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Cover Page Footnote

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Africentrism and Africentric Rituals: Their Role in Jamaican Male Motivation to Pursue Higher Education

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Abstract

This academic research presents the case for Africentrism and its attendant rituals for the African Diaspora to aid in the motivation and inspiration factor in the male's choice to pursue higher education in Jamaica. The paper discussed Africentric rites of passage against the background of pre-emancipation and post-emancipation education in Jamaica. It also analyzed the current educational system for male nationals along with the implications for applying Africentrism to theories and practice of education for male students. The major concern precipitating this study was the low levels of male enrolment in institutions of higher learning, as the female population far surpasses that of the male in most disciplines at the tertiary level. The conditions contributing to the phenomenon were traced and examined to determine whether there existed a problem of cultural identity, contributing to the male's resistance and lack of interest in pursuing education at the pre-university level. Sources of history, educational theories, gender development and Africentrism were explored to conclude that rites of passage could in fact contribute to males' educational development at higher levels of education. The issues presented leads to a discussion of the possible purveyors of this type of renewed system of education to assist in preparing the male learner for higher education.

In a general context, it has been identified and recorded in various studies and texts that men have special needs in comparison with women; these needs affect males' access and utilization of educational provisions within the island of Jamaica. Consequently, males have specific educational needs which must be considered in a 21st Century context. This is in order to achieve an understanding of the reasons behind men seeking or not seeking to pursue higher degrees in any discipline. Recent cries over the last decade and a half contain the truth of the phenomenon that males are not being represented at higher levels of education at the tertiary level.

The gender breakdown of enrolment figures at the oldest degree-granting institution in the West Indies, University of the West Indies, demonstrates that up to 1980, "more men than women graduated from the traditional 'male' faculties of agriculture, engineering, natural sciences and medicine" (Hamilton, 2001, para. 7). After this period, it has been recorded that women moved into the majority of these faculties. It is noteworthy that it is only in the realm of the last 15 years that other degree granting institutions have been established, providing more options for the degree seeking individual (Miller, n.d.). Therefore, this research paper seeks to determine if a major contributing cause of men's lack of motivation to keep pace with their female counterparts, in the pursuit of higher education, stems from a lack of a clearly

defined system of Africentric customs and rituals, which may act as precursors to the educational development of the Jamaican male.

There has been much debate, in the Jamaican public arena, regarding the failing state of education from primary through to tertiary education, and the Jamaican candidates' readiness for pursuit of higher studies. Each year, around March (the time when the Grade Six Achievement Tests [GSAT] are administered nationwide) and June (when the results of GSAT, CXC (CXC-Caribbean Examinations Council) are published) the debate ensues on the quality of education provided to our children, the quality of teachers, the quality of assessments being administered to our students, teachers' pay and the issues continue, unabated. The debaters from all corners of the society point to the glaring consequences of an inadequate education system resulting in the low rate of male enrolment in local universities. Thus, this research is subdivided into five main categories; a) the case for Africentrism and its attendant rituals for the African Diaspora, b) definitions of Africentric rites of passage, c) Pre-emancipation education in Jamaica, d) post-emancipation education in Jamaica, and e) current educational System for male nationals and implications for applying Africentrism to theories and practice of education for male students.

The Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential (1976), in seeking to address the world problems, have sought to identify specific background units that contributed to the state of anti-social human affairs and conditions:

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In the past, much effort has gone into the focus on seemingly isolated world problems, such as unemployment, boredom, endangered species, desertification or corruption. Work on the newly published Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential has now shifted its focus to the hunt for complex networks and even vicious cycles of problems. A cycle is a chain of problems, with each aggravating the next with the last looping back to aggravate the first in the chain. The more obvious loops may be composed of only three or four problems. Far less obvious are those composed of seven or more.

An example of a vicious cycle is: *Alienation* -> *Youth gangs* -> *Neighborhood control by criminals* -> *Psychological stress of urban environment* -> *Substance abuse* -> *Family breakdown* -> *Alienation*. Such cycles are vicious because they are self-sustaining. Identifying them is also no easy matter. Like the search for strange particles in physics, much computer time is required to track through the aggravating chains linking problems. (para. 6-7)

The fact that studies are now being dedicated to world problems, to study peculiarities of these problems, should usher us into the serious considerations about our males of the Diaspora as they seek to improve their life status. Each person on the face of the earth is not unaffected by economies of scale, as rich countries become richer and the poor, poorer. Males are no less unaffected. It is stated that of the 10,364 teachers in the school system at the secondary level, only 3,143 of these are males (Francis, 2009). Who teaches our boys in the classroom?

The following questions provided the catalyst for getting an understanding of the Jamaican male's lack of motivation to seek higher learning: (a) Is self motivation an inherited fact of life? (b) Is it instilled by culture, parents, society? (c) Is higher education a worthy pursuit by males in our society? (d) Is economics a factor more so than Africentrism, preventing male educational pursuits? (e) Could Africentrism close the economic barrier faced by males desirous of doing higher studies? (f) Do opportunities truly exist for males to perform at higher levels of education? (g) Is the male self-identity wrapped up in his own understanding of Africentrism?

(h) Does the system need to change to include and adopt elements of or all of Africentrism to reach the *marginalized male*?

