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**GENERATIONAL SHIFTS IN AFRICAN POLITICS:
PROSPECTS FOR A NEW AFRICA**

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INTRODUCTION

What will Africa look like in 2050? Most people in academia, state politics, entertainment, and the news media, the donor community and commerce and industry are not self-conscious about the implications of this question. This is mainly because the world has become too accustomed to seeing Africa through the lenses of wisdom from the past and thus popular opinion views Africa as a lost cause with lost generations. No wonder the conventional debate on Africa is often cast from the premise of yesteryear models. These models purport to: correct Africa's colonial history, recapture Africa's lost traditions, remind the world about Africa's contribution to human civilization, stop internecine tribal wars, defeat imperialism or implement the presumed successful globalism of market-centered economies through the structural adjustment programs and austerity measures of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, respectively. In effect, these models seek to correct the past.

The fixation on the past haunts Africa. It is uncommon to encounter futuristic policies on Africa based on critical assessments of present possibilities rooted in Africa's rather unique and rich history and geography. Therefore, it is that Africa appears to be a continent with a *past* but not a *future*. When Africa's future is discussed or presented, it is with predictable gloom. This crippling interregnum should be blown apart. As the 21st century and the third millennium loom on the horizon, it is an auspicious time for a fresh examination of the past, present and future prospects of the human condition in Africa against the background of relevant positive and negative international developments. Several concrete developments simply beg for a fresh look at Africa.

Hitherto, Africans have been seen by themselves and outside observers in terms of who they were and have been, not in terms of who they are and are becoming. All dominant definitions of Africans are borrowed from the past. Yet there are new developments which warrant a serious redefinition of the African identity.

Consider the implications of four seemingly mundane yet very significant events which took place in 1996. The events are significant not only because they are contemporary and thus have implications for the future, but also because everyone, ordinary people and the elite can relate to the events in socially important ways as far as the formation of public opinion is concerned.

First, with all things being equal, an African will lead the United Nations into the 21st century and the third millennium. Kofi Annan, who in 1996 was chosen to take over the leadership of the only global organization with reasonable claims to being truly an international institution from another distinguished African, the Egyptian diplomat, Boutros Boutros Ghali. While Annan's ascendancy to the leadership of the United Nations, towards the end of the 20th century and the second millennium, can be appropriately attributed to his exemplary professional credentials and individual strengths--or even to manipulative brokering by some superpowers notably the United States and France. The fact remains that the present secretary general of the United Nations hails from Ghana--the first African country to attain independence on March 6, 1957.

It is more than a coincidence that Africa's first country to attain political independence in this century has given the world a secretary general of the United Nations who is poised to lead the world into the next century and millennium. What this shows is that the international community has begun to move away from the prejudice of seeing Africans as people who should always be led and is now starting to recognize them as people who also can and should lead. Hence, in 1996, the World Bank appointed an African from Zimbabwe, Callisto Madavo, to lead the Bank's operations in Sub-Sahara Africa. These appointments are as real in a nuanced or latent sense as they are manifestly symbolic. Something important is going on, even if it is still hidden to the conventional mind or eye. Africa's time appears to have finally come, notwithstanding the fact that there are still some formidable odds at the international

and national levels due to the entrenched political economy of stakes now commonly expressed as globalzation.

In addition, 1996 had some milestones for Africa in the world of popular culture. The Nigerian under-23 soccer team won the gold medal in soccer at the historic 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. What was remarkable about the Nigerian achievement is that it not only was the first time an African country won a major international soccer tournament in this century, but also that Nigeria won by defeating two legendary soccer teams in the world, Brazil and Argentina, in the semifinals and finals, respectively. Moreover, it is now probable that an African country might be in the finals of this century's last World Cup soccer final in France in 1998, with a good chance of winning it all. However, win or lose, in the strange power now held by sports in the world, this real prospect is certain to influence the climate of opinion and social policy about African possibilities in the next century, certainly at the level of ordinary people among whom cultural domination is contested by the big powers in world affairs.

Take a third important cultural example. Already African music is a clear bet for the future as it continues to make major inroads into mainstream commercial trends in this Age of Entertainment. African cinema is also knocking on the doors of popular opinion with a lot of promise of bigger and hopefully better things to come in the next century. Full-length feature films and docudramas about and from Africa are certain to define commercial trends in the global film industry. Walt Disney's hugely successful animated film, "The Lion King"—that however is imperfect from an Africanist point of view, grossed over $1 billion between 1995 and 1996. This is but one example of commercial possibilities in Africa, which lie ahead in the global entertainment industry.

The fourth example is particularly significant when compared with the background of the social history of colonialism in Africa. In her traditional New Year's Eve address for 1997, Queen Elizabeth II implored her largely British audience to follow the example of Nelson Mandela whom she said had shown the world how to overcome bitterness with dignity. The Queen, who expressed dismay at what she saw as growing cynicism and bitterness among Britons in 1996, paid tribute to Nelson Mandela's inexorable multiracial grace despite his cruel incarceration for 27 years by an arrogant white minority supremacist government in apartheid South Africa. The tribute to Mandela by the British monarchy was historical. At the dawn of this century, it was unthinkable that the British monarchy would recommend an African to the Britons as a moral example worthy of public emulation: You can imagine the sharp contrast between the images of the British view of Africa then and now. Thus, the symbolic significance of the Queen's tribute to Mandela cannot be over-emphasized, as the next century looms on the horizon.

In the social sciences, while Africa Studies--and indeed area studies in general-- are clearly declining in North America and Europe, there is an upswing in the interest in the disciplines in Africa. Largely due to more and more Africans becoming specialists in a range of fields that are going to be critical to the generation and application of new knowledge in the 21st century. All this is made even more exciting if not controversial by the emergence of a new but still hidden generation of English or French speaking renascent Africans who have all the prospects of remaking Africa by the year 2050, for better or worse. What is particularly remarkable is that this generation is not yet visible.

Against this background, notions that Africans need training in some conventional fields of inquiry such as the social sciences have become self-fulfilling anthropological predictions from the past often revisited only by those interested in either justifying deep-seated prejudices or paychecks. What is needed is a fresh understanding of what is happening in Africa today and what it will mean not only for the continent but also for the rest of the world in the next century and beyond. The quest for that understanding defines the context of this essay's focus on the social history of four generations of Africans and how the latest among them is poised to socially reconstruct a new Africa with far reaching

implications on community and national life in Africa and on international politics in the next century and beyond.

THE CONTEXT

As this century and millennium close their circle, age is increasingly taking over from race and tribe as the dividing line between social groups. This is particularly true in North America and Europe where, on average, national populations are becoming dramatically older. Young people in the United States and Europe may not be an endangered species but they are clearly holding less and less power and influence. The old truism that the future belongs to young people is now a political falsehood in the postindustrial economies of the Northern Hemisphere where the average voter is at least fifty-something.

Nevertheless, the situation in Africa remains different: Older populations are vanishing for one reason or another. Recent census data, people under the age of 15 account for nearly 50% of the population of many African countries.[1] The generation gap is a major political issue in Africa; an issue, which hitherto has gone, unnoticed, ignored, or unanalyzed by national and international researchers, opinion-makers, and policy-makers. The gap is not only likely to cause conflicts within African countries, where ruling old-guard nationalists are increasingly finding themselves out of step with their younger populations, but also between African countries and the rest of the aging populations of the postindustrial economies of the northern hemisphere. This matter, along with a host of pressures from increasing urbanization, will be serious food for thought and policymaking in the next century[2].

REGION	Age Distribution % of Total Population (1995)					
	0 - 4	5 – 14	15 - 24	0 - 24	60+	TOTAL POPULATION
Africa	16.9	26.9	19.4	63.2	5.0	719,495,000
Sub Sahara	17.8	27.3	19.2	64.3	4.7	588,125,000
North America	7.5	14.5	13.3	35.3	16.3	296,645,000
Europe	5.6	13.5	14.1	33.2	18.9	728,244,000
South East Asia	11.8	22.6	20.2	54.6	6.7	481,920,000
World	10.8	20.6	18.0	49.4	9.5	5,687,113,000

Adapted from: World Population Prospects: The 1996 Revision Annex II and III: Demographic indicators by major area, region and country. United Nations (New York) Department for Economic and Social Information October 24, 1996.

Precisely because of the age-issue and its generational consequences, Africa is experiencing a fundamental transformation of the content and character of its people, a transformation which is manifested by the values and aspirations of a fourth generation of renascent Africans who are "Europeanized," principally because their first, and in some cases only, language is English or French. This generation, whose consciousness is shaped more by their time than by their place in the world, is set to redefine and redirect state politics, society and economics in Africa by the year 2050, when the previously dark continent will be a major light and deciding force in international affairs, for better or

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[1]   See for example the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics (Fifth Issue) 1995 (New York: United Nations, 1995) pp. 67-80.

