
THE MEDIA AND AFRICA'S ON-GOING QUEST FOR A TRUE HUMANITY: A BIKOIAN APPROACH

Communitas
ISSN 1023-0556
2012 17: 59-74

Simphiwe Sesanti*

ABSTRACT

Upon their arrival on the African continent, among their first acts of denuding and attenuating Africans, European colonialists targeted African culture as their casualty in order to kill Africans' self-consciousness. European culture was made a point of reference and African culture was regarded as something negative and primitive, resulting in Africans despising themselves and worshipping everything European. Aiding European imperialism in denigrating the African image and personality was the European-owned media. In reaction to the imperialists' project, the Black Consciousness Movement martyr, Bantu Steve Biko advanced the view that in order to liberate Africans, self-consciousness and self-esteem had to be restored to Africans. In his view this had to be done through the act of African cultural reclamation. In this article the author interrogates the concept of African cultural reclamation and the role the media can play in order to fulfil Africa's quest for a true humanity as envisaged by Biko.

* Dr Simphiwe Sesanti lectures in the Department of Journalism at the University of Stellenbosch.

INTRODUCTION

The title of this article – *The media and Africa’s on-going quest for a true humanity* – is borrowed from the late Black Consciousness proponent, Bantu Steve Biko’s title, *Black Consciousness and the Quest for a true humanity*, anthologised in his book, *I Write What I Like*. In his anticipation of victory for the struggle against colonialism, Biko (2004: 51) believed that the “special contribution” that Africa would make to international politics or world affairs would be giving the world “a human face”. This he considered more important than creating a military and industrial outlook – an achievement the Western world prides itself in. Biko’s (2004: 26) vision for a humane world drew its inspiration from African culture. While he believed in the potency of African culture to usher in a humane world, Biko (2004: 31) was painfully aware that African culture had been disfigured by the colonialist Europeans. He observed that “in an effort to destroy completely the structures that had been built up in the African Society and to impose their imperialism with an unnerving totality, the colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native’s brain of all form and content” (*ibid.*). The colonialists, Biko further observed, turned to the past of the oppressed and “distorted, disfigured and destroyed it”.

In their renaming and misnaming game, Africa became the “dark continent”, African culture became “barbarism” and African religious practices and customs became “superstition” (Biko 2004: 31). The misnaming and renaming project by European colonialists is referred to by Mphahlele (2002: 17) as “disinherited imagination”. Disinherited imagination refers to the perception of “standards as good because they are established by the white man and his traditions” (*ibid.*). Disinherited imagination is the stripping, as Mphahlele further points out, of the indigenous world of its own myths, poetry, dreams and reveries. As a consequence of the “disinherited imagination”, Africans, to a great extent, lost touch with a culture that celebrated respect for all that exists. In terms of human relations, African culture emphasised the need to honour and protect women and children (Ntuli 1999: 184).

Identifying gender relations as one of the key and core issues in the project of African cultural reclamation is crucial because, as Mugo (1999: 215) observes, culture, with particular reference to African culture, has been misused “as justification for patriarchal repression of women and silencing of youth”. As Mugo (1999: 217) notes, “no meaningful cultural renaissance can take place while certain sectors of the population under transformation are victims of silence”. The silencing of women, as Mugo further points out, “becomes massive in that they constitute a clear numerical majority on the African continent”.

This article is conscious of the need for caution when calls are made for cultural reclamation. That is because, as Prah (2006: 329) notes, these calls are “very

often used as a cover for the maintenance of undemocratic and atavistic political practice”. This article is largely an interrogation of the philosophical underpinnings of African culture in an attempt to illuminate those aspects of African culture that can be utilised in order to realise Biko’s quest for a true humanity. Emphasis on the philosophical approach is informed by, among other factors, an understanding that “[African] culture refers to the sum total of African philosophy, behaviour, ideas, and artefacts” (Asante 1990: 4). The author argues that the media should play a role in this quest and suggestions are made about how this can be done. Cognisant of the fact that there are many understandings and misunderstandings of what constitutes African culture, the author’s point of departure is the definition of “African culture”.

DEFINING CULTURE AND AFRICAN CULTURE

Before defining culture and discussing African culture in particular, it should be noted that in this article, for the purpose of clarity, reference to “Africans” means the indigenous people of the continent, or black Africans. The terms “black” and “African” are used interchangeably. The author employs the terms not oblivious to the many existing and contesting definitions of these terms.

