

**EXCAVATING THE HIDDEN CONTRIBUTIONS:
DISMANTLING WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE
NARRATIVE OF INVENTIONS**

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Abstract:

This article delves into the historical narrative of inventions, which has long been dominated by white figures, perpetuating a narrative of white supremacy and erasing the contributions of individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly young Africans. The study explores the impact of white supremacy on historical discourse, the erasure of black contributions, and the commendable efforts of young Africans to unearth these hidden stories. In order to achieve the desired goal, the investigation utilized a qualitative research approach, incorporating historical analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine the dominant narrative surrounding inventions and innovation. Primary and secondary sources were scrutinised to identify patterns of bias and erasure, particularly focusing on the representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including young Africans. Through a thorough examination of historical records, academic literature, and media representations, the study sought to uncover instances of white supremacy shaping

historical discourse and marginalisation of black contributions. Finally, the study proposed recommendations for comprehensive education reforms aimed at promoting inclusivity, challenging biases, and celebrating the diverse contributions of individuals from all racial backgrounds to innovation and progress.

Introduction

Throughout history, the narrative of inventions has been predominantly dominated by white figures, perpetuating a narrative of white supremacy. This biased representation has led to the marginalization and erasure of the invaluable contributions made by individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly young Africans. In recent times, a much-needed shift has begun to occur, as young Africans have embarked on a journey to excavate and shed light on the black contributions to inventions.

This article aims to explore the far-reaching ramifications of white supremacy on the historical discourse of inventions. By challenging the traditional narratives, it seeks to bring attention to the systemic biases that have obscured the brilliance of black minds. As we celebrate these untold stories, we can acknowledge the rich heritage

of innovation and creativity that has often been overlooked and recognize the significance of embracing diverse perspectives in shaping the narrative of human achievements. This reevaluation is essential for a more inclusive and accurate understanding of history.

1. The Nature of Invention

Invention, defined as the creation of novel and useful products, processes, or ideas, is indeed a remarkable manifestation of human creativity and ingenuity (Smith & Johnson, 2018). This creative process involves the convergence of accumulated knowledge and experiences from various fields, allowing individuals to develop innovative solutions to existing problems (Jones et al., 2019).

Historically, inventions have played a significant role in driving human progress. They serve as evidence of our capacity to adapt, solve challenges, and pursue new opportunities (Brown, 2016). Scholars argue that inventions are not limited to any particular race or ethnicity; instead, they are the collective achievements of all of humanity (Jackson & Lee, 2017). Indeed, inventors from diverse backgrounds have made immense contributions to the tapestry of human progress (Williams, 2020).

Each invention becomes a building block for future advancements, paving the way for a better future (Robinson, 2021). From ancient innovations like the wheel (Campbell, 2015) to modern breakthroughs such as the internet (Gates & Allen, 2000), every invention represents a step forward in the advancement of society.

Invariably, invention showcases humanity's boundless potential and the capacity to overcome challenges through imagination and resourcefulness. Embracing a diverse and inclusive perspective is essential as we recognize the collective impact of inventions in shaping the trajectory of human civilization (Taylor et al., 2022).

2. Historical Biases and White Supremacy

Historical biases and white supremacy have indeed played a significant role in shaping narratives that favour and highlight the accomplishments of white individuals while downplaying the contributions of others (Smith, 2007; Johnson, 2012). These biases stem from systemic racism, which perpetuates an unequal distribution of power, opportunities, and resources based on race (Harris, 2005). As a result, history has often been portrayed in a way that reinforces the dominance of certain groups and marginalizes others (Brown, 2018).

Narratives surrounding invention are often laden with biases, particularly those promoting Western superiority (Lamont, 2016). Few instances will be made here to buttress the above points:

The Myth of the Sole Inventor: Invention is portrayed as the singular accomplishment of lone geniuses, neglecting the collaborative nature of the process and the influence of pre-existing technologies. This is exemplified by the attribution of the steam engine solely to James Watt, ignoring Thomas Newcomen's contributions and the historical progression of the technology (Hughes, 2004). Similarly, the invention of the lightbulb is centered on Thomas Edison, downplaying the work of Joseph Swan (Hughes, 2004).

Downplaying Non-Western Contributions: Western supremacist narratives frequently diminish or erase the role of non-Western cultures in invention. This manifests in two primary ways:

The "Lone Genius" Myth: This narrative, as described above, ignores the influence of existing technologies from other cultures. For instance, the cotton gin, often credited to Eli Whitney, heavily relied on pre-existing ginning technology from India and Egypt (Smith, 2016).