[2]   United Nations Center for Human Settlements, An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

worse. This does not inevitably mean that these New Africans will reshape Africa in positive ways but that they will be a dominant and distinct group of Africans never before seen.

Ironically, the renascent generation of Africans has thus far gone either unnoticed or neglected by older generations of scholars, policy-makers, business interests and opinion-makers whose values and methods of analysis and decision-making are still steeped in the ways and means of this century and millennium. A critical examination of this new generation has a good chance of breaking new ground and generating new knowledge for policies, which might meet the challenges and opportunities in Africa in the next century. However, if this profound trend in numbers and worldview of the next generation in Africa are not even seen, let alone taken into account, the renascent Africans might turn out to be a major disaster, worse than the predatory rule of colonial and nationalist regimes, which are now discredited by history. One reason why this generation should not remain invisible is precisely that, making it visible will subject it to public debate and scrutiny, which in turn will widen and sharpen a range of competing objective possibilities for policymaking[3].

Such an approach might break new ground at a time when current thinking about Africa is characterized by an intellectual logjam coupled with poor policymaking. One thing is certain; practice in Africa is far ahead of theory, let alone popular opinion. The time has clearly come to put the horse in front of the cart[4]. However, for that to happen, the present human condition in Africa must be critically described in empirical and accurate ways. Africa's "self-interpretation," i.e., appreciation of things as they are and might be, is urgently needed before any critical or prescriptive appraisal of the continent's real possibilities can be undertaken in meaningful ways.

The underlying assumption of this essay is that Africans should not only seek a better future but that they should also have a vision of that future and a realistic strategy for achieving it. In this connection, the motivation of this essay is about taking stock of Africa's past in order to prepare for the continent's future by reshaping the present *without pretending to correct the past*.

In effect, the objective of the essay is to take stock of Africa's past and prepare Africans for the future with a view of improving the present. Few initiatives on Africa, whether under the direction of governments, donors or other international financial institutions, have had this seemingly obvious but so far absent orientation.

GENERATIONS: THE CONCEPT

During this century, four activist generations of Africans have endeavored, with varying degrees of success and failure, to remake their societies by proffering competing solutions to problems of their time. The efforts of these generations have not only been a culmination of a historical process in the making and remaking of Africa over the last millennium, in general and this century in particular, but the efforts have also embodied the challenges and opportunities, which will confront Africa in the next century and millennium.

The efforts deserve to be identified without prejudice, critically analyzed and broadly communicated over time through a range of accessible media channels, to diverse audiences, in and outside Africa, as inter-generational issues of continuity and change. There is a need to tell the story of

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[3]   For an instructive discussion on the meaning of "objective possibilities," see Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, edited by Edwards Shils and Henry Finch (New York, 1969).

[4]   This position is different from the deterministic stance of conventional wisdom, especially in the Marxist tradition which holds that "practice follows the truth and not vice-versa" as found for example in Herbert Marcuse's Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1969) p. 322.

Africa's social history from the point of view of Africa's own self-understanding from the dawn to the dusk of this century in order to unravel challenges and opportunities in Africa in the next century. The story should be an engaging and compelling human drama about the achievements and frustrations of ordinary Africans, often seen via the eyes of both leaders and ordinary people, through a captivating focus on four generations of African leaders and their social movements that were, for better or worse, dominant in this century as a result of historical developments during this millennium. This focus on four generations of the leaders and their movements gives the story a people-based content and style.

The generational story is about Africa's social history as an everyday life decision-making affair of four generations of real people with aspirations and limitations. Focusing on generations is important because they represent the social issues, which lead to the creation of social identities, ideologies, visions, and the construction of public spheres and their consequences on individuals and communities at national and international levels. The story includes, but is not limited to, formal institutions and the behavior of political leaders, i.e., organized state politics and the political economy under which they operate.

THE FOUR GENERATIONS

A.   The Pan-African Generation

The struggles against colonialism and apartheid in Africa were successful as far as they led to political independence. A specific generation of Africans, with many pre- and post-variations spearheaded the anti-colonial struggles by providing a global critique to colonialism in general and racism in particular. This was the "Pan-African Generation." This generation was internationalist in its content and character.[5] It was not limited to Africans in Africa; it was about and for blacks everywhere. Indeed, the notable luminaries who provided the intellectual basis of this generation were not Africans in the geographical sense or in national and citizenship terms. They were such figures as W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey who influenced the political thought of African exiles some of whom--like Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, and Jomo Kenyatta--later returned to Africa to spearhead the independence movements in their homelands. The vision of this generation was defined more by the concerns of black people in the Diaspora than by African power struggles in Africa. The major social objective of the Pan-African generation was the construction of an African identity to counteract the colonial mindset. Imperial ideology sought to denigrate, exclude, or marginalize black people from international and national public life under the pretext that blacks were not part of civilized humanity and that they did not have a civilized pre-colonial history of their own and thus did not have a future of civilization. Pan-Africanism was therefore neither continental nor national; it was a global intellectual and political movement. This is partly the reason why it did not touch the hearts and minds of ordinary Africans in Africa, although it certainly influenced some notable African elite and, by extension, the social movements they led.

Pan-Africanism, however, had some serious limitations, which compromised its otherwise appealing global vision. One such limitation is that the Pan-African generation was seriously weakened by its insensitivity to diversity. The global orientation of this generation overlooked the critical importance of the diversity arising from gender, class, ethnic, ideological, national, cultural, and geographic identities. This oversight disconnected the Pan-African generation from the daily struggles of ordinary people, not only in Africa but also around the world and especially in America. The legacy of this generation should be creatively profiled and critically analyzed, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of its leaders and social movements to recapture its history and to plot its future.

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[5]   The literature on Pan-Africanism is as voluminous as it is varied, nuanced and contentious. An instructive overview of Pan-Africanism and its key protagonists and opponents is found in Adekunle Ajala's <u>Pan-Africanism: Evolution, Progress and Prospects</u> (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973).

For example, the struggles against colonialism were successful as far as they promoted and established a Pan-African bond between and among Africans, or more accurately among black people, across the diversity of geography, history, gender, language, and culture. Through the struggles against colonialism, the Pan-African bond engendered a shared spirit of Africanness, which has survived some narrow minded nationalist and commercial prejudices throughout the continent and all over the world.

B.   The Nationalist Generation

However, the struggles against colonialism and apartheid led neither to political liberalization (in terms of making effective the political rights of individuals and social groups) nor to democracy (in terms of institutionalizing a tolerant civic culture and the provision of an equitable access to and distribution of resources). While the struggles against colonialism affected the superstructures of colonial states, they did not however affect the deep structures of ordinary people nor did they fundamentally challenge the deep structures of the international economic system. In addition, the anti-colonial struggles did not bring about a professional culture among Africans nor did they inspire efficient and effective economies in Africa. There is an important lesson here: political independence and the end of apartheid in Africa neither led to the enjoyment of political liberties by Africans, as individuals or as social groups, nor to the creation of entrenched institutions to promote and defend individual creativity, democratic values in the pursuit of happiness and material well being for Africans,

The major achievement of political independence was to free Africa from colonial occupation, direct foreign rule, and legislated apartheid. The major failure of political independence is that it did not bring everyday life democracy to ordinary people in the economic sphere. The generation which presided over this failure was the "nationalist generation" which now makes up about two or so percent of the population in many African countries and is represented by political leaders such as President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya. This generation, whose origins were inspired by different and often localized sources of resistance bordering on ethnic and religious identities, emerged as an ideological critique of its Pan-African counterpart. However, the nationalist generation had a rather limited spatial focus: the nation, neither the continent nor the world. Nation building, with all its trappings'--including the vexatious questions of empirical versus juridical statehood and sovereignty--was the declared mission of this generation. The focus on the nation separated this generation from the Pan-Africans whose public sphere was the world and whose intellectual and political vision was global. Even so, these two generations shared a common weakness: the masking of diversity. In its single-minded quest for nationhood, the nationalist generation recklessly sought to construct a national identity out of a plurality of competing ethnic groups and a melting pot of gender, class, political and religious interests. Individual and group identities were seen as enemies, not pillars of nationhood. Pluralism became taboo. This resulted in the construction of irrelevant rigid and centralized social structures, which stifled individual and community innovation, while creating the fiction of wise national leadership presumed to be infallible and believed to be unquestionably supported by patriotic masses. Everyone else, including the Pan-Africans who lit the fires of African nationalism, became enemies of the nation and, by that very fact, enemies of the people and of the revolution of nation building.

Under the guise of nationalism and the perceived fear of ill-defined external enemies, the nationalist generation gave rise to one man rule, protected by an over centralized and unresponsive one party state, typically led by a dominant personality who, while relying on a professionally incompetent yet sycophantic bureaucracy which fed on political patronage, claimed to possess all wisdom. In addition, the worldview of this generation had the effect of distorting African culture by corrupting it and thus arresting its development in the trajectory of human history at large with the consequence of destroying bridges between African culture and other cultures. Why and how this happened is a rich subject that is yet to be explored. In any event, one-man rule precipitated various forms of authoritarianism, economic ruin, military coups, and destruction of educational and cultural institutions, and it generally brought

international ridicule upon Africa and Africans as a hopeless people in a failed continent. Meanwhile, everyday life for ordinary people continued to make its own history and progress.

