

DECOLONIZATION AND INDEPENDENCE OF AFRICA

BLACK PEOPLE FINDING THEIR FOOTING IN THE WORLD

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African History from 1500 – present

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INTRODUCTION

Africa widely known for Its rich history and natural resources, has also been credited for being the home to humanity and the birth of modernization. Prior to 1500, Africa was once home to the most powerful kingdoms like the Mali Empire, but that was all disrupted as Africa's power and influence slowly deteriorated due to the interference of the colonizers. European nations converged and made the executive decision to take control of African countries for their own self- interest. The effects of colonization has left a lasting impact on the life and culture of Africans worldwide, causing the Africa and the diaspora to salvage what they can of their culture and rewriting a history that was stolen from them.

THE BEJEWELED HAND OF AN AFRICAN KING

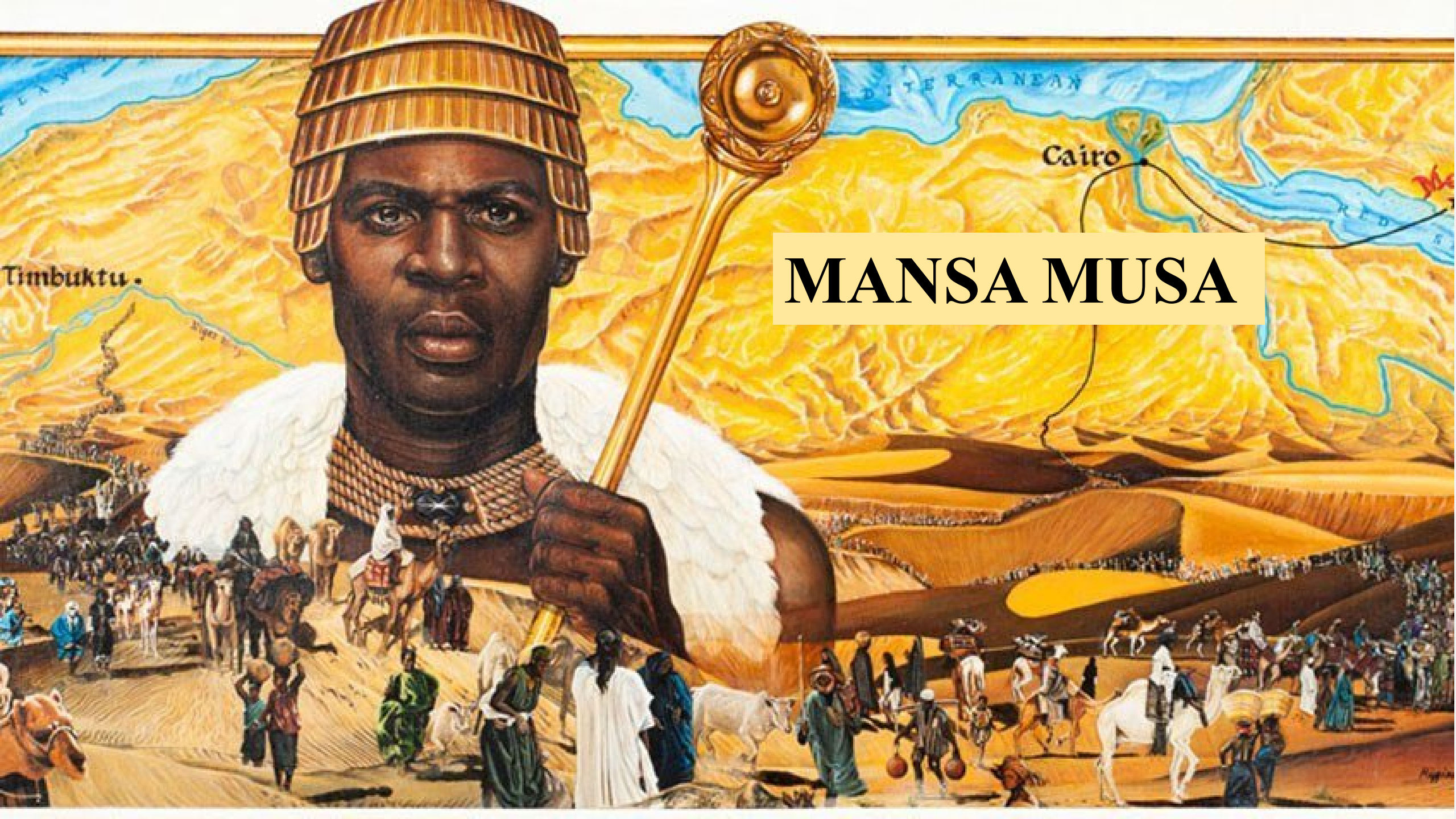


AFRICA PRE-COLONIZATION

The Mali Empire led by Mansa Musa who reigned from 1312 C.E. to 1337 C.E. was one of the richest and most powerful kingdom in the world. It is said that on Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, his caravan spent and gave away so much gold that the overall value of gold decreased in Egypt for the next 12 years. When he returned from Mecca, he built mosques and buildings in Timbuktu which was a major Islamic university center during the 14th century. Africa set the standards for successful economies and was a true representation of what leadership looked like. In addition to the abundance of gold that Africa possessed, its natural resource was a cause of envy for many nations like Europe who weren't as gifted.

Some of Africa's most valuable natural resources and countries in which they could be found are as follows

- **Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda** produced grains and cotton while preserving trade routes
- **South Africa** was rich in gold and diamonds
- **Algeria, Morocco** and **Madagascar** produced olive oil and grains
- **Cameroon** and **Togoland** produced diamonds and had many copper fields
- **Rio De Ord, Spanish Morocco** and **Eritrea** produced gold



MANSA MUSA

BIRTH OF MODERNIZATION

Pre-Colonial Africa was an era which gave birth to the most important innovations in existence, some of which have propelled our society into the future, like mathematics, geometry, astrology, and architectures that can never be replicated, most notably the Great Pyramids in Egypt. According to the World Health Organization “traditional medicine has a long history. It is the sum of the