

LES BLANCS " The Whites"

By: Lorraine Hansberry

Theatre Emory 2020

Dramaturgy

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LORRAINE HANSBERRY **4**
Early Life 4
Freedom Newspaper 4
Politics and Civil Rights 5
Awards and Honors 6
Fun Facts 7

Production History **8**
A Play Left Incomplete. Development & Inspiration 8
50 Years of Critical Response (1970-2020) 10

The Lens of Les Blancs **12**
Synopsis 12
Where in the World are We? 13
African Personality - Language, Rituals, Spirituality 15
RITUAL: Performance and Forms of Language 16
Music 16
Dance 19
Modingo & Folklore 21
"African Theatre Has Existed Since the Beginning" 21
Masks 22
Adinkra Symbols (Cloth + Robes) 23

Mau Mau Oath- Decolonizing the Mind 24
Funerals 25
Spirituality 25
Warriors 27
Warrior Women 27
Weapons of and Against Colonialism: 28
MISSIONS 29
EDUCATION + LANGUAGE 30
Nkrumah's Africanization Model 31
COMMERCIALIZING LAND 31

Les Blancs Cultural (Historical) Connections 33
African Liberation Movements 33
Timeline of Les Blancs development and the African Liberation Movement 33
Pan-Africanism- Where Global African Leaders Connect 34
The 1945 Pan-African Congress: 34
Ghana + Nkrumah's Pan-African Freedom 36
Kenya + Mau Mau Uprising 37
American Civil Rights - Where did Hansberry lie? 38
MLK Peace v. Malcolm X Violence 38
Leaders of Revolution 39
Malcolm X 39
W. E. B. Du Bois 39
William Leo Hansberry 39
Nkrumah - Ghana 40
Kenyatta - Kenya 40
Alf Kumalo 41
Abioseh Davidson Nicol 41
Albert Schweitzer (Rev. Neilsen inspiration) 42

Current Connections 43
Activism 43
Black Activism 43
Healing: Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome - Joy Degruy 44
Black Activism and Healing Resources: 45
Non-Black Activism 45
Africa Today 46
Black Lives Matter 48
African- American: Embracing Complexity of African Identity 49
Diaspora vs. Pan - Africanism 49
Toxic White Liberalism 50

Want More to "Decolonize the Mind"? - Further Exploration 51
Listen 51
Watch 51

Read 52

Glossary (in order of appearance) 53

Prologue 53

Act 1 55

A1. Scene 1 55

A1. Scene 2 60

A1. Scene 3 65

Act 2 73

A2. Scene 1 73

A2. Scene 2 74

A2. Scene 3 77

A2. Scene 4 78

A2. Scene 5 79

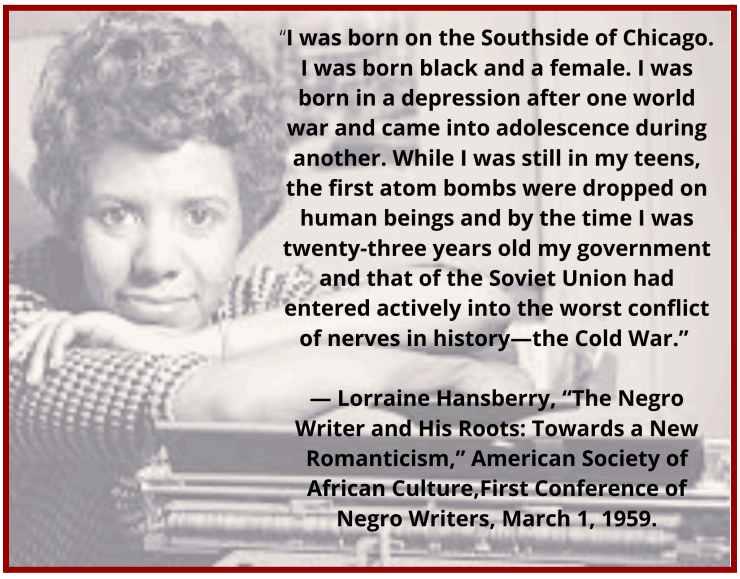
A2. Scene 6 81

A2. Scene 8 81

Pronunciation Guide - Names and Prominent Terms 83

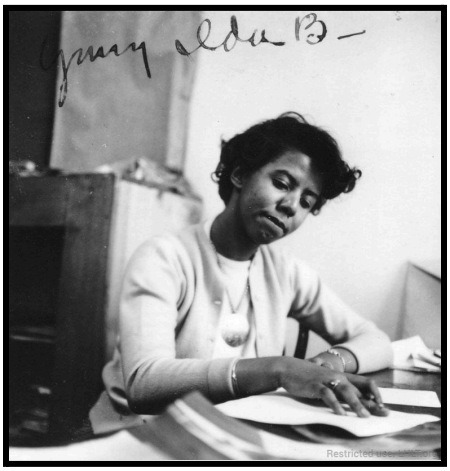
Bibliography 85

LORRAINE HANSBERRY



Early Life

Lorraine Hansberry was born in the Southside of Chicago in 1930, "to parents whose wealth and social status helped buffer their family in her early years from the full brunt of the Depression. Her mother, Nannie Hansberry, was a teacher and a representative in local politics. Her father, Carl Hansberry, made enough money in the real estate business… The influence of her parents' social network, combined with her early exposure to racism, helped radicalize Hansberry when she was still young. In 1937, when she was 7, the family moved into a home in Washington Park, a white neighborhood, where angry white mobs gathered in the hopes of forcing them out. Around the same time, a segregationist landowners' association challenged the sale. While he was away fighting for their legal right to remain in their new home, Nannie Hansberry stayed up in the evenings with a pistol to protect their children. Though Carl Hansberry ultimately prevailed in a Supreme Court case, Hansberry v. Lee, in 1940, his daughter's experience in Washington Park taught her that wealth and the legal system provided no guaranteed security against racism." (Rodriques)



Freedom Newspaper

When Hansberry was 20, she moved to New York to pursue a career as a writer. From about 1951-1953 she worked as a full time writer and associate editor at *Freedom* newspaper, and left working full-time at *Freedom* in 1953 after she married Robert Nemiroff, but occasionally contributed until about 1955 when she decided to focus on her writing. At *Freedom*, Hansberry worked with people such as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois. *Freedom* was known for their Pan-Africanist ideology, their original motto was "Where one is enslaved, all are in chains!", and frequently wrote about labor movements, and international issues such as anti-colonial struggles. "She wrote in support of the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, criticizing the mainstream press for its biased coverage. Much Of her work during the 1950s concerned the African struggle for liberation, the appeal of nationalism and its painful contradictions." (Gordon) She was also a student of Du Bois' and held great respect and admiration for Du Bois. "Hansberry's admiration for Du Bois was total. In a journal entry, she called him 'freedom's passion, refined and organized.'" (Cunningham) One of Hansberry's earliest projects for *Freedom* was as a participant-reporter on a meeting/protest by the "Sojourners for Truth

and Justice," a group of over 130 women with lefitst Black Feminist ideology responding to government attacks on Black interllectuals and activists.

Politics and Civil Rights

Early Political Education and Conscious Building

During her time at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Hanberry began to get involved with organizations such as the Young Progressives of American (YPA) and the Labor Youth League (LYL). After leaving college, Hansberry studied under W.E.B Du Bois at the Jefferson School of Social Science because of her developing interest in African affairs.



Intervention in the Civil Rights Movement

In May of 1963 Hansberry, alongside many other cultural leaders and activists such as James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, Clarence Benjamin Jones, and more, attended a meeting organized by Baldwin with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to discuss the state of race-relations in American. "During the meeting, Kennedy spoke to the more famous intellectuals, ignoring Jerome Smith, a founder of the New Orleans chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality… she told Kennedy, 'You have a great many very accomplished people in this room, Mr. Attorney General, but the only man you should be listening to is that man [Smith] over there.' After a moment in which Kennedy sat absolutely still, staring at her, she added, 'That is the voice of twenty-two million people.'" (The Good of All: Lorraine Hansberry's Radical Imagination)



African Liberation Movements

"Hansberry grew increasingly interested in what was happening abroad. In a letter to Reporter magazine, she declared her support for Jomo Kenyatta, an anti-colonial activist in Kenya arrested for his putative affiliation with the Mau Maus, a militant group that fought to expel the occupying British colonial forces. Her growing internationalism was motivated by her belief that the battle against racism must be fought on all fronts and that any progress on the home front was only a beginning: Colonialism and capitalism still needed to be uprooted." (Rodriques)

"Hansberry wrote a letter to The New York Times, arguing that "Negro leaders" who gained their position by telling "the white community exactly what the white community has made it clear it wishes to hear" shirk their duties to black people around the world. African American equality also required anti-colonial liberation."(Rodriques)

The Black Revolution and White Backlash

"I sat down and wrote a letter to the New York Times about the fact that I am of a generation of Negroes that comes after a whole lot of other generations and my father, for instance, who was, you know, real "American" type American: successful businessman, very civic-minded and so forth; was the sort of American who put a great deal of money, a great deal of his really extraordinary talents and a great deal of passion into everything that we say is the American way of going after goals."

"And I wrote to the Times and said, you know, "Can't you understand that this is the perspective from which we are now speaking? It isn't as if we got up today and said, you know, 'what can we do to irritate America?' " [laughter] you know. It's because that since 1619, Negroes have tried every method of communication, of transformation of their situation from petition to the vote, everything. We've tried it all. There isn't anything that hasn't been exhausted. Isn't it rather remarkable that we can talk about a people who were publishing newspapers while they were still in slavery in 1827, you see? We've been doing everything, writing editorials, Mr. Wechsler, for a long time, you know."

Read the full speech here or listen here

Awards and Honors

1957 - First African-American Woman to be produced on Broadway

1959 - New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play of the year for *A Raisin in the Sun*

1960 - Named an Honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta at their national convention in Chicago

1961 - Screen Writers Guild Award nomination for best screenplay
Cannes Film Festival Award,for the film version of A Raisin in the Sun

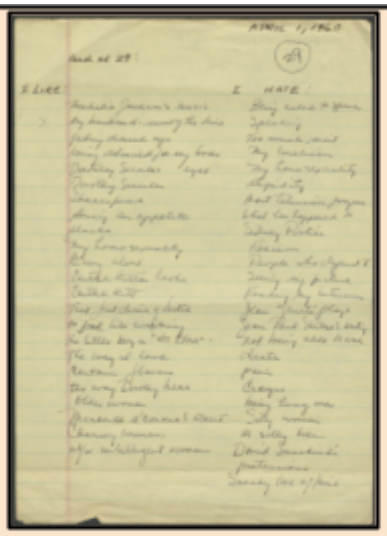
1999 - Inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame

2010 - Inducted into the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame

2013 - Inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display which celebrates LGBT history and people
Inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame.

2017 - Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

Fun Facts



Hansberry wrote about some of her likes and hates in her journal, some interesting entries include: "my homosexuality" for both like and hate, hating Sidney Poitier and speaking, and liking Mahalia Jackson's music

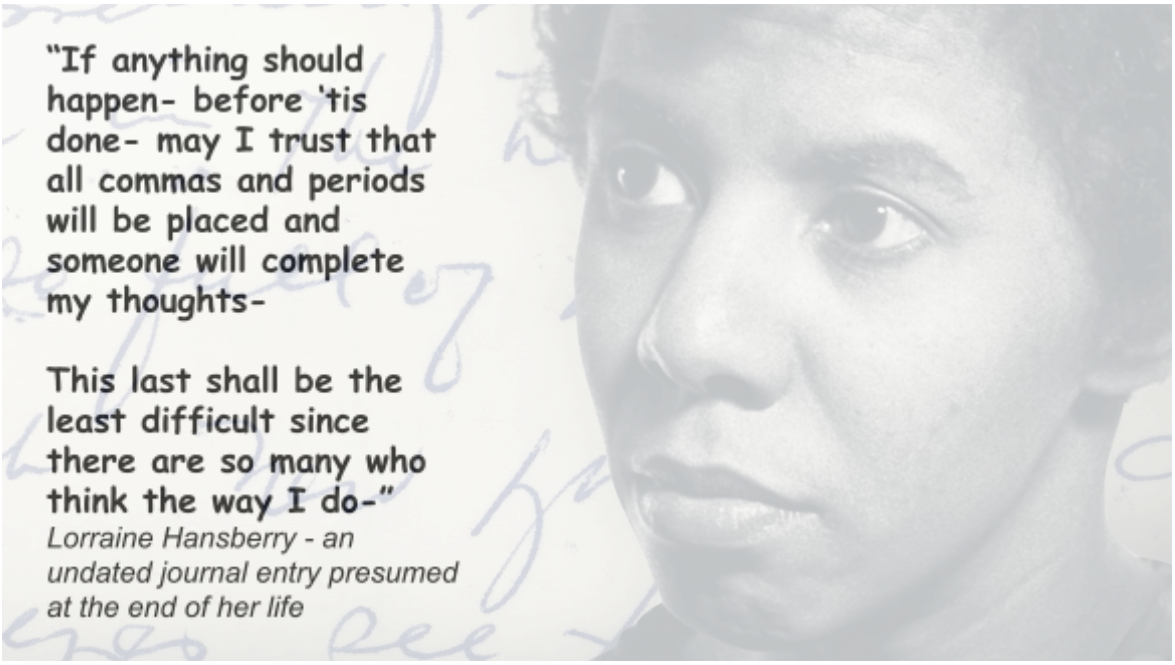


Lorraine Hansberry and Nina Simone were good friend. Nina Simone was inspired by Hansberry when Simone wrote the song "Young, Gifted, and Black." Hansberry was the godmother of Lisa Simone, Nina's daughter

In 1957, Hansberry joined the Daughters of Belitis, an lesbian, feminist organization, and would write letters to and contributions for queer magazines such as *The Ladder* often under pseudonyms.

Hansberry, like many Black artists and activists, was heavily spied on by the FBI

Lorraine Hansberry FBI Files



Production History

A Play Left Incomplete. *Development & Inspiration*

At the time of her death. In her final diary entry, poignantly, Hansberry expressed her desire for someone has to finish this play (Above quote) *Les Blancs* consists of three **almost** finished drafts of the play — each of them taking a radically different approach — as well as research clippings and notes. The play, a source of great passion and angst to Hansberry, **remained unfinished** a
Aware she was short on time, Hansberry insisted others complete her vision. So who did? Her ex-husband: Robert Nemiroff - Her Literary Executor and... a White Man. Which leaves authorial intent slightly harder to grasp and in need of extra TLC with Hansberry and the historical context.It may be impossible to know how much of **Les Blancs** in its present state was Hansberry's creation, and how much her original intent may have been changed, consciously or not, by Nemiroff's work.



Lorraine Hansberry playing with Robert Nemiroff's hair in the backyard of their home in Croton-on-Hudson. Hansberry and Nemiroff met in 1952, on a picket line protesting the segregation of New York University basketball teams. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Nemiroff was completing a graduate degree in English at NYU. They married in 1953 and divorced in 1964; Hansberry named Nemiroff as the executor of her literary estate.

LHLT private collection:
https://www.lhlt.org/gallery/lorraine-hansberry-playing-robert-nemiroff%E2%80%99s-hair

Play Development Timeline

The original title of this play was ***Fungus!***

Then ***Les Blancs: The Holy Ones***

Landed at ***Les Blancs (The Whites)***

1960 Hansberry has an "immediate visceral response" (Nemiroff) to Jean Genets *"The Blacks: A Clown Show"*

There were 17 African nations that gained their independence from colonial powers Britain, France and Belgium.

1960-1965 Hansberry wrote 3 incomplete drafts as she also battles cancer
Play Workshop: She took what would later become Act I scene iii to the Actor's Studio Writer's Workshop where, encouraged by the response, she witnessed the only performance of *Les Blancs* to happen in her lifetime.

1965 Hansberry laid to rest.

1966 Neminroff completed another "Preliminary draft" based on notes and detailed conversations with Hansberry before death

1970 First Produced in New York, Longacre Theatre, November 15, 1970. Directed by John Berry.

2016 National Thatre Company Production in London: https://youtu.be/C14W75HUaic
The production received rave reviews from London news outlets (check them out here, here, and here)

2020 - During COVID, National Theatre Company released Les Blancs for streaming (July 2-9)

50 Years of Critical Response (1970-2020)

" I wonder how much Miss Hansberry knew or Mr. Nemiroff really knows about Africa? I think they were using Africa as an allegory of America.... **It is obvious that they are trying to tell us something about America — and I think they would have done better to have told it to us straight."**
-New York Times' Clive Barnes, November 16, 1970

An audience so personally involved, so visibly affected

"A **sense of emotional investment** throughout the audience- black, white audience- partly a celebration of the spirit of the playwright, partly a response partly a response to the nature of the material. Much cheering... some scattered heckling, and a disturbance at the back of the house... **At best, an audience feeling at stake**... "- *The Village Voice*, Arthur Sainer, 1970

"Pervading dullness and didactism"
-Alvin Klein, 1970

"The opening night **audience responded violently**. Every time the whites were insulted on stage, the blacks applauded... One black militant was led from the theatre screaming.... Les Blancs is, if you forgive me, **too black and white**"
- Rex Reed *The Sunday News, 1970*

Ranging, quickwitted, ruefully savage **examination of the state of the African mind today... ready to stand without apology** ...it achieves an internal pressure, a demand that you listen to it, that is quite rare on our stages today- *The New York Times*, Walter Kerr, 1970

"the result is unmitigated disaster... **a play unfinished- or finished off- by white liberals** that does its utmost to justify the slaughter of whites by blacks... it is a malodorous, unenlightening mess.
- John Simon, 1970

"I didn't see Les Blancs live at the National Theatre and the biggest reason was that **I couldn't deal with sitting amongst a predominantly white audience to see another play exploring racism and colonisation.** From some faux gasps of outrage, to the brutalisation of Black bodies before my eyes, to the demands of white strangers during the interval or post-show to "know my thoughts," **it is exhausting to feel unsafe** in what is my creative haven: the theatre.
- Jennifer Farmer, 2020

""Les Blancs" sits differently in Britain than it would in the U.S. Written as the American civil rights movement was **splintering into violent and non-violent factions... It asks to be heard — really heard — rather than believed** - Matt Trueman, 2016 *Variety*

"Audiences at the National don't often applaud an individual speech. They are also slower than most to get up on their pins at the end. **The press night for Les Blancs changed their habits**.- Susannah Clapp, *The Guardian*, 2016

The Blacks- "Not a Monolith"



"Not a Monolith"- A Visceral Response

Hansberry wrote and titled **Les Blancs** ("The Whites," originally subtitled "The Holy Ones") in "immediate visceral response" (According to Nemiroff) to Jean Genet's **Les Negres** ("The Blacks: A Clown Show")

The play examines black attainment of power and concludes that empowered blacks would be as susceptible to corruption as ruling whites are.

Hansberry considered Genet's play "a conversation between white men about themselves" and, according to Nemiroff, she wished to write a play in which people of all ethnicities were equal participants in a much-needed "dialogue … whose purpose is neither procrastination nor ego fulfillment but clarity, and whose culminating point is action" ("Critical Background" 32-33).

CHARLIE . . . You really can't get rid of it, can you? The bitterness. No matter how you try, we've done it to you: you do hate white men!

TSHEMBE . . . Mr. Morris, have it your way! No matter what delusions of individuality infect my mind, to you **I am not an individual but a tide, a flood, a monolith: 'the Bla-a-acks!**

With *Les Blancs*, Hansberry disrupts Genet's abstraction and his conversation "haunted by guilt [for 200 years of rape of Africa and] . . . too steeped in the romance of racial exoticism to shed much light on the real confrontation that was coming." (Les Blancs, 46)

TSHEMBE
. . . It's an old problem, really, Orestes … Hamlet … we have so many other things we'd rather be doing.
Tshembe Matoseh tells a befuddled Charlie in a late draft:

Greek & Hamlet allusion?

Like Orestes, Tshembe is a libation bearer, a son come home to mourn his father.

Like Hamlet, he is itinerant, ironic, troubled by the problem of knowledge and the necessity of action.

"Try as he may to live like Shakespeare's avatar of modernity, Hansberry suggests that in times like these one needs to pick up the knife, to fulfill the Greek burdens of virtue, vengeance, and violence."
Drew Lichtenberg ~ Dramaturg and Theater Critic

Lorraine Hansberry was asked:
Which is your favorite Shakespeare play and why?
She said: Favorite? It is like choosing the superiority of autumn days. Mingling titles permits a reply: Othello and Hamlet. Why? There is a sweetness in the former that is in Othello that lingers long after the tragedy is done. A kind of possibility that we suspect in man wherein even its flaw is a tribute. The latter, Hamlet, because there remains a depth in the Prince that, as we all know, constantly re-engages as we mature. And it does seem the wit remains brightest and most instructive in all dramatic literature.

What is the most important result of your familiarity with Shakespeare? What has he given you?,
She said: Comfort and agitation so bound together that they are inseparable. Man, as set down in the plays, is large. Enormous. Capable of anything at all. And yet fragile, too, this view of the human spirit; one feels it ought to be respected and protected and loved rather fiercely. Rollicking times Shakespeare has given me. I love to laugh and his humor is that of everyday, of every man's foible at no man's expense.
To Be Young, Gifted and Black (1995) p. 45. Reprinted from "The Shakespearean Experience Show Poll # 5," Show magazine, February, 1964.

