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Spelling Our Proper Name

Reconceptualizing the Order of Africana/Black Studies

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This article examines internal and external intellectual discourses that have developed around Africana Studies as an academic discipline within the United States from its inception to the present. It explores intellectual constructs and discursive contexts that have shaped the variations, complexities, and contradictions in the conceptualization, scope, and philosophical direction of Africana Studies as a discipline. It argues that the name or names of the discipline should reflect the nature and scope, curriculum content and structure, declared goals and expected outcomes of Africana Studies.

Keywords: *discipline; discourses; world view; interdisciplinary; epistemology; multidisciplinary*

This article examines internal and external intellectual discourses that have developed around Africana Studies as an academic discipline within the United States from its inception to the present. It explores intellectual constructs and discursive contexts that have shaped the variations, complexities, and contradictions in the conceptualization, scope, and philosophical direction of Africana Studies as a discipline. While most of the discourses are familiar in their mordant disregard for African humanity, others are unaccustomed discourses and may potentially threaten the existence of Africana Studies as a discipline. Disciplines respond to and engage concepts, intellectual and political philosophies, and discourses that intersect with their specialized discourses, their theories, epistemic cultures, and discursive practices (Zeleza, 2006). Examining discourses surrounding the nature of Africana Studies, its legitimacy, paradigm, theoretical constructs, and nomenclature, involves "a sustained and sober reflection on the discipline's achievements and unfinished business, its theoretical and empirical possibilities, its self understanding as an academic and social practice" (Karenga, 2001, p. 55).

In order to develop the discipline of Africana Studies fully, it is imperative that scholars constantly engage internal and external discourses regarding the nature and direction of the discipline, the research that sustains and develops the discipline, and the intellectual constructs that frame it. There is also need to spell out the name or names of the discipline in relation to the nature and scope, curriculum content and structure, declared goals and expected outcomes of Africana Studies. Such an engagement will assist in developing a self-conscious discipline "directed, not only toward a critical grasp of the world, but also toward improving our human condition and enhancing our human prospect" (Karenga, 2001, p. 55). It also provides an opportunity, as Molefi Asante suggests, to engage "numerous issues [that] remain unresolved in the discourse of Afrocentricity," especially with regard to the various forms of social hierarchies and oppression within the African community (Asante, 2003b, p. 42). Asante also indicates that there is need to develop "African American Studies within the context of contemporary intellectual ideas" (Asante, 2003a, p. 97). According to Karenga, one of the central issues that requires attention "is the problematic of paradigm that, although it was posed and pursued at the inception of Black Studies, was never definitely resolved" (Karenga, 2001, p. 252).

African wisdom warns against avoiding discussing critical issues out of tact. Any discursive trajectories and intellectual discourses that are "ignored, denigrated, or denied acknowledgement and celebration can become a source of anxiety and disruption" or can result in truisms and stock phrases, which would stagnate any discipline (Achebe, 1990, p. 3). Some of the critical issues that have continued to create anxiety and diversion within the discipline include the name of the discipline, curriculum models, intellectual trends, and constructs. A serious dialogue about these issues will provide the basis for the reconceptualization of the discipline and to help in its consolidation as a viable and self-defined discipline rather than a discipline that struggles at the margins or in the shadows of traditional disciplines.

Discourses That Received Africana Studies Into the Academy

The introduction of Africana Studies as an academic enterprise in the 1960s and 1970s was received by extremely hostile discourses from scholars within traditional disciplines. Its sociopolitical goals and objectives, structure, scope, and theoretical constructs were the major targets of deprecatory discourses from scholars in traditional disciplines. Nathaniel Norment

