

Azibo Interviews Dr. Regina Jennings on the Template for the Racially Normal Individual

Regina Jennings, Ph.D. is author of *Malcolm X and the Poetics of Haki Madhubuti* (2006) and *Race, Rage, and Roses* (2004).

DAA: (Daudi Jambo Dr. Jennings. Asante sana (thank you very much) for answering a few questions. I know you to be an Africana Studies professor currently at California State University, a poet and a member of the original Black Panther Party. Your award winning texts, *Malcolm X and the Poetics of Haki Madhubuti*, *Race, Rage, and Roses* (your second poetry book), and your twenty-five or so peer-reviewed articles and essays come highly recommended. Your chapter on dysfunctional beginnings of racial identity entitled “*From Nigger to Negro ...*” documents how the African-U.S. were mentally de-Africanized. As such, your thoughts on the templet that the Azibo Nosology II presents to represent the mentally and behaviorally re-Africanized or racially normal individual are solicited.

RJ (Regina Jennings): Dr. Azibo I am pleased to talk to you about your very important work, the Nosology templet and I want to begin by telling you that I am still an Associate Professor in African-American and Ethnic Studies, still a poet, and as you rightfully point out, a former member of the original Black Panther Party for Self Defense in Oakland, California. Having lived through that exciting, deadly, and righteous part of Black American history, I know for a fact how important it is to raise children in an African-centered way in order to disrupt the entrenched White supremacy that dominates the psychology of Black people. The Nosology templet makes that exceeding significant direction very clear.

Because we as a people have not confronted the emotional trauma of being conquered, the hidden inferiority and the absorption of racist attitudes continue to disfigure how those of African descent think about themselves and their place in the world. For example, with the non-acknowledgement of authentic African history that posits African people as the primary creators of world civilization as well as the proliferation of n/Negro and Black subordination in mainstream history causes African-Americans to quietly feel inferior to Whites and other ethnicities. In mainstream America, with Malcolm X, for instance, being considered and taught as violent confuses the Black psyche to accept subordination instead of resistance as the proper or accepted manner of behavior. In just about every class where I have taught about Malcolm X normally my White students, and a few Blacks, initially call him a racist and a terrorist.

I have to remind them that Malcolm never killed anyone; nor did he participate in the building of ships; the sailing across an ocean to capture and enslave White people for centuries. I have to remind them of the multitude of Red Nations in America when the Spanish and English arrived with weaponry which they unhesitatingly used to murder the groups that had initially welcomed them.

DAA: What is your perception of this template? Does it appear to represent a bona fide recovery or re-Africanization that overcomes the identity losses that underlie the slavery imposed “negro and nigger” identities? Please briefly explain or describe the “negro and the nigger” identity.

RJ: If we, as the Nosology template clearly states, bring forward the lives of independent and courageous thinkers and doers such as Queen Nzingha, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Toure, and others, and pass their patterns of behavior onto the next generation, then we have a chance to contribute to a better future for all African people. Because of the courage of Malcolm X and his teacher, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, X was able to take his message of Black independence and the importance of studying Black history and particularly Nile Valley Civilization to the masses of our people. Amos Wilson is right when he talks about the necessity to re-empower ourselves as is Marimba Ani who puts forward the almost unspeakable tragedies that have beset our people. Malcolm X would certainly agree with both scholars because his kind of bravery created the 1960s generation which is now regrettably a part of Black America’s past. We have failed to carry forward those traditions of resistance and this absence has resulted in the placidity that we experience today in America.

