

Is 'Africa' a racial slur and should the continent be renamed?

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Abstract

In this paper, we will investigate whether or not the name 'Africa' can be seen as a slur. Since the name was given by European exploiters, slavers and colonists, it raises the question of whether such a name should continue to be accepted or abandoned. It may seem that just as the slavers renamed their victims and the colonists renamed the territories they conquered, the name Africa/ns similarly was an imposition on the continent and its peoples. It can also be argued that the naming of the continent by an external aggressor is a form of epistemic subordination that vitiates the dignity of the inhabitants. That is to say that European slavers took it upon themselves to give the inhabitants an identity that highlights climate and possibly skin colour because it was something they could not do for themselves. This presents the inhabitants as inferior to their namers and whose millennia-old civilisational achievements can comfortably be overlooked. We argue that the two preceding arguments constitute compelling reasons to abandon the name Africa as a compromised identity and offer an idea for the renaming of the continent.

Keywords: Africa; Anaesia; Igbo language; black; racial slur

Introduction

Kwesi Tsri's provocative essay 'Africans are not black: why the use of the term "black" for Africans should be abandoned' makes an eye-catching case against the term 'black' as it is used to categorise the people of the continent. His arguments focus on the categorical, descriptive, and symbolic meanings of the colour black. Here, we tap inspiration but go beyond Tsri's proposal to make a similar case against the name 'Africa' by focusing exclusively on its descriptive meaning.

Also, Mogobe Ramose has problematised the name 'Africa', arguing that the Greeks and the Romans coined it and that its linguistic roots and meanings point to a denigration of the inhabitants of the continent. He did not sue for the abandonment of the name or the renaming of the continent as we bid to do here. While we agree with Ramose that the name 'Africa' is problematic, we will go beyond his position to investigate whether or not the name Africa can be seen as a slur; and whether it should be abandoned or not.

Benson Igboin (2014) argues that there is something in a name. 'African names are not philosophical rhetoric, but they are believed to convey deep intrinsic significance for the bearer and the community as a whole' (Igboin, 2014, p. 26). This point was made clearer by Rebecca

Cantor (2013), who evoked the analogy of Mark Twain to argue that the ability to name is a powerful one. Names are not just forms of identification; they have metaphysical and psychological underpinnings. One who gives a name to another asserts a kind of metaphysical authority over the entity it names. If that entity is a human slave or a sentient animal like a dog, its naming could bring a psychological weight on the entity named. The namer becomes a domino of a sort, and the named is psychologically subdued and brought under control, if not out of fear and awe of its namer. In ancient Greece and Rome, slave-owners would often rename those they have captured or bought into slavery as a psychological ritual to subdue the victim. As Kelly Wrenhaven explains with a specific example of ancient Greece, '[W]hen a person's name is changed, their former name is made obsolete and so, in theory, is the life they knew prior to enslavement' (2013, p. 32). Wrenhaven goes on to observe that '... the use of names and/or titles, were often omitted if the addressee was considered to be inferior. Consequently, when free persons speak to slaves, the slaves' names are often omitted and the slaves are just given simple commands ... simple orders also illustrate that the primary function of the slave was to be an object of command' (2013, p. 39). Rebecca Cantor re-echoes the preceding in her analysis of Mark Twain's novel *Pudd'n'head Wilson* ...:

In the marginalised group are the often-unnamed slaves. These characters are powerless, owned by others, and completely at their owners' mercy. The tragedy of these characters, and of slavery as presented in the novel, is not purely the physical abuse they suffer, or their lack of freedom, but their lack of identity. For many slaves, namelessness, whether in the form of being numbered like stock or in the lack of a last name, was one of the most pervasive reminders of their irrelevance. (2013, p. 97)

The lopsided power relation in the above is further corroborated by Wrenhaven, who stated that 'choosing to address or not to address one's slave by name is indicative of the power the master has over his slave' (Wrenhaven, 2013, p. 40). To make it clearer, Wrenhaven explains that 'Just as the master has the authority to impose a new identity onto his slave by replacing his or her original name with a name of his choice, he also has the authority to deny his slave any name at all' (Wrenhaven, 2013, p. 40). Wrenhaven argues that what makes this practise more insidious is that 'By not acknowledging a slave's name, the slave is deprived of an individual identity and is relegated, a nameless entity, to a subhuman status' (Wrenhaven, 2013, p. 40). Our investigation will consider the naming of the continent 'Africa', which occurred at the time of the enslavement of the inhabitants of the south, as possibly similar to the naming practice used against victims of slavery.

