EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY AND THE RASTAFARIAN MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE JAMAICAN ASTAFARIAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN ETHIOPIA

LADAN RAHNEMA
East Carolina University, U.S.A.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community (JRDC) School in rural Ethiopia. The author explored the school's integration of Rastafarian culture and spirituality on pedagogical practices. Analysis of the perceptions of the school by members of the surrounding community and other stakeholders at the school, including students, parents, teachers, and school leaders, aided in addressing the major research question: How well did the JRDC manifest the vision or shared goal of the Rastafari movement in the form of the K-8 school in the town of Shashamane? Using a conceptual framework based on the work of Freire (1970), this study's author highlighted the process of emancipatory pedagogy within the workings of the school and its influence in the community. An Afrocentric paradigm combined with the theories of West (1993) served as the basis for framing the research process. The author found evidence of the existence of themes developed by the conceptual framework such as Afrocentric and spiritual pedagogy; however, there were opposing factors present at JRDC. These factors were present as a result of the culture of dependency in rural Ethiopia and the post-colonial Western instructional styles predominant in the school. Implications from this study address curriculum planning to support the identity development of students of African descent in developing countries as well as among Diasporic populations.

INTRODUCTION

Oppressed populations resist and challenge their situation within society in varied and complex ways. Resistance to oppression within educational institutions is particularly critical for marginalized populations because education is the realm in which cultural values are reproduced and young people are socialized. Western values continue to dominate education throughout much of the world despite waves of resistance and discourse that have attempted to create a location where oppressed peoples' voices can be affirmed. Creating an educational space, developed by the members of historically oppressed and operated independently of the dominant ideology has proven difficult.

In response to the Western dominance, African leaders have actively resisted and attempted to develop a position that reinforces racial pride, self-determination, and educational liberation. Black scholars (Asante in Dei & Kempf, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1990) have reacted to the hegemonic influence of the Western and post-colonial model in education by creating a discourse that questions pedagogical practices and curriculum that, at best, lacks resonance with Black students and, at worst, promotes an identity of inferiority (West, 1993). Cornel West and Molefi Asante developed theories of oppression and resistance that address the experiences of the African Diaspora. These theories combined with the emancipatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970) address themes of mental subjugation of the oppressed, agency of the oppressed, the spiritual or mystical nature of liberation from subjugation, and the importance of resistance independent of the dominant cultural system.

This case study explored how a community, and a school run by its members, exemplified the convergence of the stated theories of resistance in action or "praxis" (Freire, 1970, p.87). The

community, the Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community (JRDC), and its K-8 school were established by members of the Rastafari faith in rural Ethiopia. They founded the JRDC School to educate and empower their children and the local Ethiopian children who lacked adequate schooling.

Rastafari Beliefs

The Rastafari movement is one of resistance with a belief in redemption from the effects of slavery through self-determination and collective consciousness. It began in the poorest neighborhoods in Jamaica in the 1930s and was aligned to the Pan-African movement, and some may argue that it was formative in the establishment of Pan-Africanism (Payrhuber, 1998). Steeped in a Judeo-Christian identity, the Rastafari openly reject British rule and Western Christianity and pledge their allegiance to the former Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie I. Rastafari ideology incorporates political, spiritual, and symbolic factors to promote the empowerment of people of African descent. According to Price (2001), for Rastafarian identity, "Blackness is a core identity-organizing element" (p. 2). Price quoted Leonard Barrett in defining the Rastafari beliefs as a

> Messianic movement [that] believes that Haile Selassie . . . is the Black Messiah who appeared in the flesh for the redemption of all Blacks exiled in the world of White oppressors. The movement views Ethiopia as the Promised Land where Black people will be repatriated through a whole exodus from all Western countries where they have been in exile. (Price, 2001, p.2)

The Rastafari community believes strongly in self-sufficiency, self-determination, and independence, and by 1950 in Jamaica, Rastafari had produced a unique socio-cultural identity incorporating "dietary codes, a sense of shared history, and an attachment to Africa as well as practices and ideologies that juxtapose communal living with self-reliant independence" (Price, 2001, p. 17). For some, fulfillment of their faith was repatriation to Africa, and particularly to Ethiopia, which they viewed as the "promised land."

The School and the Community: JRDC

Rastafarians from all parts of the world migrate to live in Ethiopia, a land they consider the promised land, and this migration represents the ultimate type of agency that Freire, Asante, and West prioritized. This agency is manifest through the act of repatriating, an act most Pan-Africanists in the West only dream of accomplishing. Freire's (1970) conception of praxis is further evidenced with the establishment of an NGO and a school led by members of the Rastafari faith to uplift and enhance the lives of the people in the community.

JRDC School is a K-8 school located in the town of Shashamane in the rural Rift Valley about 150 miles south of the capital of Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie I granted the land in Shashamane to the African Diasporic population of the Americas as gratitude for their support during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in the late 1930's. The first Rastafari family settled in Shashamane in 1955, and since then many Rastafari have settled there. Today a few hundred reside in the town alongside over 100,000 Oromo ethnic native Ethiopians.