The Africentric Philosophy

In the application of the Africentric philosophy for the purposes of addressing the research question of ritual and rites affecting the male's choice for higher education in the current Jamaican context, Charles' (2003) comments are duly informative in positing the feature of black identity in the Jamaican scenario. He stated:

Jamaica is also viewed as a Creole society. There is cross fertilization, in that various groups cling to their heritage but find creative interactions in the interested British

political institutions. However there is a constant struggle between the African culture and the 'superior' European culture (Nettleford, 1978). Those who have embraced their African heritage are resisting the challenges of European norms and values, and have become the standard bearers of this culture because the African heritage has been relegated to the bottom of the society (Brodber, 1989). This has occurred because the colonial structure was a deep-rooted state of mind that left legendary scars. This has therefore, presented problems for the newly emerging nations of the Caribbean (Singham, 1968, p. 714).

The above gives rise to the beginning of the answers to the questions raised in the introduction. In essence, it responded to the major question; the divorce between the Jamaican Black male and his roots in forging ahead in academic studies.

The words Africentrism and Afrocentrism are not popularly nor widely used to refer to the embracing of the African heritage in Jamaica, but the terms themselves denote recognition of their role in forming the identity of the Jamaican black male. Phrases heard in the environment, more so in the 1970's, is the term *Pan-African*. Interesting to note in the same research by Charles (2003), an evaluation study of their self worth, Blacks (along with Chinese students) undervalued their importance in relation to other ethnic groups in Jamaica (White, brown skin color). In defining the Black Jamaican male, his relationship to his African heritage and thereby the role of Africentrism/Afrocentrism applied to the context of his adult education must be examined.

As Brookfield (2005) stated, the "philosophical traditions of critical theory"

(p. 274) are decidedly Eurocentric. This theory once applied to adult education, and in particular to the education of the Black Jamaican male, must encounter serious roadblocks, as the theory is based on an ethnicity which has a completely alien experience to his own. He cited Outlaw as saying that "it is contradictory for a theory that purports to help adults liberate themselves from injustice not to address racial oppression" (p. 275). In a review of African American intellectual thought, he further mentioned that there was an outright rejection of Eurocentric perspective of educational critical theory to be replaced with theories drawn from African cultural traditions. Moreover, in citing African American educators Colin and Guy, Brookfield documented their definition of Africentrism as being a "socio-cultural and philosophical perspective that reflects the intellectual traditions of both a culture and a continent; Africentrism is grounded in the seven basic value principles embodied in the Swahili *Nguzo Saba*" (p. 275). The principles identified in Table 1 are the Seven Principles of KWANZAA (Jackson, 2008). Kwanzaa is a word from the East African language of Kiswahili meaning "the first fruits of the harvest." Kwanzaa celebrations were created by African American in Maulana Karenga, PhD the midst of 1960s Civil Rights movement and is celebrated December 26 to January 1 usually in the United States by peoples of African descent.

Table 1.
The seven principles of Kwanzaa

Umojo - Unity
Ujima- Collective work and responsibility
Nia - Purpose
Imani - Faith
Kujichagulia- self-determination
Ujama- Cooperative economies
Kuuma - creativity

The seven governing principles provided a clear foundation and direction to any student of such ideas. It is imperative to note the thoughts of Outlaw, as cited by Brookfield (2005), that a person's racial history and identity directed how they perceived the world in which they lived and how they reacted and responded to that environment. Additionally, the manner in which they constructed these realities was directly related to their connection to their roots. The Jamaican male's experiential history and his reaction to the world and its demands on him are determined by his own involvement processes of who he is as a result of his African heritage, (as opposed to his slave heritage) and the demands and expectations of that heritage.

In further discussion of the terminology of *Africentrism vis-a-vis Afrocentrism*, Brookfield (2005) illustrated Colin and Hayes distinction between both terms. They spoke of the state of Afrocentrism as being that which represented an integrated approach inclusive of inherited European traditions. On the other hand, the former term is as outlined in the definition earlier, with Euro-traditions more or less excluded. With a history of European domination and the current cultural penetration of North America, it would seem that Afrocentrism is the more likely theory to handle in the adult education context of male.

Hunn (2004) spoke to the values of Africentrism as being "harmony, balance, interconnected and oneness" (p. 69). A high value is placed on wholesomeness and oneness of the past and present, unifying all matters of nature, peoples and animals, allowing individuality in the midst of commonality and community. This contrasted with the non-indigenous Eurocentric approach of individualism and competition, which placed itself in a dominant position over all other cultures. Hunn cited Lowry as stating the obvious "Mainstream bias and ...Western views of scientism artificially force Chicanos to adhere to the paradigms that do not reflect their knowledge or experience of the world" (p. 66). This is a bias that can clearly be applied to the experience of the Black Jamaican male in negotiating an education system, as that existed in Jamaica, steeped in Eurocentrism (Chevannes, 2005).

Scholar and founder of The Rites of Passage website, Paul Hill, Jr (n.d.), referred to eight, not seven,

principles of an Africentric model, *Nguzo Nane*. The eight principles are the same as outlined for Nguzo Sabe with *respect* being the eighth addition. In reference to the failure of programs designed for African American youth, Hill highlighted that the programs found their "genesis in myths created within the mainstream of the American society; (a) success is solely the responsibility of the individual, (b) success is measured in the currencies of wealth and possessions, and (c) that through hard work and ingenuity anyone can become successful."

