

Agozino, B. (2019). *Essays on Education and Popular Culture: Massliteracy*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 185 pp. £58.99, ISBN: 978-1-5275-2714-0.

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This book adopts a cross-sectional approach to identifying key issues prevalent in society such as education, terrorism, mass incarceration, environmental justice, et cetera. It is a good combination of an analysis of literary texts and prominent Black movies that serves as a concise introduction to the historical background of Black origins, especially in the Nigerian context. The book is divided into three sections with independent themes.

Section 1 was written to debunk the stereotype of limitations that Blacks face. It features smart study skills and practical tips to employ in achieving educational excellence and success outside the classroom. For example, Agozino provides guidelines for a study timetable, for critically analyzing papers and supporting them with references for a scholarly paper and getting enough rest and exercise to function properly to boost academic success. Agozino also capitalized on reviews and success stories of people who have incorporated such tips thereby moving from mere theory to actual practice to support his analogy.

Section 1 also addresses the grit of having an independent will and mindset displayed by Blacks while enslaved. That is, Blacks, even though subjugated, fought for their freedom and refused to be bound. This suppression ties directly to issues of discrimination faced by Blacks. Addressing such issues from a criminal justice reform standpoint, Agozino emphasized the decriminalization of marijuana in the United States for which most Blacks are incarcerated. Agozino's identification of environmental racism and justice issues such as dumping waste in poor communities still exist because inequality occurs not just through disproportionate legislation, but state actions that affect low to moderate-income households and

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communities. This is fundamental because although racism has theoretically ended in American society, in practice, it has not.

This review asserts that poverty and inequality in class structure is the new racial divide that destroys the American society thereby leading to economic and social strata. US society requires large investment opportunities that create economic independence to fully expunge inequality. In light of this, Agozino debunks theories of ignorance that Blacks are inferior because of the numerous strides of successes Blacks have experienced globally in closing the racial gap. For example, a study by Pew Research Center has shown that Sub Saharan African immigrants in the United States are more educated than their European and US-born counterparts (Anderson & Connor, 2018). By highlighting the role of economic equity, this review demonstrates the importance of creating an opportunity for all to thrive. This can be achieved by creating more businesses, thereby leaving the rat trap of mortgages that hold people captive, expanding frontiers, and developing new initiatives.

Agozino also referred to Boko Haram's presence in Nigeria. This is key considering the massacres perpetrated by this group. On a broader scale, the undertakings of Boko Haram have created adverse economic and political results in the global sphere. Their activities have been cited to be the result of the recent travel and immigration ban imposed on Nigerians by the United States (Maclean & Dahir, 2020). This ban comes albeit Nigerians are the most educated immigrant group in the nation and in top management positions (US Census Bureau, 2017). Consequently, Agozino emphasized the need for education to be used as a tool to curb Boko Haram's violence. However, this review asserts that the first step to curb Boko Haram's violence is to locate and assess its power origin. Thus, the source of their advanced weaponry used in perpetrating violence must be crippled and their supply cut short to disrupt their operations. Hence, the power structure and organizational hierarchy from the higher-ups to Boko Haram activists must be removed.

Another fundamental premise of Section 1 is the division in the black community which Agozino recounts. He uses the tales of Africans from the Caribbean who accuse "other people of African descent" of selling them into slavery, which he discredits. In reality, this discord has resulted in the total disdain for some Black migrants in the United States seen in "finger-pointing" by other African Americans for selling them into slavery. Caution must be employed to note that not all Africans were part of the limited sect who "sold their brothers and sisters into slavery". Hence, the sins of some forefathers



should not be visited on an entire clan. Therefore, intra-racial conflicts must cease based on the shortcomings of a few groups. Instead, the goal should be to collectively work towards a united front to eliminate issues of injustice such as racial profiling that Blacks experience.

In Section 2, Agozino used prominent African movies such as *Black Panther*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Nat Turner*, *Straight Outta Compton*, and *BlacKKKlansman*, to further demonstrate how to move away from societal labels that Blacks are inferior. For example, he underscored the need for African celebrities to be economically independent as narrated in *Straight Outta Compton*. This includes investing in more businesses or engaging in projects that benefit the Black community. Agozino could have used examples of success stories by Black celebrities to strengthen his position in his analysis. For instance, African Americans and other Blacks such as Oprah and Tyler Perry give back to their community. Other artists are Beyoncé who invests in securities, Rihanna giving back to the community, Jay Z who invests in the arts, the late Kobe Bryant, Steph Curry, Kevin Durant, and LeBron James who have investment projects that benefit the community, and Masai Ujiri who has projects that identify and mentor African basketball talents.

Agozino's decoding of the Hancock movie is very apt. According to Agozino, the media portrayed the main superhero actor (a Black male) as drunk or a person with many flaws instead of focusing on his strengths. This underscored the demeaning ways Blacks are viewed by the world (that is, the media and some literary texts) compared to how White superheroes are portrayed in a positive light. It should be noted that people of all races have different strengths and weaknesses. To attain equality, American society requires a culture purge in how Blacks and other minorities are treated. This starts with everyday actions of acceptance of all persons as equal and giving them due respect, protection, and opportunity without being biased.

In Section 3, Agozino analyzed some popular literary Nigerian texts such as Wole Soyinka's *Of Africa* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Americanah*. This segment discussed the political climate of the civil war in Nigeria between the Eastern Igbos (Biafra) and the Northern part of Nigeria alongside the violence and torture that was used to silence the Biafran activists. Enhancing the works of Wole Soyinka, it further highlighted how educated Westerners encouraged the genocide against Igbos through acquiescence. Agozino, therefore, asserts that the past ethnic conflict between

the Igbos and Yorubas in Nigeria should not be one recounted based on the superiority of one ethnic group over another but one resolved through unity.

Agozino elegantly outlines literacy skills and strategies that are practical in modern society. This is particularly enlightening because those skills are transferrable and can lead to a sustainable lifestyle that contributes to personal and economic growth.

Similarly, a second element of the book is that it is well suited for people with intermediate to advanced knowledge of the historical contexts of social justice issues in Nigeria, some parts of the Caribbean, and the United States. It serves as a good read of literature and representation of movies for audiences both in academia and society. However, it does not cover the basics for introductory readers as people in this category would require a primer on the subject matter for better understanding.

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