

Towards a Pragmatic Philosophy of Culture: Black Africa and the Paradox of Racial Mixing

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Abstract

This work is an attempt to provide a viable philosophy of culture that will guide cultural relationships between black Africans living abroad and non-black Africans. The urgency for the work arises from the fact that migration is a modern trend the world over and that black Africans form the bulk of migrants in several non-black African countries. The work applies racial mixing as an item that validates healthy cultural interaction between migrants and their hosts and attempts to determine the state of racial mixing using child bearing as a basic variable that validates a desire for racial mixing. Audio and visual tapes were applied to extract information on the rate of racial mixing through procreation and marriage in Benin City, Nigeria. Facts obtained shows an overwhelming vote for racial mixing, hence, the work concludes with proposals that would guide cultural relations in favour of racial mixing.

Key words: Migration, culture, racial mixing, Benin, parentage.

Introduction

Migration can be considered to be a major feature of globalization trend world-over. This is as result of the interconnections and linkages among

the world community. In line with this trend, migration to the economically advanced nations of the world has become part of the modern culture of men and women in black Africa. Indeed it can be conveniently held that there are virtually no states in all continents of the world or races of mankind that do not harbour black Africans as emigrants. This culture is stronger as it relates to the desire to migrate to western countries of the world for which “in the African setting the idea of going to Europe for further studies still continues to inspire school boys and girls to work hard in school” (William Wagaba, 2001). However what should be conceived as Europe in this instance should go beyond the geographical application of the word to Europe as a symbol of development and modernity. This is because many black Africans do not desire to migrate to European countries as much as they desire to migrate to other economically advanced developed portions of mankind that participate in western culture or share in European culture. In the course of this study this researcher administered questionnaires to two hundred residents of Benin City, Nigeria to determine choice countries for emigration. Among these respondents ninety-three preferred the United States of America, fifteen chose Germany, thirty chose Britain while five chose Australia and three chose Japan. The rest were not specific on their choice countries. The overwhelming preference for the United States of America demonstrates the declining preference for Europe among intending emigrants in Benin, and this suggests what such choice should look like among other black African nationals.

A cogent question arises from the migration drive in black Africa and that is the focus of the study: to what extent does migration from black Africa promote inter-racialism through procreation especially by marriages between the black race and other races of mankind? Or is the predominant view of racial purity to be sustained and advanced despite the increasing culture of migration? To address the whole implication of racial purity is beyond the scope of this essay suffice it to note that a world of racial purity where racial groups only desire the other at the level of economic interest is a less human world; and we may not search for a worse catastrophe for mankind than such a world for this is a sure way of making an object out man, an obversion of what the German philosopher Immanuel Kant meant when he

held that man should be conceived as the end of human action and not merely a means (Kant as reproduced in Stumpf, 1989, pp. 313-319).

I shall begin this essay by (i) demonstrating the urgency of racial mixing and its ability to curb racism. From here I shall (ii) discuss migration as a modern trend that is capable of promoting racial mixing. In my attempt to achieve a cogent basis for my positions I shall apply views gathered from the Benin ethnic groups of Nigeria, in the course of field research already referred to. The choice of Benin for the study arises from the fact that Benin is a strong example of a black African cultural community where African traditions and culture has been retained admitting few influences from alien cultures and traditions. Part of her cultural symbol was applied for the Black African Arts and Culture of 1977, one of the largest gathering of black Africans in contemporary history convened for the purpose of prompting African arts and culture. Secondly, Benin is an ethnic group in modern Nigeria that is very notable for migrations tendency of indigenes. Thirdly this author has had the opportunity of residing in Benin for three years (2003-2006) which enabled a first hand contact with the Benin cultural world and a field work applied for the study. Thus while the limitations of this study could be acknowledged as arising from the fact that it applied a single ethnic group for the positions reached it must noted that given what can be called “the cultural unity of black Africa”, it is valuable to argue that a single instance of an ethnic group can afford a valuable insight on what would obtain among other ethnic groups since the issue at stake is an inter-racial study between the black race and the non-black race.

I. Racial Mixing as a Panacea against Racism

Racism is a phenomenon whereby an individual or group of persons harbour a view of the other person that does not enable the individual or group to accord full humanity to other through discrimination anchored on colour or perceived differences in their genealogy. It is a negative view of the other for which the viewer relates to the other basically on a principle of difference; one that believes that human differences real or perceived is more fundamental in the conception

of the person than any other item, value or quality inherent in the person as a human being. While all human beings share same characteristics at a biological level and features a racist view of the other would prefer to see the other as coming from another sub-human category and only seeking to attain a human quality; for this reason all the human qualities the “racialised” other exercises, do not carry the same weight or worth in the mind or judgment of the racist. Racism is often rooted in a wrong cultural lense constructed on the other but which applies some rational values to support its claims. Hence in nearly all rational conceptions, philosophy, religion or history, racism could be found.

