

CRITICAL AFROISM (CA): A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Critical Afroism (CA) is a conceptual framework that centers on African and Afro-diasporic identities, histories, and worldviews through a critical and decolonial lens. As a new analytical tool of study, it adopts Afrocentric epistemologies, diaspora studies, Black feminist thought, and postcolonial critique to interrogate colonial legacies, cultural misrepresentation, and systemic inequities within literature, media, and broader sociocultural discourses. CA emphasizes the need for a grounded, historically aware, and critically engaged Afrocentricity that affirms Black agency and reclaims narrative authority. It further criticizes Afropolitanism or Afro-pessimism as a conflicting paradigm with misrepresentation of African or Afrodiasporic realities. This paper highlights the significant postulation, theoretical influences and praxis of Critical Afroism. This theory is conceptualized as a dynamic and transformative approach for interrogating African realities as well as Black diasporic productions. It contributes to the politics of knowledge production in African and diasporic scholarship.

Introduction

The concept of Critical Afroism is carved out of two phrases: 'Afro' and 'ism'. The 'Afro' presents a critical discourse on people of African descent and social contexts, while the 'ism' adds a verbal coherence tracing patterns of unresolved alternative reactions about African ambiguity as a collective radical social reform—a contemporary critical movement. The discourse on African issues seemed to have dwindled into sterile obsession with ideologies that seemed celebratory with deep-seated forms of relativism—forms of philosophy with bewildering loss of bearings on the grim battles about African oppression and vicious mental disorientation laced with inferiority complex. The theory criticizes Africa's core principle values of self-determination, solidarity, liberation from colonialism and white supremacy as issues that have been discussed with a fanatical zeal wrapped in neocolonialism, deprivation of political power and intellectual colonialism. In fact, Critical Afroism as a concept perceives certain ideologies as forms of intellectual colonialism—a form of dependence on foreign ideological euphoria.

No doubt, discourses on African people and their social contexts are replete with culture shock, colonialism, nationalism and neocolonialism. These perceptions have been fought using a two-pronged attack: the celebration of African worldview and strict ideologies that would eradicate colonialism and its contemporary trend—neocolonialism. Over the past several decades, scholarship on African and Afro-diasporic experiences has been expanded through various theoretical lenses, including Afrocentrism, Afrofuturism, Black Atlantic studies, and Afropolitanism. While these frameworks have offered valuable insights, the continuous marginalization and misrepresentation of African identities in global discourse presents a valid need for a renewed theoretical framework that adopts critical resistance with affirmational Afrocentricity. Significantly, Critical Afroism (CA) comes into limelight with the need to offer a historically grounded, and culturally situated approach that critiques African and Black diasporic texts and contexts.

Significantly, most African intellectuals are experts in knowledge production that promote subtle foreign ideologies—feigning ignorance on the collective oppression or subjugation of the African indigenous culture and political systems in a globalized world. The consequences of these fanatical ideologies, many of them do not want to know. For them, life or experiences offer different meanings to different people—a perspective which does not offer a holistic and convincing narrativization of contemporary African issues or diasporic concerns in the world. While many suggest that some concepts offer hope—a form of 'African dream'; the truism is that there is a sense of falseness—half-truth with limited African perspectives wrapped in structural inequalities. Therefore, it can be said that some of these ideologies are simply celebratory, limiting, weak and insubstantial—hence the need for a Critical Afroism with radical perspectives to complex and intricate contemporary African or Afro diasporic issues. This emphasis critiques views on Cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism, questioning Immanuel Kant's purview of 'Perpetual Peace' in nations with subtle inequality systems, and Taiye Selasi's ideology about "African young people working and living in cities around the globe, who belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many parts of the world" ('Bye-Bye Babar / What is an Afropolitan', 2005). The question is: do they really feel at home or are there some unvoiced internal questionings that have overwhelmed their systems of survival? Are there some

advantages or disadvantages associated with being diluted or undilutedly black? Are there some trauma-induced feelings linked to coming from a so-called underdeveloped country or continent? Without feigning ignorance, we must agree that these concepts do not deeply offer the reality of African experiences even with the suggestion of cosmopolitan or Afropolitan ethics for implementation. Therefore, it will not be unfair to perceive them as political ideals for global connectivity and scholarship.

Core Perspectives on Critical Afroism (CA)