knowledge, skill, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures”. There were many traditional healers that were very knowledgeable about the healing properties plants possessed and in a world before modern medicine, that was all we had to rely on. These medical discoveries made by Africans have been deeply rooted in our culture and thankfully some knowledge was carried with the enslaved people to the Americas, where they were able to preserve it as best as they could. Without the knowledge harvested by Africans, modernization would still be a figment of the imagination.



MAMA AFRICA

It is universally known that women give birth to nations, but modern history has seen them treated like a second-class citizen compared to the man. This practice of male superiority was enforced the European man who deemed themselves superior above everything living, nourishing their beliefs that women are created to serve them and be submissive.

Africa is known to have had the first female king name Hatshepsut, a pharaoh that was rumored to have the most prosperous reign in the history of Egypt, a reign that was so threatening to the egos of her successors that it prompted them to try and destroy her statues and erase her from history, which thankfully failed. Africa with all these powerful women being queens and ministers, was an example of a thriving world, giving opportunities and power to a person when it was due and not based on their gender. When comparing the right of women today and those in pre-colonial Africa, it is easy to be disappointed at how far we have fallen as a people, but now with women being elected Presidents and heads of government in places like Liberia and Jamaica, the grip of colonialism is slowly slipping and reverting to a time before Europe imposed on us their rules and misogynistic beliefs regarding women's rights.

THE RAPE OF AFRICA

The Scramble for Africa, also called the **Rape of Africa**, was the invasion, occupation, division, and colonization of most of Africa by seven Western European powers between 1881-1914. Prior to 1881 there was only 10% of Africa under European control, but after the New Imperialism period it grew to a whopping 90%.

Europe divided the most prosperous nation to build their own economy and feed the illusion that they had more than pain and misery to offer the world. The divisions caused many African nations to have rivalries with each other, desperately trying to salvage what was left of their empires and regain some form of power. With many African countries estranged from their greatest allies, the task of conquering became easy, because the British were able to build a network with other countries across Europe that wanted the same thing and that was the power and resources Africa had.

