, in her law review: *Whiteness as Property* informs us that racial identity was suffused with stratified social and legal status such that being black was synonymous to being enslaved and being white equated being free.<sup>14</sup> So, the African person has been 'socially shaped' to be 'inferior' while the white oppressor is seen as 'superior'. This is what aggravated the appetite for more pride and dominance among the whites to the extent of scrambling and partitioning Africa later.

The outside world started now taking advantage of the Africans' hospitality. They came in the guise of evangelisation and gradually unfolded their aim of dominating Africa. Mzee Jomo

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991, 69.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: from West Central Africa 1780-1867*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Cheryl Harris, *Whiteness as Property*. *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 106, No. 8, June 1993, 1718.

Kenyatta, observes how some Europeans used religion not only as a tool for racism, but also for stealing Africa's property. According to Jomo Kenyatta, when the Europeans came to Africa, they asked us to close our eyes and pray, when we opened our eyes they (Europeans) had our lands and we their Bibles.<sup>15</sup> Cheryl appears to echo Jomo Kenyatta's observation when she also indicates, "The social relations that produced racial identity as a justification for slavery also had implications for the conceptualization of property. This result was predictable, as the institution of slavery, lying at the very core of economic relations, was bound up with the idea of property."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Europeans as it will be seen in the next section were not tired of expressing their racism through slave trade, they now enslaved Africans in their own continent through colonisation as well as continuing constantly to tap Africa's cornucopia of manpower, minerals, land, African markets, *et cetera*.

Europeans also used religion to propagate and justify racism. They erroneously used the Bible<sup>17</sup> to claim that the Africans were descendants of Noah's cursed son Ham. It is erroneous because in the first place Noah did not curse his son, but his grandson Canaan when he said: "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."<sup>18</sup> Canaan according to Biblical account was Ham's son. Although it was Canaan who was cursed, the Europeans overlooked him and claimed it was Ham. Secondly, in Hebrew, Ham's name means "dark or black." Some Europeans used the Hebrew meaning of Ham's name to claim and propagate that black was the colour of a cursed race to which Africans belong and thus used it to justify slave trade.<sup>19</sup> Contrary to this erroneous view, Biblical scholars point out that in order to justify why the Israelites conquered and enslaved the Canaanites, the author of the book of Genesis justified it by pointing out that it was as a result of Noah's curse.<sup>20</sup> Any rational person who reads this Biblical account will infer that it was the son's sinful act that was 'condemned' but not his color.

And still, even if Africans associate themselves with it, they learn that the issue of blackness as a curse is a lie since blackness is as a result of the environment, the heat of the areas around the equator especially. Moreover, the New Testament teaches us that every person is responsible<sup>21</sup> for his/her actions and that no person shall be responsible of the sins of another. Consequently, if at all Noah's curse is binding; it should not be felt among the Africans of the New Testament as is the case.

Therefore, Europeans used slave trade to exhibit their racism. On their part, they may claim that slave trade was beneficial to Africans, but this is not the case. Moreover, it is a lie to say

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<sup>15</sup> Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, East African Educational Publishers, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Cheryl, Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 106, No. 8, June 1993, 1718.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 9:18-27.

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 9: 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> A Commentary on African Bible, 36.

<sup>20</sup> A Commentary on African Bible, 36.

<sup>21</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, 1731. From now on, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be abbreviated as CCC.

that the whites brought wealth to benefit Africans during the slave trade era. Africa already had her minerals, manpower, and other measures of wealth. Although the white people exchanged some wine and other consumer goods in exchange of the slaves, they took in return huge amounts of gold, bronze, ivory, among other items. The wine they gave those who were involved in the slave trade was basically out of the sweat of fellow Africans who were enslaved abroad in America or Europe working in the grape farms.

To say that slave trade benefited Africa is an attempt to justify the fiendish acts of the whites to exploit the Africans in the guise of trade. It is similar to justifying a contract that lacks sufficient consideration. The chiefs who sold some of their subjects were not aware that the wine they received in exchange of the slaves was out of their subjects' sweat abroad. Nor were they aware that these slaves would be treated inhumanely and exploitatively. We already saw that Africans treated their slaves humanely because they understood them as full human beings who were specialized in particular skills to serve the society. But the whites exploited the African manpower for no compensation as da Silva points out that the African slave labor was key in the growth of the Brazilian agricultural produce in the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the alienated African person was used as a tool to create wealth for the whites.