Implications for Current Educational Research

It can be presumed that by the inherent nature of their faith and philosophy, the JRDC School leaders were motivated by the aim of transforming the students at their school and community to become empowered and develop their identities based on historical and cultural pride. The implications of their practice are ripe not only for pedagogy and school leadership in developing countries but for pedagogical practices and school leadership for teaching Diasporic

student populations all over the world. An important consideration for school leaders of students of African descent is curriculum and instructional planning. This relevance takes many forms. For example, it calls for exploring how well the curriculum and instruction support identity development that empowers students. Also relevant to planning is the investigation into whether the students are learning skills that will be useful to their futures in the global market. Imperative to inquire is, if despite being subjected to marginalization, racism, and economic dependency, did the Ethiopian youth internalize a sense of empowerment uttered by Rastafarians? These wonderings formed the basis for the research questions guiding this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To effectively explore the influences of the Rastafari presence in this rural Ethiopian community, especially the local school established by people of this messianic faith, the author used the following questions to guide her research:

How well did the JRDC manifest the vision or shared goal of the Rastafari movement in the form of the K-8 school in the town of Shashamane? What challenges and successes did the school leaders experience in deploying pedagogical practices that highlight the Afrocentric philosophy of self-determination, identity development, and liberation?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORIES OF RESISTANCE

To be liberated, the oppressed must be seen as humans fully capable of realizing their own independence. Freire (1970) criticized the "banking method" of education because it treats learners as "depositories of information" and perceives them only as recipients, not co-constructors, of their own education and hence liberation (p.72). The banking approach to education has endured as the main form of education in most societies because it serves the "interest of the oppressor" or those in power and keeps the oppressed in a position of "beings for others" (Freire, 1970, p.74). Emancipatory education rejects the top-down system of educator to learner and embraces a partnership approach to pedagogy. Freire (1970) proposed that the
educator must align efforts with students to "engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization" (p. 75).

Afrocentric education is one form of emancipatory pedagogy and promotes an identity of African centeredness to students. It offers an alternative to "the preponderant Eurocentric myths of universalism, objectivity, and classical traditions" embedded within Western models of education (Asante, 1987, p. 9). By calling for the elimination of the "colonizer within" (Mazama, 2003, p. 16), people of African descent can become agents of their liberation. An Afrocentric framework attempts to "systematically displace European ways of thinking" (Mazama, 2003, p. 5). Asante critiqued the Eurocentric claim to a universal ideology; however, his aim was not to replace the Eurocentric model, but rather to assert that every cultural perspective is entitled to view the world from its own cultural center (Verharen, 2000). Afrocentrism is also promoted by Cornel West as one aspect of his philosophy of prophetic pragmatism.

West's critical revision of the American pragmatic tradition of Emerson and Dewey, borrows from African-American Protestant Christianity. West's prophetic pragmatism supports a worldview based on democratic practices as it echoes Dewey's belief that democracy is the "only way of living that uses the power of experience both as an end and means" hence, allowing for more free and more humane experiences in which all can contribute to society (Dantley, 2005, p. 662). West (1998) recognized that the institution of "prophetic" Christianity has been a significant influence for people of the African Diaspora, and "stripped of static dogma and decrepit doctrine,

remains a rich source of existential empowerment and political engagement" (West, 1999, p. 171). West's (1998) driving belief is prophetic pragmatism abets oppressed individuals to perceive their present condition of self-understanding for the purpose of bettering their community and society. Prophetic pragmatism contains elements of:

> [A] universal consciousness that promotes an all-embracing democratic and libertarian moral vision, a historical consciousness that acknowledges human finitude and . . . a critical consciousness that encourages a relentless critique and self-criticism for the aims of social change and personal humility. (West, 1998, p.170)

This union of resistance, identity, and spirituality to affect transformation through education echoes the beliefs of the Rastafari movement and served as the conceptual framework for this case study of a school in rural Ethiopia.

BACKGROUND OF EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

Although in recent years Ethiopia's poverty level has fallen and average household education levels have grown, the country remains one of the poorest nations in the world by some indexes. Primary schools are overcrowded, and facilities and supplies are inadequate. Attempts to explain Ethiopia's slow progress in educational achievement over the course of modern history are sparse in the literature.

In 1912 and 1924, Baykedagn, an esteemed Ethiopian scholar who was educated in the West, returned to Ethiopia and published two works exploring underdevelopment in Africa. Baykedagn pointed to obstacles such as climate, lack of natural resources, and chronic wars. Baykedagn attributed the underdevelopment in Ethiopia to the lack of social peace and constant wars and pillage, which hindered progress (Kebede, 2006). Kebede (2006) critiqued Baykedagn's Eurocentric stance in comparing progress in Ethiopia to levels reached in Europe, especially when the Ethiopian civilization is considered one of the oldest and greatest "together with Rome, Persia, and China" (Kebede, 2006, p. 817). Regardless of whether the lag in development is viewed from a Eurocentric perspective, the fact remains that obstacles averted Ethiopia from reaching a certain status of modernity, especially in higher technological and educational levels.