Nevertheless, factors of the nationalist generation combined to make it difficult for African countries and Africans to respond to political and economic crises, run transparent, accountable and responsive governments and efficient economies, nurture the development of vibrant civil societies, build bridges with other cultures and encourage individual creativity. Moreover, the authoritarianism of one-man rule under an over centralized and unresponsive one party state was nurtured by the Cold War tensions. The then two superpowers, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, competed for global ideological superiority and access to resources, to the detriment of domestic social and economic development in Africa. Wittingly or unwittingly, they provided ideological cover to vested economic interests, thatcontinue to plunder Africa's resources while treating the continent as a marginal marketplace and a sidewalk in what is now known as the information superhighway. International issues masked domestic issues, and the world lost sight of real inter-generation achievements and failures or challenges and opportunities in Africa at the level of ordinary people.

While the social history of the nationalist generation took an exacting toll on Africans, it did not kill the human spirit in Africa. Indeed, the nationalist generation had its own moments of triumph. For example, the nationalists gave Africans a sense of pride in things African. In addition, nationalism enabled Africans to construct a clear sense of self-identity. In any event, ordinary people, sometimes with the support of some sections of the international community ignited by demands of concerned citizens all over the world, but many times on their own, effectively reacted against one party rule and the economic poverty associated with it. In effect, ordinary people rebelled against the independence movement or, so to speak, against the ideology and governance of the nationalist generation.

The responses of ordinary people against one party rule gave rise to the multiparty movement, led by a globalist generation, the globalists, whose ideas have gripped the political imagination across Africa from around the late 1970s and early 1980s on to the present. This is also the generation of Africans that has been, the most affected by the scourge of disease, notably HIV-infection and AIDS.

C.   The Globalist Generation

In effect, the democratic challenges to African nationalism were generational and therefore not necessarily antagonistic with one another. It is this movement, the democracy movement in Africa, led by the globalist generation, which challenged the independence movement of the nationalist generation. Globalism in Africa has brought about new challenges and opportunities for the continent in the next century, partly due to the fact that the end of the Cold War--now seen as the triumph of globalization in the commercial sense--has opened up new vistas for political and economic reforms in Africa.

Whereas the independence movement was exclusively led by nationalists, schooled in the politics of anti-colonial struggles but not entirely sold on Pan-Africanism, the multiparty movement has been led by a new breed of globalist Africans. Made up of people from all walks of life across racial, gender, religious, political, class, professional and ethnic boundaries: Thanks to international forces of commercialism, and especially the information revolution, the voiceless during the independence movement now have voices and they are beginning to get a hearing. The globalist generation is not sold on the notion that nation building should be the essence of politics in Africa. Globalists do not believe in nationalism, if anything, they are swayed or even confused by the vagaries of the political economy of globalism to a point of being against the national interest of their own countries. Globalists see themselves as internationalized and modernized Africans, but only with reference to political and economic issues of governance and only at the level of rhetoric about these issues. Otherwise, globalist Africans are as traditional as their nationalist counterparts are when it comes to their attitudes to death and burial, family responsibilities, sexual relations, courtship and marriage, witchcraft, sports and recreation,

even animal slaughter and eating habits. The worldview of globalists is, at the very least, precarious partly because it is driven by a conflicting heritage from local, national, and international social forces.

Examples of African leaders who are part of the globalist generation include members of opposition groups who either have led or are leading the movement for multiparty politics in Africa. Some of these are now in power. President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia is a good example. But perhaps the most representative elements of the globalist generation are found in the NGO community, which has grown in leaps and bounds in recent years. Largely, notable elements of the globalist generation are found in the state bureaucracies and especially in commerce and industry. These bureaucratic elements are not a public voice but they are very effective at the silent level of policymaking and policy implementation. However, the globalist generation is especially pronounced among human rights activists who have gained unprecedented prominence, if not notoriety, in the ongoing struggles for multiparty politics. As globalists, human rights activists in Africa have thus far been anti-nationalist, as if by definition, partly because they use an internationalist language, which removes them from their national contexts. It is notable that a good number of the same activists have been at the forefront of opposition politics in their countries and this largely explains why opposition politics in Africa today have a very poor national content especially with respect to economic policy. The result is that there is now a rather high risk of having governments in Africa, which know very little about the national interest of their own countries.

In ideological terms, the globalist generation has been successful as a critique of the Pan-Africans and especially the nationalist generation. However, globalism in Africa is about international political-correctness. It is no wonder the globalist generation grounds its identity within a globalized ideology, which espouses values of a market-centered society. In this sense, the globalist generation is similar to the Pan African generation whose ideology was based on a globalized identity. In this connection, the attempt by globalist Africans to forge regional organizations for economic cooperation and integration has some echoes of the failed visions of Pan-Africanism. But unlike Pan-Africanism, which was a reaction to a colonially driven international political economy in favor of an African or "black" identity, African globalism is a reaction to an African identity as racially and geographically defined. Hence, it is a response to African nationalism--in favor of a global identity under the broad and loose claims of democracy, pluralism, human rights, good governance and the market economy.

In view of the undemocratic legacy of the nationalist generation, the globalist generation has also been successful in releasing individual and group identities from the grip of nationalism. Much of political liberalization, the so-called multiparty era in Africa, has been an outcome of the success of the globalist generation. However, this success has produced a crisis. Whereas the Pan-African and nationalist generations had clear visions of the type of new dominant identity and model of society they sought, the globalist generation suffers from a chronic case of an identity crisis. The kind of globalism claimed by the globalist generation is based on ephemeral commercial and political interests which have sought to appropriate the grammar of human rights, democracy and good governance, without acknowledging that diversity is still a problem and that what for some is a global village is for others a global pillage. In this sense, and like the Pan-African and nationalist generations before it, the globalist generation's claim to globalism masks diversity and creates false problems which invite false solutions which are often based on imitations of western political and economic systems. The globalist generation tends to deal with local problems by appealing to international authorities and forces. It is for this reason that globalists have produced a critique of incumbent nationalists and their governments which smacks of opposition to African nations because globalists have failed to make meaningful distinctions between "the ruling party," "government," "the head of state," "the nation," and "the world".

For example, among this generation, human rights and liberal democracy are often uncritically declared global values to the detriment of context and history and in a manner, which confuses globalism with universalism. Indeed, the globalist generation does not have a useful distinction between what is

global and what is universal. In effect, the globalist generation is devoid of a vision beyond globalism as a commercial ideology. Like globalism, this generation is a fad whose ideological roots are more in America than in Africa. Consequently, the globalist generation, which steadily losing credibility and is bound to suffer under new nationalist pressures. Nationalists see globalists as agents or mouthpieces of foreign interests while ordinary people do not see much of a difference between nationalists and globalists. There is, therefore, a serious tension between these two generations in Africa today. In any case, the greatest flaw of the globalist generation has been its failure to appreciate the power and resilience of nationalism in not only Africa but also elsewhere across the globe. While the content of nationalism changes with time and the emergence of new generation*s*, its form, and certainly its presence, is more or less a permanent feature of politics.

D.   The Renascent Generation

While the voices of the globalist generation are increasingly being heard, with all the contradictions of that generation, a new Africa is in the making with a renascent generation of leaders and social movements poised to take over the mantle of public opinion making at the dawn of the next century and millennium. To appreciate the challenges and opportunities in Africa, in the next century and millennium, one must have a historical perspective of the unfolding of social events on the continent. The history, told from the point of view of the success and failure of four generations of Africans who are still competing for hegemony in this century of which one of which is certain to be a dominant social force in the next century. How they have experienced suffering, how they have overcome adversity, how they have celebrated their lives and how they have seen their future in a world that increasingly asserts itself as a global village connected by an information superhighway; and how Africans are becoming a new people with new leaders, the renascent generation of African nationalists.

As the next century and millennium loom on the horizon, the globalist generation is slowly fading away not least because it shares common failures with the Pan-African and nationalist generations before it. There is a renascent generation of Africans. While the critical core of this generation is found among young Africans who are currently under-seven-years-old, the essential values and outlook of the generation are already present among teenagers. The renascent generation promises a new form of enlightened nationalism in Africa and is certain to stamp its mark on the continent's social history by 2050. However, the jury is still out as to whether this generation will transform Africa for better or worse.

What is certain is that, by 2050, there will be a New English or French speaking Africa governed by a new class, the New Nationalists, dominated by *craft-literate* intellectuals and a *craft-competent* technical intelligentsia with little to do with Africa's political past as given down by conventional wisdom in this century. Africa will have become significantly "Europeanized," not "globalized" and not "Americanized" in more or less the same way Latin America was "Europeanized" by the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This melting of cultures will by no means suggest the triumph of European values in Africa in the narrow sense that might be conveyed by the notion of "Europeanization" nor will it imply the defeat of African values as they have unfolded in history. The renascent Africans will be a culmination of a fundamental social transmutation that started some 500 years ago and became an objective social reality by 1900. It is common knowledge that cultures, languages live and die, and that this happens in ways that fundamentally alter the social identities of communities, let alone individuals.