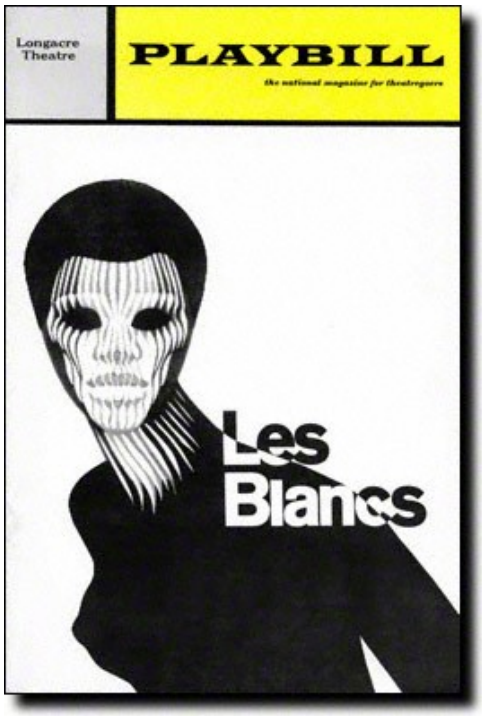
The Lens of Les Blancs

Synopsis

Zatembe (a fictional sub-saharan African village teeters on the edge of civil war. A society prepares to drive out its colonial present and claim an independent future. Racial tensions boil over. Tshembe, returned home from England for his father's funeral, finds himself in the eye of the storm.

Date premiered: November 15, 1970
Place premiered: Longacre Theatre, New York City
Original language: English
Setting: Zatembe, a fictional sub-Saharan African country

> Write about our people: tell their story.
> You have something glorious to draw on begging for attention. Don't pass it up. You have something glorious to draw on begging for attention. Don't pass it up.
>
> Use it. Good luck to you. The Nation needs your gifts.
>
> *Lorraine Hansberry speech, "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black," given to Readers Digest/United Negro College Fund creative writing contest winners, NYC, May 1, 1964.*



Characters

Tshembe Matose
(Shem-beh Mah-toe-say)
Charlie Morris
Madame Neilsen
Major George Rice
Abioseh Matoseh
(Ah-bi-oh-say Mah-toe-say)
Eric
Peter (aka Ntali)
In-tah-lee
(should not sound like word "in", be soft)
Ngago
In-gah-go (ditto on the "in")
Dr. Marta Gotterling
Dr. Willy DeKoven
The Woman

Influential Off-stage Characters

Old Abioseh

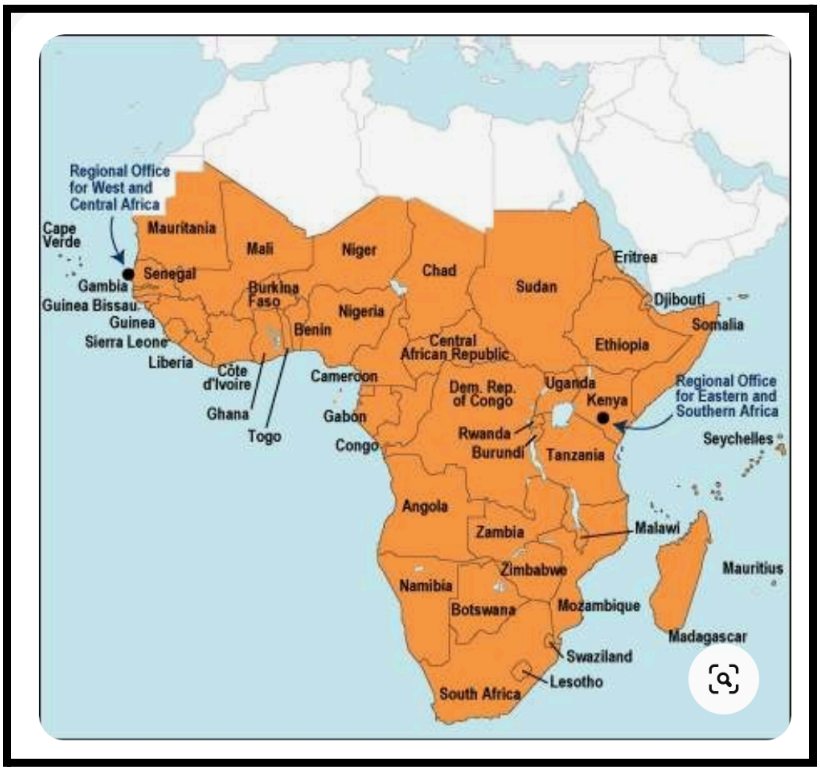
Aquah (deceased)

Amos Kumalo

Reverend Neilsen

Modingo (He Who Thinks Carefully Before He Acts)

Where in the World are We?



Zatembe

A fiction **Sub- Saharan Africa**n village. Throughout you will see references to **Ghana** (the Ashanti tribe) and **Kenya** (the **Gkikuyu** aka Kikuyu, and derogatory Western named Mau Mau).

The Times map of the tribes, peoples, & nations of modern

Significant Mentioned Locations

Two Forks Junction, Nebraska

Another fictional location, however… a few interesting discoveries:

A Word Play? Going Literal with a witty Lorraine

Fork v*erb*

(especially of a road or other route) divide into two parts.

"the place where the road forks"

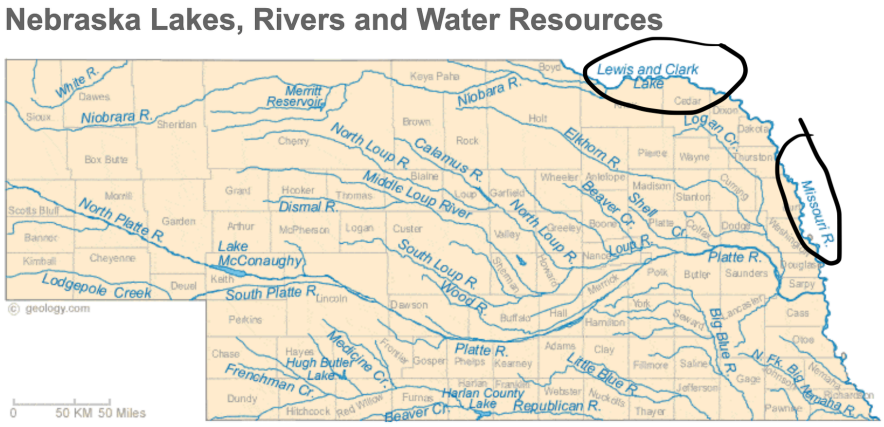
Junction *noun*

1. a point where two or more things are joined.
   "the junction of the two rivers"
2. a region of transition in a semiconductor between a part where conduction is mainly by electrons and a part where it is mainly by holes.

The Missouri River intersects with "Lewis and Clark Lake" in Nebraska

Who were Lewis & Clark? Glad you asked:

They are best known for their expedition from the Mississippi River to the West Coast and back called the Corps of Discovery. It was President Thomas Jefferson's project to explore the American West.



"When Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark into the West, he patterned their mission on the methods of Enlightenment science: to observe, collect, document, and classify…

One of Lewis and Clark's missions was to open diplomatic relations between the United States and the Indian nations of the West.... When the two groups met—whether for trade or diplomacy—each tried to reshape the other in their own image. Lewis and Clark sought to impose their own notions of hierarchy on Indians by "making chiefs" with medals, printed certificates, and gifts. Native people tried to impose the obligations of kinship on the visitors by means of adoption ceremonies, shared names, and ritual gifts."

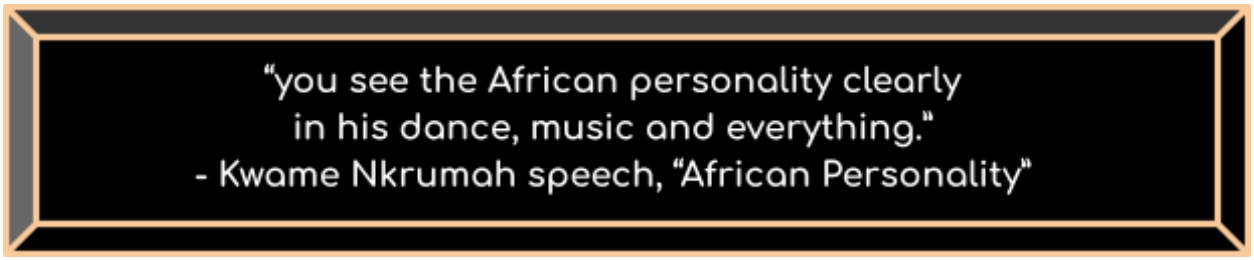
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lewisandclark/lewis-landc.html |
https://gisgeography.com/nebraska-lakes-rivers-map/

Hyde Park

I *worried about such things for years then, one day, sitting on a bench in Hyde Park... - Tshembe 60*

Famous for being the largest park in the central park & the royal parks of **London** and for it's speaker's corner.
Speakers' Corner, located at the northeastern edge of London's Hyde Park near the Marble Arch, gained unofficial status as a "right to speak" area in 1872 and has since been considered a special free speech zone.

African Personality - Language, Rituals, Spirituality



The African personality speech was based on a scene in a documentary film Opoku and Nkrumah watched:

> The wife of a drum maker had brought him some food, and as the woman was leaving, the man hit her buttocks
>
> **Nkrumah exclaimed: "that's so African!"**

Nkrumah was convinced that through theater, Africans would be able to bring out things that were African, especially, the African Personality… Nkrumah envisioned African personality as capable of recovery… As Awoonor pointed out, Nkrumah "by Ghana's independence was sharply aware of the fact that t**he disintegration of the African personality was a clear manifestation of some of the important outcome of colonialism or the consequences of colonial experience.** (Botwe-Asamoah 63-64)

****Note the cultures referenced are largely from common African tradition, the Ashanti tribe of Ghana, and the Kikuyu (Mau Mau) of Kenya****

RITUAL: Performance and Forms of Language

> Each African language has precise and indigenous terms for its dramatic concepts and conventions. Outside of a small sprinkling of people, the words drama, theatre, stage, audience etc. are foreign words and incompatible in Africa.
> (Molette, 1986:73)

Nkrumah stressed the Institute of African Studies must pay particular attention to the arts of Africa, for the study of these can enhance our understanding of African institutions and values, and the cultural bonds that unite us. The traditional dances in Ghana, for instance, have "gone into the making of High Life, Calypso and many others," Nkrumah explained. He maintained that appreciation of African art should be "something more than a mere curiosity;" it should open the door to understanding "and respect the mind of the Africans" *Nkrumah, Kwame (1973b). I Speak of Freedom. London: Panaf. (Botwe-Asamoah 61)*

Agikuyu Tribe (Kikuyus of Kenya)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCrDy4aNLag

Music

Talking Drums

Talking drum are any of various types of drums that, by imitating the rhythm and the rise and fall of words in languages, are used as communication devices. Such drums occur in East and West Africa, Melanesia, and Southeast Asia. Five varieties of dùndún pressure drums of the Yoruba and the atumpan and fontom from of the Asante (Ashanti) are especially notable. They send messages up to 20 miles (32 km), where other drummers relay them, quickly spreading tribal news.



More on the Asante Drum Language (of GHANA)

According to Nketia (1963), there are three fundamental modes of drumming among the **Ashanti: signal mode, speech mode, and dance mode.** Although the purpose of the dance mode of drumming is mostly recreational, **the signal and speech modes are played strictly for communication. Unlike typical drumming in Western cultures, Ashanti drumming is often used as a means of communication**.

The idea of using drums to communicate is best exemplified by the atumpan – the Ashanti "talking" drums. Atumpan come in pairs – one drum with a high tone and the other with a low tone. These two

drums are played with “a steady flow of beats, often lacking in regularity or phrasing” (Nketia 1963, 28) to mimic the highs and lows of the local Twi language, which is a tonal language. Although many people of the younger generation can’t understand the words being played on the atumpan, **much of the older generation can understand the drums as well as they can understand someone speaking to them**.

Learn More:

[The Drumming of Traditional Ashanti Healing Ceremonies]

[Legacy of Drums...]

A true Master Drummer has to be called to the drum, often from an early age. This highly respected status that is conferred by other master drummers is not easily earned. Technical agility represents only a stage through which the would-be initiate passes. In African drumming, the title of Master Drummer is given to a Drummer who is well known by other Masters for their high skill and knowledge. It is a title passed down from a master to their pupil, after they have learned all there is to know about the African Drum.
In general, a Master Drummer has given their whole life to **the Spirit of the Drum.**

Kikuyu Story Telling Music Riddles



One main part of the Kikuyu tribe’s music is the storytelling music, or storytelling riddles. All cultures of Kenya have storytelling riddles or music. But the Kikuyu tribe practice a unique / elaborate sung riddle games, which is very different than all the other cultures who practice storytelling songs. Normally exchanged in the evening before storytelling sessions, during the times of daylight. (Paige)

Mau Mau war song:
https://youtu.be/upB_fAwbT10

Coded Language in Song

Coded language concealed issues, as part of rituals. Coded language was also used to identify characters betraying others to the colonial authorities.

Example: For the Mau Mau "Haba Heba ngukumi", meaning, "here we have bedbugs". Bedbugs referred to non-oath partakers (interview Maceru 31/01/2014).

Similarly throughout American Civil Rights, “Code Switching” and code in song was vital.

Highlife



Descendant of traditional Akan music
The Akan culture is the predominant ethnic and linguistic group in Ghana, and the influences of this cultural identity and its traditional music styles serve as the backbone of highlife music. Highlife has a unique melding between traditional and contemporary styles.

Guitar Bands or Dance Band
Highlife gained the most mainstream popularity in Ghana after World War II, splitting into two major styles and scenes: guitar band and dance band. Guitar band highlife music was most widespread in rural parts of the country and represented by **E.K. Nyame and the Akan Trio** became the figureheads of the guitar band highlife style.
Check out here:
https://youtu.be/E_RIagtnmjA

These dance bands are best represented by **E.T. Mensah and the Tempos** – after performing in Accra with Louis Armstrong in 1956, Mensah was known as the "King of Highlife." Mensah's version of dance band highlife was known and loved for including influences from swing, calypso, and Afro-Cuban music.

Check out here: https://youtu.be/-_xyCJ06aZ0

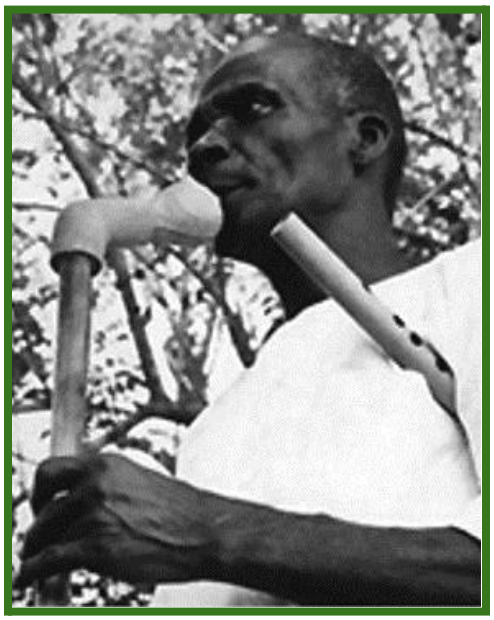
1970s roots revival

Following Ghana's independence in 1956, and the fall of President Kwame Nkrumah 10 years later, Popular
Ghanaian highlife music took a backseat to electric guitar bands and pop music, which filtered into the country from Europe and America. African and American musicians of color (including Wilson Pickett, Ike, Tina Turner, and Carlos Santana) performed together. During this time, Ghanaian youths led a renewed effort to support more traditional forms of music and stage a cultural revival.



E.T.Mensah and the Tempos Band of Ghana. c.1958. Image: BBC Attic

Burger Highlife
When British immigration laws changed in the 1970s, the bulk of Ghanaian emigration redirected towards Germany. Ghanaian immigrants brought highlife music with them, leading to a new form of the genre that included both African and German styles. Burger-highlife, as it became known, gained a huge following back in Ghana as well, especially once it added computer-generated beats. George Darko is considered one of the founding musicians of early burger-highlife trends.



Ephraim Amu - TraditionalGhanaian Crusader + Composer

Perhaps the most outstanding cultural crusader and influential composers of the time, he was devoted to the resonance of African traditions, customs and language. He collected and studied the language and aesthetic of traditional African music. Out of this effort, he created an African choral music in Ghana that has since become a legacy in the country. Though it was to replace European hymns in church service, the motifs and themes in his innovated music reflect African nationalism and folklore. After its debut in the Presbyterian Church, some of the pastors [mostly Africans] considered the music “uncouth sounds and inappropriate to Christian worship.”
But, in an interview he stated “I felt encouraged by the resistance they gave me.”

"Yɛn Ara Asaase Ni" (English: "This Is Our Own Land") is the unofficial national anthem of Ghana. It was written and composed by Ephraim Amu in 1929 and is popularly sung in Twi.
Listen Here!: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K90Lmbpd5PQ

Dance

> It is very simple. In the traditional African educational system, dance is a must for the highly educated person; he must be a good dancer. In songs and movements, the social etiquette, that is where you see these things - Opoku interviewed in 1997 (Botwe-Asamoah)

African traditions greatly emphasize dance, for movement is regarded as an important mode of communication. The dance utilizes symbolic gestures such as props, masks, costumes, body painting, and other visual devices. Every dance and every movement in a dance has a symbolic meaning. Also, not all dances are performed for the same purpose. (Miller)
Examples performed by the Kikuyu tribe are:

- **Warrior Dances** - This type of dance is often performed at cultural events and at funerals. Dance movements are in phrases and mimic battlefield tactics such as stabbing with the end of the horsetail.
- **Dances of Love** -These kind of ritual dances are performed on special occasions, such as weddings and anniversaries. One example is performed solely by women during weddings in honor of the bride.
- **Rites of Passage and Coming of Age Dances** - This is performed to mark the coming of age of young men and women. They give confidence to the dancers who have to perform in front of everyone. This builds pride, as well as a stronger sense of community.
  The Right Of Passage For Kikuyu Boys:
  https://youtu.be/U47IJiacGyM
- **Dances of Welcome –** This is a show of respect and pleasure to visitors, and to show off a little
  KIkuyu Welcome Song:
  https://youtu.be/i3gOWVsgnqI
- **Dances of Possession and Summoning -** These are common themes, and very important in many Traditional African Religions. They all share one common link: a call to a Spirit. These spirits can be the spirits of Plants or Forests, Ancestors, or Deities.

Kikuyu of Kenya + Dance
https://youtu.be/Ms6JlVD8kJ4

Throughout the Kikyu tribe, dancing is taken as a serious matter. It is a symbol of power involving the combination of four forces that are looked upon highly, which are mental energy, muscle strength, force of gravity, and momentum. **These four traits create a skillful dancer. Also, known as a warrior dancer. Warriors represent adulthood, a warrior dancer relates to notions of self-reliance and the concept of manhood. The motion of dancing is also a substitution for feeling powerful.**

Dancing is also seen as a communication tool for the Kikuyu people. **It is more like poetry** because it exhibits specific design features of language. Tribal dances are like telling a story in front of your eyes, but with no words. Dancing is an important factor in ceremonies and religious events because dancing is a sacred skill.

Nzuri Method

Welsh Asante in her "The Aesthetic Conceptualization of Nzuri":

African aesthetics as keeper of traditions will be able to absorb influences, progress and cultures as long as it is located and its development, including influences and amalgamation, is on its terms.
The argument one can present is that when an "outside theory" is modified to fit one's cultural confines, it ceases to be foreign. (Botwe-Asamoah 45) (Welsh Asante)

"The cultural dynamics of a people create a specific aesthetic complexion". For, an artist in traditional "African society does not view society as an impartial observer in order to create, rather society actively gives vision and perspective from which to express one self" (Welsh Asante)

Modingo & Folklore

>>Check it out! African Folktales Podcast<<

https://open.spotify.com/show/31YhMCLi2L4gVVaJRznOtx?si=LV7uRGcuQdyruGOSx-eqng
Kenya's Kikuyu (Mau Mau) Creation Story: The 9 + Daughters of Gikuyu
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NHjbTZgj1U



In Les Blancs she references the folktale of Modingo (He Who Thinks Carefully Before He Acts):

The main protagonist of a children's fable told to Tshembe by Peter in an attempt to recruit him. In the fable, Modingo is a Hyena who is caught in a conflict between Hyenas and Elephants. Modingo decides to listen to both sides before he takes one. He was too slow to act and the Elephants forced the Hyenas out of their home as a result. This is why the Hyena has such a bitter laugh, being the butt of a joke played on them.

> "If language is a memory bank of a people's history, then suppressing and degrading the languages of the colonised 'meant also marginalizing the memory they carried and elevating to universality the memory carried by the language of the conqueror'"
> **(wa Thiong'o 2016: 69)**

African classics meant literary forms cultivated in African societies; they included materials emerging from those forms which are passed on from generations to generations, but which also served as models for creativity. And the simplest kind of materials one would think of were the folk tales and epics.

Why is African Folklore Important?

The rationale was **"that whatever we did we would be able to express ourselves in our own languages," Nkrumah also viewed the collection of oral traditions and documentation of African classics in Arabic and Hausa languages as positive steps toward the rebirth of African history**.
Nkrumah thought of convincing other leaders in the West African sub-region to adopt Hausa as a regional language. (Botwe-Asamoah)

"African Theatre Has Existed Since the Beginning"

Writing in The Black African Theater and its Social Functions, Traoré (1972:17) states that there are myths of the gods and "all the elements necessary for the birth of African theater, in much the same way that the Greek theater was born out of the cult of Dionysus, and European theater from the Christian mysteries." Thus, "if we consider that **theater finds its materials mainly from the folklore," namely "an aggregate of myths, legends, tradition, stories, then we can say that a specific African theater has existed since the beginning of African civilization"** (Asante, 1990:47)(Ibid: 7).

