
PREFACE

This is the third edition of *Towards an Understanding of Africology*. As a pedagogical and research tool, this book is designed to enhance awareness of the significant role of Black Studies in the academy, and in so doing, to help clear up lingering cynicism about the desirability and legitimacy of the discipline. “What Can One Do with a Black Studies Major?” is among the often-asked questions that the book tackles. This third edition includes extensive revisions and updates to previous chapters, including a sub-chapter on Barack Obama’s emergence as the first black president of the United States.

Since the landmark year of 1968 when the first Black Studies department was established at San Francisco State University, about three hundred other departments or programs/centers have surfaced on various campuses of the nation. Such programs, centers or departments go by different names, such as Black Studies, Pan-African Studies, Africana Studies, African World Studies, Afro-American Studies and Africology. This work employs the terms, Black Studies and Africology interchangeably. In employing Africology in reference to Black Studies, the author observes that the term reflects cutting edge definition of the scope and epistemological framework of this broad field of inquiry. As defined by Winston A. Van Horne (1994), Africology is a name that reflects the universal scope, transmillennial breadth and trans-generational spread of Black Studies. While the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee has renamed its department of African American Studies as the department of Africology, adoption of this new name is reportedly being considered at a number of other institutions. Advances recorded in the field within the last three decades include the establishment of master’s and doctoral degree programs. Other advances relate to the development of new texts and research models and theories, as well as the emergence of internationally acclaimed journals, such as the *Western Journal of Black Studies* and the *Journal of Black Studies*. The study of African American life and culture has also extended to groundbreaking DNA and genealogical explorations that elevated Alex Haley’s *Roots* to new technological heights. A prime example is a February 2006 PBS television documentary presentation in which Professor Henry Louis Gates profiles and traces the African and other genetic roots of a set of prominent African Americans through a combination of genealogical, DNA and historical measurements and analyses. This multidisciplinary method serves as an innovative means by which more African Americans than ever before could trace their ancestries to specific regions and even specific ethnic points of origin in Africa. A point of caution comes from a recent study which indicates that there is a greater genetic diversity among Africans than the inhabitants of the rest of the world put together, [given the degree of] “historical migrations and genetic mixing that occurred across the continent” (Achenbach, 2009). Therefore, the study—which was published in the journal *Science Express*—suggests that tracing African American ancestry in fine detail is a more difficult task than previous studies had promised.

Nonetheless, the increasingly popular DNA tracing of African American ancestry, also brings into sharp focus, more than ever before, a fact that has always been documented by historians, namely the multidimensional and multicultural nature of the African American heritage—a heritage that is predominantly African, but includes a mixture of various degrees of Native American, European and even Asian genetic lineages.

In contending that Africology represents a new interpretation of inter-disciplinarity, the book examines the functional value of Black Studies in the age of multiculturalism and cyberspace educational technology. It also discusses the evolution, scope and philosophical and theoretical foundation of Black Studies. The book represents a necessary reading for students (including

undergraduate and graduate students), teachers/researchers, and administrators who seek a clear and comprehensive understanding of the evolution, philosophical and theoretical foundation, mission and functional value of Africology in academe and the human society at large. It consists of twelve chapters. They are: 1. An Overview of Primary Historical Themes, 2. The Roots of Africology, 3. Africology: a Discipline or a Collection of “Black” courses?, 4. A Guide for Africological Research, Analysis & Synthesis, 5. The Foundational Role of African Civilization: the Ground-Breaking Impact of Diopian Egyptology, 6. Africology & the Du Boisian Influence, 7. Africology as a Response to Miseducation: Carter G. Woodson Revisited, 8. Careers in Africology, 9. Africology and its In-House Detractors: A Critique of Appiah’s *In My Father’s House*, 10. Afrocentrism: An In-depth Examination of its Philosophical & Pragmatic Implications, 11. Malcolm X and his visions for African America, and 12. The Challenge of 21st Century African American leadership: A Critical Appraisal Political Strategies, Ideological Imperatives & Policy Directions.

These chapters were developed over several years of writing and re-writing. Each one benefited from critical comments from instructors who used previous editions of the work as well as comments rendered by colleagues at professional conferences where the author had disseminated versions of the chapters in panel presentations.

Using a mode of analysis and synthesis which proceeds from a philosophical assumption that the historical context makes for a clearer and fuller understanding of contemporary phenomena, the book represents a rich complement to existing pedagogical, philosophical and theoretical texts in Black Studies. Enriched by the author’s long teaching, research and administrative experience in Black Studies, across three major universities, his interdisciplinary educational background that includes a doctorate in African American Studies, a master’s in Public Affairs and a bachelor’s degree in Journalism, as well as practical insights derived from having lived and worked on two continents encompassing the Old and the New World, the book stands out in specific dimensions. In particular, the book will prove exceedingly useful to both entering and advanced undergraduate majors/minors and graduate students who need to achieve as follows: 1. knowledge of pivotal themes in the evolution of African world’s history that constitute basic knowledge in Africology, 2. an understanding of the evolution, purpose, scope and philosophical and theoretical foundation of Africology, and 3. a capstone understanding of the functional value of Africology in the age of multiculturalism in education, and cyberspace educational technology.

It promises to provide the student with a fuller understanding of the critical importance of Black Studies to the on-going debate and search for a multicultural common ground in the United States. It also stands apart in its focused examination of the impact exerted on the evolution and institutionalization of Black Studies by the works of three intellectual pioneers and giants: Cheikh Anta Diop, W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson. The work is also distinctive in the manner in which it elaborately clarifies misconceptions about Afrocentrism as a conceptual framework. Finally, the work concludes with a chapter that articulates actual and potential social, political and economic challenges that confront African American political Leadership of the 21st century.

Despite major inroads, Africology faces identifiable shortcomings and constraints. While the work identifies examples and examines and suggests remedies to the shortcomings and constraints, it proposes that Africology represents a new interpretation of inter-disciplinarity and tackles the vexed question of whether Africology meets the criteria for this status. In contending that Africology meets the criteria for a disciplinary/departmental status, the work points out, however, that among the factors that are critical in defining it as a discipline are those pertaining to entry prerequisites, including a grounding in the philosophical and theoretical pillars of the emergent discipline.