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The "Idea of Africa" and the Business of Blackness: South Africa's Transatlantic Connections*

Paitra D. Russell

Summary

This article explores some of the ideological assumptions at work behind African-Americans' imaged and imagined presence in postapartheid South Africa. The enduring ideological and material connections between black South Africans and African-Americans are part of a long history of interaction. That history is clearly represented in ongoing African-American reclamations of cultural connectedness with Africa, in which various sites on the continent act as a potential source for African-American cultural salvation. In the wake of South Africa's nominal triumph over apartheid, African-American involvement has shifted away from activist political involvement toward corporate presence, and South Africa is viewed as a site for African-American economic salvation through the provision of new markets for the consumption of American goods. This shift suggests an increasing disjuncture between the interests of African-American corporate elites and the ongoing political struggles of the majority of blacks within and beyond South Africa.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word sommige van die ideologiese aannames wat agter die Afro-Amerikaners se voorgestelde en gewaande teenwoordigheid in postapartheid Suid-Afrika aan die orde is, verken. Die voortdurende ideologiese en materiële verbintenis tussen swart Suid-Afrikaners en Afro-Amerikaners vorm deel van 'n lang geskiedenis van interaksie. Sodanige geskiedenis word duidelik versinnebeeld in die deurlopende Afro-Amerikaanse opeising van 'n kulturele verbintenis met Afrika, waardeur verskeie terreine op die kontinent as 'n potensiële bron van Afro-Amerikaanse kulturele behoud beskou word. Na Suid-Afrika se nominale triomf oor apartheid het die Afro-Amerikaanse betrokkenheid verskuif van aktivistiese politieke intervensie tot korporatiewe teenwoordigheid. Suid-Afrika se ligging maak hom hiervolgens by uitstek geskik vir Afro-Amerikaanse ekonomiese redding deurdat nuwe markte beskikbaar gestel moet word vir die verbruik van Amerikaanse goedere. Hierdie klemverskuiwing sinspeel op 'n toenemende ontwrigting tussen die belange van die Afro-Amerikaanse korporatiewe elite en die onafgebroke politieke struggle van die meerderheid swartes binne en buite Suid-Afrika.

Vertigo

As a visitor to South Africa from the United States, I have experienced my fair share of disorientation, less so because of the glaring differences between the two countries, than as a result of superficial similarities. I managed to overcome my suspicion upon arrival in Cape Town that my flight had landed in Florida, only to be confronted with television-garnered images of Beverly Hills as I was later driven through Llandudno and Camps Bay. Each entry into Tyger Valley Mall's over-the-top Mississippi Detour with its miniature golf course, two story television screens, riverboat motif and appropriately oversized American flags redeposited me into middle-America. Though disorienting, these types of references to the commercial excesses of American popular culture were somehow not surprising. This is what I expected American cultural imperialism to "look" like.

But I was never more surprised to find "America" in South Africa than when, while listening to Good Hope FM, I heard a caller sending "shout outs" to his "homeys". "They're all west coast homeys", he added. I was awestruck, as much by the use of African-American[1] slang of "shout outs" and "homeys" as by the reference to an east coast/west coast hip-hop rivalry that I would expect to make sense only within the cultural context of the New York and Los Angeles rap scenes. What, I wondered, qualifies as the "west coast" in Cape Town? The Atlantic ocean?

Perhaps. Reference to the Atlantic raises Paul Gilroy's idea of an identifiable "Black Atlantic", a semiotic sphere characterized by rich and intricate continuities, reverberating through time and space (1993). Though Gilroy's Black Atlantic is construed as a web of multivalent, multidirectional influences operating within and between western Africa, the Americas and western Europe, perhaps it is appropriate that South Africa, sharing as it does this same ocean and participating in this flow of signs, be included in the conceptual mix.

"America" is indeed everywhere in South Africa, particularly in the realm of the popular cultural, and the America I have encountered is often one with specifically black referents: a plethora of African-American comedies and videos on television, hip-hop and "old school" soul on Radio Metro and Good Hope FM, a familiar style of dress on the bodies of teenagers in oversized jeans and backwards baseball caps. (I do not mean to suggest, however, that stylistic continuities are a matter of simple "copying" of American trends. While signs may be appropriated from other cultural contexts, they are always imbued with locally specific meanings.). A virtual African-American world is represented through American media, most notably in music and television. That imaged presence is a highly stylized one, and its attendant "looks" are reinforced in the

advertising of American corporations. In this way, those looks are made accessible to the general public through the consumption of specific products.