Christianity defined not only the religion, but the culture, way of life, and polity of Ethiopian life. Christianity, in the form of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, was considered the focal point of the traditional educational system (A. Habte, personal communication, April 14, 2007). While this early education system was reserved for the elite, it was a comprehensive and intricate learning environment. Westernizing of the educational system began with the Roman Catholic missionaries and explorers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which propelled the educational sector towards a more European model (A. Habte, personal communication, April 14, 2007). This was intensified by the practice of sending students to Europe and the Middle East to study. As a leader fully invested in the educational system of his country, Haile Selassie I (emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974) wanted modernization to be aligned with traditional Ethiopian methods of education; however, scholars who were largely educated outside of Ethiopia did not create a system or curriculum to sustain any form of traditional Ethiopian education when they returned home from their studies abroad (A. Habte, personal communication, April 14, 2007).

The above detailing of the pre-modern era educational system of Ethiopia is an attempt to answer the question asked by many scholars (Asante 1991; Bridges et al., 2004): Is there an African philosophy of education? As the sole African country to remain uncolonized, Ethiopia seems a credible place to start in investigating the question. Ethiopia holds a distinctive place in the philosophy of Rastafarians, therefore especially useful for the purposes of this study. Due to the

strong early influence of the Orthodox Christian Church in Ethiopia, the philosophy of the country is couched in the faith. Beginning in the 12th century, long before Europeans colonized African nations imposing their philosophies and educational models on the various nations, Ethiopia was practicing an educational paradigm centered on the Orthodox Christian Church (A. Habte, personal communication, April 14, 2007). What contributions from this tradition can serve educational development today? For movements such as Rastafari, whose members pursue the anti- and pre-colonial virtues, the traditional Church education can be a source of empowerment. The focus on spirituality and faith is a theme that threads through the theories used to develop the conceptual framework for this study and was best explored through qualitative research methods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to explore how the ideology of resistance, self-sufficiency, and Afrocentric identity were being applied to pedagogies driven by Rastafarian values; and if the pedagogies could be considered transformative or emancipatory. To adequately understand the JRDC School and answer the research questions, it is necessary to examine its position in the larger community; both the Rastafarian community that controls school governance and pedagogies, and the larger Ethiopian community of Shashamane that surrounds the school and from which many students are drawn. This case study included elements of ethnography to illuminate the relationship of community to school and school to community.

Data Collection

To conduct the case study, the author gained access to the school through her connections within the Rastafarian community. This access facilitated the data collection process. Data collection activities included observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations with school and community members, and journaling by the author. Data was gathered daily throughout the five weeks of visiting the community, which integrated continuous observation of the community, school staff meetings, informal community gatherings, and day to day school activities. Participants included school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and community members.

The author used interview protocols that were semi-structured and included open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth views and perceptions of participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 15-20 participants. The open-ended questions varied depending on which participant was being interviewed; however, each protocol included four to seven questions that provided the author with indirect information and descriptions about the JRDC School and its community through the views of the interviewees. Selecting participants whose perspective and experiences varied regarding the JRDC School allowed for a more holistic view of the school (Merriam, 1998). The participants were initially referred to the author by the school director, a key informant of this study; however, after a certain amount of trust and rapport had been established, the author practiced a more purposeful sampling. More specifically, she employed a snowball sampling strategy. Starting with the convenience of referred participants, she then asked these individuals to refer her to other participants.

Although these semi-structured interviews provided her with rich data, she understood that the informal interviews which happened through her daily encounters with the people in the community produced equally significant data. The author attempted to sway the informal and casual conversations towards the subject of the community's perceptions of the JRDC School. Naturally, journaling and field notes followed these encounters.

The author used an observation protocol to take notes and record information while observing various activities and events. The protocol consisted of two columns; one for descriptive notes on what the author observed, and another for her reflections on and interpretations of what she observed. The author conducted formal observations in classrooms, and during school meetings and activities. Additionally, informal, or exploratory observations were conducted daily through casual encounters with community members. As a participant observer, the author used her role as a teacher trainer to gain a perspective on relationship dynamics, patterns of daily interactions, organization of leadership and hierarchies, and other cultural patterns that were presented but not readily discussed or addressed (Schensul et al., 1999).

Daily reflective journaling was another form of data collection and a critical practice as the author's position straddled between participant and observer. As part of the agreement for access, she agreed to provide teacher training for the school. As a Rastafarian, she had a philosophical investment in the ideologies and work of the Rastafarian community, but as a Middle Eastern-American visitor, she remained an "outsider" to both the Rastafarian and Ethiopian people. Her daily written reflections on her experience in Shashamane helped her adhere to epoché, a moving towards a suspended judgment of preconceived notions (Collins, 2004).

The author identified core themes most dominant in shaping the way the JRDC School came to be. She used ethnographic methods in a qualitative case study because the intent of the study was to see how themes interacted and operated in JRDC and its community. Ethnography entails the study of a community's culture and the themes drawn out during the research are cultural aspects. The players in this culture are the Rastafari, the Ethiopians, and the school stakeholders (i.e., leaders, teachers, staff, students, parents). The interactions and influences of these groups on each other created a dynamic resulting in themes of humanity, unity, resistance; yet, also of survival in a poverty-stricken rural area and the effects of globalization in this remote part of the world. A qualitative study attempts to uncover layers of truths to identify core themes. This research at the JRDC School uncovered many stories laid on top of each other bound by class, nationality, faith, and culture.