Any reasonable person who is not biased will see the implied fact that the slave trade was a system built to weaken Africa at the expense of building Europe and America, notwithstanding those other parts of the world where slaves were taken outside Africa. In a word, the concept of a 'slave' gained a different social construction as the African kingdoms interacted with the new religions and other earlier visitors like the Chinese, Persians, among others, before Africans encounter with Europeans, something that led to the racial discrimination experience.

Later, this yielded to the scramble and partitioning of Africa, with a widening biased eye against the wellbeing of the African persons in Africa and abroad. For Ali Mazrui, in his famous documentary: *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, the African geography is at the same time the mother of history.<sup>23</sup> He elaborates how the open eastern seaboard allowed the entrance of foreign influence from the east, especially how the Islamic culture impacted the African culture, 1000 years before the Western culture could.<sup>24</sup> Therefore these early visitors came as explorers and traders, and others as missionaries yet gradually admired the African land and other properties. This resulted to their subtle arrangements of exploitation especially the slave trade menace. As a consequence, the African culture has three main sources: traditional Africa, Islam, and the West.<sup>25</sup> This means that, like any other culture, the African culture was not immune of some external influence. But the main problem is not the foreign influence as such, rather the perception of Africa as hollow, deficient of values, morality, religion, and the like.

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<sup>22</sup>Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 25.

<sup>23</sup> Ali Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage- Program 1, The Nature of a Continent* (Nairobi: YouTube Documentary Video, 9/02/2017) <https://youtu.be/8-pksToXSL4> [16/09/2021].

<sup>24</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>25</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

This is a perception that is loaded with racial tendencies intentioned to annihilate the African person. Having seen the African racial discrimination experience during the pre-colonial period, let us now look at the same experience during the colonial period.

### **Racism in Africa during the Colonial Period**

Africans' racial discrimination experience did not end with slave trade, but continued perhaps, in a more ruthless way during her colonisation. During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Africans were trans-located from the African continent to the Americas and the Caribbean, but with colonialism they were now enslaved in their very own continent. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism are exemplary historical examples of racism.

Therefore, one of the impacts of racism or racial discrimination expression is colonialism. Colonialism is the direct and total domination of one country by another alien country. Colonialism was formalised with the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 which was organized and led by Otto von Bismarck. This conference marked a great wound for the systematized exploitation of Africa by splitting Africa into colonies that would be controlled ruthlessly and greedily by the colonial powers.<sup>26</sup> Whereas earlier on, each society had slaves who used to do different tasks, the term 'slave' in the colonial era was loaded with a connotation of only the 'Black' persons.

With its colonisation, Africa became the shrine for constant and immeasurable looting of land, manpower, farm produce, minerals, and anything that the whites saw of any benefit to them. Africans were no longer in charge of Africa. For example, the map of Africa was not designed by Africans. Other than the natural events that resulted to the splitting of the continents, the aspect of political dominance crowned and sealed the task. As such, Mazrui observes that the Suez Canal became the main determinant where Africa begun and ended whereby the Suez Canal portrayed the European power and planning as can evidently be seen in the colonization of Africa following the Berlin Conference.<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Heath affirms this when she talks about the scramble and partitioning of Africa as a mechanism that sought to feed the growing industrial sectors of Britain, France, and Germany.<sup>28</sup> Africa is seen here as a commodity that belongs to outsiders and not the Africans.

From the aforesaid, there is no doubt that the Berlin Conference among other negative things such as exploitation, social injustice, and colonization was an expression of European racism.

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<sup>26</sup> Ali Mazrui, *African Thought in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2014, XI.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=e000xna&AN=748503>

<sup>27</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Heath, *Berlin Conference of 1884-1885* in *Encyclopaedia of Africa* edited by Henry Louis Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195337709.001.0001/acref-9780195337709-e-0467> [15/09/2021].