Each day in our Jamaican landscape we clearly see these *ideologies of success* being perpetuated in the media, from pulpits and in the classroom. The Jamaican male is constantly bombarded with foreign images of success, which have no root in his African related identity. The recently concluded 47th Independence celebration activities, with their grounding in African roots, are relegated to the position of them being entertainment pieces rather than a way of life. It is worthy to note that with the national monument of the park named in honor of the emancipation of slaves in 1838, there was no concerted, continuous mention in the media of the Africentric Adinkra symbols which punctuated the structures in the park located in the capital city, Kingston. It is unlikely that the droves of families visiting the park on a weekly basis are made aware of the symbols which mark their green space, even though signs are present in botanical Latin giving an indication of the trees and plants present in the park.

Hill (n.d.) believed that there were an increased number of African-Americans who strongly felt that the reinstatement of staging rites of passage (see Appendix A), in the growth process of their children, would enable and be the catalyst necessary for them to assimilate into their roles, communities and the world. There is no documentation found that supported such a movement in Jamaica. However, the responses in an informal discussion on the Facebook Internet social community seemed to indicate that Africentric rituals are needed for today's youth. Rite of passage refers to events, ceremonies, or activities which mark transitions from one stage of life to another; e.g., weddings, graduations, First Communion (Catholic).

Africentric Rituals

Hill (2008), in supporting his remarks at a passage of rites ceremony, quoted the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential (1976) as follows:

The absence of rites of passages leads to a serious breakdown in the process of maturing as a person...the result is that society has not clear expectation of how people should participate in these roles (child, youth, adult, elder) and therefore individuals do not know what is required by society... (p. 1)

Hill (2004) explained rituals as "sign boards of life" while Bird "phenomenologically considered rituals may be defined as culturally transmitted symbolic codes

which are stylized, regularly repeated dramatically structured, authoritatively designed and intrinsically valued" (p. 160). From these definitions, as a Jamaican educator, there is an inability to identify any such ritual which is institutionalized and being practiced on a general basis in education for either male or female. Hill

(2004) further contended that "rites of passages are rituals which symbolize change and paradox within itself" (page 160). Table 2 demonstrates the different features between the old rites of passage and what is being practiced today as formal institutionalized education (Hill, 2004).

Table 2.

Old rights versus modern practices

OLD RITES	MODERN PRACTICES
Have religious basis	Tend to be secular
The timing is in keeping with natural, seasonal timing, sun, moon, rain, stars	By the clock and calendar
Centred on concrete experiences	Abstract, word-based, numerical
Dramatic, intense, forceful, fast	Slow, extended, vague as to ultimate destination
Engendered awe	Produce detachment, boredom
Inspired continuous participation in cultural history	Youth isolated from larger cultural realities
Resulted in immediate, unmistakable status change	Provides no direct deliverance in to adult roles and status
Occurrences are at a determined time and place with the community as witness	Proceeds indefinitely not usually resulting in general community recognition
Adults manage the process	Process managed by detached employees

Hill (n.d.), similar to Hunn (2004), offered an Africa life paradigm which embodied the principles of Nguzo Nane and Nguzo Saba. These included: nature and humanity are one; human and nature experience cyclical, periodic, inevitable change; and in nature, these changes are celestial and life affirming. Elements categorizing the variety of Africentric rites and rituals feature the following (Hill); separation of child from community, observations of nature, purification rituals, character tests, collective efforts based on age, rejection of childhood, listening to elders, special language, and special names.

The process of engaging the young male in Africentric ritual is the step forward to providing meaningful foundations for him to build unmistakable identity, which is self-directed and not others-directed. Thus, within the community he would see himself with particular attributes, qualities, and responsibilities as an integral part of the whole. Therefore, if accessing a higher level of education would determine his success for himself, family, and community, then no doubt that would be the logical choice. The thought of a whole community of inner-city men advancing academically is mind -blowing. In such a case, the immediate repercussions of an enlightened community and nation would be most imminent and visible. Fascinating to note is that this brand of spiritualism today is referred to as new age and is as feared by fundamentalists as being modern day witchcraft and blasphemous.

The inherited Christian church, it is observed, employed specific rituals and rites, but, sadly, it was

based on the Eurocentric tenets of religious beliefs and marginal to the world in which the male lived. The Afri-Jamaican (Jamaicans descended majorly from Afri-cans) community, as a whole, has no homogenous Afri-centric ritual that marks passages for young boys and men. It does not exist in its most pure and positive soci-etel form. This is most troubling as it is expected that elders and adults would teach the young, however, the elders themselves seem to be in need of ritual and guid-ance themselves (Hill, n.d.).

Pre-Emancipation Education of Males in Jamaica

As Miller (2007) declared in a discussion on the development of higher education, the history of how education develops is critical to discovering the future of the society's management of the system. It is a well-known historical fact that the education of African slaves, from which the Jamaican male descends, was never a priority, nor much less, a consideration on the part of dominant-ruling, minority-enslaving class of absentee planters for over 400 years. One could only imagine that the cause for the education of the male slave, in the plantation environment, could only be the responsibility of the slave himself. Education would no doubt have taken the form of situated learning within the "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) one was born or sold into, within the slavery system. The minimum basic, but vital, skills were required, with literacy and numeracy not being a part of the curriculum. At this stage, the beginning of the system of *plan-*

ocracy and the importation of human cargo for slaves, vague African retentions would have to suffice for the survival of peoples of various tribal affiliations. Laws would have been passed that severely opposed the desire and act of slaves learning to read and write. A conclusion to be drawn from this situation is that for the better part of 400 years the Afri-Jamaican male was pro-hibited and extremely discouraged from pursuing any form of academic acquisition.

