Entry on Negritude

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government-organized homelands, Kwa Ndebele, and so-called independence.

Kwa Ndebele administration was headed by a group of African businessmen who were appointed by the South African government. The Kwa Ndebele leadership manipulated lesser chiefs and headmen to go along with the homeland independence proposition, which would enrich them but deprive all inhabitants of their South African citizenship.

However, the paramount chief David Mahlangu, members of the royal family of the Ndebele, and a majority of Africans successfully battled this disaster at a great loss of lives, with the dedicated help of elders and youths from both inside and outside the territory. Their success, and the resistance of other Africans, plus the extreme economic and political disarray within the entire country by 1981, became one of the final blows dismantling the apartheid government.

Elizabeth Ann Schneider

See also: Africa, Precolonial; South Africa, History and Politics; Zimbabwe

References

NÉGRITUDE
The concept of nègritude identifies a literary and cultural movement that was founded in the 1930s in Paris by three major black poets: the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor, the Martinican Aimé Césaire, and the Guyanese Léon Gontran-Damas. The term refers to the ideology of cultural affirmation, celebration, and revitalization that emerged from the exchange of ideas between African and Caribbean intellectuals who were searching for a cure to the acculturation that European colonization had created in the lives of people of African descent.

Many blacks of Africa and the Caribbean, who were at home or abroad, felt exiled in their own homelands. They felt that they had succumbed to the power of Western civilization that had separated them from their original African selves. In order to resist this feeling of separation from Africa, Césaire, Senghor, Gontran-Damas and their followers wrote books of poetry in which they reclaimed their African past. In Return to My Native Land, Césaire cast out the mirage of the Western civilization that had separated him from blacks of other continents. In Return, Césaire states:

my race pitted with macula
my race ripe grapes for drunken feet
my queen of spittles and of lepers
my queen of whips and of scrofulas.

This passage reflects the strong influence that the difficult historical conditions of blacks in the Americas had on Césaire’s poetry. Césaire’s representation of his race as the people that have been “pitted with macula,” forced to grind grapes with their “drunken feet,” spat on, infected, and whipped helps him suggest the atrocious experiences of the Africans who had been enslaved in the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade. The passage anticipates Césaire’s denunciation, in his later works, of how the economic development in the West was partially built on the tortured
and murdered bodies and souls of the enslaved Africans and their descendants.

One of the challenges of scholars of négritude is to explore the complexity, mutability, and radicalism of the movement without portraying its ideologies as black cultural fundamentalism and mysticism or as inferiority complex. In The Historian in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Fourth International African Seminar at the University of Dakar Senegal 1961 (1964), Jan Vansina decried how négritude has been inaccurately interpreted as a myth in which the writers had a common goal of stressing the specificity and particularity of black culture, history, and social and cultural inventions. This interpretation of the goals of the négritude movement fails to point out the idea of multiculturalism and connections between races and civilizations that its proponents defended in their works.

Négritude has both internal and external values. On the one hand, it is spiritualist and existential; on the other, it is a practical assessment of black people's connections to politics, culture, class, and humanity. One of the most celebrated studies of négritude is Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Orphée Noir" (Black Orpheus) in which the French existentialist philosopher praised the movement for being the literary expression of the soul and being of black people. Although he perceived négritude as a search for the collective soul of black folk, Sartre did not see the movement as a return to unchanging traditions, a myth, or a racially exclusive philosophy. Instead, he saw négritude as a progress toward equality and universalism, and a continuous journey without end. Sartre's interpretation of négritude anticipated the blend of African and Western values that Senghor used to create a perfect synthesis in his négritude. The fusion of values in Senghor's négritude is noticeable in the introduction of Ce Que Je Crois: Négritude, Franceté et Civilisation de l'Universel (1989), where Senghor clearly states: "I believe, above all, in Negro-African culture, that is to say, in Négritude and in its expression in poetry and arts... I also believe in francophony, and, more exactly, in franceté that is integrated in Latin culture and in the Civilization of the Universal, where Négritude has begun to play a very important part." Senghor's négritude embraced the fusion of modern African and Western cultures. By learning to better appreciate Senghor's hybrid vision of his own culture and place in history, scholars can arrive at a better understanding of the complex history of négritude from the native Africans' point of views.

The négritude movement was a multifaceted literary movement that aimed at improving the conditions of people of African descent. As one of the most voiced poets of the movement, Césaire gave négritude a concrete historical background by using his poetry to represent the traumatic effects of slavery on the enslaved Africans and their descendants. Working with Césaire, Senghor and the other contributors of the movement, such as Gontran-Damas and Sartre, suggested the humanism of the movement, which was visible in its acceptance and blending of all races and civilizations for the good of mankind.

Babacar M'Baye

See also: Afrocentrism; Atlantic World; Blyden, Edward Wilmot; Caribbean Literature; Diaspora, Demography of; Noirisme

References
NEGRO LEAGUES

The Negro leagues, as they were commonly called, featured outstanding African American baseball players throughout approximately the first half of the twentieth century. The Negro leagues attracted large crowds to their games as baseball became an important part of black culture and, during the 1930s and 1940s, the largest black-owned industry in the country. The desire for the same opportunity to achieve fame and fortune that white players enjoyed led eventually to integration of the major leagues in 1947. Once the major leagues were open to African American players, the Negro leagues went into a sharp decline as the best black players, given a choice, trained their sights on the majors. By the end of the 1960 season, the final Negro league had died.

The Negro leagues grew out of a long-standing passion for baseball on the part of African Americans that originated during slavery, when slaves played versions of the game with a ball made from a piece of cloth wrapped around boiled chicken feathers. From the beginning, baseball had been largely, though not entirely, segregated. The first professional team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings of 1869, excluded blacks, as did the first professional league, the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, created in 1871.

Despite their exclusion from much of white baseball, at least a few African Americans played on predominantly white teams in the National Association of Base Ball Players, an association of amateur teams that was formed in 1858, even while all-black teams were developing in the 1860s. An occasional African American made it into white professional baseball, such as Bud Fowler, born, ironically, in Cooperstown, New York, site of the future National Baseball Hall of Fame. The most notable exception to the all-white rule was Moses Fleetwood Walker, a gifted athlete who caught in 1884 for Toledo of the American Base Ball Association, at the time a major league. Even the minimal integration that had occurred came to an end in 1887 when Cap Anson, the player-manager for the Chicago White Stockings, refused to compete against Newark of the International League, for whom Walker was playing. Newark benched Walker rather than lose the revenue from the game. By 1889, the last few African American players in organized ball were gone, and a gentleman's agreement to exclude blacks would