Of course, policy intervention can have an impact on the development of the generation of renascent Africans. But, at the moment, there is no evidence that any authority in or outside Africa is aware of the emergence of this generation*: Europeanized* Africans are still invisible because of populist pressures and other economic and intellectual vested interests which are disguising, glossing over, ignoring, denying or even distorting the emerging new generation of nationalism in Africa. Nevertheless, the renascent generation cannot be wished away.

In an important study, which opinion-makers and policy makers in have overlooked, yet it deals with the kind of issues to be examined by this multimedia project with respect to the renascent generation, the eminent sociologist Alvin Gouldner trenchantly observed that:

> *In all countries that have in the twentieth century become part of the emerging world socio-economic order, a New Class composed of intellectuals and technical intelligentsia--not the same--enter into contention with the groups already in control of society's economy, whether these are businessmen or party leaders [you can add globalists, nationalists and Pan-Africanists--JM]. A new contest of classes and a new class system is slowly arising in the third world of developing nations...*[6]

The coming out of a new class, to wit, a renascent generation of Africans as described in this document, is notable via an *inventory of decisive episodes* which, along with the significant total and complete language-shift from vernacular to English or French, include the following:[7]

- A process of secularization in which most intelligentsia are neither trained nor supervised by ecclesiastical institutions. Secularization is important as far as it de-sacralizes religious and traditional authority at the same time as it de-vernacularizes language and thought.
- The rise of "*jobship*" (i.e., the prevalence of impersonal values and social roles based on jobholding) in place of citizenship as a basis for the construction of socially dominant societal roles and value formation.
- The rise of a new technical language with a corresponding decline of vernacular languages linked to religious or traditional authority.
- A breakdown of feudal-like regime systems of governance based on personalized patronage relations of power.
- The growth of alternative markets, which enable independent living and independent thinking, including the dissemination and legitimating of dissenting views.
- The emergence of diversity as an important social value due to the prevalence of multi-national, multi-religious, or multi-ethnic identities.
- The growth of public education [away from the home or family] in secondary and tertiary schools as the most important institutional basis for the mass production of linguistic conversion from casual to reflexive speech, character and value formation.
- The transformation of the revolutionary form of organization, such as the 'dear leader', the 'vanguard party' or 'the one-party state', from a ritualistic and oath-bound process of social domination into a self-conscious organizational process based on instrumental rationality.

These conditions and their subsidiaries now obtain in Africa with far reaching implications for public life in the next century as the renascent generation begins to assert its vision. This generation is certain to challenge several deeply held beliefs of this century, some liberal and others radical. However, because this is an emerging generation, its profile does not yet have a developed identity. The conception, and indeed the name, of that identity is still a pending task of social history largely enabled by the massive educational project of Pan-Africanists, nationalists and globalists who, during their reign, made some significant quantitative investments in public education. Now, the renascent generation of Africans is represented by the grandchildren of the nationalist generation or put differently, the children of globalists. One feature of this emerging generation is that its consciousness and the content of its

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[6]   See Alvin Gouldner, <u>The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class</u>, op. cit. p.1.
[7]   <u>Ibid.</u> pp. 1-5.

character will be shaped to a large extent by the use of English or French by all classes as primary if not the only languages. This is notwithstanding assertions made by some apologists of the so-called western civilization, like Samuel P. Huntington[8], that as the power of the West gradually declines relative to that of other civilizations, the use of English in non-western societies will also slowly erode. This may be true in countries like India but not in Africa, where the use of English is clearly on the rise as both a tool for communication and a source of identity and community. There is a growing number of Africans whose only language of communication competence is English. But this does not mean that a growing number of Africans are speaking the English of the British monarchy. They are speaking African English, not some Pidgin English of the kind found in Nigeria but proper African English that is qualitatively comparable to the *difference* between American English and British English. In the same way Americans are not accused of speaking Pidgin English, Africans have been steadily staking a claim on the language of their erstwhile colonial master to a point where they are mainstreaming the language as they make it their own for political and social purposes.

There is another related and very important point. Social and racial diversity will be among the keys to the wealth of nations in the 21st century. As America and Europe lapse into new forms of xenophobia while desperately groping for solutions to contumacious racial conflicts within their boundaries, the new Africa is promising to be the "new-world" of the 21st century in terms of accommodating socially and racially diverse identities from the entire world. This has been happening in South Africa and is certain to happen elsewhere on the continent, especially in Nigeria as the next century unfolds. The "immigrant factor" is likely to position the new Africa to better deal with the types of socio-economic problems that brought the Asian tigers towards the end of this century. The Asian economies were driven by closed political systems that did not have the necessary social diversity of the kind that characterizes emerging Africa. The immigrant factor will combine with local developments over the 20th century to accentuate the rise of English as the new language of politics in Africa. This is notwithstanding the renewed interest in languages like *Zulu, Lingala* and *Wolof*, not to mention the assumed continuing stronghold of *Kiswahili*. The daunting fact is that the renewed interest in these and related languages is basically exotic and not substantive.

In making these propositions, I am fully aware of some recent works by creative writers like Kenya's Ngugi Wa Thiongo[9] who, for example, have pointed out the absurdity of having a political, judicial, legal and business system based on English or French in a country where the majority have less than rudimentary understanding of either of these languages. As colonial languages in Africa, English and French have been seen and used as instruments of communicating imperialist interests. The ruling elite in postcolonial Africa have employed English or French not to liberate their peoples but to reduce further their basic freedoms by marginalizing and alienating the ordinary people, many of whom function in their ethnic languages. Critics of the use of English and French in Africa have argued that a person cannot effectively fight the impact of colonialism and imperialism by the means of the same language through which he was colonized.

While these sentiments merit serious consideration, the language question in Africa is beyond sentiments. It is notable that the sentiments in question are common in debates on African literature and among ideological polemicists in academia, especially in the circles of Africa Studies. Invariably, the arguments advanced by critics of the use of English or French in Africa are based on reactions to past colonial injustices and not on critical assessments of the future of languages in Africa. While there is no point in denying the colonial origins of English and French in Africa, note should however be made of the

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[8]   See his controversial book, <u>The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order</u> (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) pp. 59-64.

[9]   See his <u>Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature</u> (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., London: James Currey and Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986).

fact that these languages have taken on a development of their own with far reaching implications on the future of Africans. Whereas English and French in Africa were used as means of communication in the colonial and early post-independence periods, they are now increasingly becoming cultural means of character development and value formation. That is to say, English or French are becoming the language of politics as opposed to being only the languages of education and officialdom. Consequently, English or French speaking Africans are becoming a social force to be reckoned with. While their numbers are still small, the trend is growing with a high probability that by 2050, English or French speaking Africans will make up the majority of African populations across the continent. Certainly, the middle class in Africa will by then speak English or French as a first language. This might be seen as a negative development by sentimentalists who preach about African languages, but there is something inevitable about the development. In this connection, the renascent generation of Africans is also inevitable.

Thus, in a significant sense, the renascent generation will be a "speech community," in the Habermasian sense, primarily because of the language factor reinforced by the totality of the inventory of decisive episodes, which tend to define the emergence of a new class as described above. The values of the renascent Africans will be justified, not by invoking the liberation struggle, Pan-Africanism, old-fashioned nationalism or traditional authority, but through a grammar of discourse based on functional rationality. As far as Africa is concerned, this will be a first in cultural and other terms. Even so, I wish to emphasize here that the notion that the renascent generation of Africans is Europeanized is given compelling weight and significance by the language factor: that Africans, be they peasants, middle or upper classes, will speak the two languages by 2050 and that, for the most part, they will speak English or French. This will mark a significant coming together of European and African cultures, in ways that will be as significant as was the coming together of European and American cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This coming together of European and African cultures in the next century will challenge Africans to construct an identity based on universal values, which characterize the human condition in a manner never before seen in Africa. The implications of this development should be brought to bear on public debate and policymaking. Here is a sample of what needs to be done:

- Challenge the Neo-Marxian theories which were used by scholars, politicians and social movements throughout the 20th century to lament how "Europe Underdeveloped Africa."[10] Some emerging realities suggest a blurred line between "development" through generations and what some of the radicals of the 20th century saw as "underdevelopment" in economic terms.

- Challenge the growing thesis (popularized by one of Africa's eminent personalities of the 20th century, Ali Mazrui in his famous multimedia project[11], that Africa has a triple heritage: traditionalism (pre-colonial and all), westernization (modernization and all) and islamization (religion and all). According to this thesis, traditionalism and westernization are falling by the way side, as Islam steadily becomes the force that will define the new Africa in the 21st century and beyond. The triple heritage thesis is not only romantic in some important misleading aspects but is also prejudiced and rather empirically spurious.