The slave trade was a matter of economy (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998), very unlike the economy as proposed by Nguzo Nane, *ujama*; the activity of slavery imposed a direct separation between the branches, the African male, and the roots, the African tribe, rituals, rites, community, culture, norms and mores. Friere (1978, p. 141) spoke to what must have obtained with the travesty of slavery; the character of the divide and rule fundamental, which would have operated against the model of African unity proposed by Africentrism. He wrote, "Concepts such as unity, organization and struggle are immediately labeled as dangerous" (p. 141).

History witnesses the formal education of the plantation slaves being undertaken by missionaries whose primary objective was to Christianize slaves; delivering their barbaric souls from sin (Turner, 1998; Moreau, 1987). This activity further sought to wrench the heart, souls, and minds of the newly enslaved Africans from their experiences of rites and rituals of their ancestry. The missionary education was dependent once more on the social mores, experiences, and beliefs of Eurocentric peoples. Noteworthy is the use of specific scriptural passages which inculcated in the minds of slaves that their lot in life is to be obedient, submissive, and subservient to their masters (Turner, 1998; Moreau, 1987).

Ex-slaves, Lisle and Baker, have been credited in the Jamaican history of religious education towards slaves as incorporating Africentric traditions of worship alongside the Christianity they preached (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). They seemed to have encouraged early literacy through the use of the Bible and hymnals along with the strategy of appointing members of the enslaved to ranks of deacon and pastor.

West Indian history books have recorded that one of the male slaves' primary functions was their reproductive prowess to increase the slave owner's holdings of slave workforce on the estates (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). This pre-emancipation male state of being seemed to be related to the results of modern discussions on men being at risk; hence, the alienation seeds were deeply planted where men felt powerless, alienated, disrespected, and inadequate (Ellis, 2003). Even though by the early 1800's the memory of Africa was faded in the minds of the slave, Jamaican culture and attitudes were being formed out of the ancestral spirit, as exemplified in religion, song and dance (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

By 1815 slave rebellions would pepper the lives of all inhabitants of Jamaica through to 1865-easily a 50-year period of struggle and resistance; no doubt the

warrior nature of the male slave would rise to the fore with the presence of the Maroons and their warfare tactics. Moreau (1987) noted that when the British banished Maroons from Jamaica, they migrated to Nova Scotia where they were trained and employed in the building industry. The historical evidence suggested that the West Indian slave system was based on a human capitalist theory (Baptiste, 2001) which viewed the enslaved as factors of production, thus higher education, much less basic education, was not important to the ruling class of the day. The closest thing to ritual, pomp and ceremony the slave experienced would occur when he was admitted to church membership (Turner, 1998). This form of ritual would be deemed far more acceptable and worthy than the forms practiced as part of the slaves heritage.

Post-Emancipation Education of Males in Jamaica

The period following the abolition of the slave trade and, subsequently, the abolition of slavery in the middle of the 19th Century did little to improve the education status of the newly un-slaved. Formal education was not necessary for the black man to survive post-emancipation as their occupations remained relatively the same as under slavery; mainly as agriculturists and artisans. It was the black males' resilience and innate survival strategies that allowed for the survival of their families and communities (free villages) at that time in history. Apprenticeship was perceived as a new name for an old condition and leading into the 20th Century; education for these Jamaican ancestors did not provide much in the way of educational hope. What was witnessed, however, was the development of religions and rituals, which partly reflected African centeredness in forms of how elders were revered in their communities and how young stewards took telling from the adults in the community.

Moreau (1987) noted that during the course of history Blacks were not allowed to aspire to educational heights as their White counterparts. Research would indeed show the minimal attention dealt to the upgrade of education for Blacks in the early post-emancipation years.

The five-year Negro Education Grant of £30,000 per annum was decreased to its end in 1845, while debate ensued as to whether the education of blacks should remain under the auspices of the religious bodies or if it should be transferred to the local legislature (Gordon, 1963). In 1835, the final award was given to the religious bodies. The Mico Charity is credited with being the only body supplying more funds than expected for the funding of schools for Blacks in the post-emancipation early period. Despite these awards, Latrobe observed, in his 1838 report to the British Government, that "no system combining practical lessons of industry with the culture of the mind has been discovered, or tried up to the present moment, by any party"

(Gordon, 1963, p. 30). This observation clearly stated that the thought of even applying Africentric principles in the delivery of education never occurred to facilitate a smoothness of receiving learning and education. The attempt by the Mico Charity and Foundation to facilitate training of native teachers might be the heralding of some attempt to apply principles, which spoke to the need for learners to be instructed and taught by their own.

In 1843, the Calabar College, under the Baptist mission, was established for older men who were illiterate but dedicated to the path of study, the ten men, eventually graduated as ministers and teachers. The content of study under a minister's tutelage included Hebrew, Greek, reading, composition, and the gospel. The instruction delivered must have been at once from the European perspective, as the reverend instructor must have been schooled under a British Baptist mission, precluding any instruction in any element of African origin.