I hope to explore some of the ideological assumptions which provide a backdrop for the contemporary appearance of these images and their related consumer products. I do so in an effort to make sense of a shift that I perceive to have occurred within the material and ideological continuities between black America and Africa in general, but which is particularly visible in South Africa. Specifically, I see that shift as being one away from political involvement toward corporate investment. As such, it is indicative of a more general global trend toward consumerism. It also potentially undermines continuing political struggles of blacks both in America and elsewhere in its support of material consumption as the means by which to demonstrate triumph over (or indifference to?) ongoing economic and racial oppression.

Connections, Real and Imagined

The African-American images that appear in South Africa are grounded in specific histories, and appearing as they do in the realm of the popular cultural, are deeply significant. I will return in a moment to a consideration of some of the bodily characteristics, both "natural" and "acquired", which are linked to black images of success and glamour to which I alluded above. The extent of their desirability is revealed in particular cosmetics practices, for example. For the moment, however, I would like to consider an American "idea of Africa" which may be operating behind those images. Such a consideration of an idea of Africa at work in the United States provides insights into how and why African-Americans look to South Africa. The ideologies that support that gaze have "real" consequences for how black America ends up being represented and representing itself in South Africa.[2]

I would like to explore two ideas in particular which are at work behind African-American interpretations of (black) South Africa.[3] The first is one of connection, both historical and ideological, and the other is one of salvation, of both Africans and African-Americans. Ideologically, black American connections to Africa are typically imagined in terms of essential (and highly visible) biological, cultural and/or spiritual continuities. Discourses of the salvation of Africa, on the other hand, are more often covert, providing ideological support to political movements, for example. Both ideas, however, are conceptually linked and perhaps codependent. They simultaneously supersede and include South Africa, rooted as they are in an ideology of "Africa" as monolithic, undifferentiated and timeless, and their presence does impact on black America's

relationship to South Africa, even as South Africa begins to be more broadly recognized as a distinctive space on the African continent.

Interactions of various kinds between blacks in South Africa and America are not new. In 1894, the National Baptist Convention (a black denomination) established a mission station in Cape Town, and missionaries from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church[4] and the Church of God and Saints of Christ followed soon thereafter (Edgar 1992). The Jubilee Singers of the Fisk University (an historically black university (HBU) founded in 1866 for the education of former slaves) and Orpheus MacAdoo's Jubilee Singers toured South Africa throughout the 1890s (Edgar 1992; Nixon 1994). Perhaps the most telling example of influential religious and musical styles distilling into a uniquely significant local cultural artifact is South Africa's national anthem itself: Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika apparently originated from a Methodist hymn.

There are other examples of political continuities. Liberation-minded African-Americans' views of South Africa as a potential site for a free black nation are nearly as old as their missionary counterparts' desire to save the souls of the people inhabiting it. At the turn of the twentieth century, the pan-Africanist sentiments of Harry Dean, a black American sailor, led him to participate in the South African War in hopes of realizing his "dream to found an Ethiopian Empire" and later, the politics of W.E.B. du Bois and Booker T. Washington found support among black South African elites (Edgar 1992: 3). But by far the most popularly successful of black America's early-twentieth century political leaders was Marcus Garvey, whose post-World War I mass-based political movement focused on a return of black Americans to Africa, and more generally of Africa itself to the control of Africans. It was a movement which found in South Africa, as well, widespread support (Edgar 1992; Hill & Pirio 1987). Despite the ultimate failure of Garveyist nationalism both in the United States and South Africa, as the twentieth century progressed, such social and political connections endured. These connections took a more overtly popular cultural turn in the 1950s, when Harlem and Sophiatown were linked through the latter's celebration of the former's art, music and literature, to create an artistic rebirth which enriched the local genres already thriving (Coplan 1985; Nixon 1994). Though Nixon suggests that the celebration of America exemplified in Sophiatown was self-consciously apolitical (much like the 1920s Harlem Renaissance which virtually ignored the concurrent popularity of the Garvey Movement just around the corner), he notes that "the two worlds - in so many ways disparate - were yoked through a mixture of influence and analogy, inevitably partial and unevenly felt, but impassioned none the less" (1994: 13).