Data Analysis

To illuminate the basis for forming the themes found during this research, the author reflected on specific cultural elements of the Rastafarian movement that best align to concepts of resistance, emancipation, identity development, and self-determination. The few scholars (Stanley, 2002; Birthwright, 2005) who have developed an erudite discourse on the emancipatory virtues of the Rastafarian movement based on the "evolution of a liberated identity" have detailed certain facets of the movement. Opposition to neo-colonialism or "Babylon", the Rastafari term for an oppressive White supremacist rule, has evolved into a lifestyle for Rastafari. Many of the conversations among members of the faith as observed by the author centered on politics and more specifically a critique of the Western system; what Rastafarians call "chanting down Babylon" or "reasoning" sessions (Stanley, 2002, p. 92). The movement's customs and cultural practices are of a political and spiritual nature and provide support for the essentials the author used to guide the data collection and analysis process.

The author next worked to capture the "relationships among several themes" and explore the ways in which things appear within the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, p. 16). This step entailed the coding and analysis of data. Due to the cyclical and nonlinear nature of qualitative research, data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities. Therefore, the technique of epoche was revisited at all stages of research (Merriam, 1998). Epoche, as the suspension of judgment by

the author, was critical in the first stages of analysis, which began with the very first interview and observation, to the last and final stages of analysis and reporting. The author used interview protocols and observation notes and filtered the data through the lens of her research questions throughout the process. She read over the first set of interview transcripts and the first set of field notes as they were completed before conducting the second set to begin drawing out categories and emerging themes from the preliminary round of interviews and observations. The right way of doing data analysis is "to do it simultaneously with data collection" (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). The fact that this study was driven by the conceptual framework facilitated the attempts to narrow the focus of the study. Through this focus and the data collection and analysis process, the author constructed categories and themes, which captured a pattern based on the specific concepts presented through the emancipatory pedagogy framework.

FINDINGS

The author identified core themes most dominant in shaping the way the JRDC School operated within the larger community. These themes were generated from codes and categories based on the interactions and dynamics between the various school stakeholders. The author found that the anti-colonial ideology of Rastafari supported the Afrocentric identity-forming virtues for teachers and students. Although these virtues and values had successfully seeped into the culture of the school and surrounding community, they were often overshadowed or contradicted by a colonial and Western mind state. These opposing elements posed challenges for the school leaders, especially around their desired pedagogical practices when faced with barriers in effective training of, and resources for, their teaching staff.

From the onset of this study, the author had certain preconceived ideas about the Rastafarian faith giving her confidence that she would find certain themes while conducting her research at the JRDC School. Therefore, she developed a conceptual framework, which as previously mentioned was based on the theories of Freire, Asante, and West; a combination that can be described as a prophetic Afrocentric emancipatory framework. This framework not only provided a foundation for her research questions and interview protocols, but also shaped the focus of field notes. What the author chose to observe and note in her journal was inspired by the conceptual framework. She began her research knowing she would find elements of a collective consciousness in the vision of the school based on Afrocentrism, spirituality, and transformatory identity development. Her practice of epoche allowed her to observe other unavoidable and opposing themes that also existed at JRDC School; specifically, that of a neo-colonial and unilinear form of pedagogy. The evidence to support this dichotomy will be described in more detail next.

Afrocentric Values vs. Neo-Colonial Pedagogy

The author found that within the school community, there was much evidence to support the theme of Afrocentric values in child rearing and education. This theme played out in two dimensions. One was the traditional and teacher-led manner of dealing with children common in developing countries and the second was the pedagogy based on the values of the Rastafari school leaders raised and educated in the West had brought with them in their journey to Shashamane. The author observed these layered and multi-dimensional Western pedagogical influences at play in the school. The research illustrated the neo-colonial Western teaching styles prominent at the JRDC School, particularly by Ethiopian teachers. This pedagogical style is one defined as a unilinear and teacher-led model of education (Watson, 1994). Yet, the second aspect and dimension of Western pedagogy found at the JRDC School was the Rastafarian school leaders' desired approach, which

was progressive and child-centered. This latter style of education was derived from the leaders' training in the West and from the Rastafarian values of humanity, love, and democracy. Evidence of this dichotomy was clear in field notes on the days spent at the JRDC School. For example, at recess the author saw very little interaction between the Ethiopian teachers and students and although this is not behavior exclusive to JRDC School or schools in developing countries, it was illustrative of the lack of communication and bonding between the Ethiopian teachers and students. In formal and informal interviews, the students often expressed dismay at the treatment received from the Ethiopian teachers because they do not encourage communication with the students, and some hit the students. Interviews with students revealed a distinction between the way the Ethiopian and the Rastafarian teachers were perceived. The Rastafarian teachers "listened" to the students and cared for them, while the Ethiopian teachers were not as caring. During a staff meeting, Sister Marcia, who was raised and educated in the U.K., had to address this issue with the teachers:

> These are our children; they are Ethiopia's future. We have to be caring. If they come up to you, talk to them, touch them. If their nose is running, give them a tissue and show them how to clean their face. We have to be more caring towards the students, especially the young ones. That's how we are different from the government schools.