Culture is understood as “the means by which a people expresses itself, through language, traditional wisdom, politics, religion, architecture, music, tools, greetings, symbols, festivals, ethics, values, and collective identity” (Maathai 2009: 160). Maathai further points out that a people’s culture is their reference point to the past and their antennae to the future. Significantly, Maathai further observes that “without a culture, a community loses self-awareness and guidance, and grows weak and vulnerable”.

With reference to African culture, this article is not claiming that Africans are homogeneous. Rather, it is as Mphahlele (2002: 237) observes, that “[a]lthough there are regional cultures in Africa, the existence of *Africanity* cannot escape us”. The term “African culture” is employed and should be understood, in this article, as Mphahlele (2002: 237-238) observes, the “common cultural experiences we [Africans] share on the continent – the whole landscape of culture”.

In discussing the issue of culture, this article is not oblivious to the fact that culture is not static but dynamic. In recognising the dynamism of culture, Biko (2004: 106) notes that culture is “essentially the society’s composite answer to the varied problems of life”. This means that as new challenges emerge, communities must have ways of rising to the occasion. Biko’s observation is echoed by Mphahlele (2002: 238) who notes that culture is “a concept that defines what we as humans do and make to cope with the material realities of life”. Observing that African culture “is not a museum specimen” but a “dynamic feature” of African lives,

Mphahlele (2002: 96), however, insists that only indigenous Africans should be engaged in an exercise of defining and redefining it, and “decid[ing] what African culture should do in the face of modern technology”. Having been born into privilege, Mphahlele (2002: 82) argues that most whites in South Africa have been “socialized into the belief that they were destined always to lead by virtue of being an extension of western civilization”. Having made that observation, Mphahlele argues that the definition and redefinition of what constitutes African culture must be done “without the white man’s tutelage”. In this he is echoed by Prah (2010: 9) who refuses to accept that others can understand Africans better than they understand themselves, insisting further that Africans must master the knowledge about their own societies (Prah 2010: 9).

This insistence on self-mastery, with special reference to African culture, is a reflection of Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy. Biko (2004: 26) stood strongly opposed to the “superior-inferior white-black stratification that makes a white a perpetual teacher and the black a perpetual pupil (and a poor one at that)”. He further opposed the “intellectual arrogance of white people that makes them believe that white leadership is a *sine qua non* in this country and that whites are the divinely appointed pace-setters in progress”. Recognising the “terrible role played by our education and religion in creating amongst us a false understanding of ourselves” Biko (2004: 57) insisted that Africans “must therefore work out schemes not only to correct this, but further to be our own authorities rather than wait to be interpreted by others”. In rectifying the wrong done to Africans, Biko (2004: 105) held the view that “a lot of attention has to be paid to our history if we as blacks want to aid each other in coming into our consciousness. We have to re-write our history and produce in it the heroes that formed the core resistance to the white invaders.” Biko was advocating, in other words, what Maathai (2009: 171) refers to as “reclamation”.

RECLAIMING AFRICAN CULTURE

African cultural reclamation is the “resurrection, reconstruction, and revitalization of African culture” (Modupe 2003: 59). It is an act of reengagement with one’s roots with the aim of attempting to embrace all of its richness, contradictions and challenges in fitting into the modern world (Maathai 2009: 165). This is necessary for Africans because, as Maathai (2009: 165) observes, when Africans were told that their culture was “demonic and primitive, they lost their sense of collective power and responsibility and succumbed, not to the god of love and compassion they knew, but to the gods of commercialism, materialism, and individualism”. African cultural reclamation is necessary because, according to Mphahlele (2002: 82), “a number of black Africans themselves have to tap the collective memory for all the things we need to know about the essence of being African”. Africans,

Mphahlele further notes, have “assimilated half-baked Western thought and beliefs, which have uprooted us, left us directionless and chasing rainbows”.

In endorsing cultural reclamation, Ntuli (1999: 184-185) argues that this is a “strategic retreat to pre-colonial Africa to extricate some of the knowledge systems relevant to our needs in the next millennium”. The “strategic retreat to pre-colonial Africa” means, as Prah (2006: 329) observes, that Africans “need to be selective about what we keep, and what we reject in our historical and cultural heritage. What clearly goes against the grain of emancipation and salvation, we must readily and quickly abandon.” Calls for the reclamation of African culture, have, as Diop (1974: xiii) observes, been dismissed as “backward or alarming”. Yet, as Diop (*ibid.*) further observes, when intellectuals who are not of African stock explain their own historical past or study their language such is considered normal. While Africans’ efforts to rediscover and reclaim their cultural past are treated with derision, there is no shortage of white scholars who research almost every area of African life and write about it (Mphahlele 2002: 18).