I note these connections not only to highlight the ways in which African-American political and cultural ideologies and practices "appeared" in South

Africa, but to suggest an idea of Africa at work among black Americans which posits Africa's importance in terms of cultural filiation and continuity. One anthropologist aptly articulates the way in which this idea flourished after the First World War:

> ... across a range of contemporary Afro-American ideological positions - from the working class disciples of Marcus Garvey to the intellectual organizers of Pan-Africanism and the artist and literati of the Harem Renaissance - peoples of African descent were themselves reclaiming in various inflections, a past called Africa, and placing it in the foreground of their assertions of cultural identity and community.
>
> (Scott 1991: 273)

These reclamations of "a past called Africa" as an attempt to establish cultural legitimacy in America through the possession of a history reverberated in South Africa as well. Local political organizations supporting the Garvey Movement, for example, provided sites of mutual ideological influence between black South Africans and black Americans. A reader of a South African publication called *Black Man* (which provided the name for Garvey's own *Blackman* journal) stated his support of the idea of an inherent connection between blacks in South Africa and America: "Let us realize we are under the banner of Black entirely ... and [it is] our mutual duty to honor such a tradition ... so as to link with these brave souls across the great Atlantic" (as quoted in Hill & Pirio 1987: 218). While in the moment of 1920s black nationalisms an idea of Africa acts as a unifying ideology in these and other contexts, it also supports a notion of "salvation", both African and American. This notion, though perhaps less obvious, is at least as important (and enduring) as that of connection.

Missionary Mentality: (South) Africa as both Object and Site of Salvation

The natural place to look for salvation projects is, of course, among missionaries. It is not surprising to hear the paternal voice of one AME missionary expressing concern for "credulous, suffering Natives" who need "elevating" (as quoted in Hill & Pirio 1987: 226). But such an outlook is not one restricted to missionaries of a religious orientation. American supporters of the Garvey Movement also exhibited a bit of missionary zeal in their hopes of saving black Africans from white oppression: "Let us go possess South Africa", writes Rosetta Stenson. "Tell the Kaffirs to awake, awake, put on the whole armor and prepare for Armageddon" (as quoted in Hill & Pirio 1987: 211).

The view of Africa as an object to be saved is not unique to the imaginations of black Americans and is representative of a more general American attitude. "Africa" is regularly represented in the American media in terms of suffering (from the tragedies of war, disease, famine, and poverty), and rescue (through Western attempts to assist it in overcoming social and economic "underdevelopment").[5] To the degree that African-American connections with Africa are imagined in terms of historical and cultural connectedness, specifically black efforts to "save" Africa often emerge in the form of organized resistance to racial oppression on the continent (hence the success of the anti-apartheid movement in galvanizing support among African-Americans, who tended to view the struggle as an extension of the Civil Rights movement in the United States) (Fierce 1982; Ryan 1995).

In words reminiscent of Rosetta Stenson's call, a young African-American entrepreneur recently stated his desire to engage in consciousness-raising work through political involvement in central Africa (the former Zaire, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi), to which he refers as "our only link to any vestige of cultural identity and hope".[6] It is his hope to "seek peace" through the economic development and political liberation of this region from European financial interests, and in so doing, to work toward "remedying the African as well as African-American plight".[7] While he cites a cultural link as part of the moral imperative behind his work, he also believes that "[making] African-American ties with African nation states is the next step for enterprising, conscious individuals to take in ushering in a new African Paradigm".[8] Underpinning this desire to help liberate central Africa from dictatorial rule and white financial interests is the notion that to do so is in the interest of the very survival, both cultural and economic, of blacks in general.

Africa, then, continues to operate as both an ideological and literal source of salvation for African-Americans, even as it is perceived to be in need of African-American assistance. Garvey's vision of "Africa for the Africans" was one which, at base, saw the only possibility of future success for black Americans in a physical relocation to the continent. The position of "Africa" in (black) American notions of salvation is not static: it operates variously as a place to be saved by black Americans, as well as the site of salvation for black Americans. This idea has become more explicit as the century has progressed. As the realization of racial equality in the United States becomes increasingly illusory, the ideals of an imagined Africa have re-emerged as a possible (and perhaps the only) source of salvation left.