The major concentrated effort of applying Africentric ideas to male adult education occurred in the system offered by Garvey in the post-emancipation to the pre-independence period. Sherlock and Bennett (1998) quoted Garvey on racial consciousness:

The West Indians generally, have developed more of the white psychology than of black outlook; but gradually in some of the islands, the consciousness of race is dawning upon the people which may develop, to place competent Negroes there in the right frame of mind to be of service when needed. There is much hope for the West Indies as for anywhere else in the outlook of the Negro toward nationalization and independence. (p. 294)

They asserted that he understood the marginalization of the inner African within the Jamaican male as a result of alienation experienced (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). Garvey sought to renew and improve the consciousness of Afri-Jamaicans through his establishment of the honor systems within the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), through pomp, pageantry, and ceremony, which are a cultural essential for peoples of any race. These honors were obviously Africentric; Earl of the Congo, Viscount of the Niger, Knight of the Nile, and Baron Zambezi (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

Garvey definitely understood the value and the need for Africa-centered rituals in social and educational contexts, without the need to directly adopt exactly what was done in Africa. The UNIA, established in 1914 on the Emancipation Day anniversary, could easily be seen as the first Black Man university (even though it admitted women) of higher education. Its objectives included the encouragement of educational attainment, race consciousness and racial pride. While Garvey sought to establish, in Jamaica, the equivalent of the Tuskegee Institute, the UNIA was the vehicle through which he made the most progress in keeping Africa on the agenda; battling Eurocentric negative ideas of the African history (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). The basic tenets of the UNIA seemed to be strongly

aligned with the principles of Nguzo Saba and Nguzo Nane with militant emphasis on discipline, self-education, and Black racial identity.

In 1936, Garvey decided to open a school of African philosophy in Toronto, Canada, the main objective being that of training Blacks for world leadership in the UNIA (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). This offered a clear choice for the Black male if he should definitely consider higher education. This Garvey institution is recorded as the most definitive institution, which sought to incorporate African awareness amongst the enrolled adults of the era. No doubt with increased awareness of African life, the adults in the Diaspora could make a connection between their place in history, their identity, and their present day norms and values. It is recorded that this schooling had a profound impact on the men who enrolled as they became leaders in their own right. This exposure and no doubt ritual contributed to their single-eye focus on becoming more than what history had promised.

Current Educational System for Male Nationals: Identity and Culture - the Implications for Applying Africentrism to Theories and Practice of Education for Male Students

Identity affects learning as it provides motivation towards learning, goals and aspirations (Bracher, 2006). In testing the question of lack of Africentric rituals contributing to males' lack of motivation towards higher education, we can surmise that if the young Jamaican male cannot identify himself with that which is greater than himself, and that which clearly supports seeking an Anglophone/Eurocentric form of higher education, then this would not be an automatic goal for him.

In a role-play, in a customer service training I facilitated in 2008, it was most startling that one adult male participant played the character of a young man trying to get the attention of two young ladies in the community on their way to evening classes. When he was asked what his future plans were he replied "Mi waan be a baby faadah!" As the facilitator, I nearly died of shock, because it registered strongly with me, that these adults were role-playing a real-life scenario, the mental context of this male figure and how he identified himself. The aspiration assigned to his male ancestors was very much alive; to sire offspring with his female slave counterparts for the backra massa; the parallel was too much to bear.

Bracher (2006), in his in depth discussion of the nature of identity, stated:

To enhance learning and reduce our most serious problems, it is thus crucial that educators, policy makers and the general public come to understand more fully the nature of identity and its needs and the failure to learn and also contribute to our social problems....the need to have one's being appreciated and validated" (pp. 6-7).

Africentric rituals are meant to positively provide for these identity needs of young Black males in the Jamaican context. These identity needs existed and were being attended to by the anti-social rituals, as seen

developed by young males in gangs and other devi-ant-behaving groups. Despite the provisions of various communities, and social and politically-initiated programs to enhance youth development through sports, arts, and culture, there is a gross neglect of the basic identity context. This was mentioned earlier in Hill's (n.d.) comparison of the old rites and modern systems of validation.

Bracher (2006) recommended that in addressing the social ills created by identity issues, the learners should be provided with opportunities to engage in self -description and expressions of attitudes as part of the learning process. Sports training, for instance, did not necessarily provide such opportunity for males, nei-ther was it the first choice for most young males to opt to become a part of a church community which offered life-affirming rituals.

Sotiri (2008), in analyzing service provisions for marginalized young men in Sydney, Australia, documented that the young men feel that the services were not meeting their needs. Additionally, he noted that the males' own belief and culture issues prohibited them from accessing the health and welfare systems imple-mented (not designed) to cater to them. Moreover, in the midst of recommendations emanating from the research report, a noted suggestion was an *alternative education* to be set up to accommodate males when they had failed or had been failed by the mainstream school system. Sotiri also mentioned that the services developed to serve them were more focused on their existence rather than on the actual needs of the young men.

The issue of family relationships and fathering were also cited in Sotiri's recommendations, in addressing and meeting the needs of young men. Hill (n.d.), in his paper, referred directly to the issue of the adult male fig-ure contributing to the identity development of the young black male. He presented the term *cultural socialization* as a development strategy for Afri-can-American youth, ergo, Jamaican Black youth. This is in tandem with the earlier mention of rites of passage tenets which, he believed, sought to instill ethnic pride, self worth, focus of control, and mastery in youth, as well as, to protect them from societal assaults to their self-esteem and cultural identity. Hill further noted that adults, particularly males who had functioned as teach-ers, mentors, and youth service providers, had generally experienced difficulties in nurturing and engaging in generative behavior. He believed that they themselves were makeshift adults who had never been initiated by a community of adults into adulthood.