As results illustrated, the author believed that the JRDC School leaders aimed to instill Afrocentric virtues in their students; however, they were also carrying with them the Western values they were reared in, growing up in the Caribbean, UK, and US. These values included those learned in their own school experiences. Many of the Rastafarian school leaders were trained in the West at institutions of higher education in the area of teaching and school administration and were well-versed in modern child rearing philosophies which tended to be more child-centered than the more traditional teaching styles found in developing countries such as Ethiopia.

Spirituality

A "true form of education" (Watkins, 2008) for people of African descent which according to Hilliard (1997) included "restoration of memories, the rebuilding of the self, the rebuilding of spirituality, wholeness, and belonging", was evident among the vision of JRDC School leaders and the pedagogical styles of some teachers. Most scholars of ancient African education (Habte, n.d.; Hilliard, 1997) agreed that spirituality was the core component of educating the youth; however, JRDC leaders and teachers disagreed on how to convey spirituality to the students. The interview with Sister Marcia, a JRDC board member, revealed the reason for the apprehension in teaching spirituality or religion:

> The topic of spirituality in the school comes up a lot but Ethiopia is strictly Islamic *and* Christian, and we wouldn't want to upset anyone. Rastafarian faith is diverse so we could teach manners and character building. Spirituality would be a personal, individual endeavor and we don't want to upset the parents. Moral character is taught along with social and personal skills. For the most part, Ethiopia does see us as humble, peaceful, and loving. Rastafarians have been good for all of Ethiopia. We think well of Ethiopia.

Brother Matthew, a Rastafari teacher at JRDC School, reiterated this point but also explained the ways in which spirituality was still conveyed to the children and other community members:

> We can't teach religion because of the many different religions. We still try to create a fundamental religious environment and create spiritual awareness in the students. I teach my students to pray the prayer of gratitude, 'Let us not forget to express our gratitude to God', and we teach them to keep the spirit of God alive, Jah Rastafari. We make students have that consciousness. By and large all the students and parents know what we represent.

These quotes demonstrate the distinction made between spirituality and religion among the Rastafari educators at the school. Additionally, they show the organic manner in which the teachers and leaders conveyed spiritual values without imposing their beliefs onto the school community.

Afrocentric Education

Brother Matthew and the teachers who he mentored maintained a focus on teaching Afrocentric values and history. Teacher Afework, an Ethiopian teacher who credited Brother Matthew with teaching him, asked the author to support him in administering an exam and asked her for her opinion on the test questions. The questions centered on Africa, specifically the history of Egyptian and Ethiopian civilizations. The teacher was proud of the exam and told the author that it was "African history" with enthusiasm evident in his voice and face. The multiple-choice questions included historical facts regarding Ethiopian history, such as "What was the name of the ancient Ethiopian civilization?" the correct choice being "Nubian". Another question was about the ancient capital of Ethiopia and the correct answer was "Aksum". There were also questions regarding current facts such as mortality rates, birth rates, and prevalent diseases in Ethiopia.

Teacher Desta, an Ethiopian teacher who conveyed his gratitude for Brother Matthew and past Rastafarian teachers for imparting pride in Africa to the students, wanted to be able to do the same for his students. He credited his initial interest in Afrocentric history to his high school teacher in an Ethiopian school. This teacher's African history lesson included the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. As Desta explained, "This made me wonder why the Europeans would do such cruel things to Africans". Also, he began to learn about "great people" like Emperor Haile Selassie I, Kwame Nkrumah, and Jomo Kenyata, wishing to take their struggle further. His hopes were that students will want to learn in the West then come back to help in Africa and Ethiopia. He affirmed that because of the mentoring and teachings of the Rastafari in Shashamane, he became ". . . a Pan-Africanist!" Interestingly, when speaking to Sister Melody, the school director, the author reflected on how dedicated and smart Teachers Desta and Afework were and she attributed their dedication to their religious natures. These two teachers had internalized the vision of Rastafari by learning from the Rastafari teachers at the school. They considered themselves Pan-Africanists and this ideology shaped their teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices.

Sister Melody's goals for the students at JRDC also supported the desire to instill Afrocentric values in the students. As the director of the school, she stated the goals of the school leaders:

The goals for students at JRDC are that graduates will be: (a) able to read and write in English and perform well enough to move on to higher grades, (b) aware of the importance of Ethiopian history and religion in the history of Africa and all people of African descent, and (c) able to use art to express themselves and the culture and history of Ethiopia.

These goals reinforce the desires of the school leaders to balance the development of an Afrocentric identity in students, while operating under an educational system that prioritized a Western, neo-colonial philosophy and language.