The renaming practice also continued during the transatlantic slave trade. Claims on how naming was used against those subjected to slavery and inhumanity are well-supported in the literature (see Cottias, 2003; Hébrard 2003, as cited in Abel et al., 2019; Cantor 2013). In fact, most slaves who were lucky to be given any name at all were given the type of names that Susan Benson (2006, as cited in Abel et al., 2019, p. 339) describes as 'injurious names'. Slave-owners often tossed aside the actual names of the victims and issued them with a new name, which they were then forced to answer. Benson describes this forcible name imposition as 'tyrannous act of interpellation' (Benson, 2006, p. 184, as cited in Abel et al., 2019, p. 339).

To rename someone is, most times, considered a symbolic ritual in slavery to bring the individual into full control and ownership of another. The Igbo ex-slave Olaudah Equiano who was renamed Gustavus Vasa the African by his master, told a chilling story of how the name was imposed on him:

While I was on board this *ship [the Industrious Bee]*, my captain and master [*Pascal*] named me Gustavus Vassa. I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus; and when I refused to answer to my new

name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff; so at length I submitted, and was obliged to bear the present name, by which I have been known ever since. (Equiano & Sollors, 2001, pp. 355–387)

This was to break him psychologically and give him that constant reminder that he is the property of the slave master. Besides subduing an individual mentally, renaming victims of slavery, sometimes, serves as a symbolic denial of one's culture as unworthy. In Africa, the naming process involves many rites that are sacred cultural practices that reaffirm the entire community's roots and existence as a distinct people (Echekwube, 2005; Igboin, 2014). When an individual is casually named or renamed, sometimes, it conveys a psychological meaning of cultural denigration and detachment. Such a person could feel severed from their natural earth-soul. The impact of such renaming can create psychological feelings of emptiness, worthlessness, and even non-existence.

In this essay, we will look at the research efforts which Tsri and Ramose have made in connection to the names 'black' and 'Africa'. We will analyse the motivations for the naming of the continent of 'Africa' by Europeans. We will seek to find out whether or not the name Africa constitutes a racial slur and, if necessary, offer a proposal for renaming the continent. Our method will be conversational in that we would engage critically with other scholars on their views and proffer a creative proposal.

The racist underpinnings and the linguistic roots of the name 'Africa'

Mogobe Ramose and Kwesi Tsri are not the first to engage with discourse in anti-African racism. Indeed, many race scholars have variously offered their views. But what makes Ramose and Tsri to be of interest to us is the fact that they problematised two concepts in African and race studies. While Ramose problematised the name 'Africa', Tsri problematised the name 'black' that points to possible racist subordination of those described as black. We will discuss and converse with both scholars momentarily. We will begin with Tsri chiefly to draw a connection between the two projects. But our main conversation will be with Ramose since the term we are going to investigate is the same one he problematised. In the end, we will show how some lacunae in both Tsri's and Ramose's submissions will constitute fodder for our own inquiry.

The name 'black': a conversation with Tsri

Tsri, in two separate publications (2016a, 2016b) demonstrates that the name 'black' as evoked in describing and categorising people from the south of the continent of Africa has symbolic and racist underpinnings. He traces these from Ancient Greece through Roman history, the medieval Christian age, and early modern English history. Based on his findings, he argues for the abandonment of the term black.^{Footnote¹} We agree with Tsri in a good number of points he made, but we wish to point out one gap in Tsri's work that we shall address in our inquiry here.

Tsri did not call for the abandonment of the name 'Africa'. His investigation was limited to the name 'black' despite the possible racist connection between the two. The preceding gap paves the way for us to extend the advocacy for the abandonment of the name black to the name Africa. Tsri's unperturbed description of a section of humanity with the name 'Africans' challenges us to probe further. Is it that he did not investigate the etymology of the name 'Africa' as he did for the name black? Or is it that he did not see the name Africa as the focus of his work and, as such, felt comfortable with it? Whatever is the case, we will investigate the etymology and historical origin of the name Africa in order to determine its acceptability or recommend its abandonment.