> **In fact contrary to the Greek Theatre Orgins taught in Western study…. Egyptian drama inspired the Greek!**
> The classical Egyptian drama and theater, from which the Greek's got their theater in honor of Dionysius.
>
> Herodotus, in his Book II, for instance, states that "**the Egyptian first brought into use the names of the twelve gods, which the Greeks took over from them, and were the first to assign alters and images and temples to the gods, and to carve figures in stone". He also points out that "the names of nearly all the Gods [Heracles included] came to Greece from Egypt"**

Masks

In most traditional African cultures, the person who wears a ritual mask conceptually loses his or her human identity and turns into the spirit represented by the mask itself. This transformation of the mask wearer into a spirit usually relies on other practices, such as specific types of music and dance, or ritual costumes that contribute to conceal the mask-wearer's human identity. The mask wearer thus becomes a sort of medium that allows for a dialogue between the community and the spirits (usually those of the dead or nature-related spirits). Masked dances are a part of most traditional African ceremonies related to weddings, funerals, initiation rites, and so on.



Commercial masks

As African masks are largely appreciated by Europeans, they are widely commercialized and sold in most tourist-oriented markets and shops in Africa (as well as "ethnic" shops in the Western World). As a consequence, the traditional art of mask-making has gradually ceased to be a privileged, status-related practice, and mass production of masks has become widespread.

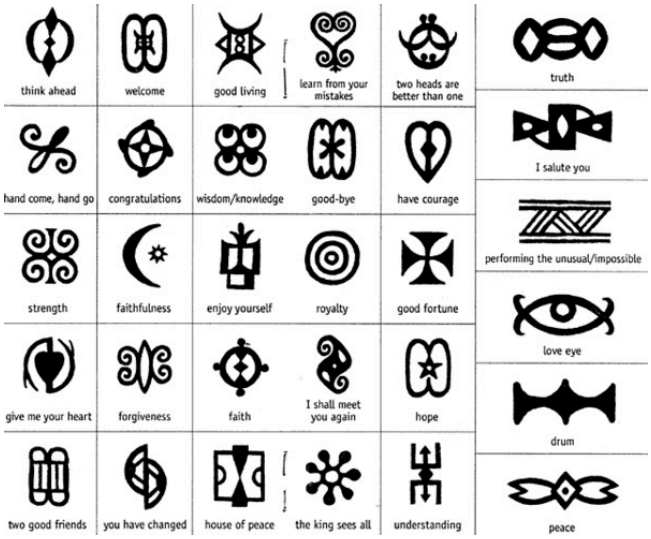


Ancestors (masks of the dead)

As the veneration of defunct ancestors is a fundamental element of most African traditional cultures, it is not surprising that the dead is also a common subject for masks. Masks referring to dead ancestors are most often shaped after a human skull. (“Traditional African Masks”)

Adinkra Symbols (Cloth + Robes)

Adinkra (ah-DEEN-krah) cloth is a hand-printed fabric made in Ghana. Developed by the Ashanti people, Adinkra cloths were traditionally made for royalty to wear at religious ceremonies. Through the years, people have also decorated the cloths to tell a story or to express their thoughts or feelings. (Alistair)



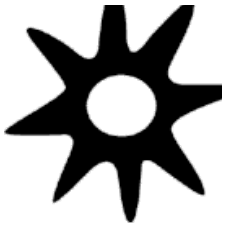
ADINKRA INDEX:
West African Wisdom: Adinkra Symbols & Meanings



DWENNIMMEN "ram's horns"

symbol of humility together with strength

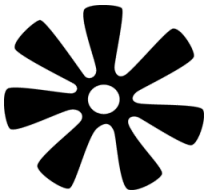
The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble.



NSOROMMA "child of the heavens [stars] "

symbol of guardianship

A reminder that God is the father and watches over all people.



ANANSE NTONTAN "spider's web"

symbol of wisdom, creativity and the complexities of life

Ananse, the spider, is a well-known character in African folktales.



ASASE YE DURU "the Earth has weight"

symbol of providence and the divinity of Mother Earth

This symbol represents the importance of the Earth in sustaining life.

Mau Mau Oath- Decolonizing the Mind

Characteristically, any European belt or iron-like buttons were removed while one was taking an oath. In the case of Mau-Mau rituals, items that "glorified" the view that "white is good, black is bad" were shunned in the process. Even European names such as Julius, John, Wellington, Joyce, Jane, etc. were shunned (interview Wanjiku 03/05/2015).

These rituals were often performed in secret and hidden from colonial British. Reference to **"Warriors going to the forest"** can often be found in what is a secretive and honored form. Hence their form of decolonising the mind began with the idea of keeping away European styles of living, European ecclesiology, and European religiosity among other concerns. Ironically, they could not perfectly do it, as even the clothes they were wearing were indeed Western attires and/or garments. Indeed, there was too much Westernisation that could not be isolated in their new rituals and their discourses of freedom.

In any case, all Mau-Mau combatants (both men and women) were requested to avoid sex during the time of war as "it was a sacred moment" (interview Maceru 31/01/2014). (Botwe-Asamoah #)



Woman taking the Mau Mau Oath
https://sites.google.com/site/maumaurevolution/revolution/mau-mau-tactics/oath-of-mau-mau

The Mau Mau- An African nationalist movement that originated in the 1950s among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. **The Mau Mau (a name given by Europeans - they prefer Gkikuyu) advocated violent resistance as a means to end British domination in Kenya; the movement was especially associated with the ritual oaths employed by leaders of the Kikuyu Central Association to promote unity.**

Their resistance led to the Mau Mau Rebellion of 1952 that pushed to Kenya independence.

Lorraine Hansberry was highly watchful of this process!

Mau Mau war song:
https://youtu.be/upB_fAwbT10

What led to the Mau Mau Rebellion? Must Watch Background
We Must Sin Quietly: Kenya's Colonial Concentration Camps
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPdAgy1vJtI&has_verified=1

British Propaganda making Mau Mau evil: The Mark Of The Mau Mau - Exclusive (1953)

Coded Language in Song

Coded language concealed issues, as part of rituals. Coded language was also used to identify characters betraying others to the colonial authorities.

Example: For the Mau Mau "Haba Heba ngukumi", meaning, "here we have bedbugs". Bedbugs referred to non-oath partakers (interview Maceru 31/01/2014).

Similarly throughout American Civil Rights, "Code Switching" and code in song was vital.

Funerals

The African Concept of Death & The Afterlife

In African society the conception of death is intricately tied to life, in fact they are not mutually exclusive concepts but exist in a continuum. Thus according to many traditions throughout continental Africa, death is merely a rite of passage through to another plain of existence, a transition which does not alter or end the life or change the temperament of a person, but only causes a change in its form. This is expressed in the idea of **"ancestors," i**ndividuals who have died but who continue to "live" in the community and commune with their families. The goal of death is to become an ancestor. For this reason, individuals must be given an "accurate" burial, bounded by abundant religious formalities. (Bondi)
Death and Burial in the African Context: A Case Study On Kenyan Customs And Kenyan Customary Law by Vyonna Bondi

The Burial

Today, the burial is at a cemetery or on the family's land. Some people also choose a simple wood casket. **Traditionally,** amongst the Kikuyu, the dead body was taken out to a burial ground called a kĩbĩrĩra. Certain rituals were practised prior to burial including the careful wrapping of the body with the legs and hands in the sleeping position, and the kĩbĩrĩra would be placed facing the homestead. **Contrary to the belief that the Kikuyu threw all deceased to hyenas, a person of means was accorded a burial.** These burials were often an expensive affair in view of all the rites that had to be paid for in goats and rams.

the Kikuyu people couldn't touch the deceased. They placed those who were dying in the forest or on the hillside. **Then, they made sure they were a specific distance from their village and placed a leash in their right hand. Throughout the day, like at mealtimes, they tugged the leash to let everyone know they're still alive.** When there was no tug on the leash, everyone knew they passed. (Goldade)

After death, usually those who had children even if the children had all died were accorded respect during funeral rites that culminated in a full Gũkũra ceremony which meant among other things that the spirit achieved a status which it would not have had otherwise.

Spirituality

One unique element of African religion is that it cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane. **African spirituality is truly holistic.** For example, sickness in the indigenous African worldview is not only an imbalance of the body, but also an imbalance in one's social life, which can be linked to a breakdown in one's kinship and family relations or even to one's relationship with one's ancestors.

Not Mutually Exclusive: While Islam and Christianity tend to be overtly resistant to adopting traditional African religious ideas or practices, indigenous African religions have always accommodated other beliefs. African spirituality has always been adaptable. It is not a "closed" theological system.

Modern Stats: According to all the major surveys, Christianity and Islam each represent approximately 40 percent of the African population. Christianity is more dominant in the south, while Islam is more dominant in the north. Indigenous African practices tend to be strongest in the central states of Africa, but some form of their practices and beliefs can be found almost anywhere in Africa.

Nevertheless, since 1900, Christians in Africa have grown from approximately 7 million to over 450 million today. Islam has experienced a similar rapid growth.

Yet consider that in 1900 most Africans in sub-Saharan Africa practiced a form of indigenous African religions.

Ancestors

The role of ancestors in the African cosmology has always been significant. A form of inclusivity where the deceased still play a role in the life of descendents.It doesn't have a fixed creed, sol Africans have diverse ideas on what role the ancestors play in the lives of living descendants. Some Africans believe (and is often contested) that the ancestors are equal in power to deities, while others believe they are not**.Overall, ancestors are believed to occupy a higher level of existence than living human beings and are believed to be able to bestow either blessings or illness upon their living descendants.**

Ancestors can

- offer advice
- bestow good fortune honor to their living dependents
- they can make demands (insisting that their shrines be properly maintained)
- Influence consequences of misfortune or illness

https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/

Orishas

The Orishas are the Deities found in many forms of African religious cultures throughout the African Diaspora such as Òrìṣà-Ifá, Santeria and Lucumí in Cuba, and Candomblé in Brazil. In Orisha devotion beliefs, practitioners interact with Orishas to gain Ashé, a life-force energy or power that is contained within all beings, animate or inanimate. Each Orisha has their favorite colors, days, times, foods, drinks, music, and dances. The dances will be used on special occasions to honor the Orisha, or to seek help and guidance. Ashé is believed to be a link between practitioners, the Orisha, and the ancestors.

Kikuyu Religion

The Kikuyu people profess Christianity as their main religion, but many Kikuyu still practice old religious ceremonies and sacrifices, especially during times of dire circumstances. The Kikuyu have long been a monotheistic culture and worshipped the god, Ngai, who is associated with Mt. Kenya. When disease strikes the Kikuyu and reaches epidemic levels, a traditional ceremony called the Battle of the Spirits is performed.

Battle of the Spirits Ceremony

The Kikuyu believe these spirits haunt their households, clinging to bushes, doors, and windows. The spirits are responsible for bringing illness and death to the tribe and must be symbolically fought and defeated. The tribal elders choose a day for the ceremony and the ceremony begins with the sounding of the war horns. All of these weapons must be made of wood and not metal. Metal weapons might cut the spirits and spill their blood upon the ground, defiling it. The Kikuyu beat the spirits from the bushes to the river. Horns resound once more. The weapons are dropped into the river which swept away by the 'river of death'. The Kikuyu beat the dust from their bodies then return home, singing traditional joyful melodies. They cannot look back, however, or else incur the spirits' wrath. The next day the mothers of infants and small children too young to participate in the ceremony shave their children's hair into a cross to ward off spirits, bathe them, and paint them with red ochre.

Warriors

Mau Mau War Song:

https://youtu.be/upB_fAwbT10

Warriorhood in many African cultures represents both a class of community and the primary role as protectors. The Mau Mau warriors were both the people who were at home (mainly women) and those in the forest.

Symbols of War For the Kikuyu

- the traditional **Muthigi** (stick-two pronged)-signifies a power to lead often held by leaders and elders
- the **Itimu na ruhiu rwa njora** (**Spear** and sword) gave power to call people to war (often held by warriors) **Fun Fact:** Jomo Kenyatta, aka Jomo ("Burning Spear") Kenyatta

Warrior Women

Initially, as men fled to the forest, women were not allowed. In time, the rebels realised that women were valuable allies and first allowed single and widowed women, who were trusted to remain secretive. Some became forest fighters. Some inducted into the Inner Secret Council, which was formerly for men only.

> In *Les Blancs*, It is a woman warrior who first appears on an open stage, clutching a spear from the earth and holding it



Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima is a retired top-ranking female fighter in the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army of the Mau Mau Uprising in the 1950s. Few Mau Mau women became active fighters, and Muthoni is the only woman to have attained the Mau Mau rank of field-marshal.



The Kipipiri women were four warriors, wives of the four generals of the Mau Mau who found innovative ways to incorporate their culture and hairstyles in the efforts to defeat British imperialist rule of Kenya. Every full moon, the women would dress themselves in elaborate hairstyles that would be useful in their revolutionary efforts.



Wanjiru Nyamarutu who was known as a "hard core" rebel. She was respected by all rebels, both men and women and changed the perception on how other rebels viewed women and eventually appreciated their role in the revolutionary movement.

Wanjiru belonged to a militant category of freedom fighters who discarded 'western clothes' and wore stitched pieces of cloth wrapped in the traditional Kikuyu style. As a symbolic way of demonstrating allegiance to Mau Mau, young and newly married initiates might have their upper ear lobes pierced, Gukaywo Nyori, and their heads shaved clean as a sign of being pure Kikuyu.

Get to know more women warriors here: Unconventional Inspiration: 6 Historic Women who fought for Kenya using Dance, Hair, and Fashion

Fun Fact: Black Panther's All Female warrior tribe was partly inspired by the Kikuyu Warrior women

Weapons of and Against Colonialism:

"The implications of Western colonialism and North American imperialism upon Africans parallels African Americans as a nation also colonized and oppressed under the device of racism, as Matoseh tells Morris in Act II, Scene 2. Racism is a device for a few to remain in power and rule upon others… By discussing the issue of racism in a different continent, Hansberry is able to engage a North American audience in a problem that concern themselves. The play presents constant allusions to the parallel situation experienced by Africans and African Americans" (Alistair 119)

> **TSHEMBE**
> So, in one century, men invoke the device of religion to cloak their conquests. In another, race. Now, in both cases you and I may recognize the fraudulence of the device, but the fact remains that a man who has a sword run through him because he refuses to become a Moslem or a Christian—or who is shot in Zatembe or Mississippi because he is black—is suffering the utter reality of the device.

The Berlin Conference: "The Rape of a Continent"

This is a reference to the colonization of Africa with devastating impact. The **"rape of a continent"** is another way to phrase the brutal intentionality in which Europeans intentionally divided up and claimed as their own the continent of Africa in the infamous **Berlin Conference**.

Delegates from the world's 14 superpowers gathered on November 15th, 1884 to discuss future trade and colonial control in Africa. Sitting in a room with a large map of Africa, the European powers ruthlessly began carving out the continent. The three month long debates marked the origins of the "Scramble for Africa", which unapologetically increased European influence in the continent.



Before the Conference 10% of Africa was under colonial rule. By the end of the 19th century, 90% of the continent was under European Rule.

The disastrous global impact for the African diaspora is still rooted in many challenges today.

MISSIONS

European colonists on civilising missions saw it as a "duty of humanity" to raise the African to the level of "other men."

European missionaries especially from Portugal, France, Britain, and Germany went to Africa under the premise of going to convert the locals to Christianity. They built clinics and schools that inevitably was leveraged as a tool of colonisation as the missionaries brought an innate Eurocentric sense of superiority. In many cases Christian conversion looked more like European Capitalist conversion and the plunder of African resources.

It was their mission to do anything necessary to convert Africans who were viewed as uncivilized and barbaric. The message preached by Missionaries encouraged Africans to rebel against everything that formed the foundation of African family and society. Role of Missionaries in Colonization of Africans

Through psychological, coercive and brutal methods, the Europeans effectively dislocated the African from his cultural center and "placed him on the margins of their cultural context" (Asante, 1993:54).

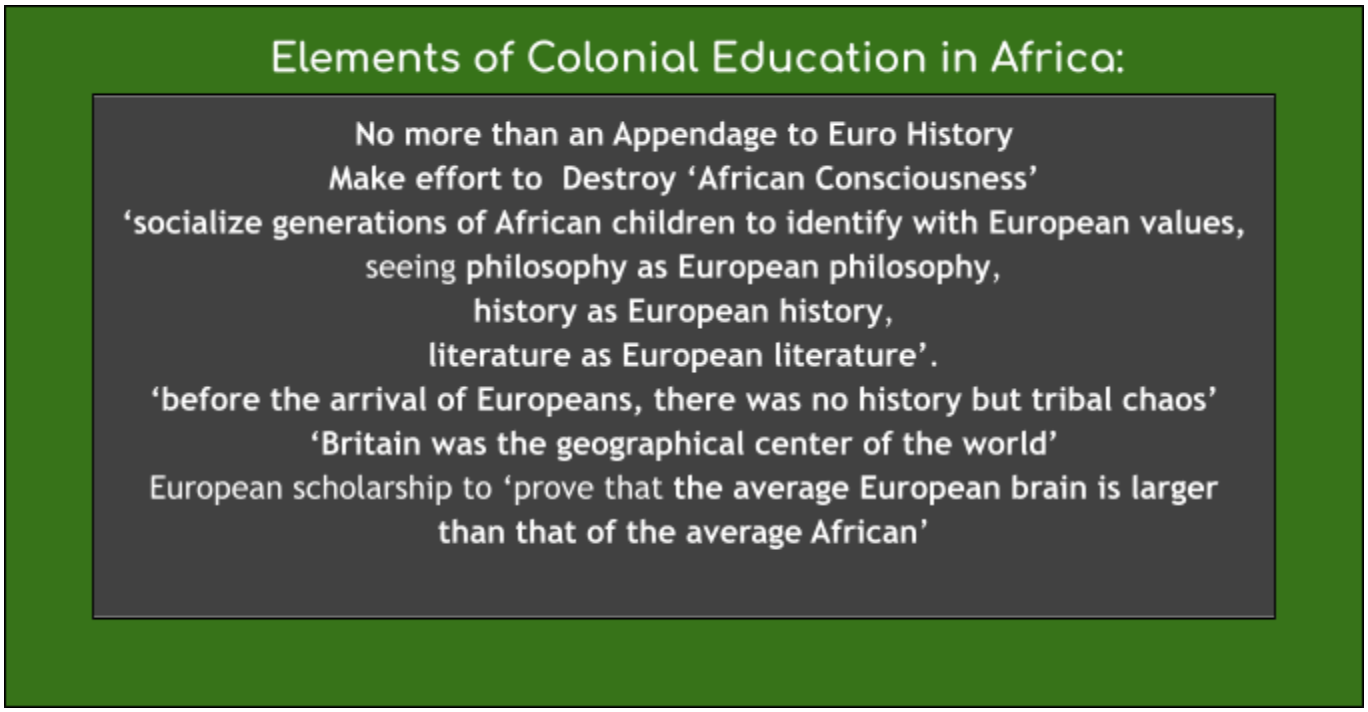
Colonial Biblical Indoctrination

- Church services or attendance was compulsory in the school system.
- The Bible was used to urge the African to 'turn the other cheek" cheek in the face of abuse, brutality, and exploitation. It also drove home the message that everything would be good for the brutalized and exploited African in "heaven."
- The African was associated with the biblical Ham, and the snake that tempted Eve. Accordingly, accepting Christ as the Savior was to save the African from the alleged curses on the descendants of Ham (King, Jr., 1967:72–73).
- The Christian God, Jesus, the saints, and all the apostles were presented as whites with blue eyes in the churches.
- African cosmology, religion, spirituality, medicine, music, dances and plastic arts were equated with the workings of the devil. Consequently, the African converts had to make confessions for observing these to Christian priests in order to be forgiven.



Hansberry made Reverend Neilsen as a parallel to Albert Schweitzer. In 1952 he won the Political Radicalism and Artistic Innovation Nobel Peace Prize for his medical missionary in the Gabon territory of West Africa. People around the world appreciated him for bringing "civilization" to "the dark continent" and building a hospital in the jungles of Lambarene. However later people became disillusioned with his real intentions.

EDUCATION + LANGUAGE



These were the narratives often taught in the Euro-centric education models. It was a method of cultural erasure, oppression, and creating a narrative of what was the gold of education. In one account in Kenya civilising mission schools in colonial Kenya wa Thiong'o (1993: 33) tells of a story in colonial Kenya where African children in school were punished for speaking their African languages. African children were caned and made to carry plaques inscribed with the words 'I am stupid' or 'I am an ass'. (Botwe-Asamoah)

Colonization via Language

Wa Thiong'o (1986: 13,15) has observed that '**any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture**' and that '**[l]anguage as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history**'.

If language is a memory bank of a people's history, then suppressing and degrading the languages of the colonised '**meant also marginalizing the memory they carried and elevating to universality the memory carried by the language of the conqueror**' (wa Thiong'o 2016: 69).

What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages? (wa Thiong'o 1986: 26)

TSHEMBE

Madame, I have seen your mountains. Europe – in spite of all her crimes - has been a glorious star in the night. Other stars have shown before it - and will again with it. The heavens, as you taught me, are broad and can afford a galaxy... it seems your mountains have become mine Madame.

Act 2 S 8

TSHEMBE

And you did know her once you did know her! But now you call her nothing, because she's dead to you! She does not exist for you!

Act 1 Scene 3

Nkrumah's Africanization Model

Kwame Nkrumah's largest weapon against colonization was his push for an Africanization model in education. He largely focused on prizing African languages resulting in the establishment of the School of Ghanaian Languages at Ajumako to train teachers, the Ghana Bureau of Languages and the Institute of Foreign Languages, including Hausa, Swahili and Arabic, outside the university.