Black Encounters of the Economic Kind

The idea of South Africa in particular, as a prime contemporary African source of potential salvation, is precisely articulated by a friend who asks me of South Africa, "Is it as wonderful as I have dreamed?"[9] He elaborates:

> I can't help but idealize a place where Black folks are in charge and they have nuclear weapons. My apocalyptic dreams now at least have one potentially salvific possibility. When the night riders come for me .... I imagine escaping to Mexico and flying to Southern Africa where Nelson - may he live forever - Mandela will protect me.[10]

My friend's comment, even in its humour, speaks to a deeply serious desire among many African-Americans to look to South Africa as a possible site of relief from continued oppression and disillusionment in America. I must emphasize, however, that the realization of a desire to reconnect with Africa in practice is often a classed one. Reclamation of, or reconnection with, Africa - culturally, politically, or geographically - is one that is generally made possible, in fact, by prior economic privilege. And as African-Americans' involvement in Africa, particularly South Africa, shifts from mass-based political struggles to the exclusive realm of corporate investment, those connections are arguably made in support of that very status. Thus I come, finally, to a peculiarly appropriate way in which Africa operates as a potential site of salvation for many of the African-Americans most able to "reconnect" with it in the late-capitalist setting of hyperconsumption: as a source of new consumers to ensure the continued viability of African-American-owned multinational corporations.

South Africa's recent emergence as an internationally recognized and respected black-led nation state makes it highly intriguing as a potential site for black American economic salvation. With the political aims of both African-Americans and black South Africans nominally realized,[11] there exists the possibility of reconstituting symbolic and historical connections into practical partnership. These connections are more often put to use, however, in the service of global market expansion, as increased competition and market saturation in the United States threatens the viability of many African-American corporations.

The idea of shared interests and needs among blacks all over the world underpins the presence in South Africa of many African-American-owned corporations. John H. Johnson, the late founder and Chief Executive Officer of Johnson Publications, for example, cites an historical interest in *Ebony* magazine among black South Africans as the impetus behind his creation of

Ebony South Africa. The inaugural November 1995 issue was launched with a story of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's first exposure to the magazine at the age of nine (cf. Whigham-Désir 1996: 78). The anecdote serves to highlight the idea of cultural connectedness between black South Africans and African-Americans through a narrative linkage of the magazine with the political history of resistance to apartheid. It also helps to rationalize *Ebony South Africa's* content, which like the American version, tends to focus on celebrities, black "firsts"[12] and other upwardly mobile figures.[13] Unlike the American *Ebony*, however, which rarely attempts to link African-Americans with black populations elsewhere in the world, *Ebony South Africa* highlights the social and political connections between South Africa and America, for instance reporting on Thabo Mbeki's interactions with American business owners and politicians (both black and white) during his visit to the United States,[14] and attempting to ferret out "The Truth About South African/African American Marriages".[15]

African-American cosmetics companies are even more explicitly interested in exploiting image-based connections between various black populations. Though the dissemination of black images in music and television is typically beyond the control of African-Americans themselves (none of the United States' globally dominant media conglomerates is black-owned), African-American-owned multinationals are disproportionately concentrated in the inextricably intertwined industries of beauty and entertainment. African-American corporate involvement in South Africa is necessarily classed, since corporate representatives are economically privileged African-Americans, and the images these corporations market for consumption (and which their representatives typically embody themselves) are also classed. The "look" their products are associated with and claim to provide often signifies upward class mobility in an American context, and marketers consciously attempt to tap into these ideas in other markets.

Among other things, social status in American cultural contexts is very much entwined with particular standards of beauty (Collins 1991; Bonner 1991; Bordo 1992; Jones 1994; Russell 1996). In order for the slim, blond-haired, blue-eyed European to be beautiful, black women with classical African features - dark skin, broad noses, full lips, and kinky hair - must be beauty's antithesis. It is not surprising, then, that among African-Americans, even slight variations in skin color and hair texture have historically had incredibly high social significance, as upward class mobility was conflated with European physical characteristics. Like similarly bodily oppressed women in South Africa, African-American women have historically paid particularly close attention to their hair texture as a site of technological manipulation (toward straightness) and possible subversion of exclusive white claims to beauty (Erasmus 1997).