The African cultural reclamation project emerges out of recognition that, as Ntuli (1999: 194) points out, African culture was a “first target of colonial power”. That being the case, for Biko and his Black Consciousness Movement culture “necessarily became the first instrument used to resist” colonialism. Recognising that Western powers’ success in effecting world domination was “predicated on its use of culture as ideology”, Biko recognised that culture should be used by Africans as an ideological tool for mobilisation, conscientisation and resistance (Ntuli 1999: 191; 194).

During this period that Ntuli is referring to – the 1970s – black journalists, imbued with Black Consciousness, declared that they were “blacks first and journalists second” (Raubenheimer 1991: 102). This meant that they saw themselves primarily as articulators of the black struggle. They rejected the traditional concept of liberal objectivity of white English language newspapers and saw nothing wrong in being revolutionary propagandists (Raubenheimer 1991: 102; Hachten & Giffard 1984: 133). But, rejecting “objectivity” did not mean, for these journalists, twisting facts and distorting reality (Raubenheimer 1991: 118). Rather, because they belonged to the oppressed racial group in South Africa at the time, black journalists felt they were bound to have a different political interpretation and social analysis from that of their white counterparts.

African culture as an ideological tool was not seen just as a temporary weapon against oppression but a mechanism to secure for future beyond oppression. Changes that have occurred to African culture have to a great extent been externally-driven and coercive. Alluding to this view, Biko (2004: 45) observes that while African culture may have sustained “severe blows and may have been

battered nearly out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with ... in essence even today one can easily find the fundamental aspects of the pure African culture in the present day African". In this, Biko is supported by many scholars of African culture (Modupe 2003: 59; Schiele 2003: 187; Mphahlele 2002: 154) who argue that not only has African culture survived brutal slaughter on home soil but that it proceeded under duress among African descendants who were scattered as slaves throughout the Eastern and Western worlds. Although the colonisation of Africa by Europeans and Arabs modified traditional Africa somewhat, the insistence on the survival of African culture implies that "slavery did not destroy all the cultural vestiges of Africa" (Schiele 2003: 187), and colonialism and apartheid failed to do the same.

It is the remnants of African culture that Biko (2004: 106) believed should be "defined in concrete terms" that would "relate the past to the present" so as to realise Africans' quest for a true humanity. It is on this basis that Biko (2004: 26) argues that "one cannot escape the fact that the culture shared by the majority group in any given society must ultimately determine the broad direction taken by the joint society of that culture". Such an approach, Biko further observes, "need[s] not cramp the style of those who feel differently, but on the whole, a country in Africa, in which the majority of the people are African, must inevitably exhibit African values and be truly African in style".

The media's role in destroying African culture

The media played a crucial role in disinheriting the African imagination. Ziegler and Asante (1992: 33) note that during the colonial era, when the media finally decided to pay attention to Africans, this was done in a "derogatory fashion". Reports on inter-ethnic clashes were highlighted as "conflict between savages" and "mockery was made of every African custom, lifestyle or tradition" (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 33). Mutwa (1998: 538) observes that a perusal of "printed newspapers printed in Africa (which are not under African control)" makes the "reader...conscious of something which has been going on for centuries. Hardly a month goes by without some White readers writing letters to the editors in which they blatantly insult the African." When Africans sought to resist the Europeans' insulting behaviour towards Africans by "writ[ing] letters to these newspapers protesting against these unscientific insults, our letters are either coldly ignored, or, if published, they are shortened to pointlessness" (Mutwa 1998: 538-539).

Even after Africans achieved independence, the vilification of African culture and the valorisation of Western values by the media did not abate. On this score, Hawk (2002: 167) observes that when analysing political conflicts in Africa, the Western media identifies them as a "tribal problem" and that "the news blames those who suffer and locates the source of Africa's difficulties within African culture, often

ignoring the roles of others, especially foreign actors”. Hawk (2002: 168) further argues that a major problem with this form of thinking is that “identifying tribalism as a problem emphasizes the negative aspects of cultural pride, representing it as the most important social pathology in Africa whilst concealing the benefits of tribe”. The consequence of this approach on the part of the Western media, Hawk (2002: 172) further argues, is that “these portrayals often define African culture as the problem and western institutions as the solution”.