There was strong opposition from the Ghanaian intellectuals to Nkrumah's attempt to Africanize the University's curriculum via the Institute of African Studies.

This paradox of being enamored of European cultural traditions, while ignoring their own African traditions was to affect the development of education structures and at the University of Ghana. (Botwe-Asamoah)

CHARLIE
You really think Marta Gutterling came here for gold -? Or was it cobalt!...

TSHEMBE
Of course not. She came here to find fulfillment. Just as you came for salvation, and I to find dash cloth here's hoping each of us finds what he is seeking. At Africa's expense as always!

Act 2 Scene 2

COMMERCIALIZING LAND

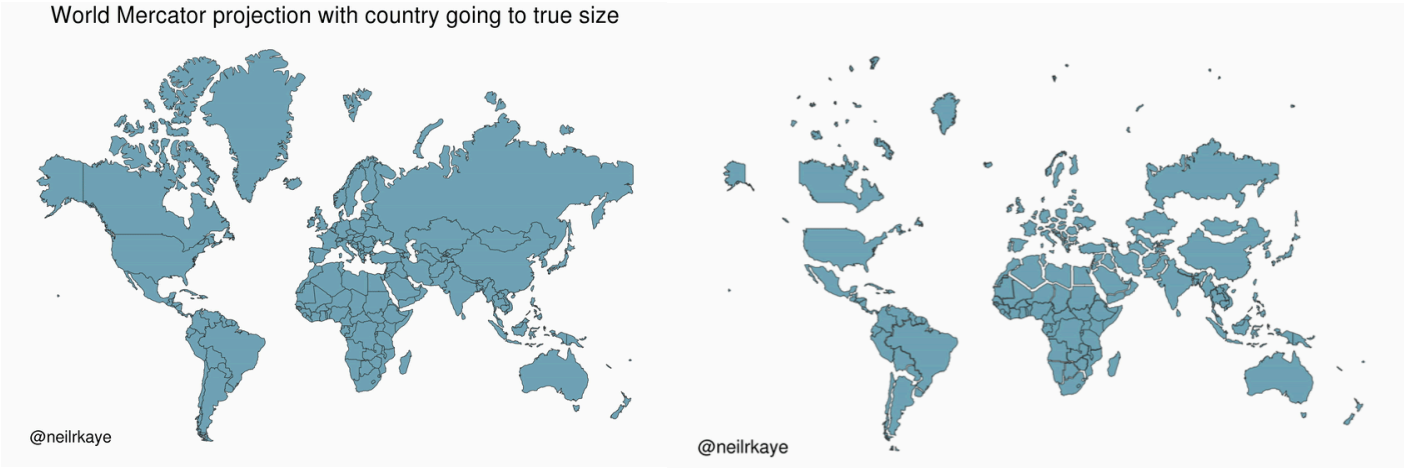
Land Ownership:

Traditional African cultures and societies it was recognized that **land was a communal property**. In most parts of Africa, **land was not a commodity to be individually owned, bought and sold**.

Africans anticipated that if the land were bought and sold, the rich, as it is the case in the modern world, would buy and own everything, whilst the poor own nothing. The commerce of the land was introduced in European colonization.

"We were taught that Mungo Park "discovered" River Niger, while David Livingston "discovered" Lake "Victoria," when in fact Africans led these two European tourists to the waters. The most absurd thing was the description of Africa as the "dark continent," which we had to learn. Our history lessons were about Europe and the white man's activities in Africa. We were made to believe that we had no culture and history to be proud of, and that our people had made no contribution towards human civilization.'" (Botwe-Asamoah 4)

Did you know... Africa is much bigger than depicted in American and European Maps?
https://www.visualcapitalist.com/map-true-size-of-africa/



It matters who draws the map.



(The Times map of the tribes, peoples, & nations of modern https://www.loc.gov/resource/g8201e.ct001273/?r=-0.414,0.251,1.788,0.816,0)

Referring to Africa, Hegel states: This is the land where men are children, a land lying beyond the daylight of self conscious history, and enveloped in the black color of night. At this point, let us forget Africa not to mention it again. Africa is no historical part of the world.

The characteristics of such views are not only aggressively ethnocentric, but they are also Eurocentric, hegemonic and dangerous; they relegate African culture and African thought to the status of non-existence. (Asante, 1990:35) (Botwe-Asamoah)

Les Blancs Cultural (Historical) Connections



African Liberation Movements

When the lay Anglican Church leader, once told people of Kenya's Mau Mau to pray for peace in 1958, they shouted in protest: "How can we reconcile with our tormentors?" (cf. Psalm 137).

Timeline of Les Blancs development and the African Liberation Movement

(Left)

Why Africa?

From colonial powers Britain, France and Belgium. A couple of leaders of those nations (and the nations that followed) had been students of Hansberry's uncle, a Harvard-trained professor of African studies, helps explain the playwright's interest in African colonial struggles from an early age. She even studied Africa as a student of the great W.E.B. Du Bois.

Black Communist?

As the Cold War intensified in the 1950s, the US government used anti-communism to undermine progressive struggles for social change. **Black activism on international political issues was often deemed anti-American, embracing Marxism, and many leaders having spent time in Moscow**. Under siege from McCarthyism, civil rights quieted during much of the 1950s as the FBI picked up investigations accusing of communism.

However, late 50s and 60s, there was cultural exchange with as many Africa's upcoming leaders spent time in the United States sharing and learning ftom black leaders. A global resurgence resulted: The Algerian War for Independence, the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, and the independence of Ghana all made a deep impression on Black high school and college students beginning to challenge segregation in the Jim Crow South…. They began to see their struggle as one for **liberation** and **independent institution building**.

Pan-Africanism- Where Global African Leaders Connect

Pan-Africanism, a political ideology of advancing African unity for African liberation, is the destruction of cultural imperialism and replacement with cultural reclamation, otherwise known as the African renaissance. *"Pan-African Linguistic and Cultural Unity: A Basis For pan-Africanism and t…" (12)*

In the late 50- 60s there was a divine African-American connection renaissance of Pan Africanism.

Ghana's future first President, Kwame Nkrumah furthered education in the US where he was introduced to the ideas and ideals of W.E.B.Du Bois and Marcus Garvey concerning Pan-Africanism.

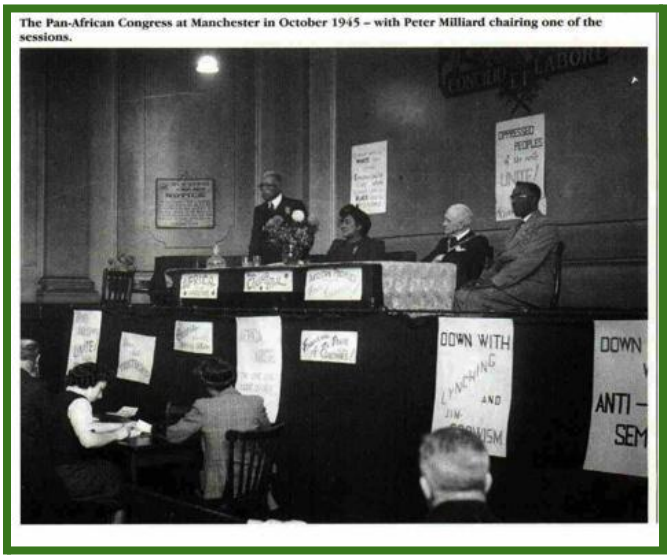
While a student in the US, Nkrumah was inspired by the US Civil Rights movement even traveling with "the Glee Club when they went to sing Negro spirituals at Clubs and other venues." Nkrumah would tell "stories of Africa, especially about life in Ghana…and often spoke of **his dreams for a free Africa or a free united states of Africa** (Botwe-Asamoah 137)

These cross-cultural exchange led to a penultimate meeting of influential leaders at the 5th Pan-African Congress of 1945.

*** Lorraine would have been a teenager avidly learning from her uncle William Leo Hansberry, a Harvard-trained professor of African studies.

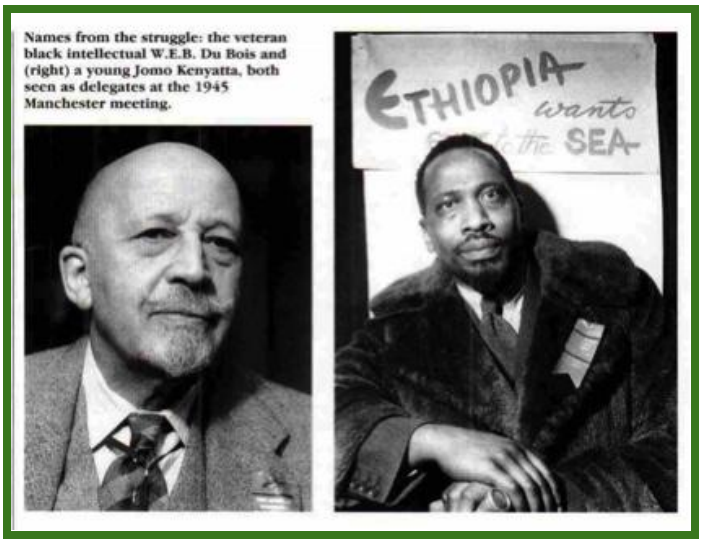
The 1945 Pan-African Congress:

It is rare for conferences and their resolutions to have significant outcomes. Manchester 1945 was different.



The Pan-African Congress at Manchester in October 1945 – with Peter Milliard chairing one of the sessions.

The Pan-African Congress, which met in October 1945, as a significant event in the history of decolonisation and of African reassertion. It differed from earlier meetings in that this was dominated by young Africans and West Indians and not, as had been the case of previous meetings (1900, 1919, 1921, 1923 and 1927).

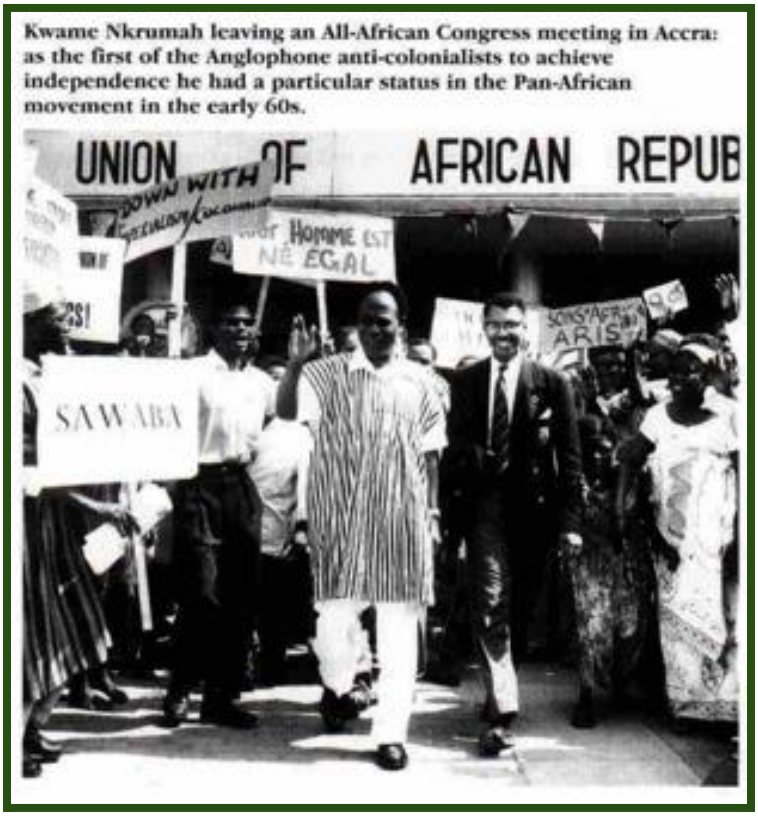


Names from the struggle: the veteran black intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois and (right) a young Jomo Kenyatta, both seen as delegates at the 1945 Manchester meeting.

The Manchester meeting was jointly organised journalist George Padmore and by a then largely unknown student from the Gold Coast (Ghana), **Kwame Nkrumah.** The congress's assistant secretary was **Jomo Kenyatta.**

Language of the resolutions strongly nuanced that of Marxism- visible movement from the

incorporationist agenda of their predecessors to the rhetoric of revolution. Anti-colonialism was no longer to be the politics of spasmodic protest and polite petition expressed in the respectful tones of liberal and Christian expectations. **Nationalists would now 'fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment'.**



Kwame Nkrumah leaving an All-African Congress meeting in Accra: as the first of the Anglophone anti-colonialists to achieve independence he had a particular status in the Pan-African movement in the early 60s.

No less importantly this was a pan-African congress. During the congress, Nkrumah and some others formed a West African National Secretariat. They planned for the creation of a **United States of Africa - a goal of African unity.**

Many of the ambitions of the Manchester Congress were actually to emerge in concrete form in the decades which followed. The majority of colonial states in Africa were to gain independence within twenty years of the meeting. Many of the Manchester participants were either to lead or to play very prominent parts in the governance of their countries. (Rathbone).

In December 1958, an All-African Peoples Conference was also held in Ghana. Diasporan Africans and the would-be leaders of the liberation movements within the continent attended this conference. Then, a series of meetings which took place between 1959 and 1963, amidst ideological differences, eventually culminated in the birth of the Organization of African Unity. (Botwe-Asamoah)

Organization of African Unity (OAU) -an organization of independent African nations. OAU was regarded in different ways by its creators:

For Sekou Toure of Guinea it was a beginning: *'African Unity will grow a little more every day from now on'.*

For others, like Houphouet Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, it marked the first of series of progressive stages towards some form of unity.

For others like Tsiranana of Madagascar, the OAU was essentially a weaker and hence more welcome alternative to an unattainable African union.

Ghana + Nkrumah's Pan-African Freedom

Kwame Nkrumah became an international symbol of freedom as the leader of the first black African country to shake off the chains of colonial rule.

'We are going to see that we create our own African personality and identity. We again rededicate ourselves in the struggle to emancipate other countries in Africa; for our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.'
- Nkrumah, March 5, 1957 when the Gold Coast became Ghana

1909 Nkrumah born Kwame Francis Nwia Kofie

1939 Nkrumah left to study economics and sociology in America & London where he was active in the Pan African movement which was demanding freedom and independence for the Colonies.

1947 Nkrumah became Secretary General of the United Gold Coast Convention campaigning to end British rule. In 1948, he was expelled from the organisation for leading a campaign of civil disobedience.

1949 Nkrumah founded the Convention People's Party- first mass political party in black Africa.

1950 CPP's landslide election victory

1952 Nkrumah became the country's first prime minister.

1957 **Ghana wins independence**

1960 Ghana became a republic

1964 Nkrumah declared self president for life

1966 Nkrumah overthrown as increasingly authoritarian. **Nkrumah Dreamed a federal union of African states. "United States of Africa". But, African countries were not desiring to go back under a central rule with a new freedom.**

1972 Nkrumah died in exile in Romania

'Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world. I believe strongly and sincerely that with the deep-rooted wisdom and dignity, the innate respect for human lives, the intense humanity that is our heritage, the African race, united under one federal government, will emerge not as just another world bloc to flaunt its wealth and strength, but as a Great Power whose greatness is indestructible because it is built not on fear, envy and suspicion, nor won at the expense of others, but founded on hope, trust, friendship and directed to the good of all mankind.'
- 1961 book, I Speak of Freedom, Nkrumah

Kwame Nkrumah's Vision of Africa

Kenya + Mau Mau Uprising

What led to the Mau Mau Rebellion? Must Watch Background
We Must Sin Quietly: Kenya's Colonial Concentration Camps
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPdAgy1vJtI&has_verified=1

The Mau Mau An African nationalist movement that originated in the 1950s among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. The Mau Mau (a name given by Europeans - they prefer Gkakuyu or Kakuyu) advocated violent resistance as a means to end British domination in Kenya; the movement was especially associated with the ritual oaths employed by leaders of the Kikuyu Central Association to promote unity.

1952 Mau Mau Rebellion was the result.

October 21, 1952, Kenyatta was arrested and jailed as Mau Mau leader (he always denied)

1960 - Lorraine Hansberry begins work on Les Blancs with keen eye to the Kenyan trials

August 1961 Kenyatta was released in

Early 1962, at the London Conference Kenyatta negotiated the constitutional terms leading to Kenya's independence.

May 1963 KANU won the pre independence election forming a provisional government

December 12, 1963, Kenya celebrated its independence with Kenyatta as prime minister.

1963 Kenyatta becomes Prime Minister of Independent Kenya

2003 the ban on the Mau Mce and non-violence lifted. It also forecasts what would happen in Algeria, in South Africa, in all of these countries where wars of independence would be fought."

"Harambee"- Kenyatta Western Friendly Strategy to Prosperity

Kenyatta early on rejected socialist calls for the nationalization of property and instead preached a doctrine of personal and entrepreneurial effort, symbolized by his slogan **"Harambee," or "Pulling together."** Besides relying heavily on a free-market economy, he **encouraged foreign investment from Western and other countries.** Largely as a result of his policies, Kenya's gross national product grew almost fivefold from 1971 to 1981, and its rate of economic growth was among the highest on the continent in the first two decades after independence. But though economic growth benefited large numbers of people, it also led to tremendous disparities of wealth, much of which was in the hands of Kenyatta's family and close associates and no large increase in Kenyan wealth.

In foreign policy, Kenyatta's government was consistently friendly toward the West. Always—in spite of his imprisonment by the British authorities—one of the more pro-British of African leaders, Kenyatta made Kenya the most stable black African country and one of the most economically dynamic.

American Civil Rights - Where did Hansberry lie?

With an way too early death in 1965, Hansberry did not live to see the heights of the American Civil Rights movement. However, she was seen as a visionary, able to foresee generation of Black Power, Black Panthers and the Black Theatre Movement the inevitable much before the rest of her time.

MLK Peace v. Malcolm X Violence

Following her early plays, many assumed Hansberry to hold pacifist views in line with Martin Luther King. However it contrasts her poignant views made clear via *Les Blancs* and public statements. When listening to her words, its clear she aligns along the line that understands the inevitable of violence and possibly even the "Just War Theory"

Just War Theory- Violence is bad?

"just war theory" is the doctrine that propounds the view that war is morally and theologically justifiable through a series of criteria; all of which must be met for a war to be considered just. The criteria are split into three groups: the "right to go to war" (jus ad bellum); the "right conduct in war" (jus in bello); and "dealing with the morality of post-war settlement and reconstruction"(jus post bellum)

The just war theory postulates that while war remains terrible, it is not always the worst option; for there are some situations where genocide and other atrocities can be prevented through war.

http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992017000200003#top_fn4

"In this regard, and referring to Martin Luther King's leadership and the Civil Rights Movement, she confessed: I support them and applaud them. . . At the same time I have no illusion that it is enough. We believe that the world is political and that political power, in one form or another, will be the ultimate key to the liberation of American [Blacks], and, indeed, black folk throughout the world. . . I think that Dr. King increasingly will have to face a forthcoming generation of [Blacks] who question even the restraints of his militant and, currently, progressive ideas and concepts."
-Hansberry, To Be Young, Gifted and Black, op. cit., 121.

"I think it's very simple that the whole idea of debating whether or not [Blacks] should defend themselves is an insult. If anybody comes and does ill in your home or your community— obviously, you try your best to kill [her/]him. I think . . . that [Blacks] must concern themselves with every single means of struggle: legal, illegal, passive, active, violent and non-violent. That they must harass, debate, petition, . . . boycott, sing hymns, . . . and shoot from their windows when the racist come cruising their communities." - Hansberry, To Be Young, Gifted and Black, op. cit., 121.

Explore more: Black Theatre Movement PREPRINT

Leaders of Revolution

“Her era was the very early days of black nationalism, of Malcolm Little becoming Malcolm X, of Cassius Clay becoming Muhammad Ali, of LeRoi Jones becoming Amiri Baraka. Lorraine was friends with Nina Simone, and she was the one who radicalized Nina Simone, not vice versa. Nina Simone wrote “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” about Lorraine Hansberry.”- Lichtenberg The Classical Fungus of LES BLANCS: In conversation with Drew Lichtenberg, Dramaturg on National Theatre's production of LES BLANCS



Malcolm X

“By Any Means Necessary”

A prevalent civil rights leader known for the acceptance of violence as a means to equality, Malcolm X’s maxim is included by Hansberry in a key scene in which Tshembe must decide whether to lead the revolutionary forces. He is initially reluctant to embrace violence as a catalyst for change, even informing the spirit that haunts him that he has **“renounced all spears” (Les Blancs 81)**

Malcolm X - By Any Means Necessary - Organization for Afro American Unity



W. E. B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt (WEB) Du Bois, also known as **“the father of Pan-Africanism”**, was an African-American intellectual and activist who is most known for his work as a founding member of the NAACP, the Niagara Movement, and his book *The Souls of Black Folks,* a cornerstone text for Sociology and African-American Studies.

The Political Legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois



William Leo Hansberry

William Leo Hansberry was a historian and anthropologist who is often referred to as “the father of African Studies.”Hansberry started his studies at Atlanta University but then transferred to Harvard. Post-graduation, Hansberry was a key figure in building the African Studies program at Howard University. It was at Howard that “Hansberry became mentor to many African American and African students, including Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first president of post-colonial Nigeria” (Mohr).