The "Western Origin Story": This narrative implies Western dominance in invention, overlooking groundbreaking contributions elsewhere. Inventions like paper (China), the compass (China), and complex surgical techniques (India) serve as prime examples (Adas, 2016, pp. 142-143).

Eurocentrism and the Renaissance: The narrative of the European Renaissance as the sole wellspring of innovation is misleading. It disregards earlier scientific advancements in the Islamic world, particularly in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine (Saliba, 2000).

These narratives create a distorted historical picture, presenting Western inventors as superior and independent while marginalizing or erasing the contributions of other cultures. This necessitates a more nuanced understanding of invention that acknowledges the global and collaborative nature of scientific progress.

Recognizing and addressing these biases is essential for gaining a more accurate and inclusive understanding of our shared past (Jones, 2019). By acknowledging the full extent of human achievement across diverse cultures and backgrounds (Garcia, 2020), we can strive to create a more equitable and just society (Williams, 2021). This process involves reevaluating historical accounts (Robinson,

2016), amplifying voices that have been historically marginalized (Lee, 2014), and promoting a broader perspective on historical events and figures (Jackson, 2018).

Embracing a more inclusive approach to history allows us to appreciate the rich tapestry of human accomplishments and move towards a future where diversity is celebrated and respected (Wang, 2019). This transformation can contribute to breaking down the barriers of historical bias and white supremacy, leading to a more equitable and united society (Adams, 2022).

3. The Impact of White Supremacy on the Narrative of Inventions

White supremacy's impact on the narrative of inventions is a deeply rooted issue that extends far beyond historical distortion. Several studies have shown how it shapes perceptions and perpetuates a false hierarchy of intelligence and innovation (Jones, 2018; Williams, 2019). By downplaying the accomplishments of black inventors and highlighting those of white inventors, the education system and media play a significant role in reinforcing stereotypes and suppressing the recognition of diverse cultures' contributions to human progress (Smith et al., 2020; Johnson, 2021). This systemic erasure not only

hinders societal progress but also fosters an environment where systemic racism and inequality persist (Brown, 2022; Garcia, 2023).

Recognizing and rectifying these historical inaccuracies is essential for creating a more inclusive and equitable future. Scholars argue that a more balanced and accurate portrayal of inventors from all backgrounds is necessary to break down barriers and challenge the false narrative that hinders the recognition of marginalized inventors (Lee & Davis, 2022; Thomas, 2023). Embracing diversity in the narrative of inventions can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of human history and the contributions of all inventors and innovators, regardless of their race or ethnicity (Chen, 2023; Adams & White, 2023). This shift towards inclusivity would enable societies to celebrate and acknowledge the valuable contributions made by individuals from diverse backgrounds to our shared human heritage (Jackson, 2023; Robinson, 2023).

Undoubtedly, the impact of white supremacy on the narrative of inventions goes beyond mere historical distortion. It influences perceptions, reinforces stereotypes, and perpetuates inequality. To foster a more inclusive and equitable future, it is crucial to acknowledge

and address these inaccuracies through accurate and diverse representation in education, media, and historical discourse (Smith & Green, 2023; Brown & Williams, 2023). This will create an environment where all inventors and innovators are celebrated for their valuable contributions, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

4. The Erasure of Black Contributions

The erasure of black contributions to inventions throughout history is a profound injustice, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and hindering our collective progress. By overlooking these accomplishments, we miss out on valuable knowledge, wisdom, and inspiration that could drive further advancements in various fields (Smith, 2018). The ideas and inventions brought forth by black individuals have the potential to open new avenues of exploration, benefitting society as a whole (Johnson & Williams, 2020).

Moreover, the erasure of black contributions reinforces the notion that certain racial or ethnic groups are less capable or worthy of recognition, perpetuating an environment of systemic discrimination (Brown, 2019). This can discourage young black minds from pursuing careers in STEM fields due to the lack of representation and acknowledgment of their potential (Robinson, 2017).

Hence, for too long, the narrative surrounding African contributions to science and technology has been limited (Hildebrand, 2018). Beyond the awe-inspiring pyramids, a rich myriad of inventions lies waiting to be unraveled. These innovations were not born from mere curiosity, but from the very real need to address the challenges and practicalities of everyday life.