Focusing on tribalism as the problem, according to Hawk (2002: 168), tends to mute other conflicts of interest between groups, and serves as a distraction from covert causes of many African conflicts. Thus, Hawk further notes, “class conflicts become tribalism; regional conflicts become tribalism; responses to structural adjustment programs become tribalism”.

This concern is echoed by Wa Thiong’o (2008: 1) who notes that the “study of African realities has for too long been seen in terms of tribes. Whatever happens in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi is because of Tribe A versus Tribe B.” Wa Thiong’o further notes that this “misleading stock interpretation of the African realities has been popularised by the western media which likes to deflect people from seeing that imperialism is still the root cause of many problems in Africa”. He (*ibid.*) laments that “some African intellectuals have fallen victims – a few incurably so – to that scheme”.

The question that needs to be addressed next is: what are the Africans’ understanding of themselves and their culture?

African cultural values for the re-humanisation of humanity

One of the core pillars of African culture is respect (Boateng 1990: 117; Mphahlele 2004: 254). This respect is accorded all beings – animate and inanimate alike. African initiation schools that colonialism strove to destroy “taught the love and protection of nature” (Ntuli 1999: 192). That is because African culture holds the view that in all creation – animate and inanimate alike – resides the Supreme Being (Mphahlele 2004: 253). It is for this reason that the Kikuyus in Kenya referred to Mount Kenya as “Kirinyaga” – meaning “Place of Brightness” (Maathai 2009: 173). The Kikuyus believed that God dwelt on Mount Kenya and that the rains, clean drinking water and green vegetation flowed from it. This belief, as Maathai further observes, was undermined by the European missionaries who told the local people that God did not dwell on Mount Kenya but rather in heaven, and that the mountain and its forests, previously considered sacred grounds, could be encroached upon. The Kikuyus accepted the missionaries’ version and subsequently believed that their relationship with the mountain and nature in general was worthless, and an obstacle to development and progress in an age of progress. The consequence was that respect for nature

was eroded and people began to see it as mere commodity to be privatised and exploited.

The destruction of African culture had two interlinked consequences. The first consequence was that when European missionary education taught African children to “despise their mode of upbringing at home and to question their values and customs of their society”, the outcome was that children and their parents began to view issues differently, resulting in African children losing respect for their parents, and things fell apart (Biko 2004: 104). The loss of respects for elders undermined the African teaching that children should have “respect for the aged, our parents – no matter how wrong we may think they are” (Mphahlele 2002: 90). Respecting the aged is not the same as turning a blind eye to their flaws, but rectifying their wrongs in ways that are not belligerent. Unlike in other cultures where “respect is earned”, among Africans everyone deserves to be respected first until that person projects behaviour that casts her/him as undeserving of respect. In the African cultural scheme of things, as Mthembu (1996: 224) further observes, “respect and dignity have no boundaries regarding gender, age and position. A human being is treated humanely.” In plain speak this means that in African culture human beings – both men and women – were appreciated for what they were: humans.

However, without being discriminatory, women in the African cultural setting enjoyed special recognition and respect. Ntuli (1999: 184) observes that even in hostile situations such as war, veneration for women and children was observed: African traditional cultural ethics emphasised that women and children should be spared. According to Diop (1989: 32), it appears that “in so-called primitive societies” the African had never doubted the participation of the father and mother but “did not assign to each the same degree of importance”. Diop goes on to point out that with particular reference to Black Africa, “it is almost everywhere thought that a child owes more from a biological point of view to his mother than to the father”. The biological heredity on the mother’s side, Diop further points out, is stronger and more important than the heredity on the father’s side. Therefore, African culture held the view that “a child is wholly that which its mother is and only half what its father is”. Boateng (1990: 144) endorses Diop’s observation in noting that among the Akan of Ghana, for instance, a view is held that a child derives its blood from its mother, one soul from God and another soul from its father. The reasoning then is that “[i]f the mother gave the blood to the child, then the child is closer to her than anyone else”. In affirming Africans’ cultural unity, and the prestige held by women in this scheme of things, Rukuni (2007: 33) notes that “[a]nother common thread weaving through all Afrikan (*sic*) cultural groups is that the mother is central to the household”. For Africans, Rukuni further notes, “mothers are always closer to our Creator than fathers are,