Rice and Steckley (1997), in describing key ele-ments in the traditional Canadian native peoples' culture in relation to lifelong learning, declared that in remov-ing native children to school them in residences ran by various Christian churches severed a primary cultural umbilical cord that inhibited lifelong learning successes of native children. The Vision Quest ritual is a rite of passage for young native males which help in creating "a strong sense of purpose and identity" for a young man

approaching manhood (Rice & Steckley, 1997, p. 220). This is one such cultural rite that was absent from the fundamental learning stages of the native youth, which contributed to obstacles in a successfully assimilating into a Eurocentric model of learning. The Vision Quest, as they argued, was a successful cultural learning tool which could easily be adapted to the lifelong learning framework for native Canadians.

The factors of identity, culture and rites of passage being discussed in this paper gave rise to the need for the examination of the state of higher education in rela-tion to adult males today. Chevannes (2005) outlined the historical context of the male/female educational dynamic by pointing out that *patriarchy* in the Carib-bean had never been so strong; hence, girls were auto-matically expected to exceed and were never discriminated against. Some feminists would argue this point strongly. Nevertheless, Chevannes (2005) used the history to suggest that boys were predisposed to drop-ping out of the educational system because it was not weighted in their favor. On the matter of the school sys-tem alienating boys, he opined that such a factor may in fact contribute to the crime and violence witnessed in the Jamaican society.

In leaning toward the development of the human being, Chevannes (2005) noted that social culture made a man into a human being. However, this author was in disagreement with such a statement, as a human being always becomes who he/she is by virtue of living in whatever environment he/she finds himself/herself. Nonetheless, this author do agree with Chevannes state-ment when he stated that quality education was the nur-turing of human potential, even through to the tertiary level. The question was even raised as to how to incul-cate within the young male who carried a gun, with the values which allowed them to select alternative roles that were not anti-social.

The answer lies in the application of Africentric/Afri-Jamaican rituals from an early age. Chevannes (2005) mentioned a number of groups attempting to address this problem. Nevertheless, investigations would reveal that Africentric values were not used as the hallmark of the design and structure of these out-reach programs. In looking at the government's attempts for males to be as aggressive toward education as females, it was noted that the GSAT examinations had a lower pass mark for boys than for girls. Miller (n.d) revealed that the Jamaican government took steps to have teachers upgraded to the tertiary level. As previ-ously mentioned, if the majority of teachers are females then it is logical to conclude that the majority of teach-ers accessing higher levels of education are going to be female. Chevannes noted that boys were more likely to drop out or under perform as the learning system of doing was not infused into the curriculum for boys. Consequently, there is the males' lack of interest and subsequent fall out of the system.

In discussing cultural relevancy in the adult learn-ing process, Isaac and Rowland (2002) declared that

including real life experiences reflective of the learner's culture may assist in the learner "taking control of their lives and improve their social conditions" (p. 2). Furthermore, in researching the African American sermon in the Black church, they found that the quality and feature of the sermon drew on the oral tradition and literature of the African culture. Isaac and Rowland identified the themes as self-ethnic personalities/experience, self-ethnic social experience, self-ethnic psycho-culture, Africentric affirmations, and self-ethnic metaphors. Each theme related to various perspectives and realities for the African American. Thus, if a study was to be conducted on our Black churches, in certain communities in Jamaica, then similar parallels would likely be drawn. Moreover, if the methods used by the Black preacher could be incorporated in the school system, then the results could be a resounding success with a greater number of males being prepared to access higher education.

Miller (2007) declared that over the last 150 years the economy in the *Anglo-phone* Caribbean has been unable to absorb the abundant talent derived from higher education. Additionally he stated "no single country can by itself develop and sustain the critical mass of human and financial resources needed to offer high quality higher-degree programs..." (pp. 71-72). What does this mean for the male desiring to seek higher education?

Over the last 150 years the world really has not demanded of the Black Jamaican male to pursue higher education; it was not part of the vision in the past. In future, however, as Jamaica sets before it a 2030 vision of attaining a first world status, the issue of higher education for males becomes a dire factor. World research will declare that the more educated a nation, the more competitive it becomes and the more financially secure and advanced. The phenomenon of males' low enrolment at higher levels of education is sure to change if Africentric theories, values and rituals, suggested herein, are fully explored and incorporated in the learning systems for boys and eventually for girls. The learning system is not broken for the girls but it is broken for the boys.

The question could arise; who said higher education is a path of success for Jamaican males? First, it would have to be determined exactly what is meant by the word *success*. As Miller (2007) emphasized, literacy tended to be a major problem for males (possibly a result of the school learning system); hence, being drop-outs, they had to negotiate life with the *street smarts* they had cultivated. In addition, he revealed that males were more likely to be employed than females. Another paradox was that although more females dominated among postgraduates at University of the West Indies (UWI), at the Masters' level of study, there were fewer than 20 women at the professorial level when compared to the 150 men in that category (Hamilton, 2001). In 1998-1999, UWI, Mona campus, recorded male enrolment at 29% with female enrolment at 71% in the

undergraduate programs; male enrolment was higher in the science, technology, and agriculture faculties which registered 47% compared to female 53%, hence males were not dominating the figures in enrolment (Bailey, 2003).

Chevannes (2005) opined that once boys were in school and motivated they would perform, as well as, their female counterparts; therefore, it was the under participation of the males and not under achievement that should be the main focus. Africentric rituals could help to provide the focus and motivation for the boys. Chevannes' opinion was supported by the 1999 data derived from the Caribbean examinations Council where more males (5,304) entered to sit the examination in the technical subjects than females (4,406) and the passes were almost, but not quite, equal (males 50.2%; females 49.8%) (Bailey, 2003). Bailey also mirrored Chevannes' thoughts in determining that the concerns of male performance at higher levels of Caribbean education was more about under participation than under achievement. This argument deserved repetition.