Jr. suggests that one of the major issues that raised great discursive contention "has been whether [Africana Studies] warrants scholarly recognition and functions as individual, independent academic discipline, or merely as a subfield which is attendant to 'traditional' areas in the social sciences" (Norment, 2001, p. 3). Other crucial questions relate to the distinctive aspects, conceptual and theoretical approaches, nomenclature, and sociopolitical mandate of Africana Studies. Norment includes Kenneth Clark, Martin Kilson, Bayard Rustiun, A. Phillip Randolph, Eugene Genovese, and Arthur Schlesinger among the most virulent detractors of Africana Studies who challenged its intellectual legitimacy and criticized its "intellectual separatism" (Norment, 2001, p. xxii). He observed that scholars who were most hostile to the institutionalization of Black Studies were Black scholars "secure in their positions, . . . treating the African American experience within the framework of their own academic discipline" (Norment, 2001, p. xxii). These professionals received Black Studies as "a threat to disciplinary boundaries, hierarchies, and rigor" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 3). Their arguments against Black Studies included such arguments as "its objectives and modalities are poorly defined and conceptualized" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 3), it was "established in response to political exigencies rather than intellectual and academic imperatives" (Hine, 2001, p. 50), its intellectual benefits are minimal, it substitutes social and political expedience for intellectual excellence, and it often tends to be topical and trendy. There was also general suspicion that standards of excellence will be sacrificed for students and community needs, that Black Studies will introduce anti-intellectualism (Pentony, 2001, p. 6), and that academic standards and scholarship would not be maintained (p. 7). John W. Blassingame saw Africana Studies as a "soft" discipline whose main task was to provide Black students with narratives of victimization rather than providing them with "sophisticated knowledge about . . . business practices, high finance, labor law and practices, judicial procedures, consumer practices and the communications media" (Blassingame, 2001, p. 23). Others generally considered it bogus and deviant. In some circles, it was only acceptable when it was linked to traditional disciplines. Whatever reasons these scholars give against the institutionalization of Africana Studies, "[a]ll too often, these debates are tied to intellectual territoriality and struggles for resources. Claims for pedagogical, paradigmatic, or political superiority made for the disciplines or interdisciplines should be taken with caution" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 4). Zeleza adds that the intellectual gatekeepers often guard their disciplinary boundaries with great passion, which often leads to academic

ethnocentricity. They "duly fortified them [their disciplines] with internal legitimizing histories" and traditional epistemic constructions (p. 5).

John W. Blassingame described Africana Studies as too emotional to be a rigorous and relevant discipline. He reduced the purpose of Africana Studies to three objectives, namely, to give students pride, a sense of personal worth, and the tools for restructuring society (Blassingame, 2001, p. 22). He criticized the discipline for failing to provide students with "more sophisticated knowledge of the American society," for vague objectives and contradictory patterns (p. 2). Maulana Karenga correctly observes that "it was clear from its inception that Black Studies would encounter a series of internal and external challenges to its realization as a legitimate and effective discipline" (Karenga, 2003a, p. 282). There is ample evidence to show that external discourses that have developed around Africana Studies have impacted its growth and shaped the nature of the research that sustains it.

Scholars in traditional disciplines hated most the fact that Africana Studies was born out of Black people's liberation and activist movements as an expression of an African world outlook. They also did not appreciate the fact that Africana Studies emerged as the gem plasm of the practical African world and that it was an inseparable and functional aspect of people of African descent's creativity and efforts to reconstruct society. The activist voices that announced the birth of Africana Studies included the Black arts, Black power, Black conscious, and civil rights movements and student protests, which embodied principles of freedom, peace, equality, and justice. James B. Stewart identified three conceptions of Africana Studies, namely, an academic conception, an ideological conception, and an instrumental conception, all which emphasize the "the historical symbiotic relationship between academic and political conceptions" (Stewart, 1994, p. 30). Anti–Africana Studies discourses detested the politics of civil rights, equality, social justice, mental freedom, and multicultural education that Africana Studies sought to introduce into an academy that was predominantly European oriented in nature. They also assigned less value to African-based knowledge and did not accord Africana Studies the same academic respectability that they accorded to European-centered disciplines (Asante, 2003b). Additionally, the attacks were motivated by fear of the potential of Africana Studies to rally together all intellectual voices within and outside the academy that challenged the authority of Western intellectual constructions of African phenomena and world phenomena. Africana Studies would give intellectual legitimacy to these "dissident" voices that hitherto challenged traditional disciplines from the fringes and would give them collective agency and authority capable of challenging

Western philosophical and theoretical perspectives and foundations. Many of these pre–Africana Studies voices laid the foundation of the discipline's intellectual discourses.