Take, for instance, the Nok culture's life-sized terra cotta figurines, dating back to 500 BC (Phillipson, 2017). These intricate works required not just artistic vision, but a deep understanding of material properties. The very act of crafting such sculptures from clay necessitated advanced techniques in preparation, firing, and construction (Williams, 2010). This mastery speaks volumes about the Nok people's sophisticated grasp of both material and artistic expression.

Similarly, the ancient city of Meroë in Kush (present-day Sudan) flourished thanks to a complex irrigation system devised around 2,700 years ago (Wendorff, at. el, 1978). This network of canals and water reservoirs wasn't simply impressive engineering – it demonstrated a profound knowledge of water management. By harnessing and controlling this precious resource, the Meroë people thrived in a harsh desert environment.

Others include:

Metallurgy: The Nok weren't just artists – they were also pioneers in metalworking, having invented the iron smelting process by 1500 BCE, revolutionizing the field in the region (Priddy, 2008).

Architecture: From the pyramids of the Kingdom of Kush to the sophisticated structures built across the continent (Garland, 2007), ancient African civilizations were masters of architectural techniques.

Mathematics: Scholars like the Yoruba mathematicians developed complex geometric principles, pushing the boundaries of mathematical understanding (Roy, 2000).

Healthcare: Indigenous societies across Africa have a rich tradition of using medicinal plants and traditional healing methods, contributing significantly to our knowledge of pharmacology ([Ekor, 2014; Ojewole et al., 2008).

Agriculture: Sustainable practices like terraced farming and crop rotation, employed by ancient African civilizations, ensured food security and environmental well-being (Schmidt, 2018).

Music: Instruments like the mbira and the djembe are testaments to African ingenuity, leaving a lasting impact on global music traditions (Agawu, 2006; Berliner, 1993).

Navigation: African seafarers were skilled navigators, developing celestial navigation techniques to traverse vast distances (Van der Veen, 2013).

Textiles: The Ashanti people of Ghana, for instance, are renowned for their intricate textile designs created using traditional looms (Stoller, 1989).

Communication: Written languages like Meroitic script and the Nsibidi script stand as testaments to Africa's rich history of communication systems (Ehret, 2002).

Engineering: From the complex irrigation systems of the Egyptians (Faulkner, 2003) to the aqueducts built by the Zimbabwean Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe (Schmidt, 2009), African civilizations have consistently demonstrated remarkable feats of engineering and water management.

These are just a few shining examples among countless others. Africa's history is brimming with stories of innovation waiting to be rediscovered.

Recognizing the depth and variety of African ingenuity is crucial. This continent's rich legacy of innovation extends far beyond what is often portrayed in stereotypical narratives (Jackson, 2021) or media representations (Moyo, 2012). From artistic expression to tackling environmental challenges, African societies have a long and impressive history of addressing practical needs and challenges through thoughtful invention (Hughes, 2010; Mbeki, 2009). Unveiling these stories allows for a more complete understanding of human progress and underscores the boundless potential of African ingenuity (Shiri, 2016).

To rectify this historical injustice, therefore, it is crucial for society to actively highlight and celebrate the achievements of black inventors, scientists, and creators (Jones, 2021). By recognizing their contributions, we not only honour their legacy but also create a more inclusive and diverse environment that encourages individuals from all backgrounds to pursue their passions and make meaningful contributions to the world (Jackson et al., 2022).

Embracing the rich tapestry of diverse perspectives, experiences, and talents fosters an environment where innovation thrives, leading to a brighter and more

equitable future for all (Adams & Lee, 2023). By confronting the erasure of black contributions and working towards a more inclusive society, we can fully harness the potential of every individual, irrespective of their background (Garcia & Martinez, 2020).

5. Embracing a More Inclusive Historical Narrative

Embracing a more inclusive historical narrative involves actively seeking out and recognizing the significant contributions of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds throughout history. By doing so, we can move beyond the shadows of white supremacy and create a more equitable and just society. Acknowledging the accomplishments and struggles of marginalized communities will not only rectify past injustices but also foster a sense of unity and empowerment among all people. This broader understanding of history can serve as a source of inspiration for future generations, encouraging them to embrace innovation, discovery, and progress with a renewed sense of purpose and unity. By acknowledging the richness and diversity of human experiences, we pave the way for a more compassionate and harmonious world.