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/hansberry-william-leo-1894-1965/



Nkrumah - Ghana

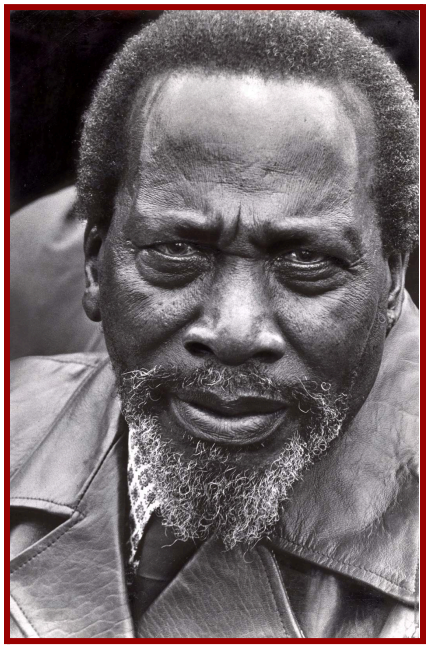
The first African-born Prime Minister of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah was a prominent Pan-African organizer whose radical vision and bold leadership helped lead Ghana to independence in 1957.

Check him out! Faces Of Africa- Kwame Nkrumah:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMY0iTcspNA

"Nkrumah lived and died African"

Studying In US as the only African in his class, they composed a little ditty in his honor for the class yearbook:

'Africa is the beloved of Nkrumah's dreams;
Philosopher, thinker with forceful schemes.
In aesthetics, politics, he's in the field;
Nkrumah's, "tres interessant," radiates appeal.'



Kenyatta - Kenya

Jomo Kenyatta, aka Jomo ("Burning Spear") Kenyatta after 1938 as Facing Mount Kenya, a study of the traditional life of the Kikuyu characterized by both insight and a tinge of romanticism. Original name Kamau Ngengi (born c. 1894, Ichaweri, British East Africa [now in Kenya]—died August 22, 1978, Mombasa, Kenya), African statesman and nationalist, the first prime minister (1963–64) and then the first president (1964–78) of independent Kenya.

"Mission Life"- Les Blancs Connection

About age 10 Kamau became seriously ill with jigger infections in his feet and one leg, and he underwent successful surgery at a newly established **Church of Scotland mission. This was his initial contact with Europeans.** Fascinated with what he had seen during his recuperation, Kamau ran away from home to become a resident pupil at the mission. He studied the Bible, English, mathematics, and carpentry and paid his fees by working as a houseboy and cook for a European settler. **In August 1914 he was baptized with the name Johnstone Kamau.** He was one of the earliest of the Kikuyu to leave the confines of his own culture. And, like many others, Kamau soon left the mission life for the urban attractions of Nairobi.

Alf Kumalo

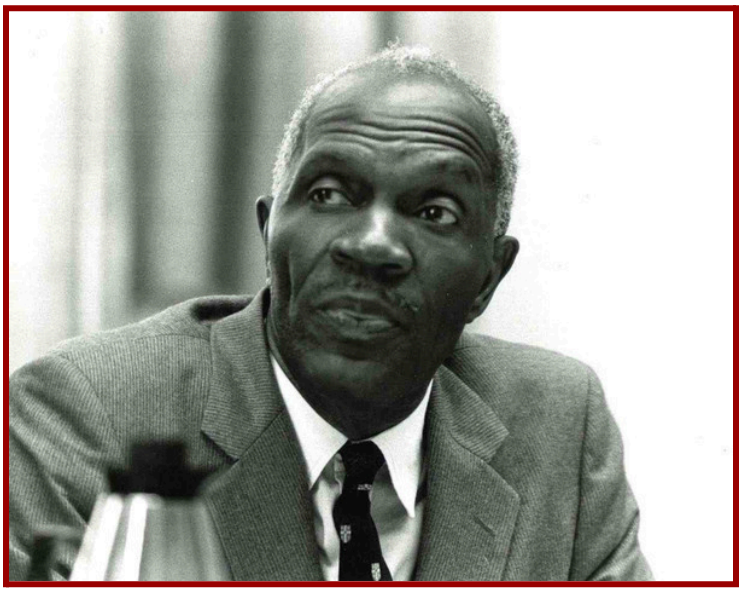
Possibility as inspiration for Kumalo character as he was a bold photo-journalist who captured many of South Africa's most revolutionary moments from the 1950s- 1990s. His photography stood as an act of revolution when apartheid would ban photography. He photographed 20+ years of Nelson Mandela's trials including imprisonment and inauguration. "Alf Kumalo was more than a documentary photojournalist; he was, above all, one of South Africa's eminent historians," a former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, said in a statement. Check out more here: Alf Kumalo, South African Photographer of Apartheid, Dies at 82
Alf Kumalo: The anti-apartheid photographer | Features News


Alf Kumalo, right, with Nelson Mandela in 2006. Paballo Thekiso/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

"I used to watch youngsters toyi-toying, chanting slogans and dancing vigorously, and singing 'Mandela, Mandela'. And I used to wonder, 'What picture did they have in their minds of Mandela?'"

Abioseh Davidson Nicol

"The Meaning of Africa" (est. written 1950-60s) by Poet **Abioseh** Davidson Nicol who was an early Sierra Leonean author and one of the founders of African Nationalism.



"...You are not a country, Africa,
You are a concept,
Fashioned in our minds, each to each,
To hide our separate fears,
To dream our separate dreams.
Only those within you who know
Their circumscribed plot,
And till it well with steady plough
Can from that harvest then look up
To the vast blue inside
Of the enamelled bowl of sky
Which covers you and say
'This is my Africa' meaning
'I am content and happy.
I am fulfilled, within,
Without and roundabout
I have gained the little longings
Of my hands, my loins, my heart
And the soul that follows in my shadow.'
I know now that is what you are, Africa:
Happiness, contentment, and fulfilment,
And a small bird singing on a mango tree."

https://blackthen.com/poem-meaning-africa-poet-abioseh-davidson-nicol/

Albert Schweitzer (Rev. Neilsen inspiration)

Hansberry made Reverend Neilsen as a parallel to Albert Schweitzer. In 1952 he won the Political Radicalism and Artistic Innovation Nobel Peace Prize for his medical missionary in the Gabon territory of West Africa. People around the world appreciated him for bringing “civilization” to “the dark continent” and building a hospital in the jungles of Lambarene. However later people became disillusioned with his real intentions (Kemayó: 48).

Kemayo, Kamau. *Emerging Afrikan Survivals: An Afrocentric Critical Theory*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2003.

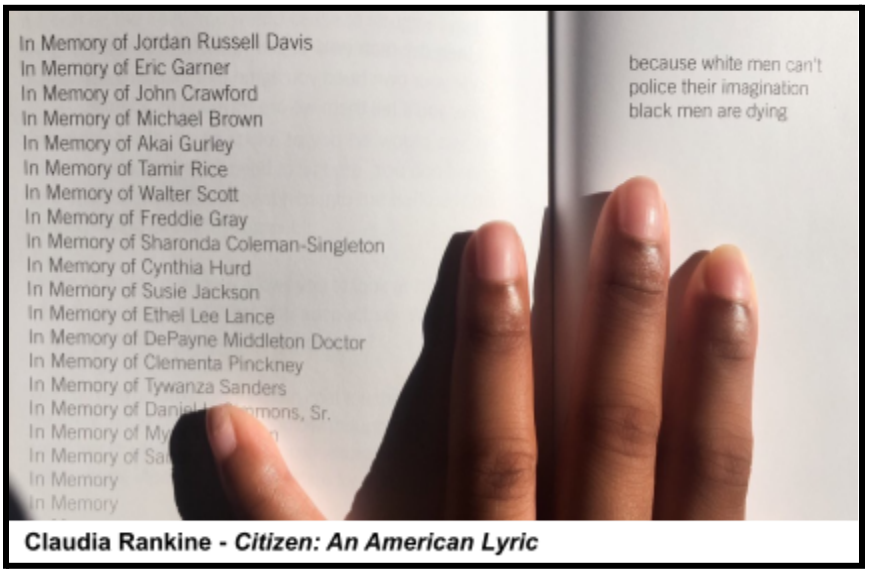
Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a renowned medical missionary with a complicated history



Current Connections

Activism

"If you are going to learn and grow, you can't just be stuck in a particular place. Crisis breaks you out and creates the space for Spirit to teach you. This breaking away from a place of stagnation, a place of comfort, and moving forward to a more perfect way is what we call a spiritual life."- An Excerpt from "Falling Out of Grace: Meditations on Loss, Healing and Wisdom by Sobonfu E. Some



Claudia Rankine - *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Black Activism

Activism not only helps society move forward, but also allows those oppressed to grapple with and begin to heal from the wounds of their oppressors. "Studies show that "activism helped participants find their voice and regain their power. They described a process of moving from silence and shame… to freedom and empowerment" (Stanford). **Activism serves as a tool for those who have been historically silenced to take control of the narratives about them and be able to counter-narrate their own lives**.

Education. Want a place to start? Check out our Watch, Listen, Read List: Want More to "Decolonize the Mind"? - Further Exploration

Community plays a huge role in both creating action, but also creating spaces of healing.
In a digital age, **Black Twitter** is one of the largest contributors to this.
Black Twitter is not a separate app, nor a specialized version of Twitter, but as scholar Meridith Clarke defines, "a network of culturally connected communicators using the platform to draw attention to issues of concern to black communities" (Reid). Black Twitter mobilizes community actions and serves as an information hub through hashtags, although not exclusively hashtags, like #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName, #YoungBlackandVoting, to bring awareness to issues the Black community faces such as police brutality, voter suppression, accountability within the Black communities, and much more. Through this information hub, Black people and organizations are able to organize in real time and give/archive information on protests and other events as they happen. What makes Black Twitter so interesting is how it uses humor and memes as both social commentary and catharsis. Being able to bring light and humor to such heavy topics allows Black communities to give voice and calls for action in a way that also creates a cultural competency barrier to keep the conversation centered within their own communities (Learn more about the formation and uses of Black Twitter here)



Healing: Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome - Joy Degruy

P.T.S.S. is a theory developed by Dr. Joy DeGruy as a result of twelve years of quantitative and qualitative research that explains the etiology of many of the adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities throughout the United States and the Diaspora. It is a condition that exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery. A form of slavery which was predicated on the belief that African Americans were inherently/genetically inferior to whites. This was then followed by institutionalized racism which continues to perpetuate injury.



KEY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR REFLECTIVE OF P.T.S.S.

With no help, becomes normalized behavior, which becomes culture.

Vacant Esteem

along with feelings of hopelessness, depression and a general self destructive outlook.

Marked Propensity for Anger and Violence

Extreme feelings of suspicion perceived negative motivations of others. Violence against self, property and others, including the members of one's own group

Racist Socialization and (internalized racism)

Learned Helplessness, literacy deprivation, distorted self-concept, antipathy or aversion for the following:

- The members of ones own identified cultural/ethnic group,
- The mores and customs associated ones own identified cultural/ethnic heritage
- The physical characteristics of ones own identified cultural/ethnic group

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury. As defined by American Psychiatric Association

… We are a miracle of a people. We are here with No Help

Epigenetics: The means through which environmental influences "get under the skin," directing transcriptional activity and influencing the expression or suppression of genes. Over the past decade, this complex environment–biology interface has shown increasing promise as a potential pathway for the intergenerational transmission of the effects of trauma.

Historical Trauma: an example of intergenerational trauma. It's caused by events that target a group of people. Thus, even family members who have not directly experienced the trauma can feel the effects of the event generations later.

Black Activism and Healing Resources:

LISTEN:

Speak Out with Tim Wise: Episode 38 - Psychologies of Oppression: Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, the Death of Empathy & the Assimilation Blues on Apple Podcasts

CIIS Public Programs: Joy DeGruy: Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome on Apple Podcasts

Therapy for Black Girls Podcast

EXPLORE:

https://www.joydegruy.com/

WATCH:

13th Ava Duvernay Documentary (2016)
Leveraging Privilege - Story from Dr Joy Degruy

READ:

The Healing Wisdom of Africa by Malidoma Patrice Some: 9780874779912
"Falling out of Grace" reviewed by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Non-Black Activism

"If this is what 300 years of slavery did to black folks, what do you think it did to white folks?"- Dr Joy Degruy
After the protests of this summer, there has been much discussion about the role of non-black people in activism and how to actively engage in anti-racist activism. Dr. Alisha Gaines, professor at Florida State University, argues that empathy has its limitations, therefore it's the role of non-Black activists to move beyond racial empathy. (watch Dr. Gaines talk about empathy here)

Anti-racist activism focuses more on action-based acticivism because "being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you *are*; it is about what you *do*. For white people, being antiracist evolves with their racial identity development. **They must acknowledge and understand their privilege, work to change their internalized racism, and interrupt racism when they see it**" (NMAAHC). (Read More: How to be Antiracist by Ibram X Kendi)

Leveraging Privilege - Story from Dr Joy Degruy
Can y'all heal and I still get to keep my stuff? Can y'all heal and do all this and can I have my White Privilege?... Folks don't want to do the work. The fear is people want to keep their stuff, when we already have too much stuff.- Dr Joy Degruy

Africa Today

Capitalism (impoverished or in rebellion?)
Well depends on the lens!

Must Watch:
Africa: States of independence - the scramble for Africa

An Excerpt from Penina Mlama, Emergence: The Indelible Face of Artistic Creativity… Resistance Art in Post-Colonial/Post-Independence Africa (32-33)

> The African continent has reeled under the forces of capitalism since the onset of foreign rule. Except for a few countries like Tanzania, Guinea or Ethiopia, that briefly experimented with socialism, capitalism has been the socio-economic development path for the Africa continent. Capitalism has been floated as the only sure way to socio-economic development and its character of private ownership, free market economy, competition, profit and democracy paraded around as the most efficient means of wealth creation and human advancement. It is true that a few people in Africa have become very rich under capitalism.
>
> **However**, the majority of Africans are wallowing in abject poverty due to capitalism. It is also undeniable that external forces, supported by external capital and globalization forces, are the major beneficiaries of capitalism in Africa. There is no denying the fact that Africa's natural resources have been exploited to the full by foreign companies and the small profits that have remained in Africa, have mainly ended in the pockets of a few local businessmen and more often, corrupt political leaders. The continent is mired in a culture of greed, exploitation, cut throat competition, corruption, consumerism, and commoditization of everything, including people, that has the potential to fetch profit. Attitudes which exult individual interests over the common good and which value material goods over human beings are common place. It should further be noted that capitalism has intensified invAfrica, especially after the demise of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the end of the cold war which used to provide a check to the spread of capitalism.

Has there been a response by artistic creativity in Africa to capitalism?
The answer is yes. As has been the case with capitalism globally, many artists have been quick to swim with the tide of capitalism and grab the opportunity to make quick money, like everybody else. They have turned their art into commodities and sold them to the highest bidder. Artistic creativity has been driven by profit, stardom and individual benefit rather than the collective social good. Because entertainment has proved to sell better than social commentary, education, correction or sanction, the bulk of artistic productions have settled for meaningless fanfare, often bordering on titillation or vulgarity.

"Harambee"- Kenyatta Western Friendly Strategy to Prosperity

Kenyatta early on rejected socialist calls for the nationalization of property and instead preached a doctrine of personal and entrepreneurial effort, symbolized by his slogan **"Harambee," or "Pulling together."** Besides relying heavily on a free-market economy, he **encouraged foreign investment from Western and other countries.** Largely as a result of his policies, Kenya's gross national product grew almost fivefold from 1971 to 1981, and its rate of economic growth was among the highest on the continent in the first two decades after independence. But though economic growth benefited large numbers of people, it also led to tremendous disparities of wealth, much of which was in the hands of Kenyatta's family and close associates and no large increase in Kenyan wealth.

In foreign policy, Kenyatta's government was consistently friendly toward the West. Always—in spite of his imprisonment by the British authorities—one of the more pro-British of African leaders, Kenyatta made Kenya the most stable black African country and one of the most economically dynamic.

Missions & Education

Christian Missions and colonial Governments had been blamed for providing education that neither integrated the individual in the society nor enhanced development. Critics saw colonial education as the underpinning factor in the slow rate of African development. Colonial education systems in particular, were accused for being used by capitalists to exploit the underdeveloped world and subjugate their peoples whilst Missionaries were accused of being the lackeys of imperialism. - **Matthew B. Gwanfogbe, Cameroonian Education After Independence *Parasite of Colonial Education and Christian Missions***

These criticisms led to reforms or what became known as the *Africanisation* of education. Schools across Africa changed their school curricula and teaching/learning material.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Nkrumah's Africanization Model

Power of Christianity in Africa

There is still much church and state relationship across Africa, but religion is very much powerful in many African politics. Politicians will often befriend ministers or be religious leaders in order to help gain a following. Ministers hold much power- if ministers say a politician is no good then the people listen. Why? The church is a charity, an educational resource, a social worker, a grantor, and so there are large donations to the churches. The church gains much wealth and power from the poverty and prosperity preaching.

Art's Reclaiming the 'African Personality'

There is deep history of African people using art as a source of religious inspiration, solace, and a deeper level meaning of hidden resistance and defiance. The "Negro Spirituals" among Black American slaves is a prime example. Emergence in artistic creativity accompanied the various forms of resistance and the struggles, peaceful or armed, against colonial subjugation. Dance, music, poetry, recitations and drama became part of political rallies, clandestine campaigns and mobilization processes and liberation wars against the colonial master. Whether the Africanization model or Negritude embracing what Nkrumah called the "African Personality" to free the mind of the African from intellectual and psychological domination.

Africa Development / Afrique et Développement , Vol. 42, No. 4, Special Issue on: 'Emergence' on Screen and on Stage / Numéro spécial sur : « Émergence » à l'écran et sur scène (2017), pp. 17-36

Black Lives Matter

Police Brutality

In *Les Blancs,* as with the history of colonialism, the police/colonial power in place in the village treated the black bodies with a lot of violence on the stage. A reference can easily be made to current news about police brutality against black bodies.

Major Rice very honestly says he believes the lives of his own (white folk) are more sacred than the lives of the black man - the face of colonial and structural racism. The National Theatre production in 2016, the play reverberated in the light of the creation of the #blacklivesmatter movement.

"It has a lot to say about #blacklivesmatter and about the lack of progress since the era when Hansberry was writing. It brings a historical consciousness to bear. You know, this is a play about a subject—African colonialism — that had not been dramatized before…**. It's saying that there was this great injustice that was done and that it will keep on producing violence until we acknowledge i**t."

There are two references to Black characters as 'it' in the play: a captured, Black prisoner early on, and then, later on, Peter, as referred to by the colonial rule of law, embodied by Major Rice. Bring to mind the video of George Floyd? Breonna Taylor? The many others? The image of colonialism's dehumanization.
https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/blog/les-blancs-theatre-and-revolutionary%C2%A0movement

Watch the Language: Protest or Riots?

Find yourself questioning responses of violence beyond *Les Blancs*? The term riots has historically been used as a tool to suppress any response of Black violence through a form of ignoring the inciting colonial violence.

>>**Check out this article on the history colonial instrument of the term "Riots"**
"The History of the "Riot" Report" - *The New Yorker*, June 15, 2020

"Brothers and sisters, let me tell you, I spend my time out there in the street with people, all kind of people, listening to what they have to say, and they're dissatisfied, they're disillusioned, they're fed up, they're getting to the point of frustration where they are beginning to feel: What do they have to lose?"
- 1965- a week before he was killed in New York, Malcolm X gave a speech in Detroit.

African- American: Embracing Complexity of African Identity

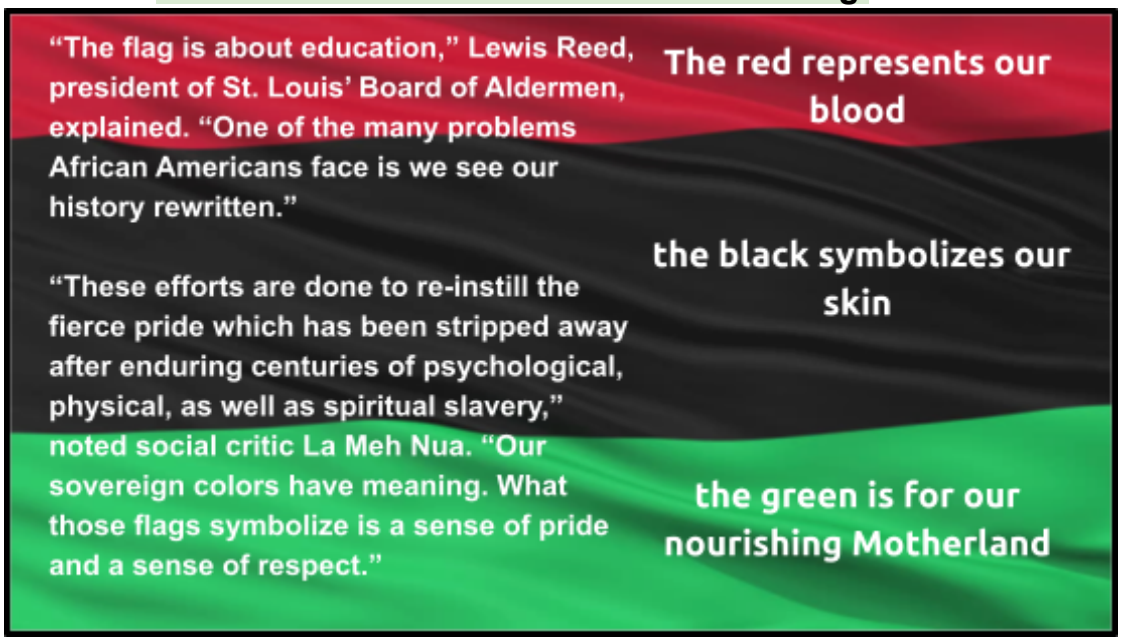
> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. - WEB Dubois *The Souls of Black Folkc*

From *Black Panther* to Beyonce, Black Americans grasp and draw elements from African cultures to make some semblance of connection to the culture taken away from them in shaping identity. On the other hand, there's a large movement for the need of Black American culture to be respected as its own culture separate from African ones (Black Americans in a sense have their own tribes; Black American Compton culture is very different from Black American Atlanta culture). Furthermore, when Black people were forced to the US, they were pulled from different countries and tribes that did not all speak the same language. Black Americans thus had to create a new culture in order to be able to come together and survive.