We conclude this brief analysis by saying that Tsri may not have produced a comprehensive work that addresses all cognate terms that devalue the inhabitants of the continent, especially the south, but it is undeniable that in problematising the name black, he has opened a new dimension to the discussion on anti-African racism.

The name Africa: a conversation with Ramose

We come now to the contributions of Mogobe Ramose (2003, pp. 113–127). Ramose problematises the name 'Africa' to reveal European historical domination and a possible racist subordination of the people's of the continent. Suppose it can be established that Europeans gave the name Africa referring to the hot climate or any other idea that they later extended to the whole continent in total disregard for its peoples' rich civilisational history. In that case, we may have possible scenarios for the European historical domination and subordination of the continent. Ramose asks, '... why, how and when did the continent receive the name Africa?' (2003, p. 114). Ramose cites the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which has it that the name Africa most likely came from the Greek *aphrike* meaning without cold or was given by the Romans in Latin as *aprica*, which means sunny, but which was 'chiefly applied to the northern coast of the continent, which was in effect regarded as a southern extension of Europe'. According to him, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* also has it that the Romans who ruled north Africa referred to the area as Afriga, which was believed to have been derived from Afrigs, meaning 'Land of the Afrigs'. The Afrigs is said to be a 'Berber community south of Carthage'. Africa is also said to mean 'Ears of Corn' which is believed to refer to an agrarian region in today's Tunisia (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1974, p. 117, as cited in Ramose, 2003, p. 114). Ramose appears to accept the authority of *Encyclopedia Britannica* and argues on that basis that '... the discovery that "Africa" is not only a description by an outsider but also an imposition by the same outsider will generate many reactions. One of the reactions is that it is rather funny that the study of "African" philosophy simply means the study of "sunny" or solar philosophy!' (2003, p. 115). One can add to this the study of African history, art, religions or even languages.

Ramose then argues that the name Africa originally applied to the northern coast of the continent due to 'Roman conquest of north Africa' and did 'not arise from the indigenous conquered inhabitants of the region let alone the whole continent'. However, Ramose observes that 'Like the Roman conquest of "north Africa", the colonial conquest of other parts of "Africa" also followed the logic of ignoring the culture and philosophies of the conquered. The will to ignore the philosophies of the various inhabitants located in different parts of the continent was strengthened by adherence to the description of the climate of the continent' (Ramose, 2003, p. 115). So, for Ramose, the name 'Africa' was eventually extended to the rest of the continent during colonial conquest. This makes some historical sense, especially if we extend colonialism to include the initial European expansionist programmes that occurred in the sixteenth century.

Ramose further argues that 'The term "Africa" speaks more to the West European historical experience with the peoples of the continent and much less to the experience of the peoples of the continent with regard to their own self-understanding. In other words, the history of "Africa" is mainly the history of West European experience of "Africa" and only incidentally is it the story of the peoples of the continent about themselves' (2003, p. 115). We agree with this point.

Also, Ramose indicates that there is a "continuing problems concerning the identity of 'Africa'" and mentions as 'significant' the name changes done by some African countries at independence. This aligns with our goal to call for the renaming of the continent. We, however, observe a gap here that necessitates our inquiry. Ramose comes short of proposing a new

name for the continent after all the condemnation of the western imposition of the name 'Africa'.

Further, Ramose asks, '... since the term "African" is silent on the identity of the indigenous conquered peoples of the continent, why does it seem to be accepted as if it is an adequate or reasonable description of their identity?' (2003, pp. 117–118). Ramose's answer is that 'the term "African" has been foisted onto the indigenous conquered peoples of the continent. Instead of being a reasonable, fair and adequate description of the conquered peoples it became the bearer of misrepresentation, disfiguration and distortion of the identities of the conquered peoples' (2003, p. 118). We agree with Ramose that the name was foisted on the continent's inhabitants, given the available evidence. But we hesitate to agree with Ramose that the name was accepted by the inhabitants. Granted that one can bear a foisted name, a proper linguistic analysis clearly indicates that 'acceptance' is entirely another thing. The Igbo ex-slave Olaudah Equiano cited earlier bore Gustavus Vassa, which was foisted on him, but clearly did not accept it. No one would accept a foisted name if they had not found new pleasing reasons to do so.

