

## **What is the Institute's political orientation?**

**I'm proud to say that we are Africancentrists, which means our worldview and our political philosophy is Africentricity. Our teaching and research orientations are informed by the social, political and economic needs of African people. As jegnoch (scholar-warriors), we seek to equip select African youth to become what Jacob Carruthers calls "intellectual maroons." They must have the tools to breakout of what Wade Nobles calls "conceptual incarceration." Then we can launch what Kemetic leadership 4,000 year ago called a "wheme mesu" to restore "Ma'at" and end what Marimba Ani calls the "maafa." The Kwame Ture Youth Leadership Institute and this web site are two vehicles we employ to do this mighty work. Now you know it will take us the next 20 minutes to define the terms I just used.**

## **Then let's get started; why don't you begin with "Africentricity"**

**Alright. The term "Africentricity" was coined circa 1990 by historian John Henrik Clarke to signify the absolute necessity of African scholars keeping the needs, interests and perspectives of African people at the center of their analysis, which means at the forefront of their consciousness. If this sounds like Molefi Asante's Afrocentricity, it should. The two terms are essentially interchangeable.**

**For us, being Africancentrists means being "intellectual maroons." This is Jacob Carruthers' term and it requires some history to appreciate. During what Karenga calls our "Great Enslavement," there were Africans called "maroons" who escaped from slavery and set up their own independent societies. Today we need intellectual maroons. By this I mean, scholars who are willing to flee the plantation of Western thought, restore the integrity of the African intellectual tradition, and establish sovereign African communities.**

## **How does one become an "intellectual maroon"?**

**To my knowledge, there's no formal course of study or educational institution devoted strictly to training intellectual maroons. In fact, the term wasn't coined until 1999, but that doesn't mean they haven't been with us. David Walker may have been the first intellectual maroon. His *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* published in 1829 has the earmarks of an intellectual maroon document. Early in the last century, Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. DuBois qualified as intellectual maroons. And today, Molefi Asante, Maulana Karenga, Hannibal Afrik, Asa Hilliard, Marimba Ani, Wade Nobles, Kobi Kambon, Agyei Akoto and Naim Akbar are pillars in the intellectual maroon community.**

**Being an intellectual maroon means breaking out of European "conceptual incarceration" using tools like sankofa, liberational logic and nyansa nnsa da to affect what Thomas Kuhn calls a "paradigm shift" from Europeancentric to Africentric ways of learning and**

living. Intellectual maroons are simply African centered scholars committing acts of “intellectual disobedience.” And we all can commit acts of intellectual disobedience, so we all can be intellectual maroons. Just internalizing what is being shared at this site will propel you toward becoming an intellectual maroon.

## **Can you give me an example of “intellectual disobedience”?**

Sure, intellectual disobedience, or ID, is a term I coined in 2000 as a corollary to Henry David Thoreau’s notion of civil disobedience. ID contends that African people must defy all attempts by the educational establishment to restrict or constrict the intellectual development of our children just as in the 1960s we defied the White political establishment’s efforts to restrict our civil rights. Simply studying African world history and reading the African centered writers are major acts of intellectual disobedience.

To take it to one step further, organizing our families, peers or community around African social and philosophical principles is a major act of intellectual disobedience. But embracing sankofa, reAfrikanization, Pan Africanism, nyansa nnsa da, liberational logic and so on is the supreme act of ID.

## **What does it mean to “break out of ‘conceptual incarceration’”?**

Conceptual incarceration is a term coined by psychologist Wade Nobles to describe our state of intellectual and emotional imprisonment in European belief systems and social values. Now this describes 90 to 95 percent of the Black professional class, which includes our intelligentsia. They are locked up in the jailhouse of Western culture and its belief systems and values. This is why they produce so little that is original or liberatory. They simply imitate their European or Arab bosses. Freeing ourselves from the dominance of the Western cultural and intellectual tradition is the first step on the road to becoming an intellectual maroon. And just like the maroons of old, intellectual maroons are the only free Black people in America. All the rest are enslaved by their addiction to Western cultural and social beliefs and values.