Neo-Colonial Pedagogy

The author's stay in Shashamane began with the teacher training workshops for K-2 teachers taking place over two days. Sister Melody asked the author to focus on differentiated assessments, flexible grouping, and visual aids as pedagogical strategies that would best serve the teachers and students, as well as enhanced teaching and learning to increase student engagement. Sister Melody and many of the other Rastafarian school leaders wanted to move towards employing these more progressive methods of instruction at the school.

From the author's observations in the K-2 classrooms taught by local Ethiopian teachers, she could tell the common teaching style was a rote memorization method with students copying what the teacher wrote on the board. One of the teachers showed the author the students' notebooks and the students had very neatly copied what the teacher wrote on the board. The notes included matching exercises, cloze tests, and spelling activities. Board work consisted of a student standing in front of class and reading the words on the board while the rest of the class repeated them.

In conversations with the Ethiopian teachers, the author noted that they did not complain of student discipline problems and in fact, during one of the training sessions they asked how to combat the problem of lack of student engagement. They stated that during instruction all the students seemed to be listening, but the teachers later realized that the students had not comprehended the lesson. The author responded that strategies such as grouping, the use of student-centered activities, and class discussions were ways to increase student engagement.

For the most part, however, the author noticed that the child-centered Western educational values, which were primarily transmitted by the Rastafarian teachers, had a positive effect on student engagement. Brother Jeremiah, a Rastafari teacher, described the difference between the Ethiopian and Rastafarian teachers and pointed out positive attributes of progressive pedagogies that can be adopted by educators in developing countries, "The Ethiopian teachers don't have that animated nature, to become like a child. In my opinion, it is a Western way to become like a child and interact with kids that way." Brother Jeremiah was describing a student-centered and democratic approach to teaching that blurs the lines of traditional power dynamics between students and teachers.

Western Standards

On the other hand, the Rastafarian school leaders somehow understood that in a global economy, their students' success depended on their ability to navigate in a Western-dominated world. As Brother Robbie, a former Rastafari JRDC board member, mentioned when referring to the English language taught at JRDC:

> Yes, it might be good that JRDC teaches English, but what good is it if all the students leave JRDC speaking English with a Jamaican accent? They need to change that because they even write English with the Jamaican dialect. This may be a problem when they try to go on to high school or college.

Despite Brother Robbie's question, the students of JRDC were learning English at a much higher rate at the JRDC School when compared to the government-run schools. Sister Marcia informed the author that the school's five-year evaluation by the local Ethiopian educational authorities was scheduled in a few weeks. She said that the original proposal that she wrote was "very ambitious", yet the authorities expected the goals stated in the proposal to be met. Sister Marcia stated that not all the goals were met but the school had done very well on their eighth-grade test scores, higher than the government schools in the region. The eighth-grade tests were developed by the Ethiopian education ministry and were in English. Additionally, there were three major high school exams at the national level. Eighth grade exams were prepared in English, Amharic, and Oromifa, the local regional language. Grades 10 and 12 exams in subjects such as math, chemistry, physics, civics, geography, history, and biology were all given in English. The process allowed children who passed the grade 12 exams to enter university where the only language of instruction is English.

Many of the school teachers and leaders were invested in wanting to help JRDC move forward and progress within the Western concept and standards of what success means; high

test scores, mastering the English language, using Western pedagogical practices, and accessing technology imported from the West. Even the Rastafarians in the community admitted to the fact that their own progeny were more privileged due to their connection to the West and the associated resources. Sister Marcia pointed out the difference between the younger Rastafarian generation and the Ethiopian youth:

> The Rastafarian youth, those under the age of twenty, are used to having things given to them and have more (materially) than the Ethiopian youth. Older Rastafarian children were brought up with more discipline. Twenty years ago, Shashamane was like a village, and everyone helped to raise a child but now you can't say anything to other Rastafarians' children. Now with more children coming here and the repatriation taking momentum, the young generation expects things from outside.

Earlier the author mentioned the apprehension of many Ethiopian scholars (Habte, 2007) regarding the gradual replacement of an Ethiopian Christian curriculum with a Western curriculum. This curriculum was imported to Ethiopia by young scholars educated abroad. The new curriculum led to the diminishing importance of traditional Ethiopian pedagogy because the young scholars brought back Western philosophy not well aligned with the traditional Ethiopian learning process and curriculum. Additionally, curriculum from the West was developed within a Eurocentric paradigm and contained colonial elements of schooling. The author recognized a parallel in the diminishing influence of Rastafari values at the JRDC School and the drive towards preparing children for a global market within a world stage still wrought with colonial practices and philosophies.

SUMMARY

The Rastafari school leaders and teachers imparted knowledge to the school and surrounding community that was an integration of progressive Western pedagogy, traditional teacher-led practices, and a resistance-oriented philosophy. The reciprocal relationship between school and community resulted in a nexus of teaching approaches. It created a school brimming with potential lessons for students of historically oppressed populations, specifically those of African descent. The school leaders were cognizant of the ways they had to prepare their students to compete at higher levels of education locally and globally. A tension existed between remaining true to their spiritual vision as Rastafari school leaders and being accountable for standards set by the Ethiopian school authorities; standards that were rooted in neo-colonial philosophies and schooling structures. The students and teachers like Desta and Afework, who were mentored by the Rastafari school leaders, demonstrated an understanding of Pan-Africanist philosophy and were keen to share this with their students. Their approach to teaching aimed to instill pride in identity and a sense of self-determination in their students and was rooted in an anticolonial and Afrocentric paradigm.