Popular press reports in South Africa reveal a similar concern with the technological manipulation of skin (toward lightness). It appears, then, that light skin and straight(ened) hair, among other commodity possessions, mark aspiration to, or realization of, higher social status in South Africa as well as the United States.

Beauty industry corporations know this. In an article detailing the international expansion of African-American-owned corporations, an executive at Pro-Line, a firm specializing in hair care, says the company targets countries "where blacks tend to assimilate to the dominant [white] culture", for international expansion. England is described as the "best" market because there is a "high literacy rate, a high enough income and an aesthetic consciousness about what is going on both [in the United States] and in Britain" (quoted in Whigham-Dèsir 1996: 72) These class and cultural markers, then, seem to be prerequisites for the appeal and consumption of Pro-Line's hair care products. Though the company's executives admit the necessity of "sensitivity" to the preferences of people in international markets where stylistic demands may be determined by different sets of meanings, the ultimate goal is to profitably "export our [African-American] culture" (p. 74).

A *Drum* magazine article entitled "Safe Way to a Lighter Complexion" (November 1996) discusses the widespread desire for lighter skin and demonstrates the discursive difficulty of subverting ideologies of certain images as particularly desirable. The article features the photograph of a woman holding a plain tube of some unknown substance and its headline declares, "A Cream for a Lighter Skin", followed by "Experts Tell how to Lighten and Protect your Face from the Sun" (Callaghan 1996: 26-27). Though the content of the article attempts to suggest that one need not have light skin to be beautiful, it nevertheless reinforces the importance of physical attractiveness in a woman's life. It also gets tangled in the ideology of the undesirability of dark skin even as it attempts to convey the opposite notion: "... some people still see themselves as too black and try [skin-lightening creams and] other dangerous methods. *But a safe sunblock does the job* ..." (p. 26; my italics). The implicit message is that there is, in fact, a job that needs to be done. Sunblock is valued because it prevents (the apparent disaster of) becoming darker, rather than because it purportedly protects from overexposure to sun. The article also cites a woman who "even though she has a very black skin ... has never used skin lighteners" as apparent inspiration for those who feel compelled to lighten their skin. Again, however, there is the potential disruption of an equation of dark skin with unattractiveness by the story of how the woman acquired her nickname, "Beauty", from being called "the dark dindy" (p. 27). The fact that her beauty must be qualified - her darkness noted - suggests that her beauty is unique

because of the rarity of both beauty and darkness in one face. Finally, "Beauty" herself admits to having used a cream called "Snow White", but only because it "worked as a make-up, not because I wanted to change my skin colour" (p. 27).

Discursive difficulties aside, perhaps more important to this paper is the *Drum* article's revelation of the perceived purveyors of particular looks. A doctor is cited as blaming the media for women's desire for lighter skin: "Although they push the 'black is beautiful' slogan, models and pin-ups they choose are often women with light skins and a Western appearance" (p. 26). *Drum* links such an appearance with (black) America, asserting that there is a forty-four-million-dollar medical and cosmetic industry in America for African-Americans who "can get anything they want: from artificial skin colors to replacements for hair, face, nose, hips and lips. All this is to make them look 'white' to be 'acceptable' to society" (p. 27). Whether blacks who lighten their skin want actually to "look white" is debatable.[16] Clearly, however, on both sides of the Atlantic there are perceived social benefits associated with the bodily attributes of a "Western appearance", particularly within the realm of skin color and hair texture.

Thus I find myself back where I started, with the issue of black Americans' virtual presence, imaged and imagined, in South Africa. *Drum's* (erroneous, I would argue) perception that African-Americans "can get anything they want" confirms a fantastical view of American blackness as essentially economically privileged and maintained through cosmetic hyperconsumption. Meanwhile, America's position as the pre-eminent imagemaker, from the proliferation of Hollywood's lavish big-screen productions to their music video soundbite equivalents, reconfirms a particular image of African-Americans, and supports corporate propagation of that image to black South Africans: "'Made in the U.S.A.' is still an attractive label to sell almost anything - from cosmetics to technology - abroad" (Whigham-Désir 1996: 70). One cosmetics company executive states: "The end-users of our products think that the best hair care products are made in the United States" (p. 70). Such companies are capitalizing well on that perception: the revenue for United States cosmetic companies exporting abroad more than doubled between 1989 and 1994 to reach $2.4 billion (p. 72).