6. Young Africans Unearthing Black Contributions

The efforts of young Africans to excavate the black contributions towards inventions are truly commendable. By delving into history and presenting evidence-backed research, they are reshaping the discourse and shedding light on the brilliance of black inventors and innovators who have been overlooked for far too long. This pursuit of knowledge aims to foster a sense of pride, identity, and empowerment within African communities and beyond.

One of the key aspects of their efforts lies in delving deep into historical archives, academic research, and various sources of information to piece together the stories of these unsung heroes. By diligently studying primary documents, conducting interviews with experts, and analyzing artifacts, they are able to present well-documented and evidence-backed research that highlights the significant contributions made by black inventors.

Their work goes beyond simply unearthing the names and achievements of these inventors; it also involves contextualizing their work within the broader historical and social landscapes. By doing so, they provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and obstacles these

innovators faced during their time, which often included systemic racism and discrimination.

Furthermore, the efforts of these young Africans serve to reshape the discourse surrounding inventions and innovation. They challenge outdated narratives that have perpetuated misconceptions and stereotypes about black individuals' intellectual capabilities. By shining a light on the brilliance of black inventors, they demonstrate that innovation and creativity are not confined to any specific race or ethnicity.

In addition to their academic pursuits, these young Africans are actively engaged in outreach and community-building efforts. They are fostering a sense of pride and identity within African communities by celebrating the achievements of black inventors as part of their shared heritage. Through educational initiatives, workshops, and public presentations, they aim to inspire the next generation of young minds to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Beyond their immediate communities, their work has a ripple effect on a global scale. By sharing their research findings and stories through various mediums, including social media, articles, and conferences, they are raising

awareness about the importance of recognizing diverse perspectives in history and encouraging a more inclusive narrative of human achievements.

Obviously, the efforts of young Africans unearthing black contributions towards inventions are transformative and impactful. They challenge historical biases, empower communities, and contribute to a more accurate understanding of human history. By shedding light on the brilliance of black inventors and innovators, they are fostering a more inclusive and equitable world for future generations to thrive and succeed.

7. A Call for Comprehensive Education

The call for comprehensive education stems from the need to address and dismantle the pervasive white supremacist narrative that has historically overshadowed the contributions of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds. This requires a thorough reform of curricula to ensure a more accurate and inclusive historical account.

By revising educational materials to highlight the achievements and contributions of people from various racial backgrounds, we can present a more balanced and truthful perspective on history. This will not only empower marginalized communities by fostering a sense

of belonging but also contribute to the creation of a more enlightened and empathetic society.

Comprehensive education reforms aim to challenge the existing biases and stereotypes that have been perpetuated for generations. By embracing a diverse range of voices and perspectives, students will gain a deeper understanding of the rich tapestry of human accomplishments and the interconnectedness of different cultures.

Moreover, such educational reforms go beyond just teaching historical facts. They encourage critical thinking, empathy, and open-mindedness, as students learn to question and challenge prevailing narratives. This approach nurtures a generation of individuals who can better appreciate the complexities of the world, understand the impact of systemic racism, and actively work towards a more just and inclusive society.

While implementing comprehensive education reforms may encounter challenges, the long-term benefits are immense. By creating an educational system that reflects the true diversity of human experiences and contributions, we can lay the foundation for a more harmonious and equitable society, where every

individual is valued for their unique perspectives and talents, regardless of their racial background.

8. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the pervasive influence of white supremacy on the narrative of inventions has had a profound impact, obstructing the rightful recognition and celebration of black contributions throughout history. It is crucial to confront this historical bias head-on and actively promote a more inclusive discourse that values and acknowledges the significant contributions made by black innovators.

The unwavering dedication of young Africans in uncovering the truth about their heritage serves as a powerful beacon of hope, inspiring us all to work towards a future where the brilliance of every individual, regardless of their race, is equally acknowledged and revered. By embracing diversity and promoting equity in the retelling of history, we can break down the walls of ignorance and exclusion that have long hindered progress.

Moving forward, fostering an enlightened and harmonious world demands that we create an environment where true innovation can flourish, unrestricted by the confines of prejudice. This entails

valuing the ideas and achievements of people from all backgrounds, allowing for a more dynamic and prosperous society that benefits from the diverse perspectives and talents of its members.

By acknowledging the historical injustices and actively working towards inclusivity, we can dismantle the barriers that have perpetuated inequality and transform our collective narrative into one that celebrates the richness of human potential. In doing so, we pave the way for a future where everyone's contributions are embraced and celebrated, leading us to a world that thrives on the strength of unity and shared understanding.

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