DISCUSSION

The school established by the JRDC can be seen as evidence of a site where theories of Afrocentricity, emancipatory pedagogy, and spiritual consciousness converged to educate Rastafarian and Ethiopian children. The interest in capturing these themes was to learn lessons from JRDC on how to plan for and educate children of African descent in a manner that transforms their consciousness and identity from marginalized to self-determined.

The Rastafarian values inherent in the daily lives and culture of the members centered on consciousness and spirituality. There was significance and worth in exploring how these values may influence the pedagogical practices of the school. As adherents to an Afrocentric culture, the Rastafarians consider their African roots an important component of their purpose. Theorists (Asante, 1991; Hilliard, 1997) agreed that an Afrocentric perspective instituted in planning practices

and curriculum could orient children of African descent to a different viewpoint, identity, or "sense of belonging and a purpose in life" (Watkins, 2008, p. 1004). An Afrocentric perspective combined with the Freirean concept of emancipatory pedagogy provided a pertinent framework to extract themes through the experiences of the community surrounding the JRDC.

The discussion of findings in this study is organized around the unexpected preponderance of a post-colonial Western pedagogy. It should first be noted that the Rastafari influence that launched the development of the school had diminished overtime due to changes in the leadership. Although many Rastafari school board members, teachers, and students had left the school, the school board and leadership remained predominantly Rastafari. The reduced influence resulted in the overriding of the efforts of the leadership to foster child-centered and democratic practices with post-colonial and unilinear teaching methods. The Ethiopian teachers
represented most of the school staff and their instructional style predominated. For the leadership to train the teachers in a child-centered pedagogical style would require more resources, time, and space. According to Oplatka (2004), teacher training in schools in developing countries is not generally prioritized in face of so many dire needs such as lack of resources, facility inadequacies, as well as lack of cooperation and increased demands from educational authorities. Hence, teacher training became less of a priority at the JRDC. The school leaders wished to train the teachers and were appreciative of the training the author provided, yet a three-day training was not enough to build the capacity of teachers in the more progressive practices.

Although the school leaders somewhat succeeded in providing instruction containing pre-colonial elements the spiritual values of their faith proffered, many of those values were overshadowed by the desire to help the students succeed in a global society driven by Western ideals. According to Watson (1994), the predominance of a "formal, linear school system" imposed upon developing countries by the West, has resulted in a "colonial educational transfer" (p. 86). Hence, the JRDC School leaders focused highly on the elements of instruction, which were not only Western in origin but also mandated by the Ethiopian educational authorities, resulting in multi-layered pedagogical styles and goals.

Hilliard (1997) argued that the traditional Western practices, more dominant in the classrooms of schools in developing regions, worked against humanity and traditional African principles that highlight the spiritual nature of being (Habte, n.d.; Hilliard, 1997). The JRDC School leaders struggled to balance the desire to remain an anti-systemic and spiritual movement yet provide students with the tools necessary for survival in this Western-dominated global system.

Rastafarian values integrate the desire for equity in face of colonial and racist hegemony and they do so within a spiritual framework. Dantley (2005) eloquently explained the way in which spirituality invokes faith in an oppressed population. This faith is what has historically offered a vision of a better situation in the face of oppression. According to Dantley (2005), "[s]uch a spiritual footing has grounded many African-American projects of resistance . . ." (p. 656). When school leaders plan for curriculum, doing so from an Afrocentric perspective holds the potential to draw on spirituality and focus on student achievement within the sphere of justice and equity in society; precisely what school communities such as JRDC or other schools with high poverty, high African-American populations require.

IMPLICATIONS

The values promoted by the conceptual framework of this study prioritized anti-colonial ideas. Freire, Asante, and West offered an alternative perspective and motivation for success for marginalized students. This alternative rests on the foundation of transforming oneself and going

against the grain of mainstream and Western philosophies of being, teaching, and learning. Similarly, resistance-oriented groups such as the Rastafarians embrace an alternative way of being that negates White supremacist ideologies.

Although the banking method that Freire (1970) so clearly criticized was apparent in the classrooms of the JRDC School, there nevertheless was evidence of emancipatory philosophy within the youth of the community in Shashamane. This philosophy stretched beyond the confines of the school building. Those in the community exposed to the Rastafarian values and lifestyle were affected and at times transformed. These values encompassed a sense of unity, spirituality, and compassion towards others. In face of marginalization, racism, and an economic dependency, the Ethiopian youth in the JRDC community internalized some sense of empowerment by learning these values. Evidence of the Rastafarian message of African pride and the spiritual significance of Ethiopia in aiding the transformation of the youth in Shashamane was clear.

As educational leaders across the globe continue to plan for teaching and learning in the 21st Century, the need for a curriculum that addresses the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and racism is apparent. The values evident in the JRDC School and community provide principles that when integrated within curriculum can support a process of emancipation for students of African descent. Embedded in this curriculum would be the goal of decolonizing the colonized mind and transforming the identity of marginalized youth to an empowered one filled with agency.