Our main point of departure from Ramose was that despite criticising those he described as 'outsiders' and 'conquerors', for foisting the name Africa on the 'indigenous conquered peoples of the continent', he comes short of openly calling for the abandonment of the name, let alone making a new creative proposal to replace the one that 'became the bearer of misrepresentation, disfiguration and distortion of the identities of the conquered peoples' (Ramose, 2003, p. 118). Indeed, who would continue to recommend the name Africa after those very strong words?

At the beginning of the essay, Ramose exclaimed that "The meaning of African was taken for granted. It is the purpose of this essay to focus more on the meaning of 'Africa/African' (2003, p. 113). He also observes that 'Our problem though is precisely that the geographic meaning is generally taken so much for granted that it seems idle and futile to problematise the term "Africa". Our contention is that it is scientifically legitimate to problematise the term. Surely, the name "Africa" is much more than a matter of etymological inquiry. It is also a question of history, of interaction among human beings ...' (2003, p. 114). But having problematised and investigated the meaning of the name and arrived at a point where he obviously found it odious, Ramose came short of calling for its abandonment, let alone for the renaming of the continent. This is a gap that necessitate's our own contribution in this essay. With the preceding arguments, and in addition to Ramose's admission that the name 'misrepresents, disfigures and distorts the African identity', we bid to go beyond Ramose and advocate the abandonment of the name entirely.

From the foregoing, the intellectual agitation for decolonisation should be understood as an indigenous effort to reject all forms of Eurocentric impositions, including language, creed, culture, and even names. Now, suppose, as Ramose has argued above, the name Africa, which derived from the Greek *aphrike* or the Latin *aprica* and originally applied to north Africa, referred to the region's hot climate. And that this name was eventually extended to the rest of the continent following colonial conquest, it would seem to share much in common with the Greek term *Aethiops*. Tsri informs us that *Aethiops* means 'sun-burnt face', – a name that was given to the people of East Africa by the Greeks who unfortunately and quite uncritically adopted the name for their country, and which was at some stage in history applied to the rest of the continent. There is a reasonable correlation here. If *aphrike* or *aprica* now refers to the rest of the continent, *Aethiops* refers to the inhabitants of the continent in the south. Both would be mediated by the same idea of hot climate that chars the skin into blackness. The two curious questions are; why must the continent or its inhabitants be described by its climate, which westerners perceived to be harsh? And why must this imposition by those Ramose

variously describes as 'outsiders' and 'conquerors' be condoned as if to say there is nothing good about the continent from which its name could be derived?

To establish the racist bent of the name Africa, we can consider an apt analogy: when something like the human skin is burnt or charred, whether by fire or scorching sun, it becomes dark and can be described as black. This makes the terms *Aethiops*, and even *aphrike* or *aprica* cognates to the term black in that while *Aethiops* makes an allusion to the skin of people from that part of the world, which their dominator judged to have been burnt by the scorching sun, *aphrike* or *aprica* describes that cursed continent with hot climate – the home of the unforgiving sun. Thus, it is hard to justify the continued use of the name Africa to describe the continent, and, especially the inhabitants in the south.