Africa has never been the same after this infamous conference. In line with Heath, Patrick Gathara, in his famous article in Aljazeera, *Berlin 1884: Remembering the Conference that divided Africa* goes on to highlight the negative consequences of the Berlin conference that continue to haunt Africa up to today especially the aspect of this conference setting up rules for the domination and splitting of Africa, in the strategy to formalise Africa as a playground for the outsiders who can meddle with Africa's resources for their own benefits.<sup>29</sup> From what Gathara says, it can be deduced that before this conference, the Europeans had already visited Africa. They knew about Africa's size of land, minerals, manpower, and many such elements of economic significance. Therefore, we are in agreement with Gathara when he indicates that looting for these items never started after the Berlin conference; rather, it had begun earlier and it was only made official after this conference. The conference was like calling dogs together and awarding each of them the various parts of a prey to crush and swallow in sunlight, even the littlest marrow of it.

What is disheartening most about this conference is the implied racism whereby those who met to discuss about Africa, never involved Africans in that conference. Africans like the Sultan of Zanzibar who tried to attend were not allowed rather laughed off by the colonizers.<sup>30</sup> Their clandestine intentions and thievery stratagems were well calculated and made official on this day of the conference. If at all they deemed Africans as full human persons, then Africans would have been invited in the conference to air their opinions about their African land.

Moreover, if they had no malicious intentions on Africa, then the conference would have been about something related to the wellbeing of Africa, not the strategized looting and dehumanizing moves established. This depicts their dirty perception about Africans as a people without the right to ownership of property, a people with no mind to form a sound opinion about the organization of their African societies. It is important to learn that this conference had three main interests from the onset. In the order of their priorities, they include the claims that:

The Powers are in the presence of three interests: That of the commercial and industrial nations, which a common necessity compels to the research of new outlets. That of the States and of the Powers summoned to exercise over the regions of the Congo an authority which will have burdens corresponding to their rights. And, lastly, that which some generous voices have already commended to your solicitude- the interests of the native populations.<sup>31</sup>

Without any consideration of Africa's sovereignty and the African people, nor the look into the Africans' legitimacy of ownership of their very land, minerals and other resources, the Berlin conference executed their mega plan of crude thievery. It is as if, all Africans were considered

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<sup>29</sup> Patrick Gathara, *Berlin 1884: Remembering the Conference that Divided Africa* (Aljazeera: 15 November 2019), 1. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/11/15/berlin-1884-remembering-the-conference-that-divided-africa> [15/09/2021].

<sup>30</sup> Gathara, *Berlin 1884: Remembering the Conference that Divided Africa*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Gathara, *Berlin 1884: Remembering the Conference that Divided Africa*, 2.

dead, for how could someone lay claim of another person's property when that person still exists and is in possession of it?

All these affirm the undeniable truth that the splitting of Africa was done intentionally by the whites who wanted to demonstrate their insatiable levels of greed, callousness, and cunningness. It further demonstrated especially, the fact that they deemed the African person as passive and not worthy to own Africa. These unbearable levels of toxic racism illustrate the perception of the African person during the colonial epoch.

Whereas in the pre-colonial era the Africans were taken to other countries outside Africa to work there as slaves, in the colonial period, Africans were mostly enslaved in their very land. In his book, *A Dying Colonialism*, Frantz Fanon observes that Africans were presented as a prey before their colonisers.<sup>32</sup> Even those few chiefs who collaborated with the colonial powers in ruling their societies were remote controlled by those whites. Freedom was only adequate for the whites and entirely deficient for the Africans in their very African land. For the African person, there was no peace in Africa nor abroad. The system of racial domination and intimidation ensnared the African person here at home and even abroad, for those who found themselves outside Africa. The element of alienation was vivid.

African cultural values were rendered useless. The dressing manner, the traditions and cultural values of each society show the uniqueness of each community.<sup>33</sup> To be shaped towards hating one's cultural values is a kind of self-hatred and therefore a form of alienation and racism. In Algeria for example, the French tried to disintegrate the Algerian culture and originality through the assimilation method.<sup>34</sup> Africans' ancestral stems and roots were thus marred by the sprinkled biases and prejudices of racism, associated with inferiority. Africans were often lumped together in a category of a people who lacked the littlest individual expression.<sup>35</sup> Seeing Africans as Negro people ordinarily is not a problem and strictly, does not deny the Africans of their individuality.