Because it is a mental or intellectual process, reading the African centered classics is the one way – maybe the only way – to break out of conceptual incarceration. And, a good place to start is with Malcolm’s autobiography. Then read Carter G. Woodson’s *Mis-education of the Negro*, followed by William Watkin’s *The White Architects of Black Education*. Then check out Na’im Akbar’s *Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery, Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* edited by his wife, Amy Garvey. You can wrap up phase one with *The Destruction of Black Civilization* by Chancellor Williams; this is a must read.

Now these books will get you warmed up for phase two, you must read all of Asante’s works on Afrocentricity. Same with Amos Wilson’s, and Asa Hilliard’s works, especially *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*. Jacob Carruther’s *Intellectual Warfare* is an essential read, likewise Erriel Roberson’s *To Heal a People: Afrikan Scholars Defining a*

***New Reality.* You can end phase two by reading Akoto's *The Sankofa Movement: ReAfrikanization and the Reality of War* and Chancellor Williams' *The Re-Birth of African Civilization*. These 10 books alone will give you the most of the intellectual tools you need to break out of conceptual incarceration and escape from mental slavery.**

**Unfortunately, you're not going to find these books sitting on the shelves at Barnes & Nobles or Walden Books. In fact, most Black bookstores may not have these books in house, but they can order them for you. Now when it comes to processing this material, I believe that happens best within the context of a study group, which is six to eight brothers and sisters who decide to come together once or twice a month to discuss a book they have decided in advance to read. Study groups provide additional motivation to read our best thinkers and opportunities to share interpretations of their views.**

**If you want to break out of conceptual incarceration, study the writings of the Africancentrists. They'll help you free your mind by giving you the tools to escape from mental bondage by opening up brand new ways of appreciating your Africanity. Like Dead Prez says, "Let's Get Free!"**

## **Where does Africentricity fit in the Black intellectual tradition?**

**For the past 200 years, the U.S. has witnessed two vibrant, dynamic, often intertwining and conflicting, schools of African American political thought and practice. On the one hand are the *European assimilationists* personified by such commanding figures as Frederick Douglass in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thurgood Marshall in the 20<sup>th</sup>. In more recent times, but perhaps not so commanding, would be assimilationists like Jesse Jackson, Clarence Thomas, Colin Powell, and Condolezza Rice. In academia, it's Henry Louis Gates at Harvard and Cornel West at Yale. These folk are major players in the European assimilationist community.**

**The European assimilationists represent the "mainstream" Black American leadership class, which is basically White Establishment groomed and supported. By "assimilation," I mean the century-long movement led by groups like the NAACP and the NUL to integrate select members of the African American intelligentsia into managerial/administrative posts throughout the European American social order. This is what European assimilations and their White liberal handlers call "racial progress." But, in fact, it's nothing more than White control of the Black elite.**

**On the one hand we have the European assimilationists, and on the other we have the *African nationalists* personified by Blyden, Crummell and Delany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X in the 20<sup>th</sup>. In the academy, the architects of Africentricity are African nationalists like Maulana Karenga at Cal State, his protégé Molefi Asante at Temple, Wade Nobles at San Francisco State and his colleague Asa Hilliard at Georgia State, Agyei and Akua Akoto of Nation House Sankofa Fie in DC, and a host of others.**

**Africentricity is a product of the African nationalist intellectual community and**

maintains that African people must re-connect with the best of our African heritage slavery denied and our Western education ignored. In this way, we can return to the ways of our wisest ancestors and walk like giants. The Akan people of Ghana, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire call this *sankofa*. Africentricity is rooted in *sankofa* because it's based on reaching back into traditional African knowledge bases, extracting the wisdom of our ancestors, and using that to move forward and shape our future. It sounds contradictory, but we must step back to go forward. And this is Africentricity's role in African intellectual thought.

## Once an “intellectual maroon” breaks out of “conceptual incarceration,” what's her next step?

Once a critical mass, maybe 25 percent, of the African intelligentsia becomes intellectual maroons, which means not only having studied our major liberatory thinkers, but also pooling their collective resources to establish family-based businesses. Let me explain. African liberation will come when we establish hundreds of intergenerational family-based businesses that provide food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and security services to the national and global African community that our people support these enterprises en masse. Once we reach self-sufficiency in the basics of life, we can announce that the *weheme mesu*, a “repetition of the birth” is underway.