Under participation loudly signaled the lack of motivation to be addressed by identifying systems, which aligned with the male's interests, identity, and sense of being. These systems could not be abstract, vague, and lacking in concrete achievements, they had to be current, relevant, tactile, and applicable. Conclusively, an Africentric framework could provide these elements and more.

Implications for the Management of Africentric Paradigms in Male Education

Therefore, who should take up the responsibility of creating, managing and implementing the Africentric paradigms to treat young male under participation in education? This is a most troubling and disconcerting question, as existing social organizations are most likely founded on basic Eurocentric and North American culture and psychology. A similar question was asked in the aftermath of emancipation at the issue of the Negro Education Grant. Could the Church be relied upon? Could the schools be relied upon? What of the families and the communities?

One group formed out of the discussions on issues affecting men and, in particular fathers, Fathers Incorporated (Ellis, 2003), could be a testing ground for the incorporation of Africentric rites and rituals in a program developed for young males. The stated objective of Fathers Incorporated was to help men become better fathers and, as previously mentioned, the fathering of our Jamaican males was crucial to male identity and motivation. If more than discussions or workshops on Africentric rituals and rites of passages were established and practiced, then our young black males would have an option and access to experience a social, spiritual, and psychological revolution. Statistics would reflect a

higher participation of men in higher education, homes, communities, leadership, and national life.

The Extra Mural Department, established in the mid 1940's to engage the Caribbean character at UWI, under the early leadership of Sir Phillip Sherlock, (Hopeton, 1985) provided a structural framework and model to explore and house a possible Africentric paradigm. Within this structure ritual and rites could be created and instituted in a bid toward nation building and redi-rection of both young and old men at risk in our Jamaican society.

Training of process managers would have to take place to ensure that the rituals and rites of passages were correctly and authentically followed. The objectives of the program must be presented and may be done on a family and community basis rather than as a disconnected organization. The exposure to European and North American customs may prejudice one's mind against something so new and different, causing resistance to the creation of the process. On the family basis, the family leader (male or female) may undertake to include Africentric/Afrocentric rituals like Kwanza at Christmas time or coming of age rituals, instead of the usual parties that have little cultural meaning to individual and other participants. The program would include African history, geography, anthropology, science, art, religion, rituals, agriculture, fishing, hunting, shooting (spears/catapults/swords), oratory, craft, music, capoeira (martial arts dance), and more. These activities are no different from the archery, fencing, sword-fighting, polo playing, classical music, and chess, which are so elitist in the Eurocentric world.

Discussion

You can be educated in soul, vision and feeling as well as in mind (Garvey, 1967). To see your enemy and know him is a part of the complete education of man; to spiritually regulate one's self is another form of higher education that fits a man for a nobler place in life, and still to approach your brother by the feeling of your own humanity, is an education that softens the ills of the world and makes us kind indeed (Garvey, 1967).

No mainstream education system has ever been designed with minorities, in particular Black youth, in mind up until recently. The *developed world* is just beginning to be involved in the process of exploring cultural learning affecting peoples who are not of the *majority* group of peoples seeking to access higher education in the Eurocentric, Anglo-Saxon world. As Friere (1978) suggested, the system of education had been totally one of the pedagogy of the oppressed where *banking education* was the order of the day. The system was designed specifically to support the means of production where workers only needed the minimal amount of education in order to carry out monotonous rote production; the feeding of sugarcane into the mill, the chop-ping of ripe sugarcane for harvest, the job of making

horse shoes by the apprentice blacksmith. Education of non-Eurocentric peoples was steeped in experiential and situated learning, much like what was being practiced by the many and varied continental African communities. This type of learning was not the learning which was the hallmark of Eurocentric education, which placed specific focus on intellectual pursuits and arguments. This was exemplified in the American film *A Beautiful Mind* (Howard & Grazer, 2001), where the true story unraveled at the prestigious Princeton University.

Furthermore, it is clear that mainstream education was never designed for the descendants of African slaves who would be present in the Western world Diaspora in the 21st Century. The only way for a man of African descent to *beat* the system of Eurocentric education was that he had to become very good at it; above and beyond expectation as has had been immediately exemplified by the current President of the United States, Barack Obama, or his predecessors Thurgood Marshall. Similar expectations have been achievements by our plethora of Jamaican scholars who have won prestigious international scholarships; for example, the celebrated National Hero (Jamaica) Marcus Garvey, at the risk of being labeled criminally insane amongst other things. Many African male descendants cannot identify with this *only way* of *beating the education system*; it does not seem to exist in their DNA. This is not to say that they are physiologically incapable of doing so, as was opined by Hitler at the 1936 Olympics with the Jesse Owens gold medal wins, but rather that their own Africentric socialization is so absent, lost, and invisible that the pursuit of something alien to them is certainly not on their agendas.

The education system in Jamaica is decidedly lacking in Africentric practices. While a few attempts have been made to inculcate within the young, through the education ministry's curriculum, the elements of our national culture, through stories, cultural days and events, it is still alien to the child growing up; as it is seen alien to the child's real life. Thus, these images and examples of our heritage shown on a cultural day are not habitually a part of the practices of the child's family life. The activities only contribute to the *knowledge* of our past, but have no dedicated hold in the present or the future.