However, the problem comes when the term 'Negro' or 'African' is racially reconstructed by the whites who act in bad faith in relation to the affairs of the Africans to mean inferior, uncivilized, mentally incapacitated, and such other biases. Thus, Jean-Paul Sartre, in his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* observes that the European elites distorted the African elites by ensuring that they saw everything through the Western cultural lenses and not their native African ones.<sup>36</sup> This alienating of people by making them hate everything associated with who they are, is the ontological problem of racism that is conspicuous in the period of colonization. Mazrui speaks of the negative effects of colonialism on some Africans when he notes that some Africans acquired alien tastes even in their choice of foods by

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<sup>32</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, 41.

<sup>33</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 24.

<sup>36</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), xliii.



preferring exotic ones.<sup>37</sup> Africans abroad were turned to be mere puppets of the Western culture. Consequently:

In Martinique it is rare to find hardened racial positions. The racial problem is covered over by the economic discrimination and, in a given social class, it is above all productive of anecdotes. Relations are not modified by epidermal accentuations. Despite the greater or lesser amount of melanin that the skin may contain, there is a tacit agreement enabling all and sundry to recognize one another as doctors, tradesmen, workers.<sup>38</sup>

Even though the African person could professionally be a doctor, nonetheless, the tinge of inferiority never missed. Abroad, most of those whites were convinced that they were superior to the Africans. Educated Africans were still seen as evolving apes who had not yet reached the ontological level of humanity that the whites were generally in. They were basically lesser human beings whose duty was to imitate the whites as the only way of redemption.

This is the reason why many Africans abroad technically deemed themselves to be advanced, more like 'whites' and not their fellow Africans whom they deemed to be 'primitive'. Although these Africans who were abroad considered themselves as whites, nevertheless they were whites just by imitation of the whites, 'whites of a substandard' category. Forced to renounce their African spirit and live like whites, was the highest level of racial intimidation and alienation. In a way, this phenomenon of racism in the colonial era was like someone who is painting a tree's leaves and branches as white, yet the tree's roots are black. The shoot of blackness was conditioned to be white for the greater merits of the whites. This cannot change the ontological structures of the tree; rather, it will affect the perception of this tree entirely.

This was purely a manipulation of the African person's personhood. In the context of Europeans, it was compulsory for the Africans to be ignorant, yet this bore a great deal of curiosity for learning the knowledge of books.<sup>39</sup> The African person was therefore not allowed to know the truth except as the whites cascade it to the African's mind. The 'compulsory ignorance' aforementioned was the white man's attitude to the Africans as people who were thought ought not to know their true self in themselves. It was an attempt to mechanically demonstrate the evil venom of racism. Thus, the values he had esteemed as African now had to be spit off as inferior and uncivilized.

Those Africans who had been captured and sold to India felt that they were superior to their fellow Africans in Africa. They tried to imitate the whites abroad and thought that in doing that they had become superior to their fellow Africans who were belittled. But these Africans abroad were intimidated by the whites as inferior. Hence, after 1945 as some came back to Africa, they were nostalgic of the African identity.<sup>40</sup> They were simply tired of racial

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<sup>37</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>38</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Strivings of the Negro People*. The Atlantic Magazine: August 1879 Issue, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 25.

discrimination. They wanted repose in their authentic being as Africans, not imitators of whites. This was manifest in Senegal.

In South Africa, the apartheid system denied the Africans the freedom to intermingle with the whites. The Africans had a different education system, political and social set-up. It was an imposed separation of blacks from the whites who were assumed superior and deserving everything.<sup>41</sup> Even mixed marriages between blacks and whites were not allowed.<sup>42</sup> Thanks to Steve Biko who fought tooth and nail to pull down this systematised racism in South Africa through his black consciousness that called upon a psychological healing of the Africans as a step towards resuscitating the African identity. For him, “Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time”.<sup>43</sup> This clarion call for self-acceptance, not as inferior, but as full human beings, equal in humanity like all, is what fills the chalice of Biko’s grand contribution in fighting racism.

