



Literary Pan-Africanism: History, Contexts, and Criticism

Christel N. Temple

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In *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, Maya Angelou writes lyrically and reflectively about her sentimental experience as an African American abroad in post-independence Ghana. *Literary Pan-Africanism*, a companion study, updates the complex historical relationship between Africans and African Americans in an era where travel, education, immigration, technology, and global exchange have broadened the definition of the African American. In the 1980s when South African scholar Ezekiel Mphahlele observed "Africans have no psychological need to identify with African-Americans" he was referring to the fact that African Americans primarily have borne the burden of being separated from the culture and continent of Africa through the historical experience of enslavement. However, African immigration to the United States over the past twenty years has given African and African American communities the opportunity to re-establish distant kinship and to consider possibilities for cooperation and organization into the future. This has not always an easy feat because four hundred years of miscommunication is not easily resolved.

The historical and literary record affirms that African Americans have traditionally been attentive to ideologies of "back-to-Africa," "the return," and Pan-Africanism, however, *Literary Pan-Africanism: History, Contexts, and Criticism* reveals that Africans have also wondered and reflected on the losses that resulted from enslavement.

In a critical, well-researched, and illuminating analysis of history and literature, this study highlights the dynamics of the relationship between Africans and African Americans since the original separation of the Middle Passage. The study emerges at a timely phase, as America struggles with its racial heritage, its ethnic future, and multiculturalism, and as people of African descent create new contexts for defining identity in a nation that is challenged to embrace Africans who have arrived, this time, as voluntary migrants.

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