Possible motivations for the European naming of Africa

There are two names traceable to three historical stages in Europe. The first and the oldest is 'Aethiops' which can be found in Homeric and other ancient Greek sources used to describe people originally from East Africa but later for all those from sub-Saharan (Hannaford, 1996; Snowden, 1971; Thompson, 1989, as cited in Tsri, 2016a, p. 148). According to Tsri (2016a, p. 148, 2016b, pp. 28–29), Aethiops is Greek for 'sun-burnt face'. Here, we can see how the ancient Greeks used a slur to describe those from south of the continent. In this age of racism, such a description can be viewed as a racial slur. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2021) defines a slur as 'an insulting or disparaging' word that has 'a shaming or degrading effect' on those it is used against. A slur is racist when it is targeted on someone or group based on their biological features perceived to be different and inferior. One can argue that Aethiops is a slur because it describes a section of humanity's skin colour as something charred by the scorching sun. From the preceding, it may then be viewed as opprobrious to name a people with such a slur. The suggestion that Africans from the south have dark skin pigmentation because the sun-burnt or charred them does not come across as charitable. And to describe a people with a name that harboured such interpretation, one may argue, can amount to using it as a slur. So, one can argue that a possible motivation for naming people from the south of the continent 'Aethiops' can be a desire for othering, that can be defined as a discrimination or subordination that marks a people out as belonging to an out-group, and intended to present them as inferior or lower in class (Brons, 2015, p. 70; Powell & Menendian, 2016, p. 14). What applies to Aethiops here seems pretty much to apply to Africa. Both can be seen as cognates insofar as the sun or hot climate is a common index in their etymologies.

The second name is 'Africa' derived from *aphrike* (later Greek history), which means without cold, or *aprica* (Roman history), which means sunny (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1974, p. 117, as cited in Ramose, 2003, p. 114).Footnote² Here again, we find two European sources of the name Africa, both of which refer to the region's climate. In the first name, Aethiops, the same sunny climate was invoked to describe the skin colour of the inhabitants in the south of the continent in a way that is arguably hideous. In the second, such a direct application on the inhabitants was not made, but when we use the name Africa as we do nowadays for the continent or its peoples, especially those from the south, it suddenly becomes obvious that the implication was there all along. For example, the descriptor 'Africans' would mean sunny people or those who inhabit the region that is without cold. Not only is it false that the continent is without cold, but there is also probably a false impression given of the continent as a region where the sun chars the human skin.

Again, we find in the preceding another uncharitable motivation for naming the northern part, and later the entire continent and its peoples. A motivation that seems directed at disregarding various civilisational accomplishments of the region leads to a misrepresentation of the people's identity. This motivation appears to have been inspired by ignorance or lack of

respect. Whichever one it is, it seems uncharitable to set aside a rich civilisational history of the peoples of the continent in naming them.

Further, by pointing at climate, the European namer silences the history and civilisations of the people. It is as if those people do not exist. The climate-driven name 'Africa' can amount to a denial of the people, their existence and contributions to world history and civilisation. This supports our argument that 'Africa' can be viewed as a slur, especially in this age of racism, and that the imposition of the name on the continent by Europeans can be interpreted as a form of epistemic subordination of the inhabitants and their cultures.

If we add to the above our earlier discussion on the metaphysical and psychological import of naming, then we would observe that the European naming of a continent and its peoples is an anomaly. No continent or people should have the right to name another. If, for any reason at all, people have been named by another in the past, it is their duty to rename themselves. And this should apply not just to the continent but to countries as well. In Africa today, while some countries have changed their colonial names at independence, there are others that are yet to do so.

When we consider the meanings of 'Aethiops' and 'Africa', one becomes further emboldened to argue for the abandonment of the names. In the present age, following the evils of racialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, it is not out of place to think of the two names as racial slurs. A racial slur is an expression or an attribution aimed at denigrating or subordinating the individual or a people it refers to. It is used to describe a person or people believed to be members of an out-group by someone or persons who think of themselves as members of an ingroup. As John Moland paraphrases Rodale, 'A racial or ethnic slur is a remark or statement designed to defame, vilify, belittle, and insult members of a racial or ethnic group, usually by those who are not members of that racial or ethnic group' (Moland, 2007, p. 1; see also Rodale, 1986, p. 1125). Moland goes on to indicate that "Examples of racial and ethnic slurs include expressions such as 'miserly jew,' 'gook,' 'jap,' 'red savage,' 'mongrel,' 'half-breed,' 'sambo,' 'spook,' 'nigger,' 'coon,' and 'kike'" (2007, p. 1). We argue that terms like 'black', 'Aethiops', 'Africa/n', etc., can now be added to this list.

