

The quote about
olaudah equiano's
encounter with a



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The book *Abolitionist Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*, by Lamin Sanneh, focuses on the attempts of freed slaves to build a new society in West Africa based on the ideas of antislavery and anti-structure. Sanneh explains how the abolitionist movement affected not only the United States but also Europe and Africa. He goes into detail about the role that certain Africans had in the anti-slavery crusade. There are many negative attributes of this book, but in all the bad, there is some good. This book conveys excellent information, but it is the way in which it is presented that hinders the overall experience of the book. Although this book gives great details and facts the author does not seem to make the information his. The book is composed of quote followed by quote. Maybe he did this to make the information have a greater impact on the reader, but it seems more like it was easier for him to quote it than to put it in his own words.

It is understandable that one would like to have reliable information, but to make a book out of a stream of quotes makes it seem like a high school research paper. At times the insertion of the quote disturbs the flow of the section or paragraph. For example, on page 81 Sanneh describes the importance of preaching among Africans and then goes on to insert a quote about Olaudah Equiano's encounter with a slave with an iron muzzle on. Sanneh then has to describe how the quote is relevant to the subject of preaching, which interrupts the flow of the paragraph. Gaps in the writing can be noticed, especially in the introduction and in the first chapter. There is a tremendous amount of information accompanied by many quotes introduced in these chapters, which cause the reading to seem discontinuous. Many of the points that Sanneh puts forward in *Abolitionist*

Abroad are repetitive. He continually integrates the fact that Africa and Europe collide.

In actuality, this should not be the case because the title of the book reads *Abolitionist Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Nowhere in the title is there stated that the relationship between Europe and Africa will be discussed in the book. This is an important factor in the quest to abolish slavery, but it does not have to continually be repeated, especially if the title does not even state that Europe will be discussed. Sanneh also uses very long sentences that are not always well developed. Some sentences have to be read and re-read to get the point just because they are so long. To demonstrate: The leaders of the antislavery movement were all to aware of the radical social implications of the cause they were championing, and, accordingly, they appealed to the public not only as a reading public but as a new age, as a society that, in their words, was being turned "on its hinges to let in a new dispensation of learning, religion, and life." (73) This in itself makes the book hard to read.

The concepts are not hard to understand, just how the concepts are presented. I think that this book was not very well written. This statement does not sound very professional. It is general knowledge that one should not use the word "I" when writing an essay or report, much less in a book. It is assumed that since Lamin Sanneh's name is on the cover of the book, those opinions expressed in the book are his.

There are several accounts in which he uses the word I. In the introduction he states, "I shall describe in the following chapters the extent to which this

conception of religion and society differed radically from medieval Christendom and its top down view of history" (17). This sentence could be said in many different ways without using the word I. It just sounds so elementary, as the first sentence in this paragraph demonstrates. Not every aspect of this book was substandard. Many of the points that Sanneh made were valid points. One being how he shows that the anti-slavery movement was not one sided.

Racial issues were involved. Not everybody for anti-slavery was one hundred percent supportive of it. For example some white abolitionists were opposed of the influence Olaudah Equiano had in Britain. Some were doubtful of the reawakening.

Sanneh does a good job in presenting both sides of the issue. He does this with many of the issues that he incorporates into his book, so the book is not all one sided. Another positive point of this book was that the information was presented in a very organized manner. It is very evident that there was much time taken into the organization of this book.

Each figure that was discussed had their own section within the chapter. Each chapter flowed in chronological order. This helped in the struggle to understand the awkwardly presented information. When reading this book one can tell that it was very well researched.

Sanneh did present a lot of valid facts, but the manner in he presented them made the book confusing and hard to get through. In conclusion, one has to be very patient and understanding to be able to get all of the information presented in this book because the author uses too many quotes, which

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makes it difficult to follow, he is repetitive, and he writes many drawn out sentences. What does help in the quest in getting through the book is the wide variety of information given, and the order in which it is written.