Indeed the enlightenment period of philosophy could be said to have harboured provocative ideas on race almost entirely for which it could be described as an age that saw to the “racialization of reason” (interpreted to mean when race defined reason). For instance Hume a prominent philosopher in this period wrote: “I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was civilized nation of any other complexion than the white...” Similarly Kant wrote: This man was black from head to toe *a clear proof* that what he said was stupid” (Cited in E.C.Eze, p.215). In his *Von den Verschiedenen Rassen der Mendchen* (1775), Kant further held that the black race emerged as a result of humid heat beating on the skin of origin species who according to him were the white species. In his review of Johann Goltfried Von Herder’s *Ideen Zur philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* of 1785, he held that it is possible to demonstrate that the (indigenous) Americans and blacks are a spiritually decadent race among other members of human race. Similarly, Montesquieu wrote: “It is hardly to be believed, that God who is a wise being should place a soul, especially a good soul, in such a Black and ugly body.” (*Spirit of the Laws*, Vol. I BK. as cited in S.E. Ogude, 1983, p.109).

At the level of spirituality, a measure of racism have also obtained. This is exemplified in the work of Isaac La Peyree, the French religious writer who believes that “the God who created Adam and Eve could not have been and was not the creator of the African, the Amerindians and the Australians” (cited in M.B.Ramose *ibid*;p.18). Another kind of racism is historical racism which is more or less a continuation of spiritual racism. In historical discourse the works of the Fredrick Hegel is an eloquent

evidence of racism. Hegel's philosophy of history led to the distortion of world history by his "festishisation of the Germanic world by way of appeal to Christian religion" (Ramose, 1999 p. 34). To do this Hegel, (Hegel, 1956, pp.92-93) severed Egypt from out of Africa to exclude her from the sphere of rationality proper and this "unilinear ... conception of history together with the racist hierocracy deriving from his geopsychology ... contributed to the advancement of both European political and spiritual imperialism." (M.B. Ramose, *ibid*, p. 34). Hegel's work can almost be likened to the "sacred scripture of racism" for which "exorcising Hegel's ghost from Africa" (Taiwo, 1997) has been recommended as the surer path to cure the pervading influence of racism. For Hegel:

Africa must be divided into parts; one is that which lays south of the desert of Sahara – Africa proper – the Upland almost entirely unknown to us, with narrow coast – tracts along sea; the second is that to north of the desert, European African (if you may call it) ... a coastland, the third is the river region of the Nile, the only valley-land of Africa, and which is in connection with Asia. (G W F Hegel; 1956, p.91)

Having argued that Asia and Africa have no movement of the spirit to exhibit and that Africa 'as far as History goes back, has remained – for all purpose of connection with the rest of the world... shut up" (Hegel, *ibid*; p.92-93) Hegel denied an African identity to Egypt. He concluded:

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it ... that is in its northern part ... belong to the Asiatic or European world. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization; but as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African spirit. What we properly understood by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which

had the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world History(Hegel,1956, p.99)

The focus of this study is not to institute a debate for or against the assumptions on which racism is based. Relevant scholarly authorities among whom is Kwame Anthony Appiah(1993) whose work on the subject has remained highly acclaimed as one of “Africa’s many mansions”(Odia ofeimun,1994) have done this task. The concern of the work is on what according to R.Mack”what people think about race” (1954 cited in Oyata,1993) and the values as well as prejudices attached to the idea. The goal of this study is to build a more tolerant world by “derisively” building on the assumptions of racism. Assuming the idea of race were to be true beyond the cultural implication of the word what could we make out it and how can we exploit the tendencies it conveys to build a better world. This position provocative as it may seem is rooted in the claims of Mack that:

Race in the biological sense has no biologically caused consequences, but what men *believe* about race has social consequences. In other words ,most of men’s discussion of race are discussions of their beliefs, not of biological fact. Most of men’s actions about race (are) based on what they have been taught to believe about it, not on what scientists know about it .Race is usually not a biological concept .It is a social concept.(Mack 1968 cited by Oyata in Nwala (ed.),1992, p.67)