Usually, members of an ingroup think of themselves as superior to those they designate as out-group whom they use slurs to demean as inferior, often without any tangible basis. Thus, slurs serve as the only basis for the claims that one group is inferior to the other. The creation of slurs often overlooks all historical accomplishments and cultural accumulations and focuses on peripherals, portraying people as underwhelming. The names Aethiops, black and Africa, which were coined and used to describe the people of the continent by the Europeans clearly establish the mark of ingroup/out-group dichotomy in which those so described are subordinated. The underlying motivation for slurs appears to be group-based hate and dislike, and in some cases, self-doubt or low self-esteem. One who is ultimately superior would not employ an underhanded strategy to display or demonstrate it. This point was made by Moland as follows:

Racial and ethnic slurs reflect the attitudes and beliefs of individuals and groups, on both conscious and unconscious levels, to make another group, generally a group with less power, the target of the slurs. For this reason, there is for both the user and the target of the slurs a variety of psychological, emotional, and behavioral actions and counteractions. (2007, p. 1)

One way to combat slurs is to reject them and enshrine that in official policies. If, as is the case with the continent named Africa, a slur has become its name, it is the duty of intellectuals, political leaders and policymakers in such places to rename their continent or country. We have quite a handful of examples in history. The territory of Zambezi that later became the two

Southern Africa countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe were officially named Rhodesia (Northern and Southern) in 1895 in honour of a British Merchant and colonist Cecil Rhodes.^{Footnote³} The implication was that the history of those peoples began with Cecil Rhodes' business exploitations. This is false and humiliating. As a result, the two nations changed the names as soon as they secured their independence.

Similarly, the West African country Ghana was named Gold Coast by the European exploiters. It was a name that ignored the people's millennia-old histories and highlighted gold as the only thing of note in the country. To correct this false impression, the leaders of the nation renamed it at independence. Ghana, which means 'warrior king'^{Footnote⁴} and refers to the accomplishments of the people during their medieval history, is a name that highlights the legacies of the people rather than a certain raw material exploited by the Europeans.

Indeed, there are several examples, but another one that deserves mention is the West African country Burkina Faso formerly named Upper Volta by European merchants and colonialist. It was a name that served as a geography marker. The European namers completely ignored the rich cultures and civilisational histories of the people. It was as if they were naming an uninhabited wilderness. However, a few years after independence, they renamed their country Burkina Faso, which means 'land of the upright or honest or incorruptible people'.^{Footnote⁵} This is to highlight the moral and cultural legacies of their people.

Even though several other countries on the continent continue to bear their colonial names, the fact that others changed theirs is an indication that naming is taken seriously in many parts of the continent, as earlier demonstrated. It is not a joyous thing that some countries like Ivory Coast are sticking with their colonial names.^{Footnote⁶} The naming of a country in honour of a material such as ivory obtained by killing elephants in great numbers is not one of the most responsible things to do. One century ago, the elephant population in Ivory Coast numbered in thousands. Colonial poaching drastically reduced that number to a few hundreds. A recent study shows that there are just about 200 elephants left in Ivory Coast's forests (Lu, 2020). Nowadays, poaching and similar activities of sourcing ivory and other animal materials have been outlawed in many parts of the world. So, there is an admission that such a practice from which the country was named was immoral and, consequently, illegal. Shouldn't the leaders of the country change the name? Not only is the name 'Ivory Coast', a legacy of crime, but much of the ivory wealth also went to the European colonialists. So, it is also a legacy of exploitation. Added to these is the fact that the name highlights a resource and silences the millennia-old cultures and histories of the people. The same goes for other countries like Nigeria, named after River Niger^{Footnote⁷} by a British journalist Flora Shaw who later became the wife of Frederick Lugard, the colonial Governor-General. Also, Mozambique, named after an Arab slave trader Mussa Al-Bik by the Portuguese,^{Footnote⁸} and South Africa, named so by the English and Dutch traders and settlers at the formation of the state in 1910.^{Footnote⁹} None of the three examples pointed at the cultural or millennia-old histories of the native inhabitants. While two of them pointed at the landmarks that immortalised European navigations, one was in honour of an Arab slave trader. These lend credence to our argument that some of those names should be changed.