- Challenge the ideology of globalization, which is gripping the imagination of the globalist generation, especially the elements, which claim that globalization is a triumph of western values under the guise of universalism, or those elements of radical political economy, which, despite their opposition to globalization, nevertheless treat it as *the* reference point for analyzing all contemporary developments. I will show that a good part of what is mistakenly seen as western values is in fact

10   See Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1974).

11   See Ali Mazrui, The Africans, op. cit.

universal values and that there is a difference between globalization as a political or commercial (or even geographic) concept and universalism as a natural social force in human history. While universal values will continue to be the object of human struggles everywhere, well into the timeless future, as has been the case since time immemorial, globalization as espoused by the globalist generation is a commercial and political fad. The phenomena by 2050 will be cracking as it retreats to the dustbins of history where many past fads now lie idle.

•   Challenge old notions of African nationalism while acknowledging the significance of nationalism as the bedrock of changing identities of all kinds and the resilience of nationalism as an enduring ideology in politics. It is in this context that the multimedia project will show how the new generation of renascent Africans will, in fact, be a new generation of African nationalists who will espouse a new nationalism more powerful than any before.

Against this background, there is a need to show what Africa will be like in the year 2050 by focusing on population, environmental, technological (knowledge and professional skills), political (governance), economic and cultural (language etc.). Underlying this need is the assumption that (when the impact of hunger, disease and ignorance in Africa is fully considered) the only significant population group with a chance to shape 2050 are seven year olds (or the under seven year olds today). Only a third of them at that since the other two thirds will not make it because of poverty, hunger and disease. Those who make it will form the heart of the renascent generation, which will be fully developed by 2050.

More specifically, the research project on which this essay is based is interested in the following issue areas:

•   *Language*
•   *Values*
•   *Identity Formation*
•   *Education*
•   *Leadership*
•   *Political Organization*
•   *Economic Organization*
•   *Means of Social Mobilization*
•   *Science and Technology*
•   *Urbanization*

Driven by these issue-areas, the renascent generation will be fully developed and Africans will have been radically urbanized and fully integrated into the international system, and they will be in a position to contribute to the shaping of that system in ways never before seen by 2050. By then, Africans will be "Europeanized," speaking English or French, as their primary language, and they will be espousing a new nationalism driven by economic rationality and supported by science and technology. But of course, and this is an important point to keep in mind, the "Europeanization" of the renascent generation of Africans will become less and less significant beyond 2050. Indeed, the significance of "Europeanization" is in the initial formation of the generation and not necessarily in its subsequent development during the next century.

SOME CAVEATS
The foregoing is the essence of the concept behind the argument of this essay. Before further expanding on the background of the essay, some caveats are in order. First, and as was mentioned at the beginning of this write-up, this essay is not about Africa's *past*. Rather, it is about an emerging new

Africa and, therefore, about the *future*. For this reason, the most appropriate period upon which the essay is premised is the 20th century. The essay therefore is about the social history of Africa in this century with implications and projections for the next.The social h istory will be presented from the point of view of three successive activist generations in the 20th century and springing from them, a fourth generation which will be still different and more important as an actor upon the world at large and Africa in particular. The colonial and post-colonial experiences in Africa during this century provide a solid basis for a realistic yet critical assessment of the continent's opportunities and challenges in the next century and millennium. There is something common about these experiences as much as there are significant differences among African countries and in the manner in which they have interacted with the rest of the world.

Otherwise, the debilitating tendency among Africans and other romantic friends of Africa has been to predictably fall back on the continent's ancient civilization often in futile if not desperate attempts to show that Africa was not as dark as colonialists, anthropologists, and imperialists have portrayed it. There is no need to prove yet again that Africa has a glorious past underwritten by a magnificent human civilization. That debate, informative and useful as far as it has gone, has reached a dead end. Greeks and Italians (Romans), who arguably had the most developed civilizations in ancient Europe, do not harp on and on about their historical heritage as a basis of superiority today or in the future. History is history; you can use it or lose it. Communities should not be assumed to have a future only by virtue of having a glorious past.

Indeed, because having a glorious heritage does not bestow superiority on any community, a fixation with the past can be very dangerous in the context of a rapidly changing world. In this connection, the discourse on Africa has been significantly limited by a chronic fascination with the past in ways that neither improve the present nor shape the future. Therefore, there is no need to go into the ancient history of African civilizations. Apart from the fact that historians and others have ably investigated the subject of Africa's ancient history almost to the point of boring exhaustion, there is also the compelling consideration that going far back into Africa's history beyond this century will necessarily detract from the *futuristic* orientation of the project. The future in Africa does not have an ancient beginning; it is up for grabs. This is notwithstanding the obvious fact that there are some structural constraints, a fact that makes the challenges before the renascent generation even more interesting.

Parenthetically, note should be made of the fact that while the *futuristic* orientation of the renascent generation is the next millennium, the specific focus is the first half of the next century. Those years, which will be dominated by the generation of Europeanized Africans, will be decisive in shaping Africa's future history. In this regard, there is a need to explore some fundamental questions about the renascent generation of Africans. Some of the questions include the following:

- What connections will the renascent generation of Africans have with Africa's ancient history and how relevant will they be to Africa as conventionally understood?
- Will their emergence not lead to a redefinition of Africa as Africans and others have conventionally defined it and if so, how will that redefinition be received?
- Will the renascent generation of Africans be homogeneous, and if not, what will its social mix and stratification look like?
- What will be the socio-economic constituency of the renascent Africans and how national or even continental, will they be?
- And what percentage of the total population will the renascent Africans make, in other words, how representative will they be?
- What will regional and country differences in Africa look like when the renascent generation becomes a dominant social force by 2050?

- Given current developments in South Africa, which in many ways seem to echo the American experience, and given the growing hegemonic influence of that country in African affairs, will the renascent Africans be "Europeanized" via the direct consequences of colonial history or will they be indirectly "Europeanized" via the American-South African connection and is there an important difference between "Americanization" via South Africa and "Europeanization" as a colonial legacy? Will South Africa, a white dominated country, influence all this or will the decisive influence result from the struggle between South Africa and Nigeria, a black dominated country whose full potential is certain to be realized in the next century?

While these and related questions are important, the real big question will depend on whether the middle class is likely to be Africa's socially dominant class by 2050. Now, peasants who have failed to either defend or articulate their interests dominate Africa. In this connection, a central proposition of this essay is this:

> *If Africa's middle class will be politically dominant but numerically insignificant by 2050, then its fate will be more or less similar to that of Pan-Africanists, nationalists and globalists who, despite their notable contributions to the making of a variety of significant but fragile social formations in Africa today, failed to transform the continent in historically significant ways. But if the middle class will be politically and numerically significant in material and value terms, then it will without doubt change the course of African history in new and dramatic ways.*

In view of this assertion, and given that populations are aging in industrialized countries at a time when large percentages of African populations are still comparatively much younger, the renascent generation of Africans is likely to be a major social force during a period of unprecedented opportunities and challenges. But, of course, it is important to keep in mind that this generation will not start from a *tabula rasa* but that it will gain from the legacy of the aspirations, capacities and limitations of the antecedent generations of Pan-Africanists, nationalists and globalists. Indeed, the Europeanization of the renascent generation of Africans through language means that there are now better prospects for viable forms of Pan-Africanism, nationalism and globalism in Africa. A major reason why Pan-Africanism, nationalism and globalism did not overcome their limitations is that they have been dominant at a time when Africans did not have a common language. It is also important to keep in mind that, as a generation, the renascent Africans will themselves be a diversified lot in terms of class, gender and other issues of identity and will thus have competing opinions some of which will be defensive of the values of Pan-Africanists, nationalists, and globalists. All this needs to be investigated and debated in fresh ways, free from the social prejudices of this century: that is what the research project upon which this essay is based promises to do.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE ARGUMENT

Human beings, by their very nature, tend to be so confined to the vicissitudes of the present such that they pay precious little attention to the past and the future in order to better understand the "here and now." Even so, history shows that past generations in many parts of the world have used the end of a century or a millennium to review the past and envision the future. Indeed, reviewing the past and envisioning the future is precisely what diverse populations throughout the world are now doing with regard to the end of this century and millennium.

Over the last decade, there has been a proliferation of both general and scholarly literature-- usually focusing on the political economy of science, trade, and international security regimes--assessing

human achievements and problems in this century and anticipating opportunities and challenges in the next century.[12] But this literature applies to Africa only by exotic extrapolation. The relevance of the literature to Africa is notable by its deafening silence on the challenges and opportunities in the continent in the next century and beyond. This silence would lead an innocent observer from outer space to conclude that Africa fell off the earth during this century.

