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On the need for Eurocentrics Anonymous: An assessment of the July 2000 Keynote Address

by *Halford Fairchild*

On July 31, 2000, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard provided the Keynote Address to the Annual International Convention of The Association of Black Psychologists in Accra, Ghana. At one point in the address, he suggested that Africans need a 12-Step Program to solve our addiction to Eurocentric thinking. We need a "Eurocentrics Anonymous."

Hilliard magnificently encapsulated the mission of Black psychologists: to rescue and reclaim the African mind. His historically contextualized address relied on novelist Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, which suggested that the struggles of African people—throughout the world—have stretched through the millennia.

Hilliard makes no distinction between continental Africans and those throughout the Diaspora: We are one people—united in our history, in our struggles, and in our (eventual) liberation. Africans have been at war with invaders who sought to invalidate their humanity. Africans have endured many forms of genocide—physical onslaughts (murder, captivity, enslavement), and the destruction of culture. The cultural genocide robbed Africans of their names, religions and memories. Because of Divide and Conquer, Africans learned to hate each other and themselves.

And yet, despite the odds, Africans have survived. Hilliard celebrated the return of Africans from America through the "Door of (No) Return." But the emphasis on overcoming historical oppression isn't about the past, it is about the future.

The Sankofa symbol—a bird with its head turned toward the rear, with an egg in its beak—has future generations in mind. To acknowledge the tens of thousands of years of African development is to reclaim the past in order to chart a future course. As Marcus Garvey said, "Up you mighty race! What you have done before, you can do again!"

Hilliard illustrated that the liberation psychology literature already exists—in the works of Akbar, Nobles, Ani, Wright, Kambon, Armah, Garvey, Woodson—it is up to us to read it. We must study the success stories of African liberation: the Haitian revolution (and Toussaint L'Overture), Marcus Garvey (and the United Negro Improvement Association), Steve Biko (and the ANC [African National Congress]), Septima Clark (and literacy training), and others.

As Biko said, "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." What we need, Hilliard intones, is to break the chains of conceptual incarceration. We need Eurocentrics Anonymous.

SOURCE: Halford Fairchild, Winter 2011 Psych Discourse. Used with permission of Psych Discourse.



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