

The utopian worldview of afrocentricity: critical comments on a reactionary philo...

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September 2012 The Utopian Worldview of Afrocentricity: Critical Comments
on a Reactionary Philosophy In this paper, I will analyze Stephen Ferguson's
article " The Utopian Worldview of Afrocentricity: Critical Comments on a
Reactionary Philosophy". Throughout Ferguson's article he discusses the
limitations of Afrocentrism and the negative effects it may cause because of
the beliefs and ideas expressed from the philosophical view.

Following the summary of the article's main points and themes, I shall
expound upon the article's erudite theme, while illuminating the author's
generalization of this " worldview". Ferguson introduces the reader to the
article with a poem entitled Heritage by Countee Cullen. While Ferguson only
includes the first stanza of that poem, the entirety of the poem somewhat
relates to the view of Afrocentrism in how Cullen articulates the beauty of
Africa, but by the end of the poem the mood has changed to Cullen's current
life and how it has changed.

Like the poem the main point of the article is that Afrocentrism may be
something of a good thing, but it cannot be any good to history if it is only
based off of " fantasy or fairy tale" as Ferguson states. There are many
examples on the claims that are made on Afrocentrism and how it clouds the
rich African-American or African heritage.

One line from the passage says, "...[the Afrocentric quest for an authentic
past] ignores the fact that the Pharaohs in conjunction with the priests were
an oppressive and exploitative aristocracy. Dreaming of what Kwame
Nkrumah termed an idyllic African classless society is a wrong-headed
approach for Black Studies" (Ferguson). I found that this strongly
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demonstrates how farfetched ideas may become, mostly, when Afrocentrism becomes just a ploy to console the African-American race from times of struggle or disparity.

Along with the negative side of the Afrocentric view, Ferguson greatly details on how it is even more important to read, research, learn and teach all parts of history; in which, he includes a cited passage, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, written by Carter G. Woodson which basically says that it is important to read about great historic heroes such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, but it is just as important to read about the slaves that provided all the labor that contributed and made this country what it is today.

One final theme that I received from the article is that like today's Eurocentric view, which is also full of fallacy, Afrocentrism would not be too far from it with all the misleading and misguided illustrations, as opposed to simply researching and collecting facts, like this quote from Carter G. Woodson used in the article, " ' race prejudice was based on wide-spread ignorance' and that ' carefully gathered scientific proof' would eliminate it" (Ferguson).

Throughout this review of Ferguson's " The Utopian Worldview of Afrocentricity: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy", I have discussed the author's main points which I believe are that Afrocentrism is frequently filled with ideal views and utopian ideas, that African-Americans used these ideas at times of hardship to uplift the race, that it is just as important to research and learn about European history as well as every other history and that just as Eurocentrism can be cloudy in terms of actuality, so can Afrocentrism.

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I would have to honestly agree with all of these points, especially after the given details and examples, however I do fear that the author has made a generalization of this Afrocentric view. I believe that many people nowadays know of the oppression faced during the era of Ancient Egypt and Africa, and those phrases and terms given by early generation African-Americans which fed to the false ideas to Afrocentrism have been proven to be exaggeration.

In conclusion, I have reasoned that while Ferguson has given great details and is right on his claims, this does not mean that they are widely believed as much as his says, which in turn gives of a since of generalization.