The main reason for this is that the international community continues to view Africa as a projection screen for the most blinkered ideological prejudices, some of which are too frequently bolstered by a blurred concatenation of wild fantasies.[13] These include exotic game parks, corrupt bureaucrats, internecine tribal wars, helpless refugees on the run, pathetic victims of HIV infection or full-blown AIDS, whose plight conjures up images of incomprehensible moral irresponsibility, starving children, lazy or incapable intellectuals and rampant tribalism under the mantle of old-fashioned nationalism. Again, not all these are wild fantasies because problems like the scourge of HIV infection are very real and require serious attention from both leaders and ordinary people in Africa. However, the way these problems are often presented leaves a lot to be desired especially when you consider the fact that a good number of the same problems are global and not just African.

THE SOUL BARRIER

Even Afro-communities overseas, especially African-Americans in the United States, and other would be African "descendants" in the Diaspora have not been able to understand developments in Africa in ways that are helpful to Africans. In general, these communities suffer from a soul barrier, *which, at times, has made frank communication between them,* and Africans difficult, and sometimes even impossible, as far back as one care to remember. The soul barrier is a defensive, and rather reflexive, racial self-interpretation of blacks outside Africa, which they employ to defend the color of their skin using Africans as a reference point but only at the level of the emotions of the soul. Much of what has come to be known as "Afrocentricity"[14] constitutes the heart of the soul barrier.

Basically, the soul barrier is a result of an ideological construction of an identity that is centered on Africa and Africans when the reality of the construction has nothing whatsoever to do with either Africa or Africans. Underlying the relationship of African-American attitudes towards Africa and Africans is the covert belief and assumption that African-Americans are superior to Africans simply because they have lived in America for some centuries and are thus westernized. Since westernization presents itself as the dominant ideology, then Africans are supposed to be backward in relation to African-Americans by virtue of not being physically and geographically part of the west as are African-

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[12]   See, for example, Paul Kennedy's The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (New York: Random House, 1987) and his Preparing for the Twenty-First Century (Fontana Press: London, 1993); and Jeremy Brecher's and Tim Costello's Global Village or Global Pillage (South End Press: New York, 1994). See also Lester C. Thurow's The Future of Capitalism: how today's economic forces shape tomorrow's world (William Morrow & Company, Inc.: New York, 1996); William Greider's One World Ready or Not (New York: 1996); David Landes' The Wealthy and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Poor (W.W. Norton: New York, 1998); and Barry Buzan's and Gerald Segal's Anticipating the Future: Twenty Millennia of Human Progress (London: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

[13]   A departure from this typical practice was witnessed during the March 1998 visit to Africa by the American President Bill Clinton when the US media pandered to Clinton's "message of hope" to Africans and their "renaissance" by reporting on some positive aspects of life in Africa. A good example of this was the TIME Magazine's (March 30,1998) cover story titled, Africa Rising under a caption that said, "After decades of famine and war, life is finally looking up for many Africans. Here's why." The reporting was generally shallow but still refreshing. Notably, however, the reporting has returned to its outdated ways.

[14]   A representative work is Molefi Kete Asante's Afrocentricity (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1988).

Americans. Such an ideological construction is in some cases positive about Africa or Africans and in other cases, it is negative. But whether positive or negative, the purpose is always to use Africans and Africa as a strategy of gaining advantage in debates which do not have much to do with Africa and Africans. Either way, Africa tends to be on the losing end by being misunderstood or distorted. While there are many manifestations of the soul barrier two are notable. One is when blacks outside Africa use the history of slavery to either excuse current problems in Africa or to explain away the present problems of Afro-communities in the Diaspora; the other is when, in an attempt to prove to be beyond racism, blacks outside Africa claim that there is nothing African about them and that slavery saved them from the tragedy that is supposed to be Africa today. These positions, and their variations coupled with the shortcomings of the Pan-Africanist, nationalist and globalist generations, have led to barriers to meaningful interaction between Africans and Afro-communities in the Diaspora.

Take the instructive example of African-Americans. As a social group in a society where race is always potent, if not eternally controversial, African-Americans have succeeded in appropriating Africa in their never-ending search for self-identity. Solely on the basis of the color of their skin while failing to understand Africa as seen and expressed by Africans who have become as diversified as any people in the world today. African-Americans are yet to appreciate that Africa, certainly the new Africa, is becoming as multi-racial as America and that this fact will be self-evident in important ways in the next century. The few African-Americans who have attempted to de-emphasize their racial connection with Africa, such as Keith B. Richburg[15], have done so in personalized and amazingly naive ways., It does not advance understanding of racial dynamics in Africa beyond the wayward emotions of the soul, which tend to dictate regardless.

Otherwise, it is indubitable that African-Americans and Africans have a common past based on the social history of *slavery* or just on skin color. Unfortunately, that is not a happy history. The sum and consequence of slavery in Africa did not bestow moral or any other kind of superiority on either its perpetrators or its victims. Slavery was a human tragedy, nothing less and nothing more. However, more to the point, slavery, which is the basis of the historical bond between African-Americans and Africans, belongs to the *past* and cannot be meaningfully used to inspire the *future* of either African-Americans or Africans. If the *past* does not have much to inspire the fostering of a common identity between African-Americans and Africans beyond the politics of color, neither does the *present*. Following the genealogical research of Alex Haley, which led to the publication in 1976 of the best-selling book and television miniseries, *Roots*, was arguably the most important influence on the last serious "back to Africa" movement. Since the earlier efforts led by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, many African-Americans who went back to Africa looking for their roots came back in the late 1970s and early 1980s having disabused themselves of the notion that they were Africans. Africa the **place** was once again replaced by Africa the **idea** in a manner reminiscent of the 1950s when African themes in fashion, hairstyles, music, and poetry blossomed well into the late 1960s. Today, Afrocentrists in America are still excited about Africa the *idea* while a growing brand of conservative blacks are challenging both Africa the *idea* and Africa the *place*. As these developments take their shape, most black Americans remain stuck in the excluded middle, unsure what to make of the new Africa, which, following South Africa's political settlement of the apartheid problem in 1994, is de-emphasizing the race problem as the 20th century ends. Of course, there are individual exceptions to Afrocentrists and conservative blacks but they are too few to be socially significant in the current scheme of things.

In the final analysis, it is more likely that a stronger, coherent, and more nuanced voice on behalf of Africa as it is emerging today will come from the growing numbers of African immigrants in the United States. For example, the voices of Nigerian immigrants in Texas have been getting louder and

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[15]   See his needlessly controversial book, <u>Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa</u> (Basic Books: New York, 1997).

clearer in local politics with their eyes on Washington. The gap between the social consciousness and worldviews of African immigrants in the United States and their African-American counterparts is, to say the least, astounding. Nothing speaks more eloquently about the soul barrier than this gap whose content and character is yet to be critically examined by Africa Studies and African-American Studies.

Against this background, modern Africa as a social reality has, largely, dropped out of the center of mainstream discourse among African-Americans. This perhaps explains why Henry Louis Gates, one of the most prominent and controversial African-American voices today, says that African-Americans have been around for too long to be treated as an immigrant group in America. His basic point is that, as external precedents, Africa and Africans are of limited relevance in exploring the internal dynamics of African-Americans as a community. Wonder why, for example, American schools, which once taught Kiswahili, now promote *Ebonics*. In effect, the language gap between Africans and African-Americans is now wider than ever before. This is a very serious socio-historical problem. The only country in Africa, which shows a promising prospect of narrowing this gap, is South Africa. In South Africa, *Ebonics*--or the culture thereof-- is catching on like fire. Moreover, Michael Jordan is as much a local hero as is Nelson Mandela.

If South Africa is destined to play a proselytizing cultural or hegemonic role in Africa, then the soul barrier between Africans and African-Americans has yet another chance of being blown apart. However, that depends on a big "if." Otherwise, and as the experiences of the Swiss and Indians clearly show, it is not easy for people who do not speak a common language to foster a common identity. While geography and history are important in the forging of social identities, language is even more important. If today's English or French speaking African elite are removed from the everyday world of ordinary Africans, the majority of whom speak an array of vernacular languages numbering in the thousands, then ordinary African-Americans from the inner-cities of the United States, let alone the elite and well-to-do among them, are even more removed from the everyday world of ordinary Africans.

There is no common ground, except skin color and we know how deep that goes. That is why the soul barrier is a problem yet to be addressed.

No wonder that ordinary Africans continue to view African-Americans as objects of amusement often associated with entertainment and sports in the narrow commercial sense, a view that has contributed to the entrenchment of the *soul barrier*. Imagine the language quandary of an African-American who visits an African hamlet or township: To an ordinary African, the only difference between such a visitor and a white missionary or colonialist is race defined in terms of the politics of color. Compare this with a scenario of an American Jew who visits Israel. In this scenario, both the visitor and the host share a social and religious consciousness, including a common language, all which are more substantive than the color of their skins. Indeed, not all Jews are white. *Ebonics,* may be an important *lingua franca* among poor African-Americans in the inner-cities but it is not a serious language among poor Africans in rural and urban areas whose aspirations include speaking perfect English or French. Therefore, the obvious and important fact to the ordinary African is that, just like the white colonialists or missionaries, the visiting African-American speaks English and is hard pressed to have heart to heart communication with his host. Beyond the contradictory and often half-baked issues around "the West versus the rest of us"--or some other kind of "us-versus them" soul barrier mentality that does not go beyond the crude politics of color. Of course, this image problem is partly because of global commercial and media interests.

