

Is An Afrocentric School Necessary?

Abstract

Battiste and Henderson (2011) define Eurocentrism as the imaginative and institutional context that informs contemporary scholarship, opinion, and law. They say its a theory that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans (p. 11) and whose core thought is its claim to be universal (p. 12). Thus as long as Eurocentrism retains its persuasive intellectual power in academic and political realms, it will be resistant to change (p. 18). It is for this reason that Dei (2011) argues that we not only have to decolonize existing spaces but create new non-hierarchical spaces of knowing. Because currently not all knowledges have the same power and influence in our academics, as evidenced by the limited awareness of Indigenous knowledge and heritage in academia (Battiste and Henderson, 2011, p. 18). The politics of de-centering spaces and dominant knowledge requires that we rethink new ways of creating spaces that allow for a centricity of multiple knowledge systems to contend with the asymmetrical power relations that currently exist in educational settings (Dei, 2011, P. 3). This space will serve to reclaim our history which, through Imperialism, “has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized” (Smith, 1999, p. 1). The “knowledge gained through our colonization has been used, intern, to colonize us in what Ngugi was Thiong'o calls the colonization 'of the mind” (Smith, 1999, p. 59

In response, then, Afrocentric schools come as a challenge to Eurocentricism as the only valid and legitimate way of knowing about our world. From an anti-racist perspective, this presentation argues that an Afrocentric school in Canada is only but the first step in the legitimate decolonizing of “scholarship, opinion, and law”. Just as colonialism has shaped our identity as indigenous peoples (Dei 2011, pg. 132), an Afrocentric school opens us a platforms were us Indigenous people can, in the words

of Bob Marley, emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, because none but ourselves can free our minds. I will also address the misguided critiques that those in opposition of the school have brought forward. Foremost is the argument that the school is a practice in self segregation, and secondly that it is not practical in a multicultural, diversified, and globalized world. At the end of the day, I hope to disprove the arguments against Afrocentric schools and to validate the arguments that speak to the necessity of this school and Indigenous knowledges in Canadian academic spaces.