Currently, African diaspora or Africa is in a contemporary phase that battles her image, puppet economy and psychological rejection of her worldview with years of ingrained mental disorientation. To be fair, the indigenous systems are replete with intellectual colonialism—a form of inferiority complex that most African descents hardly ever think of due to their committed sense of a globalizing world. Or do I say that most scholars tend to submit themselves to the ideologies of other well established knowledge or philosophies while unthinking the African true plight. It might accordingly be held that the Critical Afroism discusses African universalist perspective—a critical discourse on minorities and marginalized groups also known as *Neofroism*—a modern or revived form of Black Movement for strict mental and physical liberation from oppression or prejudice. This is replete with essential postulation from critical apparatus, Afrocentric knowledge, historical consciousness, intersectional ideologies and diasporic complexities deeply connected to contemporary Afro-lore. With the need for social commitment, Critical Afroism prioritizes African philosophies, values, and worldviews, seeking to reposition African thought systems at the center of academic and cultural knowledge production. It rightly rejects any altering or distortion of historical facts—whitewashing of racial issues, cultural erasure or misrepresentation of identities of marginalized groups. The theory does not encourage a form of sanitized narrative with narrowly identity focus without diversity. Certainly, it seemed that historical consciousness plays a significant role in critiquing facts in colonial past and present with ripples of indigenous realities and struggle for liberation—both physical and psychological. This is not a staggering fact, of course as a new critical technique, CA does not in any way dismiss the conflict between indigenous struggles and neocolonial structures. With a good conscience for freedom and pluralism, it critiques Eurocentric prejudice and internalized subjugation of African cosmopolitanism, emphasizing on intellectual radicalism. This theory attempts to dismantle the logic that thwarts or conflicts with African identities, meanings and historical continuities with genuine interrogation or depiction of reality. There is no need to belittle African sensibility with concepts that partly represent a few out of many who stood mesmerized and indecisive with less cultural, psychological and economic focus about the past or the future. What has dominated the human society and history to date is the need to thrive and be truly accepted within a social context without multiple forms of discrimination which are evidently depressive, oppressive and abusive. And for CA, the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, age, generation, marital status, and place of origin bring different forms of harsh necessities that oppress and repress human resolve to survive within a cultural context. In fact, it is a crisis of human relationships wrapped in the human mentality and personality resulting most times in anxiety or the fragmentation of self in diasporic social convolution or connectivity. No doubt, CA perceives Blackness as relational and fluid, emphasizing connections across African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, African-American, and Afro-European contexts. In interpreting identity and experiences, it will not be wrong to say that this field of knowledge has been influenced by postcolonial discourse, Black studies and feminist scholarship. What is perhaps significant is that CA has been influenced by different systematic fields of knowledge with deep intellectual culture sipped from Achille Mbembe's criticism of postcolonial and postmodern African issues, Frantz Fanon's intellectual discourse on colonial psychology and decolonization, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's rational thoughts on linguistic decolonization through African Literature, and Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks' perspectives on intersectionality and Black feminist views. In essence, CA plays an important role in reinterpreting African and diaspora ideologies or texts, critiquing varied depictions of Blackness in media culture, criticizing dominant narratives with alternative historical ideologies, and as well as supporting the need for decolonized curricula with inclusive strategies in African education. Critical Afroism (CA) is a new defining theory in the field of knowledge production. In comparison with other theoretical propositions like Afropolitanism which extols global movement and heightened hybridity without deeply thinking of the consequences of the movement, displacement, uprootedness and unbelongingness, CA critiques the abusive freedom of this model for its elitist mentality and misrepresentation of Afrodiasporic realities which often cause the splitting of personality with deep psychological fragmentation. CA further rejects Afropessimism for deeply highlighting Black woeful disillusionment and cultural inertness without offering insights into multiple memories of social advocacy. Therefore, Critical Afroism (CA) contributes to academic readership by emphasizing critical historical awareness, cultural reclamation, and transformative praxis. Notably, Critical Afroism as a conceptual framework may also be referred to as Critical Afroist Theory (CAT) in any academic discourse.

Conclusion

The Africans have been a “Black Box” to be expounded in new ideologies and methodologies (Bruce Janz, 2002). For decades, cultural mixing has become Africans’ way of belonging to the world, thus charting the course of social construction and knowledge production carved out by Western modernity. Achille Mbembe’s *On the Postcolony* (2001) has interrogated the contemporary existence for Africans and the possibilities of an autonomous African subject free from the ‘otherness’ of colonized Africa. In articulating this existence, Taiye Selasi’s seminal essay “Bye-Bye Babar / What is an Afropolitan” (2005) has received critical attention from Afrocentric critics with differing postulations. Thus, there is a visible tension between establishing Africans’ identity and continuity in the world. Observably, the influence of ‘European Dream’ and the ‘Denial of Self’ is a “crude marker of cultural commodification designed and funded by the West (Wainaina 2012). Therefore, exorcizing Afropolitanism as a new theoretical lens is now a concern in African diaspora discourse. This concern interprets the features of African existence with intrinsic cultural meanings that reflect on Africa and the African persons. Already, the African continent is at the crossroads between a Western heritage and more local traditions informed by historical, political and economic push-and-pull factors leading to African emigration. These issues assume a more transnational nature and spread in discourses and other forms of social media networks. Critical Afroism further critiques African’s present and futures via multidisciplinary modes of global diaspora issues: migration, Africanness, geographic spaces, belonging, in-betweenness, displacement, hybridity, trauma, human rights and language. The theory serves as an important analytical tool in many fields of study such as cultural studies, Literary studies, Media studies and Education. Critical Afroism as a new theory seeks to advance a scholarly and cultural discourse that restores African centrality, resists epistemic violence, and reimagines Black futures. By bridging theory and lived experience, CA not only critiques but also reconstructs narratives of Black life, offering a fertile ground for both academic inquiry and cultural empowerment.

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