Manning Marable acknowledged the significant role of this pre–Africana Studies intellectual tradition in challenging western discourses when he observed that "behind the concept of African American Studies is essentially the Black intellectual tradition, the critical thought and perspectives of intellectuals of African descent and scholars of black America and Africa, and the black diaspora" (Marable, 2000, p. 1). Some Africana scholars trace such African intellectual traditions back to "ancient societies like ancient Egypt, Mali and Songhay which clearly established an intellectual tradition of study of themselves and the world in which they lived" (Karenga, 2003a, p. 5). Others limit themselves to the more recent intellectual foundation established by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois in the late 19th century in the form of the Atlanta Conferences and the Negro Academy. Du Bois's overall goal was to provide a corrective, more systematic, rigorous, and alternative study of people of African descent in America. He developed a 100-year research agenda whose study of African people would contest inherent racism in the social sciences (Karenga, 1993). Du Bois's contributions were not limited to the 20th-century intellectual traditions but extended to the organization of African people for unity, liberation, peace, justice, and human dignity. His was an intellectual agenda with a sociopolitical purpose. Karenga disagrees with those who seek the roots of Africana/Black Studies in the pre–civil rights intellectual traditions. He argues that Africana/Black Studies as we know it has its genesis in the 1960s. The intellectual traditions that studied Black people prior to the '60s, according to Karenga, lacked the systematic posturing of a discipline.

Whether we trace Africana Studies to ancient intellectual traditions in Africa or to the intellectual and political traditions in America and other parts of the world, the bottom line is that Africana Studies emerged as part of larger collective dreams, a long-range sociopolitical vision of African people in America. Its mission and objectives were expected to be seamless with the deepest aspirations of the African American society. A discipline born out of such social activism could not expect to be excused from the social regeneration and reeducation that had to be done within the academy and the community. Owing to the situation within the African American communities, it was inconceivable that a serious department of Africana Studies would separate academic excellence from social responsibility. Born in the context of the Black power movement's demand for self-determination and Black empowerment, Africana Studies could not escape the movement's

social mission and agency. Many Africana intellectuals expected the discipline to solve the problematic of the race or to produce people capable of solving African American social problems.

This germinal relationship of Africana Studies with Black people's sociopolitical concerns and struggles for human dignity threatened the intellectual hegemony of traditional disciplines in which many scholars throve on the production of knowledge that "wittingly or otherwise, diminished, distorted, and, in many instances, obliterated the contributions of African people to world development generally and the contributions of African Americans to America's development specifically" (Hayes, 2000, p. xxi). Since the holocaust of slavery and throughout apartheid, Jim Crow, and colonization of African people, European scholars and their converts have been enjoying the privilege of weaving monologic narratives defining Western humanity through the negation of that of African people and other people of color. Chinua Achebe observed that traditional disciplines created myths "which have yielded perhaps psychological, certainly economic comfort to Europe" and of course White America (Achebe, 1975, p. 23). He adds that "the white man has been talking and talking and never listening because he imagines he has been talking to the dumb beast" (p. 24). Traditional disciplines attempted to colonize all discursive spaces with all the institutional benefits that come with that control. They enjoyed the privilege of valorizing a particular perspective of African humanity within the context of world issues and relations, a monologue that produced incomplete and distorted narratives of African people throughout the world.

Many African intellectuals within and outside academic institutions were already challenging and critiquing, condemning and disputing, "theories of black people's genetic, biological, and cultural inferiority . . . [and especially its] racism and stereotypes that have been ever present in the mainstream discourse of white academic institutions" and conditioned this aggressive monologue in Western discourses of the "Other" (Marable, 2000, p. 2). It was therefore very obvious to all those who had vested interests in the study of Black people that Africana/Black Studies would provide all these voices with a sense of unity of purpose and cohesiveness that would make it difficult to ignore or easily marginalize.

Interdepartmental/Interdisciplinary Structure and Theoretical Approaches

Institutional and intellectual hostility shaped the nature of scholarship and dialogue within Africana Studies. It forced Africana/Black scholars

into a position where they have had to constantly explain the discipline's parameters, organizing principles, theoretical and conceptual perspectives, and approaches to their detractors and have had to justify its academic uniqueness, validity, and integrity. The audience is often scholars in traditional disciplines and skeptical administrators who saw Africana Studies as activist programs with no academic merit. This writing-back left Africana Studies scholars with limited opportunity to engage in an internal dialogue about curriculum models and intellectual perspectives that are essential to realizing both social responsibility and academic excellence. Hence, after 40 years, the fundamental questions and issues of theoretical perspectives, name, and scope of the discipline remain unresolved. The anti–Africana Studies discourses have also shaped the main questions with which the discipline has been concerned. Darlene Clark Hine argues that the way individual Black Studies scholars and departments responded to "these and other factors contributed to the ongoing structural and organizational diversity" that characterize the discipline today (Hine, 2001, p. 50).

This explains why early Africana Studies research was explanatory and justificatory in nature and purpose. Articles like Nathan Hare's "Questions and Answers About Black Studies," James Stewart's "The Field and Function of Black Studies" and "Reaching for Higher Ground: Toward an Understanding of Black/Africana Studies," Darlene Clark Hine's "Black Studies: An Overview" (2001), Maulana Karenga's "Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm: The Philosophical Direction" (2001), Molefi Kete Asante's "African American Studies: The Future of the Discipline" (2003a), and William Little, Carolyn Leonard, and Edward Crosby's "Black Studies and Africana Studies Curriculum Model in the United States" (2001) demonstrate these scholars' desire to define, explain, and vindicate Africana Studies as a legitimate academic discipline. The first major task that Africana scholars tackled was to prove that Africana Studies is as intellectually sound and rigorous as any other discipline within the academy. They were forced to strike a balance between presenting a structure that would be least resisted by those who doubted the legitimacy and viability of African/Black Studies as an academic discipline and the maintenance of Africana Studies' disciplinary autonomy and social relevancy. Maulana Karenga presented Black Studies as an interdisciplinary discipline that allows for and encourages both a specialized and an integrative approach to subject areas within the discipline (Karenga, 1993, p. 24). He argued,

> Black Studies in sharing similar concerns with other social sciences and humanities disciplines draws from them and strives at an ongoing synthesis and utilization of the most incisive and productive theories, methods, techniques, models, strategies and research designs. (Karenga, 1993, p. 24)

Africana Studies, according to Karenga's argument, is unique and innovative in that it breaks down disciplinary borders that have hitherto suffocated knowledge systems and produces a synthesis out of the most "incisive and productive theories, methods, techniques, models, strategies and research designs" drawn from traditional disciplines. In other words, by bringing together theoretical approaches and ways of knowing from various disciplines under one academic umbrella, Africana Studies created the basis for new insights and greater understanding of the African people. He admits that this argument was partly meant to convince skeptics and detractors like Martin Kilson. Unfortunately, such an argument would not convince those who worship "disciplinary boundaries, [and] hierarchies" as sacrosanct. However, it may be agreeable to scholars who "value creative space[s] between disciplines," liminal spaces "where new questions are asked, new approaches developed, new understandings advanced, and new fields and disciplines emerge" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 3). Furthermore, Zeleza has argued that "the meaning of interdisciplinarity is not always very clear." He refers to the debate between Thomas Benson and William Newel to illustrate the complexity of interdisciplinarity as a concept (Zeleza, 2006, pp. 3-4). Benson rejects interdisciplinary studies because

> its objectives and modalities are poorly defined and conceptualized insofar as borrowing among disciplines is normal; . . . its pedagogical benefits are doubtful for students lacking strong disciplinary foundations; . . . it offers students fragmentary exposure to bits and pieces of various disciplines and impedes their development of disciplinary competence; . . . interdisciplinary studies programmes are typically shallow for substituting intellectual rigor for topical excitement; . . . the costs of these programs are too high. (Zeleza, 2006, p. 4)

On the other hand, Newel saw merit in interdisciplinary studies. He argued that interdisciplinarity promotes higher order thinking and more intellectual maturity than disciplines. According to Zeleza, "[w]hile advances in knowledge occur in the traditional disciplines, they are even more likely in the intersections, the liminal spaces between the disciplines, in the interdisciplinary fields that often emerge out of disciplinary interpenetration and struggles to overcome gaps and silences in the disciplines" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 4). Considering the fact that many Africana Studies departments or programs were not allowed to control their curriculum and did not have enough faculty to do so, that some or most of their courses were offered or are still offered in traditional disciplines, it is possible to define Africana Studies as interdepartmental rather than interdisciplinary in the true sense

of the word. Hence, efforts to build Africana Studies on the basis of perspectives, epistemologies, and research techniques derived from liminal spaces between traditional disciplines are not necessarily an act of agency or re-centering the study of African people. Such a project, and the institutional arrangements that occasion it, still privilege traditional disciplines as the centers of legitimate knowledge and theories of knowledge. Uninformed and racist curriculum committees; general education committees; retention, tenure, and promotion committees; and many other restrictive and parochial institutional structures undermined efforts by Africana scholars to define and develop new parameters of knowledge. The version of interdisciplinarity that Africana Studies was forced to implement was more interdepartmental in nature. It was an unhealthy compromise that did not result in a fundamental rupture from the traditional modes of knowledge. The structuring and scheduling of courses, teaching and interpretive methods, remained under the control of faculty within or trained in the traditional disciplines. The basic task of Africana Studies, which, according to Karenga (2003, p. 3), is to provide a "critical and systematic study of the thought and practice of African people in their current and historical unfolding" cannot be fulfilled using an interdepartmental structure. Such a structure undermines Africana Studies' main objectives of critiquing and rescuing African knowledge systems from the stultifying grip of Western theories and approaches. In fact, an interdepartmental structure promotes traditional disciplinary knowledge. Although some individual faculty within the traditional disciplines were already critical of the intellectual narrowness and the Western orientation of traditional disciplines, the courses on African people's experiences offered within the framework of traditional disciplines do not necessarily guarantee a dramatic alteration of the perspectives of existing disciplinary fields. Therefore, interdepartmental/interdisciplinary structure and framework, as espoused by Karenga, compromised both the intellectual and the sociopolitical goals of the discipline.

According to Maulana Karenga, the major beginning objectives of Black Studies were (a) to teach Black experience in its historical and current unfolding; (b) to assemble and create a body of knowledge that was to contribute to intellectual and political emancipation of Black people; (c) to create intellectuals who were dedicated to community service and development rather than vulgar careerism; (d) to cultivate, maintain, and continuously expand a mutually beneficial relationship between the campus and the community; and (e) to establish and reaffirm its position in the academy as a discipline essential to the educational project and the conception of a quality education

(Karenga, 2003, pp. 18-20). While it is true that these tasks require historical, psychological, political, philosophical, economic, literary, and cultural perspectives and a range of techniques and strategies, there is need for an organizing intellectual construct, a common ground, a cohesive element, a methodological grid that would help the discipline to observe, perceive, describe, and interpret African experience in ways that are discontinuous from the epistemologies of traditional disciplines. These are goals that, most likely, cannot be realized using categories and conceptual systems of knowledge which derive from traditional disciplines or within an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary structure that considers the Africana Studies enterprise as an amalgamation of the social sciences and humanities disciplines together with their theories, conceptual frameworks, and approaches. The task of providing corrective holistic narratives of African humanity requires a conceptual framework that would reorganize and reorient the disciplinary knowledge into a liberated and liberating intellectual space.

This concern with developing Africana studies into an integrated discipline was expressed by William A. Little, Carolyn Leonard, and Edward Crosby, who in 1988 were tasked by National Council of Black Studies (NCBS), as part of the Ford Foundation Grant, to review and update the Africana studies curriculum model. The committee recommended the term *holistic* model to denote the intended break from the disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary models, all of which are based on the assumption that the foundation for the study of the African world experience resides in traditional disciplines.

The second response to criticism against Africana Studies as an intellectual discipline was to declare the discipline's unique qualities to challenge and critique Western hegemonic discourses and intellectual constructs. Scholars declared a genuine need to explore and analyze the history and culture of African people in Africa and the African Diaspora from an Afrocentric perspective rather than a Eurocentric perspective (Little, 1992, p. i). It is in this context that Molefi Asante developed Afrocentricity as the theory/framework/perspective for re-centering/relocating the study of African phenomena in African worldview and philosophical foundations. Maulana Karenga (2003b) and Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993) advocated Kawaida and Africana Womanism, respectively, as alternative theories to European-centered theories. Again, these theories, especially Afrocentricity, were viciously attacked as unscholarly and essentialist. Henry Louis Gates Jr. attacked what he interpreted as "cognitive relativism promoted by many Afrocentrists" (Gates, 1994, p. 42). He further argued that such cognitive relativism "eventuates precisely in . . .

epistemological segregation, where disagreement betokens only a culpable failure to comprehend" (p. 42). Ralph A. Austen's argument represents the overall attitude that many scholars within traditional disciplines had and still have against Afrocentricity. He states,

> The Afrocentrist approach, as represented by such scholars as Molefi Asante (and his entire department) at Temple University, gets a good deal more criticism, and I personally find their work parochial, misinformed, and trapped in a discourse of the very racism which they claim to repudiate. (Gates Jr. et al., 1993/1994, p. 44)

Eugene Victor Wolfenstein disagreed with the contention of "the relationship between melanin and culture" within some circles of Africana/Black studies scholars. All these criticisms resulted in attempts by Africana scholars to quell the feeling of "uneasiness in some circles about the intellectual credibility of Black/Africana Studies" and its theoretical perspectives (Stewart, 1994, p. 2). Stewart further observes how this attack led Africana scholars to "de-emphasize the linkage between scholarship and activism" (p. 2) and distinguished Afrocentricity as an intellectual theory from the "popular Afrocentricism." Karenga sought to separate Afrocentricity from Afrocentricism in order "to stress its intellectual value as distinct from its ideological use . . . [and] to establish it as a quality of thought and practice rather than thought and practice itself" (Karenga, 2003, pp. 76-77).

The point I am making here, as I have argued earlier, is that Africana Studies discourse remains oppositional to Western discourses, yet the major project that confronts the discipline today is a developmental one. Debates on the future of the discipline should take into account the shrinking institutional budgets and rigid formulas based on student enrollments and full-time equivalent faculty, which challenge Africana Studies scholars and administrators to develop a more competitive discipline with dynamic curricula that respond to fundamental and urgent questions deriving from our contemporary environment. Themes of race and ethnicity, homelands and diasporas, identity and identity formation, global economics, womanhood and gender, sex and sexuality, the politics of hip-hop, urban youth culture, immigrations and migrations, as well as cross-cultural collaboration, all of which are part of Africana realities, are great resources for developing a dynamic, cutting-edge discipline and research within the ever-changing institutional contexts. Africana scholars need to focus more on mentoring the upcoming intellectual generations rather than continue to engage skeptics within traditional disciplines. Such an engagement was an

essential prop in the initial stages of the disciplines but may not take the discipline to a new intellectual level.

The Politics of Naming the Discipline and Curriculum Models

Darlene Clark Hine has observed that there is an "ongoing debate over nomenclature . . . a graphic illustration of the residual problems growing out of the turbulent times in which these programs burst upon the academic scene" (Hine, 2003, p. 50). Similarly, John Henrik Clarke explained differences in nomenclature within Africana Studies as an indication of the dilemma of a "discipline at the crossroads of history … [a dilemma that] has long historical roots" (Clarke, 2004, p. 192). This dilemma manifests itself in the diverse names that the discipline takes on different campuses and what Zeleza has described as the "intellectual, institutional, and ideological diversity of scholarly cultures, capacities and commitments" (Zeleza, 2003, p. 69).

