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The African American and the African cultures

African American is a term that was coined to refer to the people who are American citizens as the result of the transatlantic slave trade. Even though the African Americans originated from Africa, there exist questions about whether or not their cultures are similar to those of the African people. As a matter of fact, even though the people are similar in complexion and perhaps other aspects, the ways of life are not similar. In fact, in the recent times, African Americans have increasingly expressed resentment of the term African American as an identity because of the profound differences between their culture and the African cultures. In the first part of the paper, the essay will focus on the similarities between the Africans and the African American counterparts. Then, the paper will discuss the differences between the two cultures.

The similarities in the African and the African American cultures are evident in several areas of their cultures. One of the most evident aspects that the African Americans have retained is the love for music. Music is a very important part of the African cultures. Africans have had folk songs that have been since long ago, and when the African Americans moved to the United States of America, they brought with them the musical styles that have evolved to the various popular styles of music that are enjoyed the world over (Sudarkasa 92). Even though the styles of music performed by the African Americans may have been heavily influenced by their interaction with the white Americans during the period of slavery, the use of rhythm and rhyme as well as styles such as clapping hands while singing in a styled manner is common in the African American music. Due to the love for music, the African Americans hold music awards such as Black Entertainment Television (BET) to celebrate their talents. The music is also evident in religious activities such as churches that are influenced by music and other forms of art.

Another common feature in the cultures of the African American and African culture is the use of artistic features of speech and the integration of art in their everyday lives. For instance, in the churches services in African cultures, preachers talk in characteristic intonations depending on the messages and commonly repeating the verses of the Bible (Kitwana 34). In African American churches, preachers similarly include artistic mechanisms to communicate with the masses making the call interesting. Children in the African American cultures also include art such as songs and poems in their games to make their lives interesting. Also, many African Americans, just like Africans, are either Christians or Muslims. Both of the religions were brought to the people of the two cultures by either Europeans or Arabs while still in Africa. Nevertheless, they include some elements of the different cultures in their practice of the religions that were foreign to them for instance, African Americans, just like Africans, clap their hands while in churches in rhythmical ways.

The people from the two cultures significantly differ in several undeniable ways. One of them is that for the African Americans, they are identified as a single block of people who share almost the same culture as the result of the slavery and the majority of them coming from the western part of African. Most of them descended from the Mandingo community. Africans, on the other hand, are people sharing the same complexion, but with varied cultures from all over Africa (Kitwana 34). For instance, while most of the people from the western part of Africa like Nigeria may speak in a common tongue, like those from the eastern African countries like Kenya and Tanzania speak different tongues and therefore cannot understand each other. The African Americans on the other hand majority speak English and Spanish as their first languages. Also, people of the varied African cultures differentiate themselves based on their different ethnic backgrounds. For instance, a Swahili person from Tanzania or Kenya can identify themselves based on their tribe while another from Nigeria may identify themselves using their particular West African tribe. The African Americans cumulatively identify themselves as black people and share the same background of a history based on slavery and the suffering that they experienced for several centuries. As a matter of fact, according to Na'im Akbar, a professor of psychology and Florida state university, slavery is a legacy that will remain to tear the Africans and the African Americans apart (Muhammad). The professor thinks that black Americans still retain bitter feeling against Africans for selling them to the slavery. The ideas of the professor were echoed by the poet James Tokley who thinks that the Africans cannot identify with their American counterparts because they do not understand the suffering of slavery (Muhammad).

The family units of the two cultures are also different in several ways. While the African families are more patrilineal, the African American families show more appreciation for the mothers, hence more matrilineal. In fact, according to Cheikh T. Sylla, a Senegalese who is the CEO of an architecture firm in Tampa, marriages between Africans and African American women do not last because the American women do not accept men as the sole heads of the families as is the case of their African counterparts (Muhammad). The CEO admits that the only reason his marriage with a black American woman still lasts is because he accepts her as she is.

In summary, even though the African Americans descended from Africa and share the same color as Africans, their cultures are different in several ways. It should be understood that the African Americans have not retained all the aspects of the African roots, but just adapted them in their cultures that they built in the USA. Therefore, the two cultures should never be categories as one because they are divergent from each other.

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