

Debating The Afropolitan: Challenging the Concept of African Identity



Debating the Afropolitan by Pietro Bartolo

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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The term 'Afropolitan' was coined in the early 2000s by Nigerian writer Taiye Selasi to describe a new generation of Africans who are cosmopolitan, educated, and globally-minded. These individuals are often seen as the embodiment of a new Africa, one that is modern, progressive, and connected to the world.

However, the concept of the Afropolitan has also been met with criticism. Some argue that it is an elitist term that excludes the vast majority of Africans who do not fit the stereotype of the cosmopolitan, educated elite. Others argue that it is a dangerous term that essentialises African identity and ignores the diversity of the continent.

In this article, we will explore the complex and multifaceted nature of African identity, challenging the concept of the Afropolitan and its implications for the African diaspora.

The Origins of the Afropolitan Concept

The term 'Afropolitan' was first used by Taiye Selasi in her 2005 essay "Bye-Bye Barbar: On Blackness and Belonging." In this essay, Selasi argued that a new generation of Africans was emerging, one that was not defined by its relationship to the West but by its own unique identity.

These Afropolitans, Selasi wrote, were "Africans who are not necessarily citizens of any particular country, but who feel a sense of belonging to the continent as a whole." They were "comfortable in their own skin, proud of their heritage, and yet open to the world."



Selasi's essay resonated with many young Africans who felt that they did not fit into the traditional categories of African identity. They were not the poor, uneducated villagers that were often depicted in the media. They

were not the corrupt, kleptocratic leaders that were responsible for so much of the continent's problems.

Instead, they were a new generation of Africans who were proud of their heritage but also open to the world. They were educated, cosmopolitan, and globally-minded.

The concept of the Afropolitan quickly gained traction, and soon there were Afropolitan magazines, websites, and conferences. Afropolitanism became a symbol of a new Africa, one that was modern, progressive, and connected to the world.

The Criticisms of the Afropolitan Concept

However, the concept of the Afropolitan has also been met with criticism. Some argue that it is an elitist term that excludes the vast majority of Africans who do not fit the stereotype of the cosmopolitan, educated elite.

Others argue that it is a dangerous term that essentialises African identity and ignores the diversity of the continent.



Critics of the Afropolitan concept argue that it is based on a false dichotomy between the traditional and the modern. They argue that there is no such thing as a single, authentic African identity. Instead, African identity is fluid and diverse, encompassing a wide range of beliefs, values, and practices.

They also argue that the Afropolitan concept is based on a romanticised view of Africa. They argue that the reality of life for most Africans is very different from the glamorous image of cosmopolitan, educated elites that is often portrayed in the media.

Despite these criticisms, the concept of the Afropolitan continues to be popular with many young Africans. They see it as a way of asserting their own identity, independent of the West. They see it as a way of saying that they are proud to be African, but they are also open to the world.

The Implications of the Afropolitan Concept for the African Diaspora

The concept of the Afropolitan has important implications for the African diaspora. It challenges the traditional view of the diaspora as a group of people who are cut off from their homeland. Instead, it suggests that the diaspora is a vibrant and dynamic part of the African community, with its own unique identity and culture.

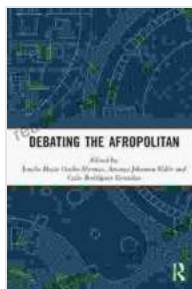
The Afropolitan concept also provides a new framework for understanding the relationship between the diaspora and the continent. It suggests that the diaspora is not simply a source of remittances and investment, but a partner in the development of Africa.



The Afropolitan concept is a powerful and challenging one. It challenges traditional notions of African identity and suggests a new way of thinking

about the relationship between Africa and its diaspora.

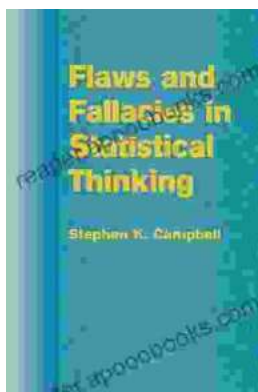
Whether or not you agree with the concept of the Afropolitan, it is important to engage with it and to understand its implications for the African diaspora.



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