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The Afrocentric Imperative in Tackling African Environmental Challenges: Afroecosolidarity Perspectives

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*Africa, Afrocentric,
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Africa is not exempted from environmental challenges. Environmental challenges in the continent include desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, gas flaring, overpopulation, resource wars, multidimensional poverty, oil spillage and pollution. The challenge is that in the process of seeking solutions to the environmental crisis in Africa, solutions rooted in African indigenous ecological values may be neglected or sidelined in preference for Western or Eurocentric ideologies and philosophies. This paper argues that there is a need to pay attention to environmental solutions based on indigenous ecological ideals and values. African solutions to her environmental problems should be Afrocentric, sourced from an Afroecosolidarity perspective. A critical hermeneutic and analytic method is adopted here to help understand the issues that the paper deals with. The paper finds that there is an undue privileging of Western ideas in the search for solutions to African environmental problems. The paper concