

Sustainable Development in Africa and of the African and African Diasporic Studies

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Introduction

Different aspects of African and African diasporic experience have received scholarly attention in the 21st century from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. There is a growing interest in African concerns, and also "the field of African diaspora studies has grown rapidly in recent years" (Zeleza, 2008, p. 4). This increased attention in African and African diasporic experiences is characterised by the shifting dynamics of knowledge production, especially with the changing contours of materials production and epistemic transformations (economic, political, social etc) that link academic endeavours with broader societal concerns (Zeleza, 2008, p. 4). It is evident that African literary and verbal arts are repository of Africanness in its broadest sense, including all of Africa's ethnic groups or nations, geographic locations, political climates, cultural changes, historical factors, religious

nomenclatures, political orientations, and other indices. All these play pivotal roles in knowledge sharing, skills, and cultural information, and, as a result, Africans and African diasporans can be understood through literary and verbal compositions and knowledge outputs. As the world is increasingly becoming a 'global village' of information, African indigenous literary and verbal arts, which constitute a great aspect of the continent's intangible culture, are essential because they incorporate previous and current experiences of Africans and African diasporans in diverse situations and speak to different audiences. As Darkwa (2018, p. 27) notes, the African and African diaspora communities are "very critical to the political and economic development of the African continent", so "theorising and analysing [both the African and] diaspora developments is increasingly important given that migration is

becoming a key part of many household survival strategies" (Zack-Williams & Mahan, 2002, p. 205). In line with the above, this theme issue on "Issues in African and African Diasporic Studies" discusses topics related to but not limited to those of identity and diasporic experiences, migration and transnational relationship of Black people, the return-to-root phenomenon, globalization and internationalization of African arts and experiences, return migration, democratization, socio-political engagement, intra and inter-language development, insecurity, brain-drain, continental/national consciousness, nostalgia, homecoming, African literature, culture, environment and sustainable development.

The twelve articles in this special issue address the aforementioned issues. The papers emerged from the discussions held by our African and African Diasporic Studies Research Group during the conference, which was held at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, from September 7-9, 2023, and attended by many African scholars. During the conference, which focused on the promotion of African traditional, authentic and original indigenous and historical knowledge in education, politics, religion, literature,

economics and social values, extensive critical discussions were also held on rebuilding the misrepresented image of Africa and Africans as well as sustaining African and African Studies. This special issue is oriented to interrogate African and African diasporic matters from transdisciplinary perspectives. For instance, in the first article in the issue, Eddie E. Archibong and Dokubo M. Goodhead argue that although the twentieth century was a time of intense struggle by "people of African descent" against colonisation and its forces, the twenty-first century has seen Africa embroiled in the struggle not to be swept away by the wind of globalisation. They examine the achievements and contributions of returnee diaspora Africans in this regard, as well as the challenges they are grappling with, while calling for "a robust and visionary integration of returnees to bring about the emergence of a new Africa." The second article by Ama Etta Agwu sees migration as a tension-filled phenomenon that is sometimes characterised by some debilitating experience. Insisting that wherever a migrant goes, the homeland metaphorically goes with him or her, he highlights the unforgetfulness and unforgettability of one's homeland, insisting that it unconsciously manifests

in the immigrant's life, causing a kind of split-personality characterised by a form of restlessness. Following the same trajectory is the article by Ifeoma Cassandra Nebeife, which argues that "Africa has always been to the African and indeed to the immigrant Asian, especially of Ugandan origin, a home like no place else." In the article, Africa is portrayed as the continent that provides not only succour but an ample ambience of survival for Africans and non-Africans, thus making anyone who moves out of it restless and listless as they are confronted with a barrage of racial prejudices. However, the paper identifies postcolonial issues such as lack of good governance, basic infrastructure, insecurity, corruption, Eurocentrism, and Indophobia, among others, as huge obstacles hampering a successful return to the roots by Africans and non-Africans who desperately want to come back and make Africa their home.

The fourth article by Evelyn Nwachukwu Urama and Leonard Obina Onwuegbuche examines the phenomenon of self-assertion and traditional performing arts in the works of some Caribbean poets. They posit that these concepts are not only woven into their poetry but are also used to depict some African historical, cultural, social, political, and religious

structures and ideologies. The next article by Uchechukwu Evelyn Madu and Enongene Mirabeau Sone is devoted to the issue of the crime of stolen identity, and how it is perpetrated through winning the victim's trust and eventually hoodwinking them of some possessions. The article's key argument is that it identifies a clear link between the cybercrime of identity theft and some Igbo trickster folktales. The next article by Onyebuchi Nwosu, Chisom Paula Ogamba and David Ifeanyi Nwakanma focuses on the deployment of morphological coinages and compounding by some Nigerian poets to ensure a clear explication of their thoughts in order to robustly enrich the meaning and aesthetics of their poetry. Doris Ann Ike's article explores the philosophical notion of existential thrownness and how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Alice Walker artistically utilise it in their novels to depict some of their characters as those who are thrown into the world without their volition. Another article by Leonard Obina Onwuegbuche and Evelyn Nwachukwu Urama explores the concepts of assertion of Blackness and Femininity in the works of two notable Caribbean poets, Aimé Césaire and Audre Lorde. Describing them as poets of social belongingness, they observe that their poetry re-educates Black people on the

importance of continual acceptance of Africanness as an effective developmental tool in the 21st century.

Adaobi Muo's contribution looks at Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* through the prism of pessimistic feminism. The article contends that the inescapable and irreversible denigration of African females, embodied in the character Mara, tends to render the long-anticipated emancipation of women hardly attainable. Kelechi Naze's article examines the widening gap between Africa and its potential in the domain of democratic representation, while that of Oluchi Chris Okeugo and Virginia Obioma Eze dwells on re-examining identity formation in the Caribbean fictional text, *Lucy*, by Jamaica Kincaid. The work posits that women who are presented in the novel as feminist postcolonial subjects deal with numerous irreconcilable attitudes and attributes as they negotiate

life in the Caribbean postcolonial and societal otherness. The twelfth article is Chidimma Ugomma E. Inyima's analysis of idiomatic adaptation as social consciousness in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The study reveals that the deployment of idiomatic adaptation in the African novel is borne out of pragmatic constraints, the need for contextual and cultural appropriacy, and communicative effectiveness.

From different disciplinary perspectives, these articles examine how Africans and their diasporas negotiate belonging, creativity, and survival within complex socio-political and cultural contexts. Together, these contributions underline the continuing relevance of Africa and its diasporas to global knowledge production and the ongoing redefinition of African self-understanding in the twenty-first century.

References

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