On the whole, we can see that the motivations for the European naming of the continent and, indeed, several other countries are those that disregarded the cultures and histories of the inhabitants. In some situations, the climate is used to denigrate and subordinate the people. In some others, it was economic exploitation. Yet, in others, like Northern and Southern Rhodesia, the legacies of large-scale exploitation and racialism perpetuated by Cecil Rhodes appeared to have been immortalised. The justification for the change of names by the post-independence leaders of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, etc., constitutes a similar ground for the change of the name of the continent.

Renaming the continent: a proposal

Although Tsri problematised the name 'black,' and Ramose problematised the name 'Africa,' it is still hard to accept that enough has been done. Arguments we have proffered so far suggest that there might be a need to categorise both terms as slurs, abandon them, and rename the continent and its peoples. Thus, we transcend both Tsri and Ramose by depicting the concepts as slurs and by proposing a new name for the continent and its peoples. We will now aim at taking up the gauntlet of going beyond Ramose, who problematised the name Africa, to call for its renaming momentarily.

One pretty name comes to mind already, and it is 'anaesia' [ana esi, the land or place from which ...] which in Igbo language means 'land of origin'. After all, anthropologists, sociologists, palaeontologists, and geographers all agree that the first humans lived on this continent from where they migrated to other continents. That is a kind of legacy worth portraying.

A true journey of self-rediscovery by the inhabitants of the continent must begin with renaming the continent. It would be a symbolic gesture that they are ready to take back their destiny and restore the dignity of humans in that part of the world. In recent times, some persons who are interested in retrieving the continent's lost glory have floated the name 'Alkebulan' as the original name of the continent. One internet source claimed that it was an Arabic for 'The Land of the Blacks' (Cyon, 2014). The challenge with this name is that besides the reference to skin colour, there is no serious source that authenticates it. Even though another internet source (Ochuko, 2020), claims that the respected Senegalese historian and Egyptologist Cheikh Anta Diop had discussed it in one of his book titled *Kemetic History of Africa* where he purportedly traced its etymology to an ancient African language. Interestingly, we found no record that Diop authored a book of such title, let alone any record of the book itself. It does appear that the idea of Alkebulan as an ancient name of Africa is an internet hoax.

Here, we want to propose the name 'Anaesia' as a veritable replacement derived from 'ana and esi', two words in Igbo-African language that mean 'land or place of origin.'Footnote¹⁰ Our case for the abandonment of the name Africa and its replacement with Anaesia is based on two arguments: dignity and epistemic subordination. Concerning the first, one can argue that the imposition of the name on the continent residualises its inhabitants. For example, it can be argued that the naming processes vitiate the human dignity of those who are given a name that referred to unfriendly climate and the latter's effect on the skin. Again, that the name of their continent by which they are also called was given to them by European exploiters, slavers and colonists further indicate the inappropriateness of the name. It may seem that just as the slavers renamed their victims and the colonists renamed the territories they conquered, the name Africa/ns similarly was an imposition on the continent and its peoples. With regard to the second, one can argue that the naming of the continent signalled epistemic subordination. For example, it can create the impression that European slavers took it upon themselves to give the inhabitants a name – an identity – because it was something they could not do for themselves. We can recall Placide Tempels proclamation that it was the duty of the European to construct the philosophy of the Bantu for them, which suggested that the Bantu may not have what it takes to frame their philosophy (Tempels, 1959). This appears more like an attempt to subordinate the episteme of people by questioning their intellectual ability. Thus, the inhabitants of the continent are by so doing presented as an inferior other whose millennia-old civilisational achievements can be comfortably overlooked in imposing a name on them. In ethnic studies, the 'self-other' mindset often compels in-groups to create slurs with which they castigate those they perceive as out-groups. With this mindset, the Hebrews of old created the slur of 'gentiles' that they used for othering peoples whom they believed to be outsiders. With this mindset, also, the slave masters in North America created the slur of 'Nigger' by which they subordinated those they enslaved. The Nazi also used 'Judenscheisse' (Jewishshit) or 'Untermensch' (subhuman) to describe Jews and eastern Europeans.Footnote¹¹

Anaesia is a name that highlights the historical and civilisational contributions of the place and peoples. Archaeologists and historians inform us that the first humans lived on the continent from where some migrated to other parts of the world. Linguists also inform us that the first human language was spoken on the continent. All these imply that the first human civilisations emerged on the continent (See Bernal, 1987). These are very rich historical facts to appeal to when renaming the continent, and Anaesia which means 'The Land or place of Origin' appropriately captures all these.