Thus given that what people think about race has dangerous consequences how can we read other meanings from the concept to cause a re-think on the dangers associated with the idea. This author is not by this attempt out to promote the idea of racism. Rather the work believes that attempts to confront racism could come by “re-configuring the idea of race” in the manner that the concept of racism can suddenly achieve a reverse in human thinking. The study is relevant because nearly a quarter of century after Mack made his observation a controversy on racism has arisen in the attempt by a recent effort by the renown biologist and Nobel laureate James Watson

to define race along biological terms instead of the hitherto sociological status it acquired. In 2007, a controversial thesis on race was credited to Watson where he is quoted to have assigned an inferior intelligence to blacks in relation to whites. This position came in form of political statement came this way:

I am inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa. All our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours-whereas all the testing says not really. (as reproduced by Kenan Malik in *The Politics of Ignorance*, 2008)

This position provoked an unsettling current of protest from members of the global intellectual community which publicly rejected the position. Censure was swift and universal. The Federation of American Scientists condemned Watson for choosing “to use his unique stature to promote personal prejudices that are racist, vicious and unsupported by science”. London’s Science Museum, at which Watson was to have delivered a lecture, cancelled his appearance, claiming that the geneticist had “gone beyond the point of acceptable debate.” New York’s Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, of which he was director, not only “vehemently” disowned Watson’s remarks but also forced him to resign. Thus considering the recent nature of this controversy on racism we can see the cogency in our study.

Our study shall elaborate the dangers of holding this view and in addition attempt to provide a fresh insight on Watson through a view that narrows the relevance of the idea of racism. Assuming that Watson’s idea deserved any thing less than the contempt it got and that his theory of racial inequality in human intelligence were true what would be the case with racial mixing? What will be the case if a child is a product of two racial backgrounds? Can it not be that racial mixing would be a desirable option to re-configure the differences in intelligences he assigned to race?

Before we delve more into this topic let it be noted that Watson who provoked this debate with the attempt to assign an inferior genes to Africans has been discovered to harbour black genes. In a follow up article to the debate Robert Verkaik in article on the British daily *The Independent* on

December 10,2007(as cited in Felix I.D.konotey-Ahulu,2009) did a piece entitled “*Revealed :Scientist who sparked racism row has black genes*”. In addition it is important to note that there are variations and categories of intelligence: intuitive intelligence, creative intelligence, analytical intelligence, mathematical intelligence, manipulative intelligence, etc, and that no single measure may be adequate to determine human intelligence in general.. Paul Howard Gardner (1993,2003 cited in Ikeotuonye,2004),submits that his twenty years research on intelligence reveals that it is more appropriate to talk of multiple intelligences than mono-intelligence. He goes further to distinguish between linguistic, logical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal, naturalistic, existential intelligences. In the light of his position, it is therefore wrong to hold that a one notion of intelligence should be applied to define an entire race and to institute a difference there from. Thus, while there may be differences in whatever form and however we conceive intelligence to be, it may not translate into racial categories. Thus the crux of the matter is that while as Malik(2008) says;

there certainly are group differences in IQ scores ,and
some of those group differences can be seen as racial
...the belief that group differences in intelligence are
linked to a putative genetics of race smacks more of
alchemy than of science.

In summary the views expressed here is that the quest to examine or determine the idea of race via racial mixing produces a cogent response to the theme because even if the idea of race were to be true beyond the sociological level it is known to be at the moment minimizes what should amount to a destruction of the entire human race by the notion of race. And while this may not true as it has severally been upheld by racial science (especially the recent supportive thesis that the *intelligent quotient* of blacks has overtime risen more than that of the whites in the US,(Kenan Malik,2008)) the idea of racial mixing is still in the right direction .

Assuming that the rather provocative and dreaded view that one race has advantage over the other is the case which advantage were to be historical or genealogical, what should this amount to? In what ways and

manners should this be addressed? Perhaps the first thesis would be to argue in support of racial mixing because this will ensure that there would be a re-distribution of intelligence (s) among different racial geographies of mankind. This would be the first step to hold unto and defend a common idea of man, for, if for any reason it is not valid to hold unto and defend a common notion of man then such universal and common notions that are applied based on the common notion development, humanity, knowledge; and even God which serve to capture the idea of a common world are at best false and should be discarded. This again points to the fact that what should be considered a major fault with Watson is that Watson's theory is not known to have elaborated on what happens when there is miscegenation that is, when a member of one race produces offspring with someone from another race. Secondly, the real challenge I guess, and which I wish to carry out, is to look at racial mixing with the view to pointing out the immense benefits it holds for mankind.