Diaspora vs. Pan - Africanism

In a desire to fight the "Monolith" narrative there has been a large global push toward Diaspora and away from the unity concepts of Pan-Africanism. There is an approach to diaspora that demonizes Pan-Africanism. It is a notion of diaspora to displace Pan-Africanism, rather than extend it. However, in the current resurgence of Black and African Studies, a lens of Pan-Africanism is vital to any study of the global black experience. (Fenderson 2)

In 2020- Black Liberation 'Pan-African Flag'



Still raised today in celebration of Black History and Modern Movement as of Feb. 2020
http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a2h&AN=141961439&site=ehost-live

Toxic White Liberalism

TSHEMBE (Whirling on him, words flying)
And just why should we be able to "talk" so easily? What is this marvelous nonsense with you Americans? For a handshake, a grin, a cigarette and half a glass of whiskey you want three hundred years to disappear—and in five minutes!"

"The problem is we have to find some way, with these dialogues to encourage the white liberal to stop being a liberal—and become an American Radical"- Lorraine Hansberry (Young, Gifted & Black 247).

Lorraine was ahead of her time on the danger of the 'do no wrong' White Liberal trope.
The Content is endless:

- ***White Fragility*- Not so helpful?**
- **Let's talk about the term "Karen"**
- **Or the concept of "White Tears"**

To say the least it's a hot topic, and has incredible connection to the White characters of *Les Blancs.*

Madame's "decent people" can be parralleled to President Trump's "fine people," portrayed almost as todays "White feminist"- who excuses impact via intention. She claimed that she learned a lot from her black female friend (Magical Negro Trope), and in return taught her a lot of things too, such as "Female Hygiene" (which can infer to many other devastating tropes). This idea of the white saviour who changes the ways of the so-called "Uncivilised" folk, who don't live by the rules of the west, is something the global south still suffers from that can be traced to the form of education on the Missions.

What Lorraine manages to share is not only the danger of the extreme, bu**t the danger also in the "White Moderate" who's support in colonialistic and racist systems is passed as "not that Bad".**
Who Martin Luther King Jr. once referred to in a letter from a Birmingham jail:

> *"I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice [...]"*

Read Further: Les Blancs: Theatre and Revolutionary Movement

Want More to “Decolonize the Mind”? - Further Exploration

Listen

Music:

Nina Simone: Nina Simone - To Be Young, Gifted and Black (Audio)

Highlife:

N.K. Nyame- https://youtu.be/E_RlagtnmjA

E.T. Mensah and the Tempos – https://youtu.be/-_xyCJ06aZ0

Mau Mau War Song: https://youtu.be/upB_fAwbT10

Podcasts:

Daughters of Lorraine

Choice Listens:

Beyond the Raisin: The Incredible Brief Life of Lorraine Hansberry

Shakespeare in Black with Renea Brown

Code Switch

Race Underneath The Skin : Code Switch

Code Switch: What's In A 'Karen'? : It's Been a Minute with Sam Sanders

When The 'White Tears' Just Keep Coming : Code Switch

African Folktales Podcast:

https://open.spotify.com/show/31YhMCLi2L4gVVaJRznOtx?si=LV7uRGcuQdyruGOSx-eqng

Watch

Africa: States of independence - the scramble for Africa

We Must Sin Quietly: Kenya's Colonial Concentration Camps

Faces Of Africa- Kwame Nkrumah

Faces of Africa - Jomo Kenyatta : The Founding Father of Kenya

Malcolm X - By Any Means Necessary - Organization for Afro American Unity

The Political Legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois

Beyonce: Black is King (Disney Plus)

Beyonce: Lemonade

Suggested Viewing:

Hold Up

Sorry

Sighted Eyes Feeling Heart

White Rage - Dr. Carol Anderson @ Emory

Empathy in the Age of Trump

How Black Twitter Changed a Decade

Read

To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words, adapted by Robert Nemiroff. New York: New American Library, 1969.

Hansberry's Drama: Commitment Amid Complexity By Steven R. Carter

Falling Out of Grace: Meditations on Loss, Healing and Wisdom By Sobonfue Some

The Healing Wisdom of Africa by Malidoma Patrice Some:

Rathbone R. Pan-Africanism: 50 years on. *History Today*. 1995;45(10):6. Accessed October 5, 2020. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a2h&AN=9510172895&site=ehost-live

Playwright Lorraine Hansberry's last thoughts on African colonialism

Black Theatre Movement PREPRINT

Colonialism and Culture in Lorraine Hansberry's Les Blancs

Bigsby, C. W. E. "Lorraine Hansberry." Confrontation and Commitment: A Study of Contemporary Drama,

"'Rebel' or 'Slave': Language Revolution, and the 1960's Black Intellectual Persona in Baraka's The Slave (1964) and Hansberry's Les Blancs (1964)." Unpublished Paper. Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California at Los Angeles, 1984-19

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. First Edition, One World, 2019.

Glossary (in order of appearance)

Prologue

(15) **African Bush or "The Bush"**
*SD "Sounds of the **African bush** are heard…"*
*"The sounds of **the bush** grow louder and…"*

in British English
an uncultivated or sparsely settled area, esp in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, or Canada: usually covered with trees or shrubs, varying from open shrubby country to dense rainforest

(15) **Bush babies**
"Sounds of crickets, frogs, **bush-babies**…"

Bush babies are found in forests throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Some species, like the South African galago, hang out in acacia trees on the savanna. Other species, like the brown greater galago, prefer more tropical and subtropical forests, while the Somali galago can be found in dry, thorny habitats. They have a loud cry they use to communicate.

COMMON NAME: Bush Babies

TYPE: Mammals

DIET: Omnivore

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: Up to 16.6 years in some species

WEIGHT: A hundred grams to over three pounds, depending on the species



(15) Laughter of Hyena (Modingo)
The occasional cry of a bird or the **laughter of a hyena…**

LIsten: **Roxy the hyena "laugh" loudly**
The Hyena has a unique giggle laugh often heard in the face of stress or in times of competition. In Les Blancs, Peter tells Tshembe the tale of The Modingo which becomes an allusion to use of traditional African Folktale and

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Modingo & Folklore

(15) **“Talking” Drums**
*On**” talking” drums** of varying size*



Talking drum are any of various types of drums that, by imitating the rhythm and the rise and fall of words in languages, are used as communication devices.
More on the Asante Drum Language (of GHANA)

The idea of using drums to communicate is best exemplified by the atumpan – the Ashanti “talking” drums. Atumpan come in pairs – one drum with a high tone and the other with a low tone. These two drums are played with “a steady flow of beats, often lacking in regularity or phrasing” (Nketia 1963, 28) to mimic the highs and lows of the local Twi language, which is a tonal language. Although many people of the younger generation can’t understand the words being played on the atumpan, **much of the older generation can understand the drums as well as they can understand someone speaking to them**.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Music (Talking Drums)

(16) **Spear**
Also… “renounced all spears” (81)



Symbols of War:
For the Kikuyu

- the traditional **Muthigi** (stick-two pronged)-signifies a power to lead often held by leaders and elders
- the **Itimu na ruhiu rwa njora** (**Spear** and sword) gave power to call people to war (often held by warriors)

Fun Fact: Jomo Kenyatta, aka Jomo (“Burning Spear”) Kenyatta

Act 1

A1. Scene 1

(16) **Mission**
It is mid-afternoon at a **Mission** compound in Africa

European missionaries especially from Portugal, France, Britain, and Germany went to Africa under the premise of going to convert the locals to Christianity. They built clinics and schools that inevitably was leveraged as a tool of colonisation as the missionaries brought an innate Eurocentric sense of superiority. In many cases Christian conversion looked more like European Capitalist conversion and the plunder of African resources.

It was their mission to do anything necessary to convert Africans who were viewed as uncivilized and barbaric. The message preached by Missionaries encouraged Africans to rebel against everything that formed the foundation of African family and society. Role of Missionaries in Colonization of Africans
Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: MISSIONS

(16) **Porter**
*Peter, an Afrcan **porter** in shorts and undershirt*
person employed to carry luggage and other loads, especially in a railroad station, airport, or hotel.

(17) **Valise**
*… is barefoot, bareheaded and carries two heavy **valises.***
a small traveling bag or suitcase.

(17) **Pith helmet**
He (Charlie) wears a **pith helmet**…



While serving a practical purpose of protecting from the sun, the pith helmet became a symbol of colonialism and imperialism with usage founded on racist philosophy. The idea that white people from Europe needed special protection from the sun was based on racist pseudoscience, George Orwell wrote in a 1944 essay. " 'Natives', their skulls being thicker, had no need of these helmets, but for a European even a double felt hat was not a reliable protection," he recalled being told.

Emphasizing the difference between the natives and their colonizers was "one of the necessary props of imperialism," Orwell added. "You can only rule over a subject race, especially when you are in a small minority, if you honestly believe yourself to be racially superior, and it helps toward this if you can believe that the subject race is biologically different."

*Recently Milania Trump (First lady of the US, was criticized for sporting the heavily symboled hat)
From 19th-century India to Melania Trump: How pith helmets became a symbol of colonialism

(17) **attache case**



*(Charlie) carries a battered portable typewriter and **attache case***

> a small, flat, rectangular case used for carrying documents.

(17) **Bwana**

Peter: “You wait here, **Bwana.**”

Charlie “You have seen one **“Bwana” Movie** too many”

> Bwa·na | /ˈbwänə/
> noun: bwana
> plural noun: bwanas
> (in East Africa) a boss or master (often used as a title or form of address).: "he can't hear you, bwana"
>
> Hansberry makes reference to Peter and the Uncle Tom obliging servant image. One could make the parallel to the compliancy in “yessuh” and “mastah” language.

(18) **Reverend**

Reverend Neilsen

Charlie: Thats rather a handful even for the **Reverend**, isnt it?

> 1. worthy of reverence
> 2. used as a title or form of address to members of the clergy.: "the Reverend Jesse Jackson".
> - *Merriam - Webster*
>
> **Reverend**, the ordinary English prefix of written address to the names of ministers of most Christian denominations. In the 15th century it was used as a general term of respectful address, but it has been habitually used as a title prefixed to the names of ordained clergymen since the 17th century. https://www.britannica.com/topic/reverend

(21) **New World**

Rice: Come to do a piece on our **“New World”** eh?

> The **New World** refers to the Americas and it is inclusive of North America, South America, and Central America. Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine explorer coined the term **New World** (Mundus Novus) in a letter to Lorienzo di Pier in the spring of 1503. He asserted that the lands discovered by European navigators were not the edges of Asia as Christopher Columbus stated. Instead, they belonged to an entirely distinct continent, the **“New World”**. What Does Old World and New World Refer To?
>
> *It is important to note that the lens of **“New World”** is a very Eurocentric angle that dismisses the inhabitants and Natives of the land before. The euphemism of discovery disregards the presence of any previous inhabitants.*

(21) **Terrorists**

Rice: We flushed out a couple of **terrorists** in the bush…

Charlie: **Terrorists-** here? We've had no news

a person who uses unlawful violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

(22) **Pacification**

DeKoven: "Mr. Morris, there is a *war* going on here. Everyone else that you talk to will call it a bit of an emergency, **pacification**, a police action…"

Pacification is the act of appeasing in an attempt to create or maintain peace. That can mean appeasing a hostile country through diplomacy or even just by settling an argument.
A pacifist is someone who is against fighting and wars.
https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/pacification#:~:text=Pacification%20is%20an%20attempt%20to,is%20against%20fighting%20and%20wars.
Here it is used along the lines of highlighting the euphemism used for the violence of wars.

(22-23) **Kumalo**

Charlie: And what about **Kumalo**?... **Kumalo** - the leader of the independence movement

A character in Les Blancs possibly inspired by real life activist **Alf Kumalo** of South Africa. **He was a bold photo-journalist who captured many of South Africa's most revolutionary moments from the 1950s- 1990s.** His photography stood as an act of revolution when apartheid would ban photography. He photographed 20+ years of Nelson Mandela's trials including imprisonment and inauguration. "Alf Kumalo was more than a documentary photojournalist; he was, above all, one of South Africa's eminent historians," a former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, said in a statement.
Reference in Dramaturgy Guide:Alf Kumalo


Alf Kumalo, right, with Nelson Mandela in 2006. Paballo Thekiso/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

(23) **Independence Movement**

Charlie: Kumalo - the leader of the **independence movement**

Les Blancs is an microcosm exploration of the larger African Liberation Movements, that led to a ripple of African fight for independence from colonial rule. In 1960, 17 African nations won independence including Ghana and the Mau Maus who Hansberry kept close eye

Hansberry grew increasingly interested in what was happening abroad. In a letter to Reporter magazine, she declared her support for Jomo Kenyatta, an anti-colonial activist in Kenya arrested for his putative affiliation with the Mau Maus, a militant group that fought to expel the occupying British colonial forces. Her growing internationalism was motivated by her belief that the battle against racism must be fought on all fronts and that any progress on the home front was only a beginning: Colonialism and capitalism still needed to be uprooted." (Rodriques)

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: African Liberation Movements, African Liberation Movements

(24) **War Drums**

DeKoven: All drums are not **war drums**… not yet

Madame: No, not **war drums** at all

Drums were a form of communication and language throughout many traditional African cultures. Different cadence, rhythms, and form could be paired with ritual and dances to signify a time for war.

Mau Mau war song:
https://youtu.be/upB_fAwbT10

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Music, Dance

(24) **Aquah**

Madame: … Yes, **Aquah**. She was the dearest friend that I have had in Africa

The late mother of Tshembe, Abioseh, and Eric as well as someone Madame speaks with forlornness toward he brutal passing. The name **Aquah** means *Water Or Sea Blue* and is of Latin origin. **Aquah** is a name that's been used primarily by parents who are considering baby names for girls https://www.babynames.com/name/aquah

The last name Aquah is found in Ghana more than any other country or territory (followed by Nigeria, then US)https://forebears.io/surnames/aquah

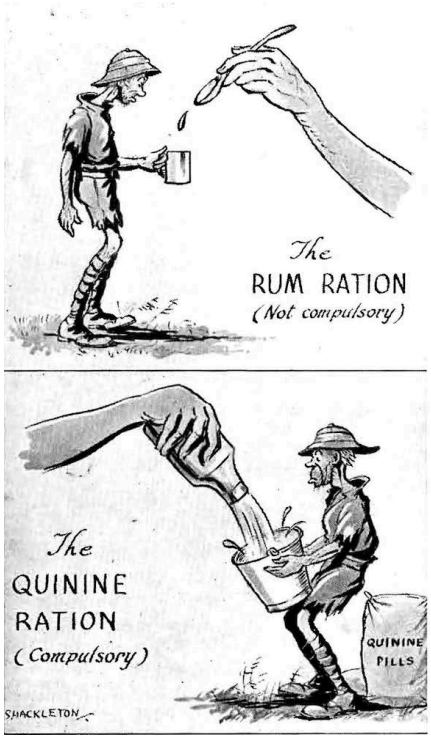
(25) **Kwi people**

Madame… speak the language of the **Kwi people**

The native people group and tribe o*f Les Blancs* setting in the fictional Zatembe. Aspects of the play (such as Swahili terms) signify connection to Sub-saharan cultures and leading nations of the African Liberation Movements. The general elements can speak to the common Pan-african cultural element, however specific inspiration is drawn from the Ashanti people of Ghana and the Gikikuyu (Kikkuyu or Mau Mau) people of Kenya.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Where in the World are We?

(25) **Quinine**



*Madame: ...Aquah taught me how to make **quinine**. Do you know how to make **quinine**, Mr. Morris?*

Quinine(an antimalarial drug) became a tool leveraged by colonial Europeans that allowed colonists to survive in malaria-infested jungles of Africa long enough to colonize and enslave indigenous Africans. The slave trade, land expropriations, butchering of resisting fighters, and other inhumane acts could be exacted on native Africans in part because of the discovery and industrial isolation of quinine. Quinine lessened the fear of malaria,and became a tool that propelled the exploration and colonization of Africa.-
https://hekint.org/2019/05/22/quinine-and-the-cinchona-plant-gain-or-bane-for-africa/
https://africacartoons.com/tag/quinine/

(25) **Abioseh**

Madame: That old **Abioseh** was the first to change

Pronunciation: Abioseh Matoseh = Ah-bi-oh-say Mah-toe-say

Name Meaning: "Sunday" of African Origin

Possible Associations:

"The Meaning of Africa" (est. written 1950-60s) by Poet **Abioseh** Davidson Nicol who was an early Sierra Leonean author and one of the founders of African Nationalism.

"...You are not a country, Africa,
You are a concept,
Fashioned in our minds, each to each,
To hide our separate fears,
To dream our separate dreams.
Only those within you who know
Their circumscribed plot,
And till it well with steady plough
Can from that harvest then look up
To the vast blue inside
Of the enamelled bowl of sky
Which covers you and say
'This is my Africa' meaning
'I am content and happy.
I am fulfilled, within,
Without and roundabout
I have gained the little longings
Of my hands, my loins, my heart
And the soul that follows in my shadow.'
I know now that is what you are, Africa:
Happiness, contentment, and fulfilment,
And a small bird singing on a mango tree."

https://blackthen.com/poem-meaning-africa-poet-abioseh-davidson-nicol/

(25) **Musette**

...A **musette** bag hangs from his (Eric) shoulder

1. a kind of small bagpipe played with bellows, common in the French court in the 17th–18th centuries and in later folk music.
2. a small, simple variety of oboe, used chiefly in 19th-century France.
3. a small knapsack common among US soldiers



(26) **Caliban**
Madame:..."**Caliban**" is almost upon us. He has turned on the generator an the river breeze tells me

From Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, **Caliban**, is Prospero's dark, earthy slave, frequently referred to as a monster by the other characters, Caliban is the son of a witch-hag and the only real native of the island to appear in the play. He is an extremely complex figure, and he mirrors or parodies several other characters in the play.

Caliban is the sole inhabitant of his island (excluding the imprisoned Ariel) until Prospero and his infant daughter Miranda are cast ashore. **Some interpreters consider him a representative of native peoples suffering under imperialist oppression.**

A1. Scene 2

(27) **Sign of greeting**
*As if he were about to dive and claps three times in the Kwi **"sign" of greeting***

In the Kikuyu culture, men who were initiated together always have a special bond as blood brothers who share anything even wives since they shared the knife. During initiation they developed a secret greeting so that even if one were to travel far and meet an age-mate, they would recognize each other from the greeting, much like Freemasons. One would host the other warmly in his homestead and even offer him one of his wives for the night. Men and women did not share hand greetings. Tag: Kikuyu Greetings

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Modingo & Folklore

(28) **Ties that bind**

Eric: When I wrote you- I didn't think that you would come at all
Tshembe: As the whites say: There are **ties that bind. There are ties that bind.**

This phrase is believed to come from the protestant hymn"Blest be the Ties That Bind" written by Rev. John Fawcett (1739-1817). In short, after a life of poverty, he got offered a move to prestigious LONDON! But as he was packing with family to leave his home in Yorkshire, the scene was so heart wrenching - he couldn't leave and decided to stay!

It's the tale of a man unable to leave his home.

Here are the lyrics: Hymnsite.com
Take a Listen: https://youtu.be/P6lzTJfWdmk
Full Story:
http://askherabouthymn.com/what-hymn-was-written-after-a-pastor-gave-up-the-opportunity-of-a-lifetime/#:~:text=He%20turned%20the%20horses%20around,the%20true%20measures%20of%20wealth.

(28) **St. Cyprian's**

Eric: After you went away, he went off to **St. Cyprian's**.



St. Cyprian, Latin in full Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus, (born 200 CE, Carthage—died September 14, 258, Carthage) born in Roman Africa.

An early Christian theologian and bishop of Carthage who led the Christians of North Africa during a period of persecution from Rome. Upon his execution he became the first bishop-martyr of Africa.
St. Cyprian | Christian theologian and bishop [died 258]

(30) **Zatembe**

Eric: They say that Kumalo is coming home to **Zatembe**

A fiction **Sub- Saharan Africa**n village and the setting of *Les Blancs*. Throughout you will see references to **Ghana** (the Ashanti tribe) and **Kenya** (the **Gkikuyu** aka Kikuyu, and derogatory Western named Mau Mau). *The Times map of the tribes, peoples, & nations of modern*

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Where in the World are We?

(30) **Raffia |** raf·fia

*Reaching for the **raffia** he begins to beat his body dry*

Eric: Wouldn't you like a towel?

Tshembe: Raffia works up the blood better!

(NOUN) aka Raphia farinifera

the fiber of the raffia palm used especially as cord for tying and weaving. Used in many indigenous African communities for varied purpose from craft to fibers that can be used for textile.

*Tshembe uses this to dry himself. Raffia, Raphia farinifera, plant facts



(31) **Ancestors**

Tshembe:... Tell me about my father in his last hours. Of what things did he speak?
Eric: (curtly, to hurt in return) Only of his **Ancestor**s, what else.

The role of **ancestors** in the African cosmology has always been significant. A form of inclusivity where the deceased still play a role in the life of descendents.It doesn't have a fixed creed, sol Africans have diverse ideas on what role the ancestors play in the lives of living descendants. Some Africans believe (and is often contested) that the ancestors are equal in power to deities, while others believe they are not**.Overall, ancestors are believed to occupy a higher level of existence than living human beings and are believed to be able to bestow either blessings or illness upon their living descendants.**

Ancestors can

- offer advice
- bestow good fortune honor to their living dependents
- they can make demands (insisting that their shrines be properly maintained)
- Influence consequences of misfortune or illness

https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Spirituality

(31) **lizard powder**

Eric: Because it's true. He (Father) was just an old savage who went to his death rubbing Lizard Powder on his breast and chanting out his kula or some damn thing!

