



Who Should tell the African story?

All people need to learn about their past and need to be able to participate in the creation of their own legacy. In the past, the story of Africa has been told and defined by others and these 'others' have been considered authorities on the subject.

The representation of African events and characters by non-Africans has led, in many instances, to the creation of a negative portrayal of Africa

"It's not really our history from our point of view. It might be African history from an European point of view." Dr Wosene Yefru, Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tennessee.

While Europeans have amassed valuable written information, the down side is that their interpretation of history has brought with it cultural baggage, such as stereotyping, says Dr Wilhelmina Donkoh, who lectures at Kwame Nkrumah University, Kumasi, Ghana.

SUITABLE METHODOLOGY?

The history of Africa has tended to rely on written evidence. But Africans had their own particular system of recording past events, situations and traditions, before Europeans started writing about it. This was based on collecting oral testimonies.

Most Western societies regarded this method untrustworthy as a means of gathering and preserving information. As a result, Non-African historians used written documentation to chart the history of the continent. If this was missing, it was assumed that nothing worth recording had happened.

It was not until the 20th century, that there was a major revolution with regard to oral evidence for history. In the 1960's, oral history went through a process of validation and historians began to use it as a source.

POLITICAL EXPLOITATION

History has political uses. It can be employed by citizens and governments to create social cohesion as well as division. This means that in the making of history, there is scope for the distortion and manipulation of historical events. At certain points societies can choose to distort or misrepresent facts. "Most societies eulogise their heroes, idealise their founding fathers and romanticize their past. It might be incorrect or wrong but it has its political uses..."

In the US, the discovery that Thomas Jefferson had a black mistress and had children by her...Although known to some historians, it was a taboo



Who Should tell the African story?

subject...Two hundred years later, the country is ready to discuss the intimate life of one of its founding fathers.”

Professor Ali Mazrui, Binghamton University, New York.

NO ABSOLUTE TRUTH

The nature of history is such that it provides no absolute truths. Nevertheless, historians are responsible for interpreting facts and should endeavour to evaluate data objectively in order to determine the truth. Modern African historiography has experienced many turning points. Initially emphasis was placed on the ancient African empires and kingdoms and on the battles for independence. But since then, African historians have become more questioning about events in their continent. “African leaders failed to produce the social and economic benefits that were expected from independence... Historians have begun to write a more critical history, that does not only celebrate the achievements of political independence and political power but criticizes what to do with that power.” Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

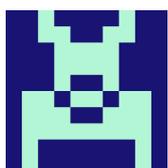
GRASSROOTS HISTORY

Grassroots history examines society as a whole. It concentrates on the ruled, rather than the rulers.”You don’t look for pyramid builders and sphinx builders, great monarchs and great architects, and those who beat Columbus across the Atlantic... You look at the history of the plough in Africa, the history of the blacksmith in African villages, the history of a particular marriage custom in African society and the functions it serves.” Professor Mazrui, Binghamton University, New York.

Today Codewit Global Network try to explore all the facet of African history and ensure that our youth get the full knowledge of who they are and what influence other cultures has caused on their life. Seeking ways to redefine and rediscover their true identity

Author

Recent Posts



Anthony-Claret Onwutalobi

CEO & Software Engineer at [Portia Web Solutions](#)

Anthony-Claret Onwutalobi, an educator, a blogger, and a committed Nigerian activist, was born in Nnewi, in the heart of southeastern Nigeria,

Follow me



Who Should tell the African story?

Anthony-Claret is widely known among his counterparts for his breadth of outlook, liberal views and marked sympathy for African aspirations. People, who knew him intimately, described him as “a hard headed Africa man who sees straight into the heart of things, and never hesitate to express himself with the bluntness in which an African man never fails, if he works hard.”