While the available views on racial science does not support the attempt to link race with intelligence or would rather hold that the attempt "to link race and intelligence are even more contentious" (Malik,2008, 2007) the point is that these does not in any way negate the need for racial mixing. In whatever way we approach the subject racial mixing has the capacity to neutralize and blend the human community. In a typical black African community, racial mixing through childbearing is the hallmark of proper union and integration between families. To have a child with a black African man or woman especially on grounds of marriage easily translates to joining the *family tree*, something more valuable and integrating than achieving a citizenship status which is the major benefit that goes with this in many countries of the world. In a plain language having a child with a black African man or woman especially on the grounds of marriage is becoming one with the people and this is because by so doing the man or woman becomes a member of a clan, which in African cultural world is a highly valued relationship to a family. It is perhaps for this reason late Aneke Anike an African sage from Mbu area of the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria held the view that "it is wrong to choose any man for husband or any woman for a wife for you select human seedling in the same manner you select yam seedling." His position is that procreation which is the soul of

African life deserves a careful choice for intending partners because a child harbours the traits of the parents and since in Africa “a man without a child is a waste” (Emmanuel Obunna, 1985) then the ambition to procreate must be seen as a careful project. His position also supports the extent to which carefully chosen racially mixed off springs hold promise for humanity at large.

Having established the need for racial mixing let us examine how this has obtained between black Africans in diasporas, that is, those living with other races of mankind. The study is carried out using child bearing between Benin indigenes and other races as a basic variable, as a strong item that validates a desire for racial mixing and as a strong indicator that defines cultural bond. The reasons for the application of Benin for our inductive analysis of racial mixing has been elaborated in the earlier part of this essay.

II. **Emigration and Racial Mixing in Black Africa: Inductive Analysis from Benin Ethnic Group**

In Benin a prominent ethnic group in Nigeria, migration to nations with developed economies is a valuable project a young man or woman can undertake. Successful emigrants to developed countries of the world popularly known as *akate* are highly respected. They are visibly prominent upon return as they often identify themselves with peculiar dressing codes. While the males among them usually put on earrings, in imitation of the dressing culture among European/American youths, the females among them often put on expensive jewels and adopt an accent or intonation that imitate English accent.

In a poll I conducted in 2005 and which cut across the forty two clans in Benin Kingdom namely: De lazio, *Lamogun, Liablieze, Labgete, Latose, Lagiesan, Lamosun, Lai, Lamehu, Lagba, Laire, Larendo, Delani, Dalaiki, “the Osuan, Labo”, “The osemugba”, Lagiewan, Delakun, Lagite, Lagenu, Layede (Lauvbi), Dlaube, “Euma Ojima of Okeluhun”, Laide, Lamoru, Laloke, Laugbe, Laigie, Laugba, Lahe, Lalu, Lameri, Lagia, Lamehe, Laakpan, Lamolu, Laize, Laumokun, Lareni, Laidu, Lairen, Laigieva* and Lamekon, with *lavbieze* family

having the highest representatives, the study discovered that all families have emigrants in other countries of the world, outside black Africa.

Emmanuel Ojeaga, a staff of Nigerian Immigration Services in Benin collaborates this position. In a chat with this author, he volunteered that the branch issued as much two thousand, two hundred traveling passports in March, 2003 alone with an average of about five hundred booklets in a week to intending immigrants. Although passport acquisition does not translate to visa acquisition it suggests an ambition for migration. It also suggests a desire for emigration.

As a matter of fact, there are strong views to suggest that migration often induces emigration. The United States of America Immigration law in Nigeria, for instance, "requires all applicants for non-immigrant visa to view every applicant as an intending immigrant" (U.S, Consulate in Nigeria, 2003). This is contained in the United States of America Immigration and Nationality Act Section 101(a)(15) which requires all applicants to 'show that they have sufficiently strong family, social or economic tiers to a place of residence in a country other than the United States to ensure that their projected stay in the United State will be temporary" (U.S, Consulate in Nigeria, 2003) As a result of this, nonimmigrant visas are only issued to applicants who can establish that they intend to return to their place of residence in Nigeria after temporary stay in the United States of America.

There is yet another basis to argue that this high rate of passport/visa application in Benin suggests a strong emigration tendency. This is supported by the fact Benin is an ethnic group in Nigeria that has what is known in Nigerian circles as *professional trolleys* whose main source of livelihood lies in securing traveling documents and opportunities for interested immigrants as well as pre-arranging a citizen of the desired country of the emigrant's choice to receive them and accommodate them while they are yet to secure their temporary or permanent resident permits. This trade has served many immigrants to achieve their desire for emigration. Many of the intending immigrants often succeed through this measure and gain full citizenship status in their various countries of their desire, many others do not. The result is that some of the unsuccessful ones often end up as illegal immigrants in these

countries doing meager and dirty jobs including drug trafficking and prostitution to survive. Some others are later deported back to Benin.

