

The Roles and Functions of Africana Psychology

by

Guest Editor

DeReef F. Jamison, Ph.D.

Africana Studies Program, Savannah State University

DeReef F. Jamison (jamisond@savannahstate.edu) is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Africana Studies at Savannah State University. His research interests are African American culture and gender identity, community activism among Black psychologists, the psychological aspects of oppression and liberation, and the intellectual history and diasporic connections of Africana Psychology. He has published articles in *The Journal of African American Studies*, *The Griot*, and *The Journal of Pan African Studies*.

This special edition of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal, focuses on how scholars in the field of Africana Psychology have critically investigated and interrogated the life-worlds of people of African descent from an African-centered perspective. The authors examine definitions and conceptual models in African-centered Psychology, the historical development of African-centered Psychology, the relationship between African spirituality and African-centered Psychology, the relevance of culturally-specific psychological interventions and treatments with Black patients, the impact of media images on Africana identity, and the social viability of African-centered Psychology. From some of the pioneers in Africana Psychology that have laid the theoretical foundations, to emerging scholars in Africana Psychology, the contributors illustrate and exemplify the intergenerational transmission of knowledge that has occurred within Africana Psychological discourse.

SEEKING THE SAKHU: AFRICANA PSYCHOLOGISTS IN SEARCH OF THE SPIRIT

African Psychology and European Psychology differ on the very definition of what comprises the discipline of psychology. Is psychology the study of human behavior, the mind or the spirit? Erylene Piper Mandy and Taasogle Daryl Rowe's "Educating African-centered Psychologists: Towards a Comprehensive Paradigm" builds and elaborates on Africana Psychology as Sakhu or the illumination of the soul/spirit. In mapping the contours of this spiritual and intellectual journey, Mandy and Rowe argue that in order to become Sakhu Shetis, African-centered psychologists must become more actively engaged in the process of illuminating the spirit. Mandy and Rowe propose a framework for implementing spiritual concepts into the core of Africana Psychology. In "Zulu Traditional Healing, Afrikan Worldview and the Practice of Ubuntu: Deep Thought for Afrikan/Black Psychology," Kevin L. Washington presents the worldview of the Zulus as an ideal approach to understanding the psycho-spiritual experiences of people of African descent. Washington offers alternative conceptions of what constitutes healing within the domain of African-centered Psychology. The practice of Sakhu is demonstrated in Chante D. De Loach and Marissa N. Peterson's "African Spiritual Methods of Healing: The Use of Candomblé in Traumatic Response". De Loach and Peterson discuss the role and function of African spirituality as an entity that manifests as a healing force that seeks to address the psycho-trauma experienced by Afro-Brazilians. Their analysis provides an application of spirituality within a cultural context that displays how spirituality directly impacts how people suffering from oppressive conditions benefit from spiritual/psychological services that emphasize spirituality at its core.

AFRICANA PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

One of the most heated and debated topics within African psychological discourse has centered on issues related to Africana personality theory. Linda James Myers' and Suzette Speight's "Reframing Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being Among Persons of African Descent: Africana/Black Psychology Meeting the Challenges of Fractured Social and Cultural Realities" documents the dissemination and production of psychological knowledge relative to people of African descent over the last half of century. Myers and Speight argue that during this period African-centered psychologists diligently went about the task of defining and developing an alternative perspective to psychological well-being. Critical to their understanding of this alternative psychology is the notion that psychological concepts that emphasize cultural congruency are imperative to optimal mental health. Adding to this discussion is Kobi Kambon's and Terra Bowen's "Theories of African American Personality: Classification, Basic Constructs and Empirical Predictions/Assessment". Kambon and Bowen critique some of the knowledge production examined by Myers and Speight and provide a comprehensive review of African American Personality theories. Kambon and Bowen systematically analyze and interpret the various approaches that have been employed by scholars attempting to conceptualize the complex nature of the African American Personality. In addition, Kambon and Bowen present a representative model of an African-centered African American Personality Theory.

The concepts discussed in the previous articles are further explored by Karanja Keita Carroll. Carroll's "A Genealogical Analysis of the Worldview Framework in African-centered Psychology" examines the intellectual history of the Worldview concept within African Psychology. Carroll connects the initial articulations of Edwin Nichols and Vernon Dixon to the intellectual productions of contemporary Africana psychologists such as Kobi Kambon, Linda James Myers and Wade Nobles. In combining various concepts into a comprehensive whole, Daudi Ajani Azibo's "Criteria That Indicate When African-centered Consciousness Is Endangered Or Depleted By The Mass Media" utilizes the African-centered concepts of Psychological Misorientation, Mentacide and African Consciousness, as starting points for developing a criteria for determining how particular mass media impact African self-consciousness. Azibo argues that by establishing criteria that is grounded in African-centered psychological concepts, African-centered psychologists put themselves in a position to defend people of African descent against Eurocentric forms of media that negatively impact the African psyche.

AFRICAN-CENTERED ANALYSES OF FRANTZ FANON

Any discourse concerning the psychology of oppression and/or liberation relative to people of African descent is incomplete without discussion of the profound work of the revolutionary scholar Frantz Fanon. Fanon's body of work was interdisciplinary and thus crossed and often transcended disciplinary boundaries. However, his work is of particular importance to Africana Psychology. In "Beyond Health Disparities: Examining Power Disparities and Industrial Complexes from the Views of Frantz Fanon (Part 1)" the Fanon Project positions Frantz Fanon as a scholar/activist whose ideas can be used as a model for future endeavors in theory, research and practice. The Fanon Project illustrates how various industrial complexes are used to maintain and perpetuate power disparities among people of African descent. In addition, the Fanon project proposes that the issue of power should and must be central to the vocation of the Africana psychologist. DeReef F. Jamison's "Fanon Revisited: Exploring the relationship between African-centered psychology and Fanonian psychology" parallels the Fanon Project in its attempt to emphasize the theoretical and practical components of African-centered psychology and Fanonian psychology. Jamison compares and contrasts African-centered psychological theories with Fanonian psychological concepts. Jamison argues that the two schools are more similar than what is often thought. In discussing the similarities and differences, Jamison attempts to close the perceived gaps and lessen the conceptual discontinuities in order to build a bridge of shared understanding.

BUILDING TO ETERNITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH LINDA JAMES MYERS

Sekhmet Ra Em Kht Maat concludes this special edition with an interview of Linda James Myers, a leading scholar and pioneer in the field of Africana/African-centered Psychology. Maat asks a series of penetrating questions ranging from Myers' understanding of the state of African-centered psychology to words of wisdom for future African-centered psychologists and psychological theorists. This interview provides an important intergenerational dialogue between an elder African-centered psychologist and a developing African-centered theorist.