ERASURE OF AFRICAN HISTORY AND SLAVERY

During the midst of colonization, Europe set forth on a mission to erase Africa's culture and replace it with their idea of civilization. One of the first successful attempts to do so was when Europe sent missionaries there with the intention of transforming Africa into a “civilized” nation because they didn't think that Africa's way of life was up to par with what the queen wants. During World War One, Africa was seen as a support system and this caused Africans to be subjected to hard and excessive labor, many Africans fled their region at that time to avoid such harsh treatments. These European ideologies caused many people to see Africa as less than and inferior to the crown. Europe turned to Africa because they knew they were hard workers, which is what they wanted and eventually exploited by force. They used this forced free labor to build successful businesses and create a legacy, for they had no history that was worth telling. African rulers sold their captives because the Europeans offered to trade guns with them and the more guns a ruler had, the more powerful he was. Many Africans were brainwashed into thinking that they were savages and many left to Europe for better life because Europe had tarnished Africa's image and made it impossible to have a decent life there.

ERASURE OF AFRICAN HISTORY AND SLAVERY

In Chinua Achebe's the role the missionaries played was a very simple one, erase any trace of culture and replace it with the European customs. England was obsessed with being superior and force feeding their made-up culture to the world, because that fed their ego. Europe profited greatly from bringing them to the Americas to work for free. Free labor meant that they didn't have to pay anyone, so all the money stayed with them, and the overworking of Africans caused them to produced large amount of cotton which made them the richest people in the country. Some of those slave owner's descendants are still profiting from this horrible crime decades later. Fast forward today we see White descendants of European slave traders enjoying generational wealth from a system that was "built" by their ancestors for them, while the descendants of those who were the true architects of the system, suffer from systemic oppression and racism.

SUGARCANE PLANTATION IN JAMAICA



DECOLONIZATION AND INDEPENDENCE

The mass importation of guns in Africa changed the balance of power between kingdoms and added further division to a continent already riddled with devastation. This tool was used by Africans against other Africans, severing all ties they had with each other, giving the Europeans an easy way in. Ever since the moment Christopher Columbus set sail to the Americas in 1492, to the decolonization of Africa in the 1950s to 1975, the continent was and is still being plagued by the problems caused by colonizers. “Colonialism’s impacts include environmental degradation, the spread of diseases, economic instability, ethnic rivalries, and human rights violation—issues (Blakemore 2019). It is with the knowledge of our history, leaders like Toussaint Louverture found the strength to lead Haiti to independence. Regaining Africa's footing in the world caused division between African leaders when it came to how they wanted the continent to be governed. On one hand we have leaders like Dr Kwame who was a more radical thinker, he was frustrated with the colonialist interference in Africa's present and foreseeable future, he wanted Africa to unite against neo colonialism and become one. While on the other hand leaders like Haile Selassie was more peaceful and politically correct with his approach, he wanted peace while refusing to ruffle any feathers