On November 3, 2003, the *Independent Television*, a media outfit in Benin reported that out of eighty-eight Nigerians deported from Italy, eighty-six were from the Edo state (Benins constitute more than sixty percent of the population of Edo state). This deportation which is one out of the many provides an evidence of what can be called a pronounced craze for migration in Benin. Several reasons account for the strong migration drive in Benin and it is proper to outline them to appreciate the roots of the problem.

III. Emigration in Black in Black Africa and Racial Mixing: The Cultural Paradox

The disappointing fact that follows the overwhelming desire for migration in Benin is that it does not translate to a genuine desire for procreation with citizens of the emigrant state in a proportionate manner to the rate of the desire to migrate to these states. A rude shock comes when an attempt is made to contrast is made between the rate of migration in Benin and the level of interracial mixing through procreation between Benins and other non-African races of mankind.

While Benins (and by extension black Africans) have a strong disposition to migrate, live and earn their living among other races of mankind, this disposition meets no match with the low rate of racial mixing with other races. In my study on this topic among two hundred Benins, over one hundred and fifty respondents however, showed some positive disposition towards racial mixing with the argument that there is indeed the need to encourage Benins to procreate with citizens of other non-African states on the ground that “when Benin’s bear children with citizens of other race it would promote development in Benin”. The respondents were further willing to encourage their emigrant brothers and sisters to have children by other races more legitimately i.e., through marriage”. A hundred and seventy of the respondents volunteered that they were aware of Benin children who were racially mixed children and were products of interracial marriage. A particular respondent who preferred to remain anonymous reported

that he was aware of fifteen Benins who were products of racially mixed parentage. However, the highest number known to a respondent is fifteen. The disturbing question then is why do we have low or rather poor rate of racial mixing. Mrs E.A Agbonifo of Lavbieze family, a public servant in Benin provides an answer in this regard. She volunteered that “Benins have lost many interracial children to other races of mankind due to racial mixing as many of the children cling to their mother when they are of the white race and refuse to return to Benin land, even at old age”. Hence there have been very many cases of parents who suffered at old age as consequence of having racially mixed children who refused to return to Benin. Although the loss of children may be a strong factor that count against racial mixing there is also the other danger that racially mixed children stand to face which appears to stand in the way of racial mixing .This problem arises from the fact that they may not be fully integrated within their folks on return and feel secure enough to enjoy the cultural rights and privileges due to them as indigenes of Benin. This is itself could arise from the fact that they may be seen as harbouring “true Benin blood” a kind of essentialist disposition to culture or what can be characterized as a form of “anti-racist racism” implicit in Sedar Senghor’s philosophy of negritude(1961). A particular respondent, whose view highlights this problem adequately, volunteered that “interracial parentage between Benins and other races should not be encouraged so as not sell Benin culture”. His thinking in this regard is a form of advocacy for racial purity which in principle is what racial mixing negates. Thus side by side with the view that advocates for a liberal and dynamic notion of culture and for which the desire for racial mixing is a welcome development there is also the other desire that seeks to preserve Benin culture in all purity thereby wishing for a second-class citizen for children of racial mixing.

Among those who demonstrate strong support for interracial mixing there are those whose positions harbour a conservative notion of culture which undermines (if not negates) the desire for racial mixing. This is because racial mixing applied under such conditions or recommendations is clearly harmful to human dignity. One of them I encountered during my interview is Ehigiator Osazuwa, a Benin chief

from the Lavbieze family. He recommends racial mixing by way of Benin sons marrying wives from other races and having children by them but not other races marrying Benin daughters. His argument in this regard is that wives of Benin sons from other races would be loyal to Benin culture whereas Benin daughters married to other places will be acculturated in a manner different from Benin world-view for which their children will not promote Benin culture or advocate for it. What we can read from this position is a desire to acculturate women of other races but unwillingness to permit same for Benin daughters.

Others who belong to this school of thought are not in support of awarding chieftaincy title to children of Benin kingdom who are products of racially mixed parentage since these sons by their interpretation are not “purely” Benins and do not harbour Benin blood entirely. This position is clearly strong and counts against the desire for racial mixing since chieftaincy title is the hallmark of honour and recognition recognition in Benin as for many other black African ethnic and cultural groups.