The negro and nigger identities that I linguistically researched and explained in my previous article are so-named people who have assimilated to White supremacy to the degree that the historical memory of being African is either forgotten or discarded as the renamed negro/nigger has accepted the inferior identity and aesthetics enforced and projected regularly by White America. For example, the enslaved Africans, such as the Mandingo, Ibo, Akan, Wolof, were stripped of their original African group names and in bondage their White owners renamed such people negro/nigger/boy/girl/guinea, whatever the Whites thought derisively appropriate. As negro became synonymous with slave, it lost its original relationship with the adjectival meaning in Spanish, which was black. Because primarily Negroes were enslaved, for centuries and designated as chattel, this former adjective (negro) changed to a noun (negro) loaded with pejorative connotations because it indicated property, not people. Plus, we must understand that despite what many films and books imply, negroes/niggers were regularly worked to death. They were dispensable and I think about those horrendous crimes against humanity because killing is an American sport that has spread to our young males in particular. In my view, young Black males have distorted messages from the inhumane thinking of White Americans who love to kill; America is a mindset programmed to kill everything that is not White, such as people, animals, the environment, you name it. In some areas, they have even killed The Unnamed Creator of All Things.

The term, nigger is worse than Negro. Negro indicates the subjugated, normally Christian and Americanized African while nigger in the White mind or psychology is a loathsome, inherently stupid and inferior piece of filth that should be lynched, castrated, set afire, and annihilated. Nigger also indicates the fright in the psychology of White supremacy because it also connotes an outrageousness and terrific fighting spirit that Whites fear. This nigger is in the design of King Kong, Mighty Joe Young, and the apes in *Planet of the Apes*. Because of the 1960s this terrifying image in the White mind has been modified in *Star Trek* in the character Warf, a Klingon. White males hate and fear Black males. This complicated fright is well defined in the Cress-Welsing theory where Whites dread their own racial inferiority in numbers and in their inability to produce color.

DAA: Is it a legitimate and necessary enterprise to socially engineer a re-Africanized identity with this template?

RJ: Azibo's Nosology I and II are a must for reorientation of the disturbed renamed African who dwells among us today and for those about to be born. The nosology template designates a proper mode of thinking and responding in ways that help to eradicate the damage that White supremacy or Eurasian laws, principles, and customs have perpetuated among the once enslaved and renamed African people in the Americas. To use this template when addressing challenges of Black people is to move towards refashioning a subjugated people who often fail to recognize that indeed they are in dimensional, racial trouble.

When I was a member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, I learned about Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and I lived with the bravest Black men and women I had ever known. I learned to love Africa and my people because to be a Panther we all agreed that we were willing to die for our people if necessary. In accepting this possibility while learning about my own race-centered history, I began to experience a self and racial love unknown before and one much bigger than myself.

I had not received a biological love from my mother because she was a recipient of White hatred, subordination, media mockery, poverty, individualism, and capitalism. My sisters, brother, and I had different fathers and none were around. My mother knew nothing about Africa, except that it was a cannibalistic, heathen, stupid, and ugly region. She like her sisters and brothers had nothing to do with Africa. They just attempted to live in what they called "The White man's world." My mother and my family members accepted being colored or negro and they strove to find joy in n/Negro American culture. This equaled being Christian, which is a belief in a White solo God and his son Jesus. This also meant working for meager wages, getting high on Friday and Saturday nights, and staying young forever. With the realities of life, such as our relationship to the Planet, and the mere fact that our Earth is a Planet were not factors in our psychology.

We like many American n/Negroes were dislocated from the African and humane understanding that everything on Earth is inter-related and this of course includes the Heavens. Like many American n/Negroes they were focused on the culture, news, world- views of the dominant society. Therefore, when middle-age hit my mother and aunts, they were ill-prepared to handle this natural part of life.

They were American, so they believed prominently in youth culture, getting a man, and getting high. They attended nice Negro festivities—picnics, bar-be-ques, parties-- and beyond that they were lost. When I was a child, my family watched me live my youth as if I were unreal, a movie I suppose. When I ran away from home at age fourteen, no one came after me. I started living on the streets, involving myself in crime, going home whenever I wanted to, and none of my siblings, aunts or mother tried to find out what was happening to me. They had their own troubles; they were individualistic and psychologically deformed due to American racism. I don't think our people realize that the forced separation of people and families that we underwent during the enslavement period is still with us. To this day, I honestly don't know what family means. I never had that true experience with the exception of being a member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and prior to that living with a gang of outlaws. Now, we were family because we had a mission and a purpose: to eat and to survive.

