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An African View of Creation



KEITH O. HILTON

According to the Continental African writer John S. Mbiti everyone is aware that rapid changes are taking place in Africa. Because of this, traditional ideas are being abandoned, modified or colored by the changing situations.

At the same time, it is wrong to imagine that everything traditional has been changed or forgotten so that no traces of it are to be found.

If anything, Mbiti noted, the changes are generally on the surface, affecting the material side of life, and only beginning to reach the deeper levels of thinking pattern, language content, mental images, emotions, beliefs and response in situations of need.

"African Religions and Philosophy" the book by John S. Mbiti, deals almost exclusively with traditional concepts and practices in those African societies which have not been either Christian or Muslim in any deep way, before the colonial period in Africa.

According to Mbiti, traditional concepts still form the essential background of many Africans, though this differs from individual to individual and from place to place.

Mbiti believes that even if "educated" Africans do not subscribe to all the religious and philosophical practices and ideas described in the book, the majority of the people with little or no formal education still hold on to their traditional corpus or beliefs and practices.

He emphasized the unity of African religions and philosophy in order to give an overall picture of their situation.

Both Christianity and Islam are "traditional" and "African" in a historical sense, he writes, and it is a pity that they tend to be regarded as "foreign" or "European" and "Arab".

The following are some excerpts and opinions on Creation in the African reality. One will gather that there are still strong strands of this reality in the U.S. and the Caribbean.

Over the whole of Africa, creation is the most widely acknowledged word of God.

The Akan title, Borbore, given to God means "Excavator, Hewer, Carver, Creator, Originator, Inventor, Architect."

The universe is described as having its architectural origin from God, who is pictured as its Artist-in-Chief.

There is no general agreement as to the order in which creation

was accomplished.

The Vugusu, for example, tell that God created first the heavenly universe with the sun, moon, stars and clouds. Then God created the earth, followed by the creation of man and women; and finally plants, animals and other earthly creatures.

Many people say that God not only created the material universe, but also established laws of nature and human custom.

And finally, the Ashanti believe that "God created things in an ordered fashion," and made an orderly and harmonious world where everyone could perform their duties.

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English As The Only Language To Be Debated At NAEA Meet

Should English be the only accepted language spoken and written in the United States and in Nevada? The UNLV debate team will argue this resolution before the Nevada Adult Education Association conference to be held Friday, March 27, at the Hacienda hotel.

Keynote speaker at the conference will be Gary Redenbacher, grandson of Orville Redenbacher of popcorn fame, who will discuss "Pursuit of Excellence" with the adult educators at the conference. The Redenbachers have established a "second start" scholarship for older students who wish to re-

turn to college or university. Redenbacher will speak at the luncheon session on Friday, March 27.

The conference is co-sponsored by UNLV and The Community College of Southern Nevada with the support of The Clark County School District Adult Career Development Center.

Dick Benoit, NAEA president, said conference planners "hope the debate will spark discussion at the conference about this issue which has resulted in court cases in Nebraska, California and Florida, and has the potential to result in litigation in Nevada as well."

Nevada statutes require that students pass a proficiency examination in which they must demonstrate a minimum level of competence in speaking and writing in English before they can be awarded a high school diploma.

"However, with growing numbers of adult immigrants from non-English speaking cultures moving into Nevada," Benoit said, "educators increasingly are counseling individuals with workplace skills, but not the competence in the English language required by statute to earn

Nevada basic education credentials."

Other issues which will be addressed at the conference March 26-28 are the impact of military downsizing on the labor pool, assessment of the problems of ex-offenders, homeless and refugees, the Adult Education Act of 1992 and its impact on educators, and adult education and its impact on the economic development of the state.

For additional information about conference call co-chair Mary Malley at CCSN, 388-8953 or Ann Tate at UNLV, 739-1020.

Some of our former stars still shine brightly!

Tony Gladney, UNLV's coordinator of multicultural student affairs, has three goals. He is working hard to recruit minority students to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is developing programs to help them make the most of their education. And he is promoting an increased awareness of UNLV's cultural diversity campuswide. Gladney, a former professional football player and UNLV alumnus, believes strongly in the power of education. "A college education is very important, but I know it's not always easy," he says. "We are here to help minority students with the transition to college life." You can talk to Tony Gladney at 597-4165.

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—U.S. News and World Report

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