Apart from the views volunteered above there are other positions that tend to discourage racial mixing which are implied in the culture of black Africans and their worldview in general. The first in this in this regard is the world view of Africans. African world-view to which Benins share, is largely communal hence wisdom and truth often reflect community belief. This position is amply demonstrated by the Igbo proverb which holds that *unu oha ka ike enya ohunonye*—“the foolishness of the community is more than the wisdom of one person”. In the communal philosophy of Africans, to be is to be with. Man in the African worldview is an ontological force connected to other human beings. This corporate nature of African world-view is evident in its strong attachment to the extended family system, its belief in corporate guilt for any offence committed against the community and its preference for communal wisdom (Nze 1989). In this worldview;

To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from

his roots, his foundations, his context of security, his kinships and in the entire group of these who make him aware of his own existence. To be without any of these co-operate elements of life is to be cut out of the whole picture. (Mbiti, 1969, p.1)

This worldview variously summarized in as communalism, communitarianism (Gyekye 1997, Basu 19998, Coetzee 2004) or communocracy (Toure, as cited by Ruch and Anyanwu, 1984) believes that “the right of one kinship member was the duty of the other and the duty of the other kinship member was the right of another” (Josiah Cobbah, 1987 cited in (Ibhawho, 1999, p.21). For instance, it is the right of an orphan to gain the duty of care from his extended family just as the duty of care gives rise to the right to respect the members of the extended family especially, the elder. This is sharply in contrast to the individualism of several other world culture especially, those that have come under the influence of western culture (where authentic existence consists in living the “I”). In these cultures existence is defined largely as an individual project which one human being carries while the communities are spectators. The implication of this is that what could be regarded as an individual affair in other world cultures are submitted to a larger body before it is deemed fit and legitimate enough in the African communal world. Such matters as choice of marriage partners, choice of marriage venues for marriages, names of children gotten through marriage; all these are expected to reflect the communal wishes of the people. Given then the weight of this communal philosophy and its overbearing influence on the individual decisions such as marriage and procreation it has been seen that a fundamental problem that affects racial mixing by way of procreation exists in the culture. This is because the desire for racial mixing if it has to be done through marriage may not get the consent of the family of either of family of the intending partners and where it has to be through lawful union as implied by marriage it has to pass through an elaborate tradition.

In relation to marriage the African communal philosophy makes specific demands without which it is not considered valid and legitimate enough. Here, marriage is a family versus family affair that demands elaborate

procedures the relevant aspect of which is the payment of a bride price which the groom's family pays to the bride's family as a sign of commitment to the marital contact. The bride price which could be in cash or in kind (yam or cattle) and which serves to regularize and regulate the marriage and gives "permanence to the foundation of the family from a mere paramount relationship and the promiscuous begetting and bearing of children" (C.O. Meek -1437, p.27 as cited in C.O.Nwanunobi, 1992, p.30). In Benin marriage rite, the bride price is twenty-four naira.

Other rites that legitimize marriage is the official handing over of the bride to the groom. In Benin this ritual is often performed by an uncle of the bride who represents both the father of the bride and the extended family (and which symbolizes the official hand-over of a daughter of a clan to another clan and the fulfillment of the inter and intra-family union that goes with marriage). This rite is accompanied with vocal recitations of numerals, one, two, three, four, ... as the bride is seated periodically at the lap of the bride. At the seventh count, the bride is landed finally at the lap of the groom and this concludes the official handing over of the bride. This serves to emphasize the spirituality of the marriage and gives marriage a legitimate status in Benin.

When a marriage is contracted between two partners without these rites of tradition, such marriage is not regarded as a legitimate contract capable of producing children with full rights. Such marriage under Benin customary law is invalid and "children from un-married couples or marriages which are not properly contracted are not regarded by the family and community and cannot be fully integrated into the family until the children's paternity has been established through the performance of the relevant rights of inheritance" (Ibhawoh, 1999:74). This has enormous implications for inter-racial procreation and affects the rate of racial mixing in Benin and by extension black African nations. Although this research observed that non-black African nationals have in some instances come to Benin to observe these traditions before marrying Benin daughters the instances were remarkably low especially in comparison to the population of the Benins in diasporas.

Arising from marriage is the basis for legitimacy of a child. Legitimacy is a demanding aspect of child bearing in Benin as in many other ethnic groups in Nigeria that it has strong potentials to affect the desire for racial mixing. According to C.N. Obi, a leading authority in Nigeria family law:

There is a statue of illegitimacy under the customary laws of all the communities in Southern Nigeria. The status carries with it certain disabilities, particularly in inheritance and succession to property as well as in the holding of certain traditional offices.