Grinding up Lizard scales into a powder are used in some African traditions as a form of medicine used in ritual. For example, in Zambia, they use it for serious or chronic illnesses. They require "chizimba," which means sealing a disease or illness away forever. This involves killing a lizard and burning the heart with roots of certain trees and grinding with charcoal. Tiny cuts are made on the ailing area and left breast and the mixture rubbed into the cuts. Herbal Medicines in African Traditional Medicine
There are some modern articles reporting lizard as a psychedelic use.

(32) **Ishmael**

Abioseh: The Wanderer, my brother called Tshembe, who is **Ishmael**

Ishmael, a figure in the Tanakh and the Quran, was Abraham's firstborn son by his wife's maidservant, Hagar, is considered a patriarch of Islam. Muslims believe that because he was Abraham's firstborn, God's covenant was fulfilled through Ishmael rather than through Isaac. Muslims also believe that Ishmael was the son that God told Abraham to sacrifice, not Isaac.
https://www.compellingtruth.org/Ishmael-in-the-Bible.html

(32) **The Resistance**
Tshembe: But when **the resistance** began the government closed it down. Poof!
Abioseh: “**Resistance**” Tshembe?

In the midst of the African Liberation Movements, the Mau Mau led a resistance that ed to the Mau Mau Rebellion of 1952 that pushed to Kenya independence. the Mau Mau- An African nationalist movement that originated in the 1950s among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. The Mau Mau (a name given by Europeans - they prefer Gkikuyu) advocated violent resistance as a means to end British domination in Kenya; the movement was especially associated with the ritual oaths employed by leaders of the Kikuyu Central Association to promote unity.

Lorraine Hansberry was highly watchful of this process!

Hansberry grew increasingly interested in what was happening abroad. In a letter to Reporter magazine, she declared her support for Jomo Kenyatta, an anti-colonial activist in Kenya arrested for his putative affiliation with the Mau Maus, a militant group that fought to expel the occupying British colonial forces. Her growing internationalism was motivated by her belief that the battle against racism must be fought on all fronts and that any progress on the home front was only a beginning: Colonialism and capitalism still needed to be uprooted.” (Rodriques)

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Mau Mau Oath- Decolonizing the Mind

(34) **Hyde Park**
Tshembe: I worried about such things for years then, one day, sitting on a bench in **Hyde Park**- watching the pigeons, naturally- it came to me as it must come to all men. I won’t come this way again.

Famous for being the largest park in the central park & the royal parks of London and for it's speaker's corner. Speakers’ Corner, located at the northeastern edge of London’s **Hyde Park** near the Marble Arch, gained unofficial status as a “right to speak” area in 1872 and has since been considered a special free speech zone.

(34) **African liberation Movement**
Tshembe:...I had been wanting to mary but had nott, you see, because...The Liberation! The Movement! “AH-FREEKA!”- and all the rest of it...

Les Blancs is an microcosm exploration of the larger African Liberation Movements, that led to a ripple of African fight for independence from colonial rule. In 1960, 17 African nations won independence including Ghana and the Mau Maus who Hansberry kept close eye.

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Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: African Liberation Movements, African Liberation Movements

(34) **Paint our cheeks? Dance? Yellow Ochre?**
Abioseh: And what do you propose we do at the ceremony… Should we also **paint our cheeks**?
Tshembe: Yes
Abioseh: And **dance**?
Tshembe: Of course.
Abioseh: With **yellow ochre** on our cheeks and the rattle in our hands?
Tshembe: We should.
Abioseh: To chase away the "Spirits of evil" that have taken our father away?

These are all aspects of common traditional ritual practices across Africa. Painted faces (using ochre) for ritual ceremonies, dances, and rhythms all have varying form that hold symbolic purpose and meaning. However, many of these practices were demonized by the European missions that marked many of these practices as sinful witchcraft.
More on Painting tradition among Gkikuyu here: Gīkūyū Traditional Colors
Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: RITUAL: Performance and Forms of Language, Spirituality

(35) cassock and crucifix
*He reaches out and pulls the blanket from his Brother- who stands revealed in the **cassock and crucifix** of the Roman Catholic Church*



There are various **cassocks** to signify the status of priests within the church or parish. Bishops wear a purple and pectoral cross, on the other hand, the pope wears a white cassock, with a red stole, a cross and red silk.

Roman Catholic: Roman cassock has a series of buttons down the front, which in most places are ornamental. You may find it black except in tropical countries. The reason being heat, so they use white usually without the shoulder cape.

People studying for the priesthood wears such cassocks. It also includes a sash known as fascia which maybe is worn with the cassock. The two ends that hang by the side have silk fringes and tassels. Priests and other major seminarians adorn the black-colored fascia. On the other hand, bishops, chaplains, apostolic use a purple faille.

The **crucifix** is a cross with an image of Christ on it. The crucifix is the symbol of Christianity and reminds everyone of the death and resurrection of Christ. It serves as a reminder of God's sacrifice of his only Son so that humanity may have salvation. https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z9ppjty/revision/2

(36) **Archbishop**

Abioseh: Some day a black man will be **Archbishop** of this Diocese

A man becomes an archbishop, in most cases, because he has been named as the head of an archdiocese (the head of a district under the pastoral care of a bishop in the Christian Church).. Some archbishops have the title because they oversee important administrative functions or they receive the title as an honor.

(37) **Headpiece**

*For his **headpiece**: a great imposing affair of furs and annalhorns*

Headgear is not just confined to hats. We have wigs, hair ornaments, razors and combs to aid in adorning the head. Overall, headgear in African culture is visible in many statues, masks and certain ceremonial staffs, depicting an engaging and laborious exercise of love.

Tribal headgear was also visible among the Kikuyu. At independence, when Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was sworn in as Kenya's First President, he wore a scintillating ceremonial robe and a headdress made from the skin of the thumbless colobus monkey – one of Kenya's rare and treasured primates.

It is about the structuring of systems of encounter within the visual and material world of intrinsic culture. Design culture is indeed a process that embraces the surrounding natural material. How the Kikuyu came to adopt the warm fuzzy sheepskin or the fur of a colobus monkey is most definitely a product of the cold central highland climatic conditions and the marked seniority of the wearer respectively. Significance of the African headgear - Travelog
Great image examples: https://youtu.be/HKdS6kg21nw

(37) **funeral chants**

With all his power, to chant the offstage funeral chant

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide:Funerals, RITUAL: Performance and Forms of Language,

A1. Scene 3

(39) Torvald

Madame: What a pity that **Torvald** did not get back in time to play for us this evening

Torvald is a character from the Western classic *A Doll's House.* Throughout the play he displays many misogynistic yet accepted traits including how he likes to envision himself as Nora's savior, asking her after the party, "[D]o you know that I've often wished you were facing some terrible dangers so that I could risk life and limb, risk everything, for your sake?"
Throughout he has demeaning language toward his wife, calling her "girl" and his "little bird"
In the end Nora asserts, has treated her like a "doll" to be played with and admired. She decides to leave Torvald, declaring that she must "make sense of [her]self and everything around her." She walks out, slamming the door behind her.
https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/dollhouse/character/torvald-helmer/

(40) Decent people

Madame: The Duchesnes… The Duchesnes… they were decent people

Madame's "decent people" can be paralleled to President Trump's "fine people," portrayed almost as a "White feminis liberal moderate". However, Hansberry argues the danger of the moderate.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Toxic White Liberalism

(40) Savage

Rice: And these are the savages they want us to sit and "talk" with-

Charlie: Major Rice, I'd hardly call Kumalo a savage

Savage is a word we often find in English literature and early European journalism and politics to denote the inferiority of a "wild" group of foreign people to be feare5ced. History tells us that the idea of"savages" is intricately linked to colonialism and oppression. It's a word that like its variants of "cannibals" and "barbarians" entered modern European and American language hand-in-hand with the colonization of Africa, Asia and the New World. They are words used to justify and affirm the actions of colonial and imperial authority, regardless if these actions be cruel and inhuman, all while implicitly feeding the egos of an uninformed public by demonstrating the superiority of their "state" and "civilization" over all others. In this way, colonization fed public hubris through racism, xenophobia and hierarchy to garner public support. Savages: The History of a Word

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Weapons of and Against Colonialism

(42) Kaffir

Rice… Who's the kaffir?

Madame: We do not have "kaffirs" here, Major Rice! We have friends who are Africans.

Kaf·fir | \ ˈka-fər \
variants: or Kafir

From Arabic word: *kāfir* - infidel

In South Africa, the use of the term Kaffir to **refer to a black African is a profoundly offensive and inflammatory expression of contemptuous racism that is sufficient grounds for legal action**. The term is associated especially with the era of apartheid, when it was commonly used as an offensive racial slur, and its offensiveness has only increased over time. It now ranks as perhaps the most offensive term in South African English.

(43) The Oath

Marta: (to Charlie) When they take **the oath**, they are marked

Characteristically, any European belt or iron-like buttons were removed while one was taking ***an oath***. In the case of Mau-Mau rituals, items that "glorified" the view that "white is good, black is bad" were shunned in the process. Even European names such as Julius, John, Wellington, Joyce, Jane, etc. were shunned (interview Wanjiku 03/05/2015).



These rituals were often performed in secret and hidden from colonial British. Reference to “Warriors going to the forest” can often be found in what is a secretive and honored form. Hence their form of decolonising the mind began with the idea of keeping away European styles of living, European ecclesiology, and European religiosity among other concerns.

Woman taking the Mau Mau Oath

https://sites.google.com/site/maumaurevolution/revolution/mau-mau-tactics/oath-of-mau-mau

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Decolonizing the Mind - Mau Mau Oath, Warrior Women

(46) “liberal” whites

SD: *He (Tshembe) is put off by the others’ too ready familiarity with having known too many “liberal” whites to trust protestations that may backfire at any moment*

Lorraine Hansberry drives in the conversation around the danger of the White Liberal or Moderate in furthering colonialism. This conversation was pervasive throughout the Civil Rights Movement as well as today. There is an exceptionalism and assumption of being “not one of the bad guys” or extremes that stands in the way of the extreme actions needed for activism or revolutionary change.

What Lorraine manages to share is not only the danger of the extreme, bu**t the danger also in the “White Moderate” who’s support in colonialistic and racist systems is passed as “not that Bad”. Who Martin Luther King Jr. once referred to in a letter from a Birmingham jail:**

> *“I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice [...]”*

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Toxic White Liberalism, MLK Peace v. Malcolm X Violence

(48) negritude and Senghor's poetry

Charlie… engage a real live African intellectual in a discussion of **"negritude" and Senghor's poetry**

Léopold Sédar Senghor: Sengalese poet and politician and praised as one of the spiritual founder of Négritude.



The negritude movement's founders (or Les Trois Pères), Aimé Césaire, **Senghor**, and Léon-Gontran Damas, met while studying in Paris in 1931 and began to publish the first journal devoted to Négritude, L'Étudiant noir (The Black Student), in 1934.

The term "**Négritude" was coined by Césaire in his Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land, 1939) and it means, in his words, "The simple recognition of the fact that one is black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as blacks, of our history and culture."** Even in its beginnings Négritude was truly an international movement—it drew inspiration from the flowering of African American culture brought about by the Harlem Renaissance and found a home in the canon of French literature.

Unlike the other members of the Trois Pères, Senghor advocated for assimilation, but a form of assimilation that allowed for "a cultural métissage," or cultural miscegenation of black and white. While **Senghor also promoted a rediscovery and celebration of African beliefs and values and the establishment of an authentic black self,** he also imagined a new racial consciousness in which a dual black and white cultural background could work toward a place of mutual enlightenment, a "rendez du donner et recevoir" ("give-and-take")

Further Reading:
https://poets.org/text/brief-guide-negritude
http://sbffranktalk.blogspot.com/2014/11/negritude-is-literary-and-ideological.html (photo)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/#NegRevNeg

(49) Imperialism

Tshembe ...White intellectual begins suggesting not only fellowship but the Universal Damnation of **Imperialism**..

Imperialism, state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas.

Because it always involves the use of power, whether military or economic or some subtler form, imperialism has often been considered morally reprehensible, and the term is frequently employed in international propaganda to denounce and discredit an opponent's foreign policy.
https://www.britannica.com/topic/imperialism
… aka colonialism
Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Weapons of and Against Colonialism

(49) Tobacco Country
Charlie: Did you get down to our… **tobacco country** at all
Tshembe: Yes, I was in the South

AKA Tobacco Nation (where tobacco is grown in the US)
Comprised of 13 states across the South— Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia

(50) rape of a continent
Tshembe: Do you really think the rape of a continent dissolves in cigarette smoke?

This is a reference to the colonization of Africa with devastating impact. The **"rape of a continent"** is another way to phrase the brutal intentionality in which Europeans intentionally divided up and claimed as their own the continent of Africa in the infamous **Berlin Conference**.



Delegates from the world's 14 superpowers gathered on November 15th, 1884 to discuss future trade and colonial control in Africa. Sitting in a room with a large map of Africa, the European powers ruthlessly began carving out the continent. The three month long debates marked the origins of the "Scramble for Africa", which unapologetically increased European influence in the continent.

Before the Conference 10% of Africa was under colonial rule. By the end of the 19th century, 90% of the continent was under European Rule.

The disastrous global impact for the African diaspora is still rooted in many challenges today.
https://www.obv.org.uk/news-blogs/rape-africa-1884-berlin-conference

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Weapons of and Against Colonialism

(50) the committee
Tshembe… until the kicked me off the committee

The committee Tshembe refers to could have been inspired by the onset of the All-African Peoples Conference and the Pan-African conferences that gathered global leaders to form African unity. These meetings resulted in the freedom of many African nations.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: The 1945 Pan-African Congress:, African Liberation Movements

(51) Referendum

Tshembe… We will need a referendum which includes me

Ref·er·en·dum /ˌrefəˈrendəm/
noun: referendum
plural noun: referenda , referendums

a general vote by the electorate on a single political question which has been referred to them for a direct decision.

(52) Twin Forks Junction, Nebraska

Charlie: Have you ever been to- (Slyly, tongue-in-cheek.) **Twin Forks Junction**?

Another fictional location, however… a few interesting discoveries:

A Word Play? Going Literal with a witty Lorraine

Fork v*erb*

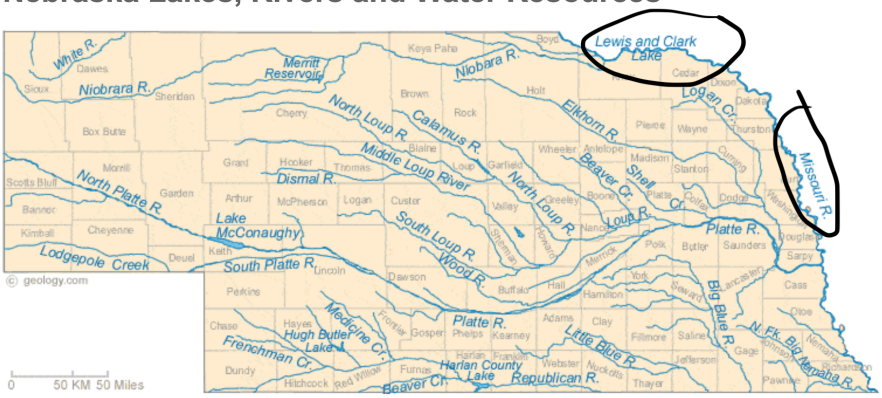
(especially of a road or other route) divide into two parts.

"the place where the road forks"

Junction *noun*

3. a point where two or more things are joined.
   "the junction of the two rivers"
4. a region of transition in a semiconductor between a part where conduction is mainly by electrons and a part where it is mainly by holes.

Nebraska Lakes, Rivers and Water Resources



The Missouri River intersects with "Lewis and Clark Lake" in Nebraska

Who were Lewis & Clark? Glad you asked:

They are best known for their expedition from the Mississippi River to the West Coast and back called the Corps of Discovery. It was President Thomas Jefferson's project to explore the American West.

"When Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark into the West, he patterned their mission on the methods of Enlightenment science: to observe, collect, document, and classify…

One of Lewis and Clark's missions was to open diplomatic relations between the United States and the Indian nations of the West.... When the two groups met—whether for trade or diplomacy—each tried to reshape the other in their own image. Lewis and Clark sought to impose their own notions of hierarchy on Indians by "making chiefs" with medals, printed certificates, and gifts. Native people tried to impose the obligations of kinship on the visitors by means of adoption ceremonies, shared names, and ritual gifts."

https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lewisandclark/lewis-landc.html | https://gisgeography.com/nebraska-lakes-rivers-map/

(55) Orestes … Hamlet

Tshembe… Its an old problem, really… Orestes… Hamlet… the rest of them...

In Greek mythology, **Orestes** was the prince who avenged the murder of his father, King Agamemnon of Mycenae, by killing his own mother, Clytemnestra. Orestes' sisters Iphigenia and Electra play important roles in his story.

The ghost of the King of Denmark tells his son **Hamlet** to avenge his murder by killing the new king, Hamlet's uncle. Hamlet feigns madness, contemplates life and death, and seeks revenge. His uncle, fearing for his life, also devises plots to kill Hamlet. The play ends with a duel, during which the King, Queen, Hamlet's opponent and Hamlet himself are all killed.

(55) the savannahs

Tshembe: Ssh!... She will materialize out of the bush, she will waft up from the savannahs

The savanna biome is often described as an area of grassland with dispersed trees or clusters of trees. The lack of water makes the savanna a difficult place for tall plants such as trees to grow.

One of the most famous African savannas is Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, which is known for its large wildebeest and zebra populations. The park is also home to lions, leopards, elephants, hippos, and gazelles. Other locations of savannas include:
Africa: **Kenya**, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia

(56) Queen Esther! Joan of Arc! Columbia! La Passionara!

Tshembe: I end up that same night in her arms… Who! Who! When you knew her you called her **Queen Esther! Joan of Arc! Columbia! La Passionara!**

Queen Esther

Book of Esther, book of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament.The book purports to explain how the feast of Purim came to be celebrated by the Jews. Esther, the beautiful Jewish wife of the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), and her cousin Mordecai persuade the king to retract an order for the general annihilation of Jews throughout the empire. The massacre had been plotted by the king's chief minister, Haman, and the date decided by casting lots (purim). Instead, Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai, and, on the day planned for their annihilation, the Jews destroyed their enemies. According to the Book of Esther, the feast of Purim was established to celebrate that day, but this explanation is surely legendary. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Book-of-Esther

Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc, a peasant girl living in medieval France, believed that God had chosen her to lead France to victory in its long-running war with England. With no military training, Joan convinced the embattled crown prince Charles of Valois to allow her to lead a French army to the besieged city of Orléans, where it achieved a momentous victory over the English and their French allies, the Burgundians. After seeing the prince crowned King Charles VII, Joan was captured by Anglo-Burgundian forces, tried for witchcraft and heresy and burned at the stake in 1431, at the age of 19. By the time she was officially canonized in 1920, the Maid of Orléans (as she was known) had long been considered one of history's greatest saints, and an enduring symbol of French unity and nationalism.
https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/saint-joan-of-arc

Columbia



In the American Colonies and in the later USA, this goddess (Liberty and Columbia) became part of our own mythology of our struggle for independence, and later of our country. And while they were not worshipped as goddesses, they were revered, sacred figures that made us feel that our country is larger than life. Finally, our division of this goddess into two separate but related figures is instructive as a wonderful illustration of how in the ancient world too the same deities had different aspects and epithets reflecting the various functions they served (think of the Triple Goddess, or the various faces of Aphrodite as Ourania, Pandemos, and many other titles). It also helps us appreciate the phenomenon of syncretism of deities in the ancient world, since Columbia did get swallowed up by Liberty, in the form of the Statue of Liberty, by the 1920s. Are Liberty and Columbia the same Goddess? - Mythology & Folklore Stack Exchange

La Passionara



Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, ″La Pasionaria″ whose bold defiance during the Spanish Civil War rallied millions in the fight against fascism. Mrs. Ibarruri began a career as a labor organizer and strike leader and wrote articles she signed as ″La Pasionaria,″ a name she chose in 1916 because her first article appeared during Holy Week, known in Spanish as the week of the Passion. The Spanish Communist Party, which named her honorary president in 1960, said in a statement, ″In informing with sorrow of her death, the Spanish Communists address the Communist, socialist, progressive forces and the democratic movement of all the world, expressing our will of contributing with a daily effort to the ideals of emancipation and peace which stimulated the life of Dolores Ibarruri.″

Act 2

A2. Scene 1

(57) Franco

Charlie: so papa took those stubby, miraculous hands of his to Spain- and died there, Fighting **Franco**..



The general and dictator Francisco Franco (1892-1975) ruled over Spain from 1939 until his death. He rose to power during the bloody Spanish Civil War when, with the help of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, his Nationalist forces overthrew the democratically elected Second Republic. Adopting the title of “El Caudillo” (The Leader), Franco persecuted political opponents, repressed the culture and language of Spain’s Basque and Catalan regions, censured the media and otherwise exerted absolute control over the country. Some of these restrictions gradually eased as Franco got older, and upon his death the country transitioned to democracy.

(60) **Capitalize**

Charlie: if just possibly he hadn’t **‘capitalized’** so to speak on the backwardness he found here?