Dr Kwame Nkrumah
Speaking in Addis Ababa
On May 24, 1963

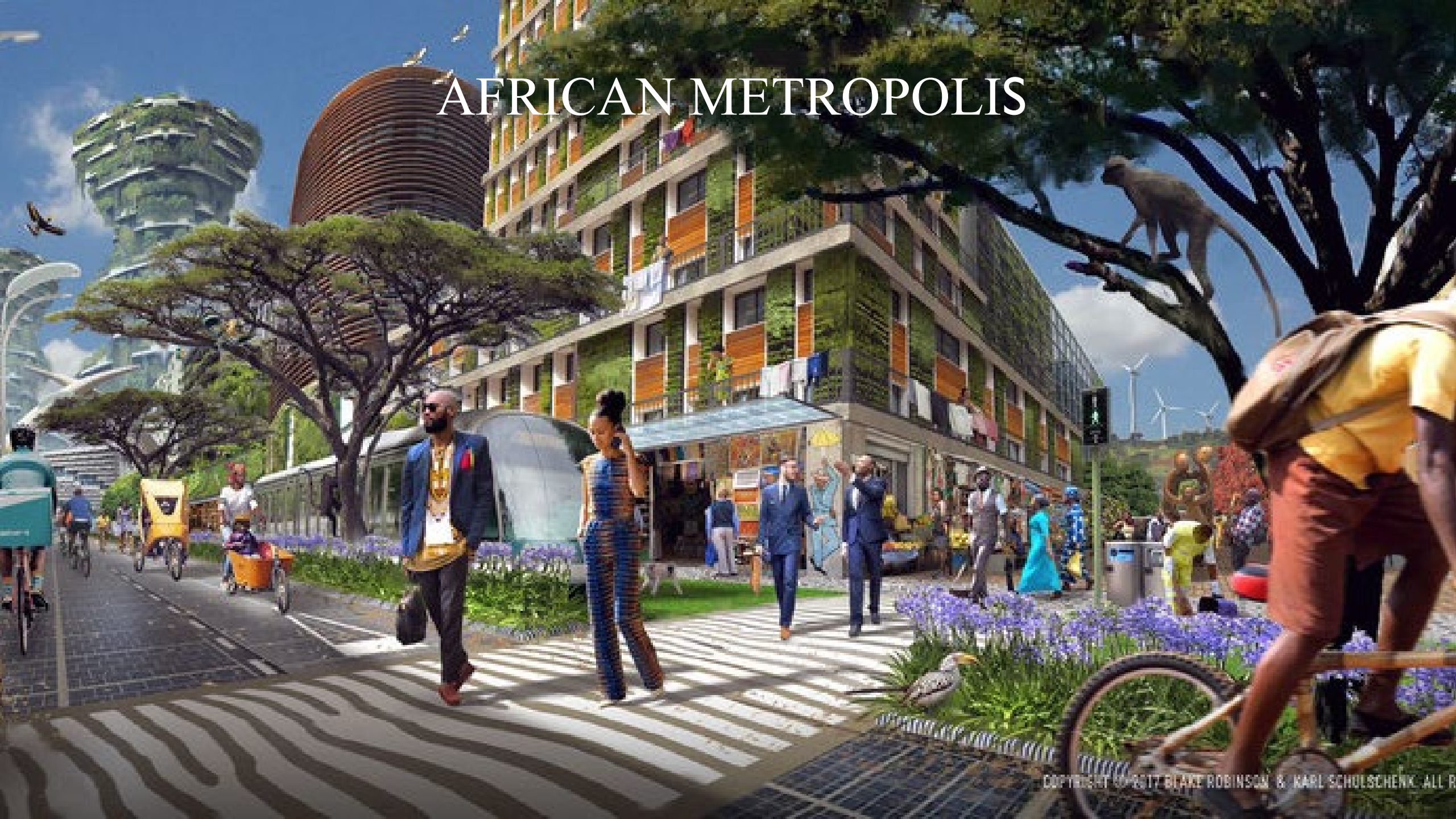


Haile Selassie I
Emperor of Ethiopia
2 April 1930 – 12 September 1974



Toussaint Louverture
Governor-General of Saint-Domingue
1797-1801

AFRICAN METROPOLIS



THE IMPACT OF SLAVERY ON AFRICANS AND THE DIASPORA

There are many people in Africa and the African diaspora that have lost touch with their roots and are now forced to write their own stories. In a perfect world all decedents of enslaved Africans returning home would be ideal, but many of us have accepted that although we're children of the mother land, wherever we were born is now home to us and that will not hinder us from celebrating our culture. As Helda Mandlate from Mozambique says in a video posted by the University of Cape Town South Africa, "My constant strive for freedom, my heritage and my skin color is what makes me African."



AN AFRICAN AMERICAN PERFORMING A TRADITIONAL AFRICAN DANCE AT A KWANZA CEEBRATION

A group of children are playing soccer on a dirt field in a residential area. The children are in various poses, some running and some standing. In the background, there are several houses and trees. The scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, cinematic style.

CONCLUSION

In order to move forward and regain our standing in this world, black people as a collective need to remember where they came from and stand in solidarity and support of every black person no matter the nationality, gender and sexuality. At a time where black people are still being treated as if they're less than, thus prompting the creation of movements like Black Lives Matter movement, we all need to unite. After all unity is the most powerful tool a nation and people can use to protect its legacy.

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