(Cited in Ibahowoh 1999, p.74)

Although the provisions of 1979 constitution of Nigeria which states that “No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth” (Sect 39(2)), there remains a dominant negative attitude towards illegitimate children ,persists in informal circles which is capable of affecting the desire for racial mixing .Children considered illegitimate suffer sanctions, which may range from denial of right of inclusion in family circles in certain matters to outright alienation by way of ostracism from the clan .In balck Africa this is a serious psychological harm capable of affecting the psycho-social well being of the individual.. In Benin as in many other back African communities, ostracism from a clan or community is like throwing a fish out of water.

Closely related to the problem of marriage and legitimacy of child in relation to racial mixing is the problem of inheritance; that is-the order and manner for bequeathing property consequent upon the death of the father of a family. Although in Benin “inheritance rules vary” (Bradbury, 1973, p.214), in Benin inheritance generally flows from legitimacy of the child. A child born outside marriage or one who is a product of a wrongly contracted marriage is fundamentally disabled in matters of inheritance. He does not have the *locus standi* to any claim of inheritance. In Benin when a man dies “the bulk of his moveable property “(Bradbury, 1973, p. 214) goes to the eldest son. If the man has many wives, the property is shared among the first male child of a wife while some are left for the last born. Children in the middle of birth row are not entitled to any property. But the right to property is also bound by a corresponding funeral duty to bury the dead honourably by performing the funeral rites. The failure to

perform the funeral rites of a deceased father invalidates claim to inheritance. Thus while the individual who has been unable to bury the father question may make use of his father's property, he does not have a legitimate claim to them and stands more or less like a care taker. When the individual in question dies his brother may step in, perform the rites and take away the possession from his son. Indeed, failure to perform the burial and funeral rites of dead parents is a crime against the custom of the Benins punishable by sanctions. A Benin chief volunteered that the defaulter may never enjoy the rights due elders if he permitted to attain the age in the land and that as he may even be ex-communicated for the offence.

An on-going legal suite on inheritance at Ewu-Esan, a sub-ethnic or cultural group that shares some strong cultural affinity with Benins exemplifies his claim. At Ewu-Esan the failure of rightful heir apparent to the throne of the Onoje of Ewu to perform the burial rites of a deceased king has created a succession problem in the town as the uncle of the deceased king who performed the funeral rites of the dead king has stepped into the throne. In February, 2005, the trial judge ruled in favour of the heir-apparent who was the claimant to the right of succession the judge upheld the judgement that the claimant was not financially capable of performing the funeral rites of the dead king at the time of his death and as such should be allowed the right of kingship especially now that he is viable enough to perform the role.

IV. Emigration in Black Africa and the Desire for Racial Mixing: Resolving the Paradox

Our submissions so far points at the fact that while racial mixing is desired by black Africans some of the cultural provisions of the society do not promote this ambition. Apart the unhealthy political climate that characterize majority of black African states as a result which inter-racial children prefer to live their life in more suitable foreign countries, hence, many of them never return to their paternal home or even visit their maternal relations, and hence "are lost", the corporate ontology of this world-view have cultural items that is capable of affecting this desire. Hence in a city such as Benin with over one million inhabitants and variously well known in Nigeria as a city/ethnic group with very high number of emigrants outside

black Africa the population of children born from interracial parentage is one to a ten thousand.

But racial mixing through marriage and child bearing is an important desire of mankind because of its social and political potentials. It should just be imagined what the world stands to gain when a black African marries a white American and their son or daughter is married to a red Indian. Apart from providing a credible factor for mediating in world politics, it would serve to build love and a more tolerant human community and combat racism and xenophobia. Indeed it will stand as an effective weapon against racism for it remains a disturbing reality that while there appears to be no justifiable biological evidence to substantiate the idea of race, racism remains a major problem of humanity functioning as “politics parading in a guise of nature and natural law “(Leighton Williams, 2005). Even if the theory of racism were to, for any reason, go beyond its present state at the moment for which it should imply that there is inherent difference among human kind, the idea of racial mixing would still be a viable option. What then are the map out solutions to the cultural tensions and dilemma that affect this desire and indeed need for racial mixing?

The first option then in the way of racial mixing is to address the cultural desires of modernity with a “detached mind”. By this, is implied, a certain world-view that seeks to interact with a culture on the basis of its relevance to as many people as possible, and further seeks to measure this relevance by as many people as are positively absorbed by the culture. The argument in this regard is that it does not make much sense to preserve a culture that alienates one from a vast majority of the human race since this by implication is alienation of growth and development. The desire for development, which in this instance, is clearly interpreted in economic terms must also be allowed to have a significant influence in human terms. There should also be a certain level of social growth that encourages racial mixing among different races of mankind. It makes little sense to desire the humanity of a people in economic terms and isolate them in social terms by way of refusal to procreate children with them. In whatever terms one constructs the notion of difference by way of what I have elsewhere referred to as the attempt to “de-other the other”(O.Ugwuanyi in Chima J.Korieh ed.2009,p.136), differences in the

final analysis creates more possibilities than certainties. In human terms such differences can be mediated through racial mixing.