It is imperative to re-Africanize the n/Negro/b/Black people and that's what the Nosology templates do. When you introduce an average Black person to the actual or true history of how we as Black people came to this part of the world, it clarifies our suspicion, dislike, and caution about White people. When you tell Black people that it is normal for them to dislike White people, that we are NOT ONE; that White people deliberately enslaved Black people that they devastated Africa, then you are allowing that human being to come into a healthy reality. It is unnatural and confusing to tell people to love those who hate them; committed mass murder on them; devised laws to humiliate them; castrated many Black males; incarcerate those who challenge police brutality; mass incarcerate political prisoners and cage them in jail from the 1960s to the 21st century. Many of my Panther brothers have died and are dying behind bars and our new negroes masquerading as Blacks whisper around this truth and connection. The only member of the Congressional Black caucus that has ever said anything about the brave and courageous political prisoners still incarcerated or have died is the wonderful Barbara Lee. The others sit back and let Assata Shakur's name and image be defamed. Black people today do not care about their freedom fighters of yesterday. Contemporary Black Americans are in urgent need of a re-Africanization, and one instituted by moral and ethical people of African descent.

White people, after Blacks arose in the 1960s and challenged them en mass, came up with new ways to re-assimilate the next generation into what we have today. First, they removed the true history of our people from educational materials. They then found Negroes who loved being identified as White Black men and put them in charge of major offices. This gave a visual of progress and equality, but the leaders were normally not Africanized.

In the dumbing down of America, Black people became the greatest receivers. Additionally, Black people have watched their leaders Malcolm X and Martin Luther King gunned down in America and from this trauma they developed a negative psychology of being killed themselves. This information comes directly from my students today when I ask them why they are not interested in fixing the ills that beset our people.

However, when I teach about the cycle of life, that fall always turns to winter, and then spring again, and that no human being can escape death, and when I teach them that Harriet Tubman and the Queen who never surrendered, Nzingha, lived into ripe old age, I do get different attitudes by the end of our course.

DAA: Do you perceive any shortcomings or problems with this template? How might it be improved?

RJ: I do not think that the templet needs improving, but I strongly urge that the health practitioners who use it be both ethical and sincere. In my personal experience, I have had horrible experiences with health practitioners who truly should not be in the psychiatry or psychology business because they are ill, mentally, themselves. Because of White supremacy and its entrenchment in our people, we all require a healing process and re-immersion in traditional cultural values that would inspire us to legitimately desire the best for our brethren. In my view, capitalism and American perspectives in general have erased the community and communal spirit that our people once lived in African nations as defined by Chancellor Williams and earlier, Edward Blyden.

DAA: Is there a feature or property of this template that you would like to make special mention of given its presentation in the Azibo Nosology II?

RJ: (no response)

DAA: Should this templet for re-Africanized identity be part of a mental health practitioner's standard diagnostic repertoire? If yes, what do you think the impediments are and how might they be overcome?

RJ: I believe that the re-Africanization of American Africans is crucial and certainly should be a part of all health practitioners' tools to assist Black people; however, I truly do not think that White psychologists would embark on this Blackenized training. That would be the biggest impediment, as I see it because health practitioners may have to get approval from Eurocentric health providers who are disinterested in such a re-learning experience. In fact, they may call it reverse racism if it is not applicable to Whites, Asians, Latino/as, Women and so on. To overcome this problem, concerned health practitioners must exercise their bravery and independence by developing as did the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Marcus Garvey, autonomous facilities.

DAA: Is this template realistic? Would it really help African descent people get over Negro-to-Nigger identity?