because of the role mothers play in giving birth – with the Creator, physically giving life”. The sacredness of motherhood, of the womb in African culture, is best articulated through the West African Ohaffia saying: “father’s penis scatters, mother’s womb gathers” (Kamalu 1990: 153). Mutwa (1998: 626) observes that among the “Bantu” Africans

the High Law of Behaviour Towards Parents stipulated that of your two parents your mother ranks higher than your father. In quarrels between your parents you must come to the aid of your mother, be she right or wrong. You may strike your father, but never draw his blood. You may never strike your mother and even if you do so accidentally you must lose your right hand.

The second consequence of the destruction of African culture by the colonialists was that, as Biko (2004: 44) observes, for Africans it became “difficult...to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture” because Africans were “not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even themselves”. While the Africans’ right to speak with authority about their culture was usurped, Biko further observes that other people became “authorities on all aspects of the African life”. The “authorities” identified by Biko are also identified by Asante (1990: ix), who points out that “Western-trained scholars from a European perspective” who “wrapped in the swaddling clothes of a fully emergent European ideology, were often incapable of understanding the unity of African culture”. They are incapable of understanding and accepting that Africa “is one cultural river with numerous tributaries characterized by their specific responses to history and the environment” (Asante 1990: ix). The “argument given by those of the anti-African culture school is that the African culture cannot exist because Africa encompasses too many ethnic groups” (Asante 1990: 4). Echoing Asante, Mphahlele (2002: 87), a subscriber to the notion of one African culture, emphasises that “[w]e believe in African culture that cuts across artificial boundaries...At the deepest spiritual level African culture unifies the whole continent.” On this score, Hilliard (2003: 270) observes that “[f]oreign explorers have been fascinated by what they considered to be significant differences among Africans, differences in the physiognomy of peoples, in ways of worship, etc.” Insisting that African “cultural unity is far more significant than its superficial diversity”, Hilliard notes that the foreign explorers did not fully appreciate the oneness and unity of African culture because their focus was on the “surface structure” as opposed to looking at the “deep structure” of African culture. The denial of oneness and unity of African culture by Eurocentric scholarship is both hypocritical and inconsistent, according to Dove (2003: 167). That is because there was a time when it was convenient to regard “African people [as] very much alike”:

At that time, it seemed politically expedient to support this idea in order to justify the subjection of African women, men and children to analogous forms of barbarian treatment under the auspices of European domination. Today, it is expedient to deny the earlier claim of cultural unity since this concept, retained in the minds of African people challenging academic racism and scholastic dishonesty, has taken on a new meaning. It poses a threat to the fundamental doctrine of White supremacy within the ivory tower.

The usurpation of Africans' authority on their own lives reduced Africans to being "gate-crashers" and elevated the usurpers to being "gate-keepers" (Prah 2010: 2). The African cultural reclamation which Biko advocated is a relentless struggle against Africans' disinherited imagination. Just as the reactionary media played a role in the disinheritance of Africans of their imagination, it can and should play a role in African cultural reclamation. The disinheritance of the African imagination was achieved through mis-education by educational institutions and the media. The media can contribute to African cultural reclamation through education – which is one of the core functions of the media – in order to accomplish Biko's quest for a true humanity.

The media and Africa's quest for a true humanity

The function of the media, according to Herman and Chomsky (1994: 1) is to "amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society". Inculcation of values by the media – which is the focus of this article – is education. Shujaa (2003: 246) defines education as a "means of providing for the inter-generational transmission of values, beliefs, traditions, customs, rituals and sensibilities along with the knowledge of why these things must be sustained". Through education, Shujaa continues, a people learn how to determine what is in its interests, and how to distinguish its interests from those of others, and recognise when its interests are consistent and inconsistent with those of others.

The definitions of education above show very clearly the strong link between education and culture. Education is, as Mugo (1999: 218) notes, "a key institution for inculcating and promoting cultural values and practices. It acts as a communicator, as well as a reservoir of culture." The colonial media in Africa, as argued above, fulfilled the role outlined by Herman and Chomsky, but in a way detrimental to the Africans.