In a way, this change of mind shows that the African people gradually became aware of their African identity and of course, about the distortions by the colonial powers. Mazrui observes that the British families in Africa worked on creating a New Britain abroad.<sup>44</sup> This suggests that these colonial powers were not after improving the living standards of the Africans; rather, they were concerned in exploiting them if not eliminating them to benefit Britain.

According to Fanon, the colonial period split people into the world of whites who dominated the Africans who belonged to a lesser world such that one would have resources because one was a white and one would be white because one had resources.<sup>45</sup> This explains the fact that whiteness has been a construct based on economic merits. Everything of the whites is deemed perfect and worth our bragging about, but everything African is associated with inferiority and worth universal repugnancy. In return, the whites managed thus to create a global market of their commodities in Africa at the expense of effacing our African markets by intimidation. This is a symptom of racism.

The world is cast as a duo reality whereby the whites deserve everything good and the Africans deserve everything that is bad or at least substandard. Du Bois talks about the social stratification of humanity based on racism when he asserts that the Negro is the least in the human stratification while the other races are all superior to him.<sup>46</sup> Racial discrimination continued to manifest itself in the colonial era in many other ways. This being the case, the struggle for independence continued. And still, the intimidation of the Africans on their very African soil never stopped. The looting was subtler yet deeply felt. The thievery strategies of the colonial powers went on to deliver for the equations of economics they were intentioned to

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<sup>41</sup> Malvis Mhlauli, End Salani, and Rosinah Mokotedi, *Understanding the Apartheid in South Africa Through the Racial Contract* (International Journal of Asian Social Science, 5(4), 2015), 204.

<sup>42</sup> Malvis Mhlauli, End Salani, and Rosinah Mokotedi, 205.

<sup>43</sup> Steve Biko Foundation, *Steve Biko: The Black Consciousness Movement*, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/steve-biko-foundation/GQWBgt1Wh4A?hl=en> [17/03/2022].

<sup>44</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>45</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 8.

fulfil, for the greater glory of the whites at the expense of rendering Africa and the Africans useless, poor, and sub-human. The African person triggered his search for freedom, for identity, for authentic living that negates racial biases and prejudices. “To a number of African men fell the task of freeing their peoples from the yoke of colonialism, humiliation, and exploitation.”<sup>47</sup> In any case, the Africans fought for their independence in order to reclaim their lost African identity as a people.

They won the battle. But at this time, the colonial powers had already tasted the huge wealth of Africa. Economic wealth never accompanied Africa’s freedom.<sup>48</sup> Like a stubborn tick that has swelled by siphoning blood from a cow, these colonizers were reluctant to leave Africa. Those who left had many clandestine strings attached, that created avenues for them to suckle from the udder of the African wealth by using some African leaders. We shall see this phenomenon in the condition of Africa after independence.

### **Racism as inherent in the Post-Colonial Africa**

It is not surprising that the colonial era never lasted too long, yet we all know that the wounds and scars it left continue to affect the condition of Africa and the African person today. The exploitative economic systems in Africa serve to benefit outsiders at the expense of ruining our environment. Mazrui warns against Africa’s change of climate when he points out how Africa that lacks dead seas is today experiencing numerous dead rivers.<sup>49</sup> It is a fact that drought in many parts of Africa has resulted to displacement of many people in Africa due to lack of food. In the words of Mazrui, “Africa, the first habitat of man seems to be the last to be taken habitable for man.”<sup>50</sup> We wonder why the Post-Colonial Africa is worsening every now and again. Indeed, imperialism was not the solution to our African sickness; death continues to take African lives.<sup>51</sup> Africans need to be fully in charge of Africa.

The forces of capitalism continue to tear Africa apart. The African people are being conditioned to exploit one another, in order to maximize the profits. This expresses the African alienation as a symptom of racism. In the African traditional context, a sense of belonging from a shared ancestry was conspicuous. Africans never had words like cousins, these people were considered brothers and sisters; Africans never had nephew and niece, because one’s brother’s children are considered to be his/her children, hence his/her sons and daughters.<sup>52</sup> This marked the authentic family fabric of the African family.

In the contemporary Africa, racism is inherent in the tendency of renouncing the African modes of leadership at the expense of imitating those of the former colonial powers. This phenomenon

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<sup>47</sup> Wangare Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>50</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>51</sup> Mazrui, *The Nature of a Continent*.