RJ: I honestly do think that the Nosology II template would help our people travel from negro/nigger consciousness to a race-centered psychology because I have witnessed how practicing self-determination has transformed me and many others. For example, to be in the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, we learned responsibility for our people. We were trained to not only serve our people (the breakfast for school children program, among others) but also if necessary accept incarceration, torture, or death for our people. Even in my career as a professor, I still maintain my absolute desire to teach in the interest of my people and I have passed on that attitude to my Black, White, Latino/a and Asian students. In fact, teaching from this perspective, in a predominantly White college where I was the only Black female professor, I aroused my students to appreciate Black literature so much that together we started Black Studies at this mostly White, prestigious school.

My teaching African-American literature and resistance caused the few Black students in this mostly White college to stop wearing their hair in imitation of White people; to abandon multi-colored contact lenses (in imitation of White people) to think deeply about Harriet Tubman, Martin Delany, Kathleen Cleaver and others. In fighting for Black Studies and being the only African-American female in an English department and in THE ENTIRE COLLEGE where I felt unwelcomed and unwanted, I experienced such overt racism from a head honcho White male that my body started to deteriorate during my time there. Racism causes both physical and mental illnesses in Black people and when this happened to me, I didn't even know how to articulate what I experienced. I lacked an Africentric health practitioner and my isolation from White colleagues literally debilitated my body.

People rarely discuss how racism weakens the body and causes serious, physical illnesses. In this educational institution of higher learning that perpetuated White supremacy, I was surrounded by White hatred and mean-spiritedness and although I won the battle, of starting a Black Studies program, I ended up extremely sick. That was one of the most awful experiences in my life and teaching career.

I have also witnessed other Black female professors at similar institutions, literally die from racism. Though the reasons for death were stated as heart failure or cancer, I and their families know it was racism in the college or university where they taught. Sitting in ice cold English Departments where Black literature is devalued, constantly having to defend your right to be in higher education is simply awful. One of the most racist colleagues at my particular bastion of awfulness even called the local Ku Klux Klan on me, and his organization made threatening calls to the Black Student Union, where the students and I regularly met to organize ourselves to demand Black Studies. I used to be quite scared walking from the train station to the campus, always sensing danger for my life. To this day, I still carry the wounds and scars of that terrible experience, but one that ended in Black Studies being implemented at a White college.

DAA: Any thoughts on how a therapist might use this template to move his or her client away from nigger-to-negro identity to a more African identity?

RJ: There needs to be a directory of Africentric psychologists and psychiatrists. Our people need to know that they exist and where to find them. I will be candid here. I have been in therapy with three different professionals. The first was a Black male thief and charlatan, and he came highly recommended. This individualist nigger pretended to care for his patients when in reality he extorted them for money, using the personal information that he gleaned from client patient sessions. In fact, that fraud is no longer practicing and preying on our people because once I became one of his victims, I filed charges against him. Yet, there is no satisfaction in putting him out of business; I am still hurting from that Black on Black deception. This is why I stress sincere ethics in using the Nosology template.

The other two health practitioners I went to were White females and I ended up telling each one that she was not fit to treat Black patients. These women were demeaning and had no clue about what Blacks have undergone in America. Yet, it wasn't until after my second White female therapist that I realized my insanity for going to either of them to become mentally healthy. Once I gave up the notion of therapy, I healed myself when I again dived into not only the history of my people, but also African science and its prefiguration in quantum physics. African science associates with African spirituality.

Africentric psychologists need to create groups in every city and town populated by Blacks because all of us are still hurting from the trauma of being owned by White people and forced to contribute free labor to this country for centuries. White males had their notorious way with Black women and men. White people sold their own offspring into enslavement for life. Yet, these same people enforced Christianity onto Black people emphasizing the turn the other cheek process that confuses and saps the courage from our people.

A solution is in the Nosology methodology where we can turn our psychology backwards in time in order to go forward, but the key is in the genuine care and love of Black people that is within the practitioner, him or herself.