The second option is to resolve the cultural tension that emanates from racial mixing in black Africa is to educate children with as much multi-racial ideology as possible that is ideologies that arises from and justifies the equality of differences among races that form the human community .This could serve as an efficient way of (de)constructing the notion of race to make the concept more attractive and more productive. If it established that differences among humankind has the capacity to pioneer and promote different forms of civilizations and worldviews all which could reflect the differences intelligence that could be found among humankind it is difficult if the theory of difference that seeks to apply the notion of these differences for negative ends would succeed for then differences would then be seen as the assets that they are and not liabilities. It is dangerous in social and psychological terms promote an idea of difference that does not emphasis the gains of differences because the human duty demanded of this difference will not be met by this way.

Finally children of racially mixed parentage should be encouraged to relocate to their place of paternity at a certain age of their life to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of their land origin. As Mrs. Agbonifo puts it “Let then come home, let them come here and live with us”. Indeed after a productive age of their lives interracial children should be encouraged to return to their paternal family. This is the one sure way to promote the desire for inter racial procreation and ensure that no culture or race is at loss in the promotion of this desire. For a black man to raise a child in far way India with an Australian mother for example, and for the same child to grow and die at old age outside the place and culture of his natural origins cannot promote the cause of racial mixing however it is desired. Some a man is literarily lost to other races of mankind. This is itself is a harmful pattern of depopulation which stands against the desire of racial mixing. This therefore justifies the need for sound knowledge of cultural history of parents of a child born out of inter racial marriage.

V. Conclusion

The effort in this work has been to determine the problems affecting racial mixing between black Africa and other races of mankind through and inductive analysis of the case as it applies to Benins, a prominent ethnic group in Nigeria. Our attempt to draw materials from the Benin culture of Nigeria is anchored on the persisting influence of cultural traditions in the worldview of this ethnic group in Nigeria. In Benin, the people's idea of Christianity and modernity does not radically oppose their traditional convictions adequately and have not eroded traditional belief and attachment to traditional culture. For instance, in February, 2005 the Oba of Benin gave an instruction that all Benin sons and daughters residing in Benin City should carry out a sacrifice by rubbing a white chalk at the forehead and walk to Emotan shrine (a popular Benin goddess) where they were to drop an egg each and this order was faithfully obeyed. Thus what one witnesses in Benin is a form of religious syncretism where a man may be a pastor and the wife is a traditional worshipper, practicing what is popularly known as African traditional religion. Hence Eghosa Osagie writes that despite the ever-increasing influences of British custom "some particularly resilient aspects of Benin culture have held their own in the face of formidable opposing forces. Traditional ceremonies of marriage, naming of children... have remained intact..." (Eghosa Osagie, 2000, p.9). Among these enduring traditional cultures are: marriage patterns, inheritance rights, burial patterns, etc, will remain for a long time and as long as these cultures endure in their traditional forms and resist change, racial mixing will remain a difficult desire among Benins and other races of mankind.

The study has discovered an overwhelming vote in favour of racial mixing with a corresponding volume of impediments against this desire many of which are rooted in the world-view of the people. The study has also provided some strategies on how to overcome these problems with the view that just as other races of mankind have the duty to ensure that interracial children are raised with a deep sense of patriotism to their ethnic nationality, for which they should desire home at a stage of their life, black Africans should also permit a more flexible disposition to

their culture and restrain the temptation towards can be called “anti-racist racism”, in interacting with other cultures, a situation whereby the black colour or any cultural achievement arising from the black race serves to alienate other races of mankind from proper integration with them. It is the hope of the author that this work will provide some insight on the path to a multiracial world by way of marriage and procreation, whereby, the world will grow to achieve a pool of races in any city of black Africa. Surely this would be a reliable avenue to a healthier human race, for as it is popularly, “blood is thicker than water”.

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Interview with Mr. Ehigiator Osazuwa, a Benin chief 64 Erie Stree, off Agbado Street, Benin City 16/4/05

Interview with John Osazuwa (Eghaevbo-nogbe Palace Socceity) at 4 Ewaise Rd off Akpakpava street, Ewaise, Benin City on 16/4/05

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