One of the earliest recommendations made by William A. Little, Carolyn Leonard, and Edward Crosby in the 1990 NCBS Curriculum Committee report was to establish a standard nomenclature for the discipline. Yet almost two decades after the committee's report, the discipline still uses multiple terms to name the units offering courses and degrees associated with the study of African world people and societies. The terms are supported by specific intellectual discourses with their particular understanding and interpretation of African descendent people's historical and cultural realities. The dominant discourses that have contributed to the variations in the name of the discipline relate to three basic conceptual frameworks used to understand and interpret the identity of African American people. These are the national, the pan-African, and the diasporic frameworks.

The nationalist framework defines African Americans as a distinct community whose goal is to be both Black and American and to struggle to create conditions in American society in which this would be possible. It also minimizes the presences and significance of cultural connections and continuities between African Americans and Africans. Ralph Ellison, quoted in Jacob Drachler's *Black Homeland, Black Diaspora: Cross Currents of the African Relationship* (1975), summarizes the essential position of this perspective with his rejection the practical or symbolic significance of Africa as the homeland for African Americans. He argues that if everyone had to have "some place to be proud of . . . I am proud of

Abbeville, South Carolina, and Oklahoma City. That is enough for me" (Drachler, 1975, p. 3). The tendency of this national emphasis is to promote labels like African American studies, Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, Afro-Ethnic Studies, Comparative American Cultures, Ethnic Studies, Multicultural Studies, and Race and Ethnic Studies.

The pan-African perspective recognizes historical and cultural continuities between Africa and its Diaspora and favors a curriculum model with a global emphasis. Its discourse regarding the connections of African people throughout the world favors labels like Africana Studies, African and African Diasporas Studies, African/Black World Studies, Africology, Africa and New World Studies, and Pan-African Studies. Diasporic discourses with their aversion for collective concepts of African identity like African unity and pan-African and African identity describes the African Diaspora's attempts to connect with African heritage as "both dangerous in practice and misleading in theory" (Appiah, 1998, p. 116). According to Anthony Appiah, such concepts as pan-African, African unity, and African identity are biologically rooted conceptions of race. He rejects African traditions as metaphysical and disabling "because . . . [they] found our unity in gods who have not served us well in our dealing with the world" (p. 116). His argument against Afrocentricity is based on his belief that

> Afrocentrists—like all who have chosen to root Africa's modern identity in an imaginary history—require us to see the past as the moment of wholeness and unity; tie us to the values and beliefs of the past; and thus divert us from the problems of the present and hopes of the future. (p. 116)

Similarly, Paul Gilroy considers concepts of African collective identity to be fantasy and mere "time-worn assumption of homogenous and unchanging black communities whose political and economic interests were readily knowable and easily transferred from everyday life into their expressive cultures" (Gilroy, 1994, p. 1). Gilroy accuses African-centered scholars of "trying to create and harness a sense of sameness that does not exist prior to their attempts to manufacture it" (p. 2). Both Appiah and Gilroy, like many other postmodernist and postcolonial scholars, base their arguments on the idea that identities are unstable and floating; that since race is an unscientific concept, it cannot be ontologically useful; that there are no "essential essences" that define people. This discourse prefers a diasporan model with elements of area and national studies curriculum model with labels like Diaspora Studies, Black and Hispanic Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, African New World Studies, and African and African American Studies.

Although a combination of institutional constraints and ideological variations have resulted in a variety of names for the discipline, there is one basic area of consensus. This is expressed in program descriptions which are available on the departments'/programs' Web sites. A few examples will suffice here. Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach focuses on "the significance, beauty, and ongoing evolution of *the African heritage*" using an "interdisciplinary approach"; the Department of African-American Studies at Temple University "offers a broad selection of courses addressing historical, cultural, sociological, political, economic, and psychological factors that affect *the lives of African people*"; the Black Studies program at Providence College "provides all students with a valuable understanding of *African and African-American history*, social and political life, culture and practice"; Africana Studies at University of Pittsburg "is a study, research, interpretation, and the dissemination of knowledge concerning *African American, African, Caribbean* affairs and culture"; Afro-American Studies at San Diego State University "covers a variety of subjects pertaining to *Africa and the African Diaspora*"; Pan-African Studies at University of Louisville offers "a multidisciplinary study of the *societies and cultures of Africa and persons African ancestry* past and present"; and Afro-American Studies at University of Massachusetts, Amherst provides an "in-depth knowledge of the history and culture of *Black people in Africa and the New World*."