However, and more important, the same image is a product of the hitherto unresolved social dynamics, including major language differences, related to the soul barrier between African-Americans and Africans. The fact, however unpalatable, is that African-Americans and Africans do not constitute a speech community. Hence, there is nothing *African* in the construction of the "African-American"

identity beyond the politics of color. Perhaps the soul barrier between African-Americans and Africans will be broken down by the emergence of "Europeanized Africans" in the next century; namely those Africans who, even with some differences, will speak the same language as most African-Americans by 2050.

THE AGE OF SOLUTIONS

Meanwhile, the story of Africa's 100 years of social transformation since the dawn of this century remains truncated and risks being ultimately lost as both clock and calendar tick-tock towards a new century and millennium. According to some influential circles, Africa is the "final frontier" of development because it faces the greatest challenges of any region in the world. A quarter of all children will die before their fifth birthday from disease and malnutrition; only half of all adults are literate and fewer than 20% of young people can attend high school. HIV/AIDS infection rates are the highest in the world; drought and famine are not uncommon; and the potential for political instability is high.[16] Not only outsiders voice this view. One of Africa's respected newspapers, Kenya's *Sunday Nation*, doubted Africa's prospects in the next century by asking some telling rhetorical questions:

> *Is Africa going into the next century mired in wars? Is Africa going into the next century without a formula for reducing or doing away with food deficits? Still dependent on aid, for food and finance? Fettered to wars and quite unprepared to handle natural calamities or stake a claim to technological advancement?* [17]

Happily, though, and without dismissing the seriousness of the above-unresolved issues, which undoubtedly demand urgent and decisive policy action, there is another side to Africa's dark image. Africa has great potential not only for economic wealth but also for political democracy, cultural and intellectual creativity, technological advancement and human achievement, which, if sufficiently tapped and respected, should turn around the continent's social history of hopelessness and the apparently ubiquitous economy of squalor to restore hope to the majority of Africans in the next century.

This story needs to be told by Africans as a human story with which the rest of humanity will identify because the story will be about generations as they are found anywhere in the world. A critical analysis of social history in Africa through the eyes of four generations in this century is instructive because generations are not only about ordinary people and their leaders across class, racial and ethnic barriers but they are also about continuity and change in human history: The old and the new expresses itself through real people, i.e., through generations. If this century served to highlight Africa's problems and isolation, there is every reason to believe that the next century will be *Africa's Age of Solutions* and integration. This essay is about telling the social story about the making and remaking of Africa in a balanced manner that will highlight failures and successes as well as challenges and opportunities against the background of the dialectical relationship between hope and despair in a world that is under the grip of globalization.

Throughout this century, four activist generations of creative and committed individuals, organizations, institutions, and communities in Africa have endeavored, with varying degrees of success and failure, to make and remake their societies by proffering competing solutions to different problems. The efforts of these four generations amount not only to a culmination of a historical process in the

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[16]   See "Making a Difference in Africa: A Report on USAID Assistance on Africa" (Washington DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1996), p.4.

[17]   See an editorial in the Sunday Nation (Nairobi, Kenya, Sunday March 22, 1997), p. 6.

making of a continent over the last millennium in general and the past 100 years in particular but the efforts also embody the challenges and opportunities which will confront Africa in the next century.

Otherwise, it is true that in general, Africa has had a miserable social history, or so it seems from the standpoint of conventional wisdom in popular, academic and policy circles.[18] This century appears to have left Africa cold and alone in the dark, notwithstanding its remarkable social developments for better or worse and its unprecedented advancement of the natural and social sciences as well as its perfection of the means of war and accumulation of material wealth in the name of peace and prosperity for everyone everywhere.

So it is that, in most of Africa, the of patriarchy and the political consequences of colonial occupation, coupled with traditional influences the post-independence politics of one-party and one-man rule, have combined with international financial interests to frustrate the birth of new values of human dignity, individual creativity, pluralism, democratic governance, scientific achievement and economic prosperity. At the level of social anthropology of everyday life, the fear of social change, especially among the ruling cliques and their regular members, has remained palpable even after the defeat of colonialism throughout Africa and the formal end of apartheid in South Africa. In between all this and more of the same, Africa seems to have lost this century to social prejudice.

However, did Africa lose this century? That is a matter of social imagination, which the generation of "Europeanized Africans" will have something to say.

In any event, few in Africa are celebrating the end of this century and preparing for the challenges and opportunities in the next century.[19] It is as if everything has been lost. On the other hand, is it that Africans do not see any significance either in the passing of this century or the coming of the next?

Following the celebrated collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Africa's 20th century march in the dark to the 21st century yet again started showing some light. After the end of the Cold War and the break up of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a majority of African countries pressed on with structural and social transformation from authoritarian regimes of one sort or another to some form of democratic rule, however precarious.[20] This triggered a kind of optimism in Africa with echoes of the departure of colonial powers some 30 years earlier.

Indeed, after some 100 years of prolonged struggles against colonial rule, the downside of patriarchy, and the vagaries of monopoly politics of the post-independence era this has spawned four generations of leaders and social movements in Africa. Each generation, distinguished by its own hopes and dreams, with its own failures and achievements Africa is finally showing signs of a historic generation break from the continent's dark past as a new century and a new millennium beckon on the horizon with a new promise.

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[18]   A dark and miserable picture of Africa was recently painted by Robert Kaplan in a widely distributed controversial article which was taken as the gospel truth by some vested interests in and outside Africa, "The Coming Anarchy," The Atlantic Monthly (February 1994, Vol. 273, No. 2), p.4.

[19]   Of course, there are some exceptions, which must be qualified. Many African governments decreed policies with the year 2000 as the benchmark such as "housing for all by the year 2000" or "health for all by the year 2000." The poverty of these decrees is defined by the silence over them as the year 2000 looms on the horizon. The United Nations has played a part in this with high sounding but hardly viable initiatives such as the "Africa 2000 Network" on the environment run by the United Nations Development Fund with eight coordinating countries which include Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

[20]   An instructive summary of these events is found in Governance and Politics in Africa edited by Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992).

Indeed, a new generation in Africa is within the range of a new vision of the best future Africa is yet to see. This new generation is rising with the advantage of the values of Africa's rich cultural, geographic, historical, political, ethnic, racial, religious and gender diversity each and all measured against the consequences of globalization in the commercial world with all the contradictions of the present international political economy.

Throughout Africa, a new generation of some creative and committed individuals, organizations, institutions, communities, and values is voicing steady demands for transparent, responsive, and multicentric governments as well as for viable economies cemented by diverse and mutually tolerant social groups driven by vibrant cultures, which have respect for individual achievement. In some donor circles, this new generation is often presented in communal terms which describe what appears to be promising local initiatives which speak of the rise of democratic civil society. There is a great deal of skepticism and even cynicism among donors about the promise of state institutions and political leadership in Africa. Both the skepticism and cynicism are misplaced. The generation of new Africans is not only found at the local level (among NGOs and community-based organizations), it is also found among intellectuals, bureaucrats, the military, commerce, and industry as well as in the arts, sports, and recreation. In effect, a new civil society is beginning to influence what is certain to be a new state.

This new generation, which has been made possible by a number of factors of social history including the expansion of formal education at primary and secondary school levels everywhere in Africa in both urban and rural areas, is at the heart of the making of a new "Europeanized" Africa. This new Africa will be a competitive participant in the shaping of human history in the next century for better or worse. With this new Africa on the horizon, which will be full blown by the year 2050, English or French, as spoken by New Africans not by the English in England or the French in France, will be the languages of social discourse across class, racial and ethnic barriers. With this will follow all the consequences of the kind of social consciousness, which often comes with such a fundamental transformation in language. Even a country like Tanzania, with its remarkable successes in broadening and deepening the use of Kiswahili underwritten by problematic Arabic influences, will become fully French or English speaking by 2050.

Thus, in 2050, the upper and middle classes and the peasants in Africa will speak the same language, English or French, as happened in Mexico in this century when aboriginal populations and immigrants were Europeanized by the use of the Spanish language. Today, speaking Spanish in Mexico is a matter of course for nearly everyone. Similarly, speaking English or French in Africa will be a matter of commonplace routine for "Europeanized Africans" in the next century and beyond. This eventuality will mark the emergence of "new nationalists," a new speech community, in Africa, one that will be a product of some happy and not so happy social forces of history, public education, and social engineering reinforced by the global entertainment industry[21]. Parenthetically, much of this relates to Sub-Sahara Africa, and not to North Africa where Arabic is most likely to continue to preset interesting challenges as it too risks disappearing into the past despite what appears to be its rather strong religious roots which are being as shaken as was Latin in the Catholic Church until the adoption of Vatican II. The point here is a simple one: If Islam will grow as a popular religion throughout the rest of the world, and then Arabic in Africa will face formidable challenges in places where English and French will become the primary languages.