> an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state. - Oxford Languages
>
> Many capitalist critiques stem from the theories of Karl Marx, the 19th-century economist and philosopher whose work gave rise to **Marxism**. Some connect profit-driven economic models, such as capitalism and mercantilism, **to the rise of oppressive institutions such as slavery, colonialism, and imperialism.** Consider the scene in Les Blancs where Tshembe is searching for African fabrics.
> https://www.britannica.com/topic/capitalism

(61) **Racialist & Nationalist**

Marta: Mr. Morris, one could hardly call me a **racialist**, but theres are some things one cannot get out of one’s mind when you read all this new **nationalist** blood and thunder - the Duchesne family, for example!

> **Racialist**: A person who believes in the racialism theory that race determines human traits and capacities.
>
> **Nationalist:** A person who strongly identifies with their own nation and vigorously supports its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.

A2. Scene 2

(63) **Kwi Warriors**

Tshembe: Strange names for **Kwi warriors**

The Kwi are the native people group and tribe of *Les Blancs* setting in the fictional Zatembe, however specific inspiration is drawn from the Ashanti people of Ghana and the Gikikuyu (Kikkuyu or Mau Mau) people of Kenya whose liberation movements are believed to have inspired Hansberry.

Warriorhood in many African cultures represents both a class of community and the primary role as protectors. The Mau Mau warriors of the Kenyan uprisings that led to independence is believed a large inspiration for Hansberry. They are of the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Warriors

(64) **Capitalist**

Charlie: Ah a **capitalist** to the marrow

An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state. - Oxford Languages

Many capitalist critiques stem from the theories of Karl Marx, the 19th-century economist and philosopher whose work gave rise to **Marxism**. Some connect profit-driven economic models, such as capitalism and mercantilism, **to the rise of oppressive institutions such as slavery, colonialism, and imperialism.** Consider the scene in Les Blancs where Tshembe is searching for African fabrics.
https://www.britannica.com/topic/capitalism

66) **Violence vs. Non-violence**

Tshembe: Mr. Morris, your concern for **non-violence** is a little late, don't you think? Where were you when we protested without **violence** and against violence.

The violence vs. non-violance paradox is often tokenized as the Martin Luther King philosophy versus Malcom X "By any means necessary" ethic. Hansberry worked on Les Blancs at the very rise of the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s and was much more involved in activist work then first pegged. She was largely vocal about what she viewed as the inevitable.

To this current day, we here the same questions of is violence necessary or even helpful. Lorraine Hansberry tells a narrative that adapts in form to the Just War theory:

"In this regard, and referring to Martin Luther King's leadership and the Civil Rights Movement, she confessed: I support them and applaud them. . . At the same time I have no illusion that it is enough. We believe that the world is political and that political power, in one form or another, will be the ultimate key to the liberation of American [Blacks], and, indeed, black folk throughout the world. . . I think that Dr. King increasingly will have to face a forthcoming generation of [Blacks] who question even the restraints of his militant and, currently, progressive ideas and concepts."
-Hansberry, To Be Young, Gifted and Black, op. cit., 121.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: MLK Peace v. Malcolm X Violence, Politics and Civil Rights,

(66) **by the tribe!?**

Tshembe: Where were you when they were chopping off the right hands of our young men by the hundreds- by the tribe!?



The Western map of Africa is divided in accordance to the boundaries Europeans intentionally divided up and claimed as their own the continent of Africa in the infamous **Berlin Conference**. Delegates from the world's 14 superpowers gathered on November 15th, 1884 to discuss future trade and colonial control in Africa.

To understand from an Afro-centric lens, would be to consider the over 3,000 tribes that make up the continent. These tribal groups vary vastly in everything from language to cultural values. When Europeans formed countries in 1884, they combined and separated without regard to tribal commonality or difference. One can imagine the conflict in forming unified countries once independence was won.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: *Land Ownership:*

(66) **A Monolith**

Tshembe: I am not an individual but a tide, a flood, **a monolith** "The Bla-a-acks"

The "**monolith**" stereotype insists that a group of people who are thought of as being all the same. Hansberry wrote *Les Blancs* after a "visceral" reaction to Jean Genet's "Les Negres" where the African character was written as a one-dimensional monolith. She considered Genet's play "a conversation between white men about themselves" and, according to Nemiroff, she wished to write a play in which people of all ethnicities were equal participants in a much-needed "dialogue … whose purpose is neither procrastination nor ego fulfillment but clarity, and whose culminating point is action" ("Critical Background" 32–33).

The current Diaspora language used among global African peoples is used to celebrate the diversity of Black / African cultures and combats the limiting monolithic lens.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: A Play Left Incomplete. Development & Inspiration, Diaspora vs. Pan - Africanism

(66) **The Blacks**

Charlie: To me you are no more "**The Blacks"** than I am "the Whites"

Hansberry wrote *Les Blancs* ("The Whites") after a "visceral" reaction to Jean Genet's *"Les Negres" (The Blacks).*where the African character was written as a one-dimensional monolith. She considered Genet's play "a conversation between white men about themselves" and, according to Nemiroff, she wished to write a play in which people of all ethnicities were equal participants in a much-needed "dialogue … whose purpose is neither procrastination nor ego fulfillment but clarity, and whose culminating point is action" ("Critical Background" 32–33).

(67) **Racism as a Devise**

Tshembe: **Race-racism-is a devise**. No more. No less. It explains nothing at all.

Devises of colonialism included the invention of race and in connection racism. There are no genetic monolithic commonality among any one race group. Someone considered Black may be considered by varying identity in a different culture, making "race" a social construct unlike the social, political and economic meanings of race, or rather belonging to particular racial groups. This is where race and racism may be leveraged as a device that can benefit the majority ethnic group in abusing power.
Read more here: Race and Racial Identity Are Social Constructs - NYTimes.com

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide:Weapons of and Against Colonialism:,African- American: Embracing Complexity of African Identity

(70) **Ntali**

Peter: And in your father's house I am not "Peter" - I am **Ntali**, the name our people gave me.

Ntali (Arabic: نطالي) is the original name of a place in situated in Southern, Malawi. Its geographical coordinates are 14° 20' 0" South, 35° 11' 0" East and Ntali is its original name (with diacritics). The name is carried by more people in Greece than any other country or territory, 2nd is Cameroon
http://www.maplandia.com/malawi/southern/ntali-14-20-0-s-35-11-0-e/#:~:text=Welcome%20to%20the%20Ntali%20google,photographs%20of%20Ntali%20in%20Malawi.
https://forebears.io/surnames/ntali

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: A Play Left Incomplete. Development & Inspiration

(70) **Tale of Modingo** 'One who thinks Carefully Before He Acts'

Peter:... You have forgotten the tale of **Modingo**, the wise hyena who lived between the lands of the elephants and the hyena

Introduced by Peter in allegory challenge to Tshembe's The main protagonist of a children's fable told to Tshembe by Peter in an attempt to recruit him. In the fable, Modingo is a Hyena who is caught in a conflict between Hyenas and Elephants. Modingo decides to listen to both sides before he takes one. He was too slow to act and the Elephants forced the Hyenas out of their home as a result. This is why the Hyena has such a bitter laugh, being the butt of a joke played on them.
Explore more here: Modingo & Folklore
https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/85799/10/10_chapter%204.pdf
(P.73-74, 77, 83)

(72) **meet in the forest**
Peter: We **meet in the forest** within the hour (He turns to go followed by the warriors…)

In the Mau Mau uprising, the warriors would recruit and operate covertly. Often there would be speaking in code and a common understanding among oath taking rituals and required secrecy - including references with **meeting in the forest.**

Initially, as men fled to the forest, women were not allowed. In time, the rebels realised that women were valuable allies and first allowed single and widowed women, who were trusted to remain secretive. Some became forest fighters. Some were inducted into the Inner Secret Council, which was formerly for men only.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Warriors

A2. Scene 3

(77) **Jurisprudence**
Rice: And I expect our standards of **jurisprudence** in all matters of race will compare favorably with America any day.

(Noun) the theory or philosophy of law.

(80) **Uncle Tom**
*Peter is by now the typical stereotype stance of **Uncle Tom**, his face frozen in a kind of simpering eagerness to please…*

Hansberry makes reference to Peter and the Uncle Tom obliging servant image. One could make the parallel to the compliancy in “yessuh” and “mastah” language in the use of “Bwana”.



The Tom caricature portrays black men as faithful, happily submissive servants. The Tom caricature, like the Mammy caricature, was born in ante-bellum America in the defense of slavery. How could slavery be wrong, argued its proponents, if black servants, males (Toms) and females (Mammies), were contented and loyal? The Tom is presented as a smiling, wide-eyed, dark skinned server: fieldworker, cook, butler, porter, or waiter. Unlike the Coon, the Tom is portrayed as a dependable worker, eager to serve. Unlike the Brute, the Tom is docile and non-threatening to whites. The Tom is often old, physically weak, psychologically dependent on whites for approval. In his book, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks, Donald Bogle (1994) summarizes the depiction of Toms in movies: Always as toms are chased, harassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved, and insulted, they keep the faith, n'er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless, and oh-so-very kind. Thus they endear themselves to white audiences and emerge as heroes of sorts. (pp. 5-6) The Tom Caricature - Anti-black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum

(80) **Civilize**

I am devoted to the blacks who work for me and whom I helped **civilize**

European missionaries especially from Portugal, France, Britain, and Germany went to Africa under the premise of going to convert the locals to Christianity and with the mission to "civilize" the "savages". They built clinics and schools that inevitably was leveraged as a tool of colonisation as the missionaries brought an innate Eurocentric sense of superiority. It was their mission to do anything necessary to convert Africans who were viewed as uncivilized and barbaric.

The message preached by Missionaries encouraged Africans to rebel against everything that formed the foundation of African family and society. Role of Missionaries in Colonization of Africans

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Weapons of and Against Colonialism:

A2. Scene 4

(81) **"message" drums**

In the darkness 'message' drums begin at the back of the house and move swiftly towards the stage

The idea of using drums to communicate is best exemplified by the atumpan – the Ashanti "talking" drums. Atumpan come in pairs – one drum with a high tone and the other with a low tone. These two drums are played with "a steady flow of beats, often lacking in regularity or phrasing" (Nketia 1963, 28) to mimic the highs and lows of the local Twi language, which is a tonal language. Although many people of the younger generation can't understand the words being played on the atumpan, **much of the older generation can understand the drums as well as they can understand someone speaking to them**.

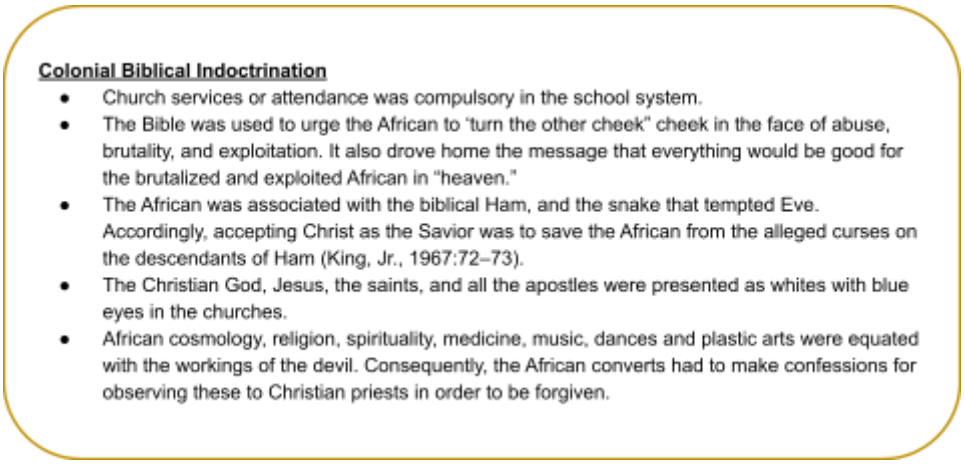
Talking drum are any of various types of drums that, by imitating the rhythm and the rise and fall of words in languages, are used as communication devices.

More on the Asante Drum Language (of GHANA)

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Music (Talking Drums)

(86) **Christian Teachings**

Abioseh: You would be better off, my brother, if your **Christian Teachings** had been more forceful



This is in reference to the combination of Religion and Education as a colonizing tool for Missions education. Oftentimes these "teachings" demonized any forms of traditional African religion or culture. The first president of Ghana, Nkrumah largely pushed an Africanization education model to restore an African sourced model.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: MISSIONS, EDUCATION + LANGUAGE, Nkrumah's Africanization Model

(87) **Ngedi**
Eric: They call me by the name my mother gave me -
Tshembe: **Ngedi**!
Eric: Yes. ***Ngedi***. They have asked me to take the oath

English Translation: **That time.**
French Translation: La Fois

**Possible reference to the cataclysmic event that led to Eric's birth as Eric refers to this as the name given by his mother*

(88) **Judas**
Abioseh: Yes! Tshembe - but it is not *I* who am **Judas**! It is *I* who have chosen African!

Judas Iscariot is a biblical character who is a part of Jesus' 12 disciples.
In exchange for 30 silver, Judas betrays Jesus to the Roman authorities and reveals Jesus' identity in the garden near Jerusalem, stating "Whoever it is I kiss, he is the one; take him into custody, and lead him away under guard.""Greetings, Rabbi!" Judas greets, and he kisses Jesus very lightly. "Fellow, for what purpose are you present?" Jesus responds. (Matthew 26:49, 50) Answering his own question, Jesus says: "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"
Judas Betrays Jesus - Bible Story, Verses & Meaning

(89) **Brother's Keeper**
Abioseh: Then use the spear. Because that is the side you have chosen. The side of terror, the side of blood. I make you your **brother's keeper**!

This phrase comes from the Cain and Abel bible story (Genesis 4:1-16).
Cain has murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy since God rejected his sacrifice. When God asks where Abel is, Cain Responds **"Am I my brothers keeper?"**

A2. Scene 5

(90) Torvald Neilsen
Dekoven: You are sitting there, still harboring the fugitive hope that sooner or later **Torvald Neilse**n will walk out of the jungle and announce "I have been to Zatembe to intercede for Kumalo!"

Torvald is a character from the Western classic *A Doll's House.* Throughout the play he displays many misogynistic yet accepted traits including how he likes to envision himself as Nora's savior, asking her after the party, "[D]o you know that I've often wished you were facing some terrible dangers so that I could risk life and limb, risk everything, for your sake?"
Throughout he has demeaning language toward his wife, calling her "girl" and his "little bird"
In the end Nora asserts, has treated her like a "doll" to be played with and admired. She decides to leave Torvald, declaring that she must "make sense of [her]self and everything around her." She walks out, slamming the door behind her.
https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/dollhouse/character/torvald-helmer/

Albert Schweitzer (Rev. Neilsen inspiration)

Hansberry made Reverend Neilsen as a parallel to Albert Schweitzer. In 1952 he won the Political Radicalism and Artistic Innovation Nobel Peace Prize for his medical missionary in the Gabon territory of West Africa. People around the world appreciated him for bringing “civilization” to “the dark continent” and building a hospital in the jungles of Lambarene. However later people became disillusioned with his real intentions (Kemayó: 48).

Kemayo, Kamau. *Emerging Afrikan Survivals: An Afrocentric Critical Theory*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2003.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a renowned medical missionary with a complicated history



(92) Reading Drums

Charlie: … How many people in the village can even read?

Tshembe: **Read what? Drums?** Everyone Books? Six, eight, a dozen at most.

Two of the major colonialistic tools have been language and education. For African cultures, there are diverse forms of intelligence, understanding, and wisdom - such as “r**eading drums**” as a form of intelligent communication. While from a Euro-centric lens, the standard of intelligence forced upon colonized African nations (often in form of missions) may have been measured in reading literacy, from an African lens, literacy can come in many forms including: Drums, dance, ritual, language, visual artisanship, and further.

Nkrumah’s Africanization model was an effort to celebrate the “African Personality” and forms of wisdom in education.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide:I EDUCATION + LANGUAGE, African Personality - Language, Rituals, Spirituality, Nkrumah’s Africanization Model

A2. Scene 6

(97) Poet Warrior
*He (Ngago) is a **poet-warrior** invoking the soul of his people.*

Understanding the power of language seen throughout Ngago's speech, Hansberry alludes to the use of language and its many forms to invoke and to move. For the African people in revolt against colonial rule the use of language, code, and non-eurocentric language (drums, symbol, dance, ect.) was key to discreet rebellion.

Coded Language in Song
Coded language concealed issues, as part of rituals. Coded language was also used to identify characters betraying others to the colonial authorities.

Example: For the Mau Mau "Haba Heba ngukumi", meaning, "here we have bedbugs". Bedbugs referred to non-oath partakers (interview Maceru 31/01/2014).

Similarly throughout American Civil Rights, "Code Switching" and code in song was vital.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: African Personality - Language, Rituals, Spirituality, *Decolonizing the Mind - Mau Mau Oath*;

A2. Scene 8

(102) **Darkest Africa**
Madame: Because, my child, no man can be more than a man; yet that is exactly what was expected of him. He was a White Man in **Darkest Africa** - not God but doing God's work



Darkest Africa trope including landscape of mmense sandy wasteland, the grassy veldts and savannahs, and especially the thick, treacherous jungle (which is, in reality, nowhere near as widespread as non-Africans often picture it, being mostly located within Central Africa). The history includes the ancient sophistication of the Egyptians, rich ancient kingdoms like Kush and Mali, and mysterious tribal groups — as well as the more recent European colonies and military juntas. And always, there is the wildlife, some of which may be misplaced.

When Africa is not being used as a Lost World, it's the next best thing: mysterious and dangerous, but populated with outcroppings and ties to the modern world. This balance of civilization just within reach and terra incognita a mere wrong turn away gives the **"Dark Continent"** a unique position
https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DarkestAfrica

(104) Warrior

Madame… Our country needs warriors, Tshembe Matoseh. Africa needs warriors, like your father.

Warriorhood in many African cultures represents both a class of community and the primary role as protectors. The Mau Mau warriors of the Kenyan uprisings that led to independence is believed a large inspiration for Hansberry. They are of the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya.

The Kwi are the native people group and tribe o*f Les Blancs* setting in the fictional Zatembe, however specific inspiration is drawn from the Ashanti people of Ghana and the Gikikuyu (Kikkuyu or Mau Mau) people of Kenya whose liberation movements are believed to have inspired Hansberry.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide: Warriors

Pronunciation Guide - Names and Prominent Terms

Abioseh Matoseh = Ah-bee-oh-say Mah-toe-say

Name Meaning: "Sunday" of African Origin

Possible Associations:

"The Meaning of Africa" (est. written 1950-60s) by Poet **Abioseh** Davidson Nicol who was an early Sierra Leonean author and one of the founders of African Nationalism.

Poem: "The Meaning of Africa" by Poet Abioseh Davidson Nicol

Amos Kumalo = a-muhs koo-mah-loh

A character in Les Blancs possibly inspired by real life activist **Alf Kumalo** of South Africa. **He was a bold photo-journalist who captured many of South Africa's most revolutionary moments from the 1950s- 1990s.** His photography stood as an act of revolution when apartheid would ban photography. He photographed 20+ years of Nelson Mandela's trials including imprisonment and inauguration. "Alf Kumalo was more than a documentary photojournalist; he was, above all, one of South Africa's eminent historians," a former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, said in a statement.

Reference in Dramaturgy Guide:Alf Kumalo

Aquah = ah-quah (stretch "ah", shorten "quah")

The name **Aquah** means *Water Or Sea Blue* and is of Latin origin. **Aquah** is a name that's been used primarily by parents who are considering baby names for girls.

https://www.babynames.com/name/aquah

The last name Aquah is found in Ghana more than any other country or territory (followed by Nigeria, then US)

https://forebears.io/surnames/aquah

Bwana = bwah-nah

Bwa·na | /ˈbwänə/

noun: bwana

plural noun: bwanas

(in East Africa) a boss or master (often used as a title or form of address).: "he can't hear you, bwana"

Hansberry makes reference to Peter and the Uncle Tom obliging servant image. One could make the parallel to the compliancy in "yessuh" and "mastah" language.

Camus = cah-moo

Kula = koo-lah

Ntali = In-tah-lee (should not sound like word "in", be short and soft)

(Arabic: نطالي) is the original name of a place in situated in Southern, Malawi. Its geographical coordinates are 14° 20' 0" South, 35° 11' 0" East and Ntali is its original name (with diacritics). The name is carried by more people in Greece than any other country or territory, 2nd is Cameroon

Ngago = In-gah-go (ditto on the "in")

Ngedi = in-geh-dee (ditto on the "in")

English Translation: That time.
French Translation: La Fois

*Possible reference to the cataclysmic event that led to Eric's birth as Eric refers to this as the name given by his mother

The last name Ngedi is found most in The DR Congo (some in Kenya)
https://forebears.io/surnames/ngedi

M'nabe = mm-nah-beh (again be short with the consonant)

Modingo = moe-ding-oh

'One who thinks Carefully Before He Acts'

Introduced by Peter in allegory challenge to Tshembe's The main protagonist of a children's fable told to Tshembe by Peter in an attempt to recruit him. In the fable, Modingo is a Hyena who is caught in a conflict between Hyenas and Elephants. Modingo decides to listen to both sides before he takes one. He was too slow to act and the Elephants forced the Hyenas out of their home as a result. This is why the Hyena has such a bitter laugh, being the butt of a joke played on them.
Explore more here: Modingo & Folklore

Raffia = rah-fee-ah

(NOUN) aka Raphia farinifera
the fiber of the raffia palm used especially as cord for tying and weaving. Used in many indigenous African communities for varied purpose from craft to fibers that can be used for textile.

Titswali Okele = tits-wah-lee oh-keh-leh

Tshembe Matoseh = Shem-beh Mah-toe-say

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