Writing on the status of the media in South Africa ten years after the first democratic elections, Nyamnjoh (2005: 40) notes that although it was relatively too early to use the same yardsticks employed for the bulk of Africa in judging South Africa, whose freedom was only a decade old, it was worth noting that there was “concern about the slow pace of reform in media relations with the black majority in the ‘so-called *new* South Africa’”. One of the “concerns” raised by Nyamnjoh was that increased black ownership and partnership in the media industry had not necessarily made newspapers “more representative of the concerns, interests and aspirations of Africans as cultural communities”. In particular, Nyamnjoh (*ibid.*) observes that the “ideas of *ubuntu* and Africanisation have yet to capture the creative imagination of the media and cultural industries beyond the tokenism with which we are all too familiar”.

In arguing that greater presence of blacks in the media had not moved beyond “tokenism”, Nyamnjoh further points out that black faces in boardrooms and news had not resulted “in more or better coverage of black realities informed by their experiences, predicaments and philosophies of life”. In other words, Nyamnjoh’s argument is that in the first decade of democracy in South Africa, a distinctly Black or African Consciousness was missing in the content of the media.

Reflecting on the role of black journalists in a democratic South Africa, Mphahlele (2004: 331) shares Nyamnjoh’s concerns. According to Mphahlele, the role of black journalists should be to “[c]reate a cultural vision” and “help to develop an African consciousness”. The creation of a “cultural vision” for Mphahlele means inculcating into the minds of black people that “although we have adopted Western systems of education, of technology, even the religion brought by our colonizers – in spite of this, we owe it to our sanity of mind to develop African ways of perceiving”. The development of “African consciousness”, according to Mphahlele (2004: 331) means that black journalists have a responsibility of “educating the reader about historical actions and discourse”:

We should remind ourselves that several African countries were single vast tracts of land before the colonial masters carved up the continent, that in establishing boundaries they succeeded in cutting across unilingual populations.

What Mphahlele is advocating for is that black journalists in a democratic society have a responsibility of promoting African solidarity and a spirit of pan-Africanism. In echoing the importance of “African consciousness” on the part of African journalists, Moemeka and Kasoma (1994: 40) argue that “African journalists... should strive to attain the virtuous life of a good man and woman according to African society before they try that of a good journalist. After all, they belong

to their society first and are journalists second.” What this means, according to Moemeka and Kasoma, is that African journalists’ actions should be informed by their “customs, traditions, cultural norms and practices”. It is worth noting that Moemeka and Kasoma’s assertion that African journalists “belong to their society first and are journalists second” echoes a declaration by black journalists who, in the 1970s, inspired by the Black Consciousness philosophy, declared that they were “blacks first and journalists second” (Raubenheimer 1991: 102).

If, as Moemeka and Kasoma argue, African journalists should strive to attain a virtuous life of a good woman according to African culture, that means then that black journalists have an obligation, as part of the media’s role to educate, to remind Africans, as Karenga (2003: 90) notes, that the

communitarian philosophy and emphasis of African culture serves as an essential framework for the conceptualization and pursuit of the just and good society, a society marked and moved by civility, reciprocity and equality in all areas of human life and practice.

These areas of human life that Karenga refers to, include gender relations. As Mazama (2003: 28) points out, “[i]n African culture, emphasis is placed on the necessary complementarity, rather than the conflict, that exists between African men and women”. That is because, Mazama further observes, “[w]hat makes a man is a woman; likewise, what makes a woman is a man”. The educational role of the media is to remind Africans that according to African traditional education to walk on two legs did not automatically qualify one as “human”, nor did dying automatically qualify one as an “ancestor” (Myers 2003: 124). Rather, what qualified one as a human being or ancestor was “on the basis of one either evidencing the potential to manifest good consciousness... or in the case of the ancestor, having realized good consciousness in individual/group experience (self-actualized)”. What this means is that in re-Africanising Africans, black journalists’ role should be to remind themselves and their fellow blacks that the historical mission of the Africans is to create a just and good society, and that everyone should be an agent of that cause.

CONCLUSION

By interrogating the philosophical underpinnings of traditional African culture, this article sought to investigate the basis upon which the Black Consciousness’ advocate Bantu Biko advocated that African culture should be central in Black Consciousness and the quest for a true humanity. This interrogation revealed that traditional African culture emphasised respect for all that exists in the world – both the human world and the environment. It also revealed that the male species,

which has historically wreaked havoc in the world and continues to do so, must show respect to the female species so as to realise a humane world. This exercise, the article has argued, should be aided by the media, with particular reference to black journalists who share Biko's vision that the greatest contribution to human affairs is yet to come from Africa – giving the world a human face.