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[21]   The cultural attributes, and indeed origins, of this class are reminiscent of the "new class" described by Alvin Gouldner in The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (New York: Macmillan Press LTD, 1979).

The renascent generation of Africans is a culmination of a historical process very much related to the vagaries of slavery and colonialism during this millennium in general and this century in particular. But more recently, the emergence of this generation has partly been made possible by the fact that the authoritarian one-party-state models of yesteryear which were crafted by the feared 'Big Men' of the nationalist era, have ruptured and collapsed as rapidly as did their erstwhile colonial structures. For example, virtually all sub-Saharan countries now have some measure of political liberalization under the leadership of an emerging *craft-literate*[22] and *craft-competent*[23] breed of globalist Africans who espouse and claim commitment to professionalism, democracy, and social diversity. The children of these Africans do not speak any African language with skill and neither promise nor are they steeped in African culture as colonial anthropologists and African nationalists both of who picture African culture and tradition as fossilized in history have described it. This image allows neither movement nor growth, including borrowing from other cultures or even being swallowed by them to create something new, as always happens in all cultures throughout human history.

There is also an economic angle to this fundamental transformation in Africa, which becomes more evident as this century and millennium close their circles. In the name of globalization, the disputed economic laws of supply and demand are now being exalted as the engines of social change and resource allocation. Economic growth is supposed to lead to poverty alleviation everywhere in Africa. Buoyed by the ubiquity of World Bank sponsored economic structural adjustment programs and the austerity measures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the enchantment with the prospects of economic growth in Africa is underway. Its happening at a time when near-opportunistic market ideologies are beginning to replace the previous crude forms of state-based ideologies associated with patriarchy, one-party rule, and the evangelical socialist inclinations of the past.

Regrettably, however, the developments that are indubitably sweeping across Africa at the twilight of this century are going unnoticed. Opinion-makers in and outside Africa continue to see the bulk of Africa as a hopeless place where nothing good or noble ever happens or is likely to happen. Bad as this view is, what is worse is that it forms the kind of pessimism, which was internalized by three generations of Africans throughout the 20th century, thanks to the powerful global influences of the Western media, financial and educational institutions. As far as these institutions are concerned, social strife is the order of the day everywhere in Africa, ostensibly because of the prevalence of political patronage coupled with the troika of deep-seated ethnic, racial and religious differences which brook neither creativity nor pluralism beyond official decrees and the confines of tradition or religion.

According to this conventional wisdom of hopelessness in Africa, political and economic problems on the continent are seen by many observers to be made worse by economic impoverishment that has relegated most African countries to the margins of squalor and relative deprivation. The usual evidence for this is that some 18 of the 20 poorest countries in the world are in Africa. In addition, the

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[22]   *Craft-literacy* is the human capacity to shift from an intellectual orientation based on tradition, faith, or affectual considerations to one that is based on functional rationality. It is the kind of capacity that leads to the construction of blueprints or models that can be applied in different situations. Before building a dam, there is little use for faith or tradition; there must be a functionally rational model for the dam. Similarly, before setting up an organization or social enterprise, there must be a formalized model of what it should look like and why. The process of developing such a model is *craft-literacy*. For a more elaborate explanation of *craft-literacy* and how it might be a crucial value of the "Europeanized" generation of Africans by 2050, see Jonathan N. Moyo, The Politics of Administration: Understanding Bureaucracy in Africa (Harare: SAPES Books, 1992) pp. 59 74.

[23]   *Craft-competence* is the ability to understand and apply, with regularity, a model, or blueprint that has been developed by someone other than oneself. *Craft-competence* is thus the average or common knowledge that is necessary for the sustenance of collective pursuits. In effect, *craft-competence* is applied *craft-literacy*. As such, the former is always a product of public education whereas the latter is often the product of individual creativity. For a fuller explanation of *craft-competence,* see Jonathan N. Moyo, The Politics of Administration, op. cit. pp. 59-74.

continent's pessimistic critics are quick to use globalization arguments to remind everyone that Africa accounts for 30 of the world's poorest 40 nations; that in 1995 Sub-Sahara Africa got 4.5% of the total of foreign direct investment flows. Globalists argue that market-seeking investment will not go to Africa because African markets are small, poorly developed, unsophisticated, have high transaction costs and have uncertainty regarding policies and regulations. What Africa gets is investment going into natural resource extraction. In addition, African labor is seen as being more expensive but less productive than its Asian counterpart. Globalists give some breath-taking numbers that are supposed to spell doom for regions like Africa, even though the numbers conceal more than they reveal. Here are some often-cited examples:

> ⇒ *20% of the world's population consumes 85% of the world's resources;*
> ⇒ *in 1996 world economic productive activity was $30 trillion out of which $1 trillion was traded daily with 99% being transacted electronically;*
> ⇒ *some 3,700 conglomerates accountable to a tiny group of shareholders control 75% to 85% of world trade;*
> ⇒ *1.2 to 1.4 billion people live on less than $1 a day;*
> ⇒ *nearly 2 billion people are yet to make their first telephone call and so on.*

What do these global patterns mean for Africa in the next century?

In relation to Africa, this gloom prophesied by globalists has spawned an ideology of *Afro-pessimism*, a back-to-the-future type of mind-set, which projects Africa as a hopeless place because of extending the continent's problems in the 20th century well beyond the horizon of the next century. More recently, Afro-pessimism has been given further impetus by protracted political mayhem in countries like Liberia and Somalia, constitutional decay and social breakdown in Nigeria, ethnicide in Rwanda and Burundi and statelessness and social fragmentation in Zaire, to name a few glaring examples of what conventional wisdom views as the trouble with Africa today. The optimism around Nelson Mandela's "New South Africa" has not been enough to quiet down the Afro-pessimists who will rather see the New South Africa as an aberration, which should not be used to either explain or predict social history elsewhere in Africa.

Thus, the recent self-evidently, unhappy experiences of countries like Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia and Zaire, no matter how isolated they may be, have become a fixed mental standard. They are a measure for not only those explaining politics in Africa but also for those measuring and projecting social progress on the continent beyond this century as if there are no other African countries, besides South Africa, with a better promise in the next century. Little consideration is given to the fact that these are only five out of 55 countries in Africa with less than 10% of the continent's total population. In any event, this spiral of negative information, coupled with the dearth of competing information, has taken a heavy toll on the ongoing efforts to encourage and sustain human dignity, individual creativity, cultural expression, democratic transitions, and professionalism and sound policies for economic development in Africa. From Africa's point of view, globalism may very well be an illusion and not the solution it promises to be.

This is why the story of Africa is 100 years of social transformation, since the dawn of this century, remains truncated with the risk of being ultimately lost for good. True, there have been various partisan projects on social transformation in Africa. The two notable examples are Ali Mazrui's

controversial but engaging television series, "The Africans: A Triple Heritage[24]" and Basil Davidson's rather patronizing anthropological television series, "Africa: A Voyage of Discovery.[25]"

But these two critically acclaimed television series, with their accompanying trade books, which did not use the multimedia concept adopted by the research project upon which this essay is based, have suffered from the shortcoming of treating Africa as some kind of unfortunate peculiarity in human history, while a host of other smaller and less ambitious projects have been limited in scope and substance not least because they have tended to be episodic and ideological: always assigning an anthropological uniqueness to Africa with the consequence of presenting the continent as a pitiable case in human history, and often concentrating either on romantic anthropological claims about the richness and superiority of African culture or highlighting the sensational issues and events such as personal rule and corruption, economic ruin, catastrophes such as famine, military coups and all manner of crises at personal, community, national, regional and continental levels. However, the dark picture is neither the only nor the dominant truth. There is another and even more compelling side. Africa has great potential not only for economic wealth but also for political democracy, cultural creativity, intellectual leadership, technological advancement and human achievement, which, if sufficiently tapped and respected, should turn around the continent's social history of hopelessness and apparent economy of squalor to restore hope to the majority of Africans.

Africans must tell this social history as a human story with which the rest of humanity can identify. A critical analysis of social history in Africa using the template of generations will be instructive because generations are not only about ordinary people across class barriers, but they are also about social movements and their leaders. As mentioned earlier, the old and the new expresses itself in dynamic ways through real people, i.e., through distinct yet inter-connected generations whose emergence tends to transform public life by introducing new values, a new language, a new vision and new ways of doing things in a new Africa in the next century.

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[24]   See Ali A. Mazrui, The Africans: A Triple Heritage (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1986).
[25]   Based on an eight-part television series Africa: A Voyage of Discovery with Basil Davidson produced in 1984 by Channel Four in England; Video distributed by Home Vision in the United States.