From the foregoing, there are a few implications that this new name would have. First, the continent's south and north points would be called Southern and Northern Anaesia, and no longer 'sub-Sahara' and North Africa. The prefix 'sub' is compromised, signifying that which is beneath, below or 'sub-ordinated'. Second, the country South Africa, if they choose to retain their colonial name, would naturally become South Anaesia, while the west and east points of the continent would become Western and Eastern Anaesia, respectively.

Some objections could be raised against our proposal here. Some may question why the entire continent should be named from one of its multiple languages given that the Igbo language is not Africa's lingua franca. As a result, they may question the possibility of the rest of the continent accessing the Igbo world and the name Anaesia. Others may question our authority to propose a new name for the entire continent. These are legitimate concerns. However, it is important for us to realise that what we are doing is exercise of scholars' poetic license. As philosophers, we have the liberty to create and propose a new idea, and since it seems daunting to create a name from thousands of languages in Africa, most of which the authors do not speak, we can make do with one of the African languages we understand. Also, it seems feasible that a new name can be derived from one language or a few languages than from all the languages spoken on the continent. What appears more important is the meaning of such a name. The meaning of Anaesia, as the land of origin, is something the rest of the continent can access, which speaks to the history and heritage of the continent. Also, the fact that it was derived from an indigenous African language and not the language of the colonialists is another positive about the new proposal. Finally, Anaesia is a proposal and not a finality. It is merely intended to open a discussion on the subject of renaming the continent.

Conclusion

Racial slurs are bad in themselves. This is chiefly because they segregate and subordinate any section of humanity they are used against. Slurs subject people to gross indignity, which leave both social and psychological scars on the victims. Worthy of mention is that slurs do not usually have bases in facts. They are mostly baseless claims. Where there is a connection with facts at all, it is usually peripheral. It becomes worrisome when such claims are deployed in name-calling to dehumanise victims. In the case of cognates such as Aethiops, Blacks, Africans, etc., references are made mostly to skin colour and the type of climate that is believed to produce dark skin. These are peripheral compared to the millennia-old history and civilisational contributions that the continent's inhabitants have made. It is on accounts of baselessness, offensiveness and peripherality of the name 'Africa,' that we designate it as a slur and advocate its abandonment. As a replacement, we have made a proposal for a new name, 'Anaesia' based on the facts of the people's contributions to world history and civilisation. It is our hope and expectation that critical engagements will ensue amongst researchers in race and indigenous studies to challenge or affirm the suitability of our new proposal.

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Notes

1. An examination of Tsri's arguments has been provided in Chimakonam (2018, 2019).
2. In fact, there are various etymological origins of the name Africa. Besides the Greek and Roman, there is the Phoenician, etc., origins, most of which refer to the harsh climate. We cannot discuss all these sources in detail. We identify the Greek and the Roman as the most convincing, and as a result, will dwell more on those.
3. See Blake (1977, pp. 113–115). See also the timeline at <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191737589.timeline.0001>
4. <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/countries/23424824/#:~:text=The%20word%20Ghana%20means%20%22Warrior,and%20the%20Fante%20among%20others.>
5. See <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>
6. See https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/C%C3%B4te_d'Ivoire
7. https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/birth-of-the-nigerian-colony-pan-atlantic-university/ARi_MKdz?hl=en
8. See <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/Mozambique/>
9. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094918>
10. This endeavour is not an easy one, especially as no continent has ever been renamed before now. So, there is a problem on how to go about it and which language(s) to use. But one can argue that the fact that it has not been done does not mean it cannot be done, especially where there is a strong motivation that the name Africa could be interpreted as a racial slur. We are putting out our proposal as a suggestion that can set the discussion on and not as a final opinion.
11. See Gumkowski et al. (1961).

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