The male in today's society, despite the valiant efforts made by educators and various ministries of education throughout the years, has not been equipped to think about or plan for the pursuit of higher education. At a preparatory stage for college education, if the drop-out rate usually occurs within the first three years of the secondary education process, then intervention must take place most radically before the child leaves the primary education system. This intervention cannot begin and end with the child (male/female); it must include family and community. As the August celebrations surrounding Independence remembrances are planned and staged annually, it seems that the *Africentric Jamaican*

culture is reduced to mere entertainment and competition. All students, except those pursuing undergraduate and post graduate degrees at Jamaican universities, must succeed in examinations which are external to the Jamaican cultural systems.

The case for the education system to radically adopt all relevant facets of Africentrism is supported by the tenets of Africentrism, which place wholesale value on community education, as opposed to just sports reformation as is the case for education of unattached male youth. The education of males for the level of higher education has to be at the forefront of the national agenda. It cannot be a token act to be treated with cursory glances, functions, and seminars. It must be a concerted legal effort to ensure colleges of study for men, developed with the focus of ensuring that males desired to pursue higher degrees in the sciences, humanities and education, sports, engineering, or any other suitable field of endeavor. This also meant that financial provisions must be made by the state to ensure that economics was not a major deterring factor to access higher education. If the males themselves were employed in very good paying positions then, like a mortgage, they must be made to repay the government for the education provided for them.

At this time in the 21st Century, there is a fear of what Africa means, as worldwide media seemed to be obsessed with always showing the diseased and dispossessed of the continent. Often we forget that Africa is indeed an entire continent and the truth of what Africa is today has never been portrayed as a wholesome place to aspire. Not for a moment, am I advocating that there should be a rebirth of the *back-to-Africa* movement of the 60s and 70s, popular in the Americas and the West Indies at the time. However, surely a wide understanding of the riches and history of the relevant parts of the continent should be brought to bear on a child's learning. Many practices which are done by rote in some Jamaican households, the beliefs and superstitions, have a direct linkage to practices carried over from the West African regions of the continent by our fore-parents. The problem is that no one is telling the reasons or explaining how the practices occur and why they do occur. The oral tradition no longer serves to teach wisdom and create longevity of a tribe, community or peoples; hence, our youngsters and in particular young men have very little to which to look forward.

In the period 1993-1998, the Ministry of Education created the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) project which sought to change curriculum in the secondary level of education, in which it was recommended that a study of Marcus Garvey and his works were to be done at a certain grade level. This recommendation was not necessarily taken into consideration in all schools and the students missed out on a vital part of our history and identity; because the students were not exposed to

radical ideas concerning race and moving ahead successfully. Many young men did not have a vision, much less a clear vision for themselves or their lives and could not find anything of substance on which to hold. In this regard, the many strains of Rastafarianism with its culture of wearing locked hair and smoking the illegal substance of ganja (marijuana) held a strong appeal for many youths. Unfortunately, this route, with its roots in a form of Africa-centeredness and Marcus Garvey as one of its icons, did not lead to any measurable success for those who assimilated themselves into this type of culture/religion.

Rastafarianism was not a welcomed religion or culture in mainstream society. Nonetheless, in recent times, the crowning of a Rastafarian Miss Jamaica Universe in 2007 may signal that attitudes were changing with this image of blackness or African-centeredness. The popularity of reggae icon Bob Marley added to the allure of the search of black-themed success and identity balance for the young male, who quickly identified with the image as some kind of foundation for his life. This allure signified a hunger and deep-seated need for knowledge of one's past, roots, and history, which had been obscured by time, place, and modern demands of daily life.

If we are to refer to the comparisons in Table 2, we would see that in the customs of the old rites of passage, a program of care, nurturing, guidance, and direction was provided for a young man growing into adulthood. This program of development would be sure to alleviate future problems in the education and the mental health systems, as the process would give the individual, a sense of place and grounding as he forges ahead in life. The reasons for pursuing certain paths are clear and definitive, so that when he arrives at the checkpoint and milestone to move into the relevant areas of study there would be no hesitation as to what to do next. When a young man meets up on difficulties in negotiating the various stages of life he will not be daunted or deterred, so his focus remains firm so that he is motivated to pursue what he sets out to pursue. In doing so, he would recognize that his success was most significant not only for himself, but for his family, community, nation and the world.

The Africentric paradigm of ritual and rites would not only work for males, but for females, as well. The program, however, would have to be completely different from that prepared for the male; the education system so far is genderless. The curriculum is not altered depending on the gender of the student, but the results thereafter are compared on a gender basis. Introducing Africentric rituals of study, experience, tasks practice, stages of development, and appropriate rewards of change of status and recognition could only augur well for the young man (or woman) growing into adulthood, in a rapidly changing global residential place.

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Appendix A

RITES OF PASSAGES IN JAMAICA

Rites of passages in Jamaica vary from religion to religion, community to community, era to era and there exists no one identifiable ceremony that holds true for every single Jamaican individual.

A discussion on the rites of passage will have to be inclusive of issues of race, class, creed, locale and heritage, just to name a few of the indicators which would determine certain ceremonies which are a part of one's developmental stages in life. Such a discussion would merit an entire research to explore the varying rites observed in local Jamaica.

The generic ceremonies of having birthday celebrations, wakes, funerals, weddings and graduation are just that - generic and only distinguished by individual choice and freedoms. These tend to be activities which are external, action-oriented, social event-focused rather than internal spirit-focused activities.

Where activities mark transitions from one stage of life to another, they are not formally accepted widespread engagements with the sanction of an entire community. Each community writes their own rules which change according to popular culture each day.

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