Implications from this study point to planning for and creating a curriculum framed within an Afrocentric ideology, and more specifically the African principle of spirituality and self-determination, core elements of the Rastafarian philosophy. Planning by school leaders to embed these principles in curriculum can demonstrate the ability to transform the identity of a learner. Teaching and learning within an emancipating framework can have significant effects on escaping the cycle of dependence present in developing countries, especially those in the sub-Saharan region of Africa. In fact, an Afrocentric anti-colonial curriculum holds emancipatory promise for youth of the African Diaspora.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNERS

Educational planners in developing countries will undoubtedly encounter tensions between the neo-colonial standards imposed on their school by educational authorities, who continue to follow a Western model of schooling, and their own local cultural values and visions.

In planning curriculum that can support the identity development and transformation of their learners, school leaders can align their planning with resistance-oriented strategies. Borrowing from the Rastafari philosophy, these strategies would incorporate ways to instill critical thinking to build self-determination, a spiritual collective consciousness, and transformatory identity development.

A spiritual collective consciousness invokes school leaders to recognize the reciprocity between schools and their surrounding community. The identity of the leaders is reflected in the identity of school stakeholders, and the identity of the school folk is reflected in the school leadership (Norris, 2022). When planning for ways to meet goals, school leaders can glean from the local community the best ways to instill the values necessary for sustained self-determination and collective growth. This is particularly important in rural areas of a developing country that face many barriers in education (Aref, 2011; Oplatka, 2004). As the school leaders at the JRDC School were cognizant of, planning for curriculum and pedagogical practices must meet the needs of all the people in the community. When a school is representative of the local community's multilayered and diverse backgrounds, the priorities, needs, and desires of the people living there inform planning and aiming for the lived vision of the leaders. The population in and around JRDC was a combination

of various religions, nationalities, languages, and ethnicities. The school leaders understood that a collective consciousness based on Rastafari values was possible if they maintained a focus on their vision and goals specific to their context, and at the same time respected the range of perspectives and backgrounds in their community.

Freire (1970) theorized that leaders are responsible for the "coordination, and at times, direction" of action and planning (p. 126). He warned that within the planning process, leaders must not deny praxis to their students, teachers, and mentees. When leaders impose their vision on their stakeholders, they go against or "falsify" their own vision (p. 126). Freire affirmed that leaders and followers together and "in communion liberate each other" (p. 133). This is particularly true of people of the Rastafari faith, for whom unity and a collective consciousness are highly valued.

The characteristics of successful praxis (i.e., dialogical action) include cooperation, unity, organization with the community, and cultural synthesis that centers and enriches diverse views. Organizing with the people in the community is the sharing of planned achievement and a true form of praxis is one in which the planning process includes the needs, participation, and cooperation of the people impacted most in the community. This type of participation supports the vision of creating greater self-determination and independence within a space that otherwise marginalizes the participants and renders them dependent.

CONCLUSION

According to the Rastafarian school leaders, the youth in Shashamane were affected by the global marginalization of the African identity and the leaders strove to combat this marginalization. Leaders like Sister Melody and teachers like Brother Matthew were focused on helping the students break out of the colonial mindset and liberate themselves. What the author witnessed through her interviews and observations was the Rastafarian presence facilitating a transformation of the reality in many of the community members, mainly through dialogue emphasizing pride, self-determination, and collective progress.

Rastafarian school leaders are well equipped to support a transformatory curriculum because they are already part of a movement aware that they and their students are "situated in a broader social and political context" and in this way conscious of colonial and racist power structures and policies that they are up against (Dantley, 2005, p. 659). The leaders imparted a pedagogical style that was steeped in spirituality yet aimed to prepare the students for the global market. Despite the lack of resources, these leaders were effective in spreading an anti-colonial mindset that reached beyond the confines of the school and impacted many in the community. These elements can empower school leaders of marginalized communities to create and plan for curriculum frameworks that support an emancipatory identity development process for their students.

Another significant finding was the paradoxical application of Western pedagogy in a school run by Rastafarians. A post-colonial model of teaching contradicted attempts at a more child-centered and progressive Western model of education. Nonetheless, the Rastafarian leaders desire this latter Western model. This is surprising considering the anti-Western, anti-systemic, and highly spiritual sentiments of the Rastafarian movement. This leaves the author to ask if there is a way to reconcile progress, in the Western and scientific way with the concept of spirituality. To respond, she will conclude with a quote from Haile Selassie I:

> Time was when strength and endurance, courage and faith, were sufficient to make leadership equal to the task. But times have changed and these spiritual qualities are no longer enough. Today, knowledge and training, as provided largely in the universities of the world, have become essential . . . nor can we ignore the importance of the spiritual in this

academic life. Learning and technical training must be nurtured by faith in God, reverence for the human soul, and respect for the reasoning mind. There is no safer anchorage for our learning, our lives, and our public actions than that provided by Divine teachings coupled with the best in human understanding. (His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, 1961)

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