REFERENCES

- Asante, M.K. 1990. Afrocentricity and culture. In Asante, M.K. & Asante, K.W. (eds). *African culture: The rhythms of unity*, pp. 3 – 12.
- Biko, S. 2004. *I Write What I Like*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.
- Boateng, F. 1990. African traditional education: A tool for intergenerational communication. In Asante, M.K. & Asante, K.W. (eds). *African culture: The rhythms of unity*, pp. 109 – 122.
- Diop, C.A. 1974. *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.
- Diop, C.A. 1989. *The cultural unity of Black Africa: The domains of matriarchy & of patriarchy in Classical Antiquity*. London: Karnak House.
- Dove, N. 2003. Defining African Womanist Theory. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 165-198. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Hawk, B.G. 2002. African politics and American reporting. In Hydén, G., Leslie, M. & Ogundimu, F.F. (eds). *Media and democracy in Africa*, pp. 157-176. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Hachten, W.A. & Giffard, C.A. 1984. *The Press and Apartheid – repression and propaganda in South Africa*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Herman, E.S. & Chomsky, N. 1998. *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. London: Vintage.
- Hilliard, A. 2003. Pedagogy in Ancient Kemet. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 265-281. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Kamalu, C. 1990. *Foundations of African thought*. London: Karnak House.
- Karenga, M. 2003. Afrocentricity and multicultural education: Concept, challenge and contribution. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 73-94. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Maathai, W. 2009. *Challenge for Africa: A new vision*. London: William Heinemann.
- Mazama, A. 2003. The Afrocentric Paradigm. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 3-34. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.

- Modupe, D.S. 2003. The Afrocentric philosophical perspective: A narrative outline. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 55-72. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Moemeka, A. & Kasoma, F.P. 1994. Journalism ethics in Africa: An aversion to deontology? In Kasoma, F.P. (ed.). *Journalism ethics in Africa*, pp. 38-50. Nairobi: ACCE.
- Mphahlele, E. 2002. *Es'kia*. Cape Town and Johannesburg: Kwela Books and Stainbank & Associates.
- Mphahlele, E. 2004. *Es'kia Continued*. Johannesburg: Stainbank & Associates.
- Mthembu, D. 1996. African values: Discovering the indigenous roots of management. In Lessem, R. & Nussbaum, B. (eds). *Sawubona Africa: Embracing four worlds in South African management*, pp. 215-226. Sandton: Zebra Press.
- Mugo, M.G. 1999. African culture in education for sustainable development. In Makgoba, M.W. (ed). *African Renaissance*, pp. 210-232. Sandton and Cape Town: Mafube and Tafelberg.
- Mutwa, M. 1998. *Indaba, My Children: African tribal history, legends, customs and religious beliefs*. Edinburgh: Payback Press.
- Myers, L.M. 2003. The deep structure of culture: The relevance of traditional African culture in contemporary life. In Mazama, A. (ed). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 121-130. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Ntuli, P. 1999. The missing link between culture and education: Are we still chasing gods that are not our own? In Makgoba, M.W. (ed). *African Renaissance*, pp. 184-199. Sandton and Cape Town: Mafube and Tafelberg.
- Nyamnjoh, F. 2005. Media and the state in Africa: Continuities and discontinuities. In Kareithi, P. and Kariithi, N. (eds). *Untold stories: Economics and business journalism in African media*, pp. 32-61. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Prah, K.K. 2006. *The African Nation: The state of the nation*. Cape Town: CASAS.
- Prah, K.K. 2010. *Soundings: Studies on African transformation*. Cape Town: CASAS.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. 2008. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Oxford: James Currey.

- Raubenheimer, L. 1991. From newsroom to the community: Struggle in Black Journalism. In Tomaselli, K. & Louw, P.E. (eds). *Studies on the South African media – The Alternative Press in South Africa*, pp. 93-130. Bellville: Anthropos Publishers.
- Rukuni, M. 2007. *Being Afrikan*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books.
- Schiele, J.H. 2003. Afrocentricity: An emerging paradigm in social work practice. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 185-200. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Shujaa, M.J. 2003. Education and schooling: You can have one without the other. In Mazama, A. (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, pp. 245-264. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Ziegler, D. & Asante, M.K. 1992. *Thunder and silence: The mass media in Africa*. New Jersey: Africa World Press.