Despite the increasing predominance of a consumption-based transatlantic relationship, there are indications of the desire and potential for more broadly advantageous interaction between African-Americans and blacks in various African nations. In an interesting conflation of all there is to hate about black American images, Paul Goldsmith lumps African-American senator Carol Mosely Braun's political associations with Nigeria's Sani Abache together with

Gangsta Rap and the notoriety of basketball star Denis Rodman (Goldsmith 1997: 10) If nothing else, we are reminded that the popular is political. South Africa's potential salvation of American corporate sectors through the provision of new consumers of particular American images may index a divergence along class lines in the political interests of blacks of both countries. Despite this divergence, even Goldsmith suggests the possibility and desirability of continued connectedness:

> Black America and sub-Saharan Africa retain so much in common after centuries of separation. Moreover, without doing anything much, the USA has emerged as the dominant influence in Africa at the moment the continent is undergoing dynamic changes; the brothers would do well to move beyond the Africa of Mansa Musa and seize the opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation.
>
> (Goldsmith 1997: 10)

The idea of connectedness and its "salvific" potential on both sides of the Atlantic endures.

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Notes

1. For the purposes of this paper I refer to black peoples in America as African-American, in keeping with generally accepted preferences. I understand African-Americans to be part of a broader category which I term "black", a category I define as predicated on contemporary and/or historical experiences of systematic oppression stemming from ideologies of raced subjectivity. In this conceptualization, the category "black" is made up of people of various nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and physical characteristics. "Blackness" does not suggest homogeneity or a lack of internal contradictions and conflicts. I refer to both African-Americans and black Americans, using the latter to connote a broader idea of blackness in America which transcends the national boundaries of the United States.

2. Such sweeping language can potentially falsely homogenize Americans *and* South Africans. Nonetheless, I do believe it is possible to talk about general trends.

3. "South African" in common African-American discourse is typically conflated with "black", and the phrase "black South African" is considered redundant. I use this phrase, however, to underscore that when African-Americans think and talk of South Africa in general, we are typically referring specifically to black South Africa. This generalization is supported both by the numerical majority status of black South Africans, and the pervasive assumption that with the election of President Mandela, white economic and political domination was defeated.

4. To underscore the multidirectional and cross-temporal web of black Atlantic influences as Gilroy describes it, I draw attention to the fact that the AME church, though an American denomination, was founded in the 1780s by free Africans in New York who were members of the (originally British) Episcopal Church. They formed their own denomination in protest of racist Episcopal Church policies.

5. For an intriguing discussion of how little progress has been made in deconstructing the myths of Africa in the contemporary American imagination, see especially Comaroff (1992).

6. Personal communication, 1 June 1997.

7. Personal communication, 7 July 1997.

8. Personal communication, 7 July 1997.

9. Personal communication, 7 July 1997.

10. Personal communication, 15 July 1997.

11. I acknowledge that apartheid-era policies continue to shape people's everyday lives and experiences, as well as that the struggle against apartheid's racial oppression was only one part of a broader South African struggle against economic oppression, which has yet to be realized. This is likewise the case in the United States, where despite the legislative successes of the Civil Rights movement, racial oppression is far from dead, and economic struggles have been sidelined.

12. "First Black Airforce Pilot" and "First Car Dealership Owned by Black Women", *Ebony South Africa* 1(10).

13. "Carter Drew: the Man Behind SA McDonald's", "Dora Ndaba: From Rags to Riches: Former Taxi Driver is now Marketing Director of a Multimillion-rand Food Processing Company" and "Blacks on the Cutting Edge of the Computer

Revolution", *Ebony South Africa* 1(12).

14. Hans Massaquoi, "Mbeki in America: Deputy President Makes Big Impression with his Intellect, Sense of Humour and Style", *Ebony South Africa* 1(10): 50.

15. *Ebony South Africa* 1(10): 50

16. A similar article quotes a doctor as saying: "They [people who lighten their skin] don't want actually to look white, because that is not their ideal". He equates skin lightening among blacks with suntanning among whites, suggesting that "in both cases the individuals wanted to impress, and improve their chance in life". He adds, however, that this is an "irrational" pursuit. ("Skin Bleaching Fad Spreads in Africa", *The New Vision* (Kampala, Uganda) 24 June 1997, p. 17).

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