This short survey of the descriptions of the discipline on various campuses shows that in spite of the differences in the names used to identify the discipline, there is a general understanding that the scope of the discipline has to be global and internationalist. Perhaps it is the consistent expression of a global orientation of the discipline that motivated William Little, Chair of the NCBS Curriculum Committee, to recommend the term *Africana Studies* as the standard nomenclature for the discipline. This global perspective is supported by such scholars as John Henrik Clarke who believe that the last or most advanced stage in the development of Africana Studies is characterized by an internationalist perspective that takes a "global view of African people and understand[s] how they relate to other people" (Clarke, 2004, p. 196). Similarly, Chancellor Williams is uncompromising in challenging us to adopt a global approach to Africana/Black Studies. He states,

> That we are here studying a single race, not races, . . . single people, not peoples, is a major theory and fact of black history and one of our principal

> guidelines. We are concerned with things that are characteristically African, practically universal among them from one end of the continent to the other . . . an ancient common culture in a common center of black civilization. On this we stand. (Williams, 1987, p. 21)

The contradiction that exists is that in spite of this declared internationalist/pan-African position, a survey of the courses offered in these departments, programs, and institutes will show that Africana Studies on most campuses "tends to focus more heavily on the African American initiative and experience" (Karenga, 2003). Most of the courses offered are predominantly African American with a few African and African Caribbean courses. There are not many departments, centers, institutes, and programs that offer a global integrated curriculum that was developed by the NCBS. The courses are generally not structured in a way that allows for a systematic study of African world peoples' realities as a collective epic narrative or as a continuum and often take the form of stand-alone themes based on the area studies model. Thus, behind the internationalist scope that the program descriptions and mission statements suggest, there exist fundamental conceptual and epistemological differences as well as the branches of knowledge that the discipline is expected to cover.

What, therefore, is the proper name of discipline? What do we take into consideration in deciding this name? It may be important to invoke African wisdom regarding names and naming, which reminds us that names have cultural and philosophical meanings. The name(s) that Africana Studies scholars and administrators choose should bear meaning and focus of their discipline and should be reflected in their course offerings and the way they structure. Mazisi Kunene draws attention to the fact that

> the naming of things follows a principle of describing their function, appearance, sounds and relationships, not merely to identify and label them, it is from such a study that one can amass and trace some of the fundamental philosophies of the culture. (Kunene, 1982, p. xi)

Kunene adds that "in the names of things are embodied a timeless set of values which by their ethical authority supercede the whims of temporal political power" (Kunene, 1982, p. xi). According to Kunene's argument, naming a discipline is not merely an act of identifying and labeling a field of study, but it is also an expression of an understanding of the fundamental nature of that discipline, its order, and the realities that it has engaged. Niyi Osundare supports this line of argument by providing five reasons

that names are important: (a) The discipline is "shaped—and frequently determined—by the words we use for expressing it"; (b) "In naming the world we also name ourselves, evoking a recognizable, tangible construct of that panoply of realities which constitute what we call human experience"; (c) "Names serve as doors to the house of experience, a guide to the hidden meanings in the shadowy nooks of time and place"; (d) "Names tell stories, liberate or imprison"; and (e) "Names commit" (Osundare, 2002, p. 41).

The task of developing the discipline calls for a serious consideration on the various labels that we use to name the discipline; think about the principles that guide our naming, the relationships they invoke, the philosophies they project, and the values they embody. Africana scholars have the responsibility to ensure that names selected to identify the discipline reflect the mission and goals of their department or program. Let us spell our proper name and appropriately name our discipline.

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