In ancient Egypt, whenever the leadership wanted to inspire themselves and the populace to greatness they would launch a *weheme mesu*. Europeans would call it a “renaissance,” but a *weheme mesu* is much, much more than a renaissance because the driving force and end goal of a *weheme mesu* is the restoration of *Ma'at*. *Ma'at* means truth, justice, order, harmony, balance—in short—righteousness. The Africans who ruled Kemet knew that their ancestors who built Kemet wrote in their sacred books of the absolute necessity of infusing *Ma'at* into all of the nation's affairs. And at times, they were successful at doing this. In the view of the ancient Africans, to do *Ma'at* is to be in sync with the will of God. And this, they claimed, insures national prosperity, peace and happiness. Our African ancestors have given us the model, we must have the self-love to breathe life into it; to do what the people of Kemet called *serudj-ta*, which means to “restore that which is in ruins” or to “re-build.” We must re-build the African World Community beginning first with our knowledge bases and then our extended families and then our neighborhoods, city, state, nation and so on. We move from the micro-self to the macro-world.

This is the mission of intellectual maroons: Step 1— break out of conceptual incarceration, Step 2— launch a *weheme mesu* to restore *Ma'at* in human affairs so Africans can live happily in prosperity and peace. There's only 2 steps to this dance; this is why we all can learn it. We must “increase the peace,” but we also must restore truth and justice and build global institutions for Black survival.

Now there's one more little twist to this tale and we are finished. The act of re-instituting *Ma'at* means terminating the *maafa*. Let me explain. *Maafa* is Swahili for “suffering” and was first used by Marimba Ani to mean the “great suffering” of African people caused by European and Arab invasion, conquest, slavery, colonialism, oppression and genocide. The

maafa has been in effect for the past 1,000 years or more and the only way to end it is to restore Ma'at. We must end the maafa because if we don't we Africans will inherit the full brunt of the Illuminati's death march to establish their "New" World Order, which is no more than an intensification of global genocide. Make no mistake, the haters of life hold sway on this planet and unless we move rapidly to wrest power from their fiendish hands, we will all die beneath their murderous heels.

## **So Africentricity seeks to confront the enemies of Africa?**

Yes indeed. We have no choice; our children are under attack and our enemies are taking no prisoners. This is why we established the Kwame Ture Youth Leadership Institute. It's a shield and sword, both a defensive and an offensive weapon. It's also a safe haven and base of operations, one of Nkrumah's "liberated zones," from which we launch forays against the one-dimensional thinking that constricts the African community.

But it's the hearts and minds of our people that we must win. And this we can do. Our assignment as Africentrists is to give African youth both the love and the intellectual and cultural tools so they can free their own minds. In the U.S., this means first the skills to substantively critique the American social order 1619 to present based on race, class, gender and ethnicity. Next, they must be prepared to create a whole new reality, a real New World Order, not the continuing madness that Bush and his backers seek to perpetuate. A true New World Order is centered in Ma'at restoration-preservation. And we need our best and brightest youth broken out of conceptual incarceration, committing acts of intellectual disobedience such as leading our movement to launch the weheme mesu to restore Ma'at and end the maafa. This is non-negotiable.

As a prerequisite to African victory, Kofi Addae suggests an emancipatory practice called *systematic enemy analysis*. This means we must study deeply Europeans and Arabs. And especially how they use their culture, for example their religions – Christianity and Islam – as an instrument to penetrate and dominate African societies. Our enemies use stealth and cunning as well as brute force to achieve their objective, which is always to control and exploit.

For African people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its either Pan Africanism or Perish, unity or death at the hands of our historical enemies. Our enemies are European imperialists, who are the present-day leaders of the European world and their sponsors and supporters. Our only weapons are our history and our culture; our battlefield is the heart and minds of our people, and our strategy is to set the captives free. Let's get free!

**Thank you**

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