<sup>52</sup> Mazrui, *A Legacy of Lifestyle*, <https://youtu.be/fByaUppoGs> [16/09/2021].

illustrates how Africans lack confidence in their cultural systems to the extent of looking for foreign ones. As the African nations attained their independence, the British parliamentary system was believed to be the noble legacy that Africans received from Britain.<sup>53</sup> But we know that this system has never made Africa any better in terms of addressing her African problems on development.

This is why Mazrui is eloquent that, “You can teach other people how to speak English, Christian doctrines...but you cannot teach them how to govern themselves. That, they must learn themselves.”<sup>54</sup> But in neo-colonialism, the Africans are refereed and remote-controlled by the former colonial powers how to run the affairs of Africa for the greater benefit of the foreign nations, other than Africa. This is racism because it attempts to present the African person as inferior and incapable of controlling the affairs of Africa.

The current generation may think that Africa never had her own political systems before colonization. Or, that Africans never had the concept of democracy or even human rights. The truth however is that they did. Mazrui informs us about the Ashanti chiefs and how they were not hereditary but nominated by the queen, after a rigorous inquiry from the natives, and still that the nominated candidates could be challenged by the people.<sup>55</sup> This demonstrates that indigenous African forms of government were not all about power and exploitation rather about serving the people well, by meeting their needs.

African nations were left by the former colonial powers on shaking grounds. Strictly, the substratum of the colonial government has proved to be amorphous.<sup>56</sup> The colonial powers were happy and are happy that African nations continue to shake in search of stability because only in such instability can they continue looting from Africa and pretend to be special humanitarians to offer all solutions to the African problems.

The army became the strongest force after independence in Africa. Coups were staged in many African nations. Mazrui thus notes that power is abundant in those owning the means of destruction as opposed to the means of production.<sup>57</sup> A great record of over seventy *coup de tats* was experienced in Africa after independence. The weapons being used were imported. The military tactics were foreign. The government systems were alien. The African person was alienated still. Mazrui therefore wonders that Africans do not know where political asylum ends and economic refuge starts.<sup>58</sup> The refugee issue is threatening because Africa has the largest population of the refugees in the world, more than half of the world’s refugee population.<sup>59</sup> This is absurd.

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<sup>53</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>54</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>55</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>56</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>57</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>58</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>59</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

It has been a great challenge to turn the artificially created African nations into habitable units for the African person since independence. Whereas the colonial jails produced some of Africa's forefathers like Kenneth Kaunda, Mazrui laments that today the barracks are hatching the future leaders planning how to overthrow the government.<sup>60</sup> But he warns that inasmuch as the military can change the African politics, nevertheless, they cannot transform Africa's economy because they are not specialists in that area.<sup>61</sup> This instability favours foreign looting as they meddle in the African affairs as peace makers.

Maathai observes how the colonial intimidation continues to dog the newly formed African states after independence. Maathai mourns that the African leaders who took power after independence failed to serve the people as they had promised and rather embarked in looting the public resources and mistreating the citizens.<sup>62</sup> The African condition is therefore a racial problem, clearly delineated in the ashes of history as demonstrated.

### **Conclusion**

The historical analysis about racism evinces the principles of the Critical Race Theory. The theory holds that racism is the ordinary way our world conducts itself in dealing with the Africans. This in turn has led to the normalisation of racism in our world that at times we cannot detect it. Racism has been used to perceive Africans as being inferior, to enslave and enrich the White race materially at the expense of Africans. Racism has exhibited itself in the African continent in the pre-colonial Africa, colonial Africa and post-colonial Africa. In all these 'phases' Africa has experienced racism in form of slavery beginning with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the pre-colonial Africa. During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Africans were trans-located from their homestead to alien lands to work as slaves. The end of Trans-Atlantic slave trade ushered in colonialism, a new form of racism that saw Africans experience slavery in their own continent. On the other hand, the end of colonialism has seen Africans continue experiencing racism in subtle ways of enslavement. Slavery is one of the ways in which racism has always been exhibited.

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<sup>60</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>61</sup> Mazrui, *In Search of Stability*.

<sup>62</sup> Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa*, 29.

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