



Cliff's Notes

Authored by: Cliff Koder, based on questions
Kenndra Roberts has always wanted to ask

Like a blind man seeing himself in the mirror for the very first time, my experience here in the United States has been nothing short of eye-opening. At the susceptible age of 18, I left Kenya, where I was born and raised, to study in Illinois. I have joined the Diaspora population of Africans, and I have bonded well with African Americans. I believe that we (Africans and African-Americans) are bonded by the same struggles. We share not only the same genes, but also the various burdens of European domination—slavery, colonization, imperialism, and distortion of culture.

DISTANT RELATIVES

African Americans are considered Africans in the Diaspora because they are of African origin. However, three hundred years of geographical dislocation and the unconscious acceptance of European values have changed African Americans' perceptions of Africa. Today, many African Americans feel that Africa is a distant place where all the wars in the world exist. For them, Africa is thought to be a very different place than the home I know. African Americans have a home in Africa—at the heart of his/her soul is the continent of Africa, knowingly or unknowingly.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US

The truth of the matter is that, culturally, Africans living in America are not African Americans. Three hundred years created a culture of Black people in America that is distinct from that of the people of Africa. Africans living in America speak different languages, come from different countries, have different cultures, and have a very different view of both the American society and the United States. Some Africans come to the United States as a place of refuge from war while others are attracted by the American dream.

PRAISE VS. CRITICISM

Africans do not hate African Americans. Rather, we hold African Americans in very high esteem for placing Black people on the global map by triumphing over slavery and Jim Crow, and by striving for civil rights and the empowerment of women. Undoubtedly, this was an inspiration for many African countries to declare independence from Europe. Nonetheless, we Africans living in America fail to understand why African Americans have not thrived more in the United States. Why have African Americans not excelled to their full potential? We are confused and disappointed by this lack of progress, for we consider the success of African Americans as Africa's success.

HEALING MECHANISMS

Africans understand imperialism—they lived with it for over five hundred years. However, there is a time to let go. African Americans focus so much on the emotional effects of oppression. Some African Americans feel, rightly, that America owes them something. Though, the fact is that the world is moving ahead. We, Africans and African Americans alike, have to move ahead as well. We have to go to school, embrace scholarship, raise children, and create a culture that is functional and not dysfunctional. We have to create empowered young men that can form functional families. We must embrace our true identity and support one another. African Americans can achieve greater success in the U.S despite institutional racism; the system can be beat!

AND THE STORY GOES...

Africans acknowledge that slavery happened, and that approximately 12 million Africans were forcefully captured and sold as slaves to the New World. The majority of those captured died during the voyage. Only a small segment settled in North America, while most were sent to South America and the Caribbean islands.

Most slaves in America were captured from the west coast of Africa from Senegal to Angola. In West African oral history, there are reports that initially only war prisoners and people rejected by society were sold into slavery. Slavery existed in Africa, yet it was different. Slaves in Africa had basic rights; they could marry, own property and eventually be fully integrated into the community.

When Africans learned that their brothers and sisters sent to slavery would never return, were worked to death, and were treated inhumanely, many African kings stopped selling off prisoners of war to European slave traders. Black slave merchants were corrupt individuals who were intoxicated with selfishness and greed. They were the minority and not the majority of the African people.







THE REDUCTION

If you visit West Africa, you will see forts dotting the coast. These forts were slave warehouses. They stand as residue of slavery. The effects of slavery are present in Africa as they are in America. Slavery reduced the self-esteem of the black person in the world. This reduction of self-esteem is not only a problem of African Americans; it is also a problem for all people of African descent. In my view, this is the most negative remnant of slavery.

TODAY'S MOTHERLAND

Today, Africa is a continent with 1 billion people. Sub-Saharan Africa, also called Black Africa, has about 800 million people. The continent has 54 countries with various races, cultures, languages and customs. Some countries are wealthier and industrialized, almost like the United States, while others are underdeveloped and poor. Most African countries are democracies and hold peaceful elections regularly.

Currently, most of the conflicts are gone. The continent enjoys a great deal of peace; though, countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Nigeria, and Somalia are in civil wars.

For many African Americans, Africa is "bad news" thanks to the ever-negative images of the continent in western media. The truth is that while Africa is not as affluent as the United States, it is functioning. People live regular lives. They do not live in the jungle. They drive cars, wear clothes, and speak languages and not dialects. Like every other society, the variety of people and their successes and failures are diverse.

ONE BODY, ONE MISSION

We are united by our history much more than our skin color. We are descendants of kings, queens, great warrior nations, and highly advanced civilizations. Today, more than anything else, African Americans and Africans form one of the most marginalized peoples in the whole world; we are brothers and sisters in the struggle. It is our collective duty to make sure that the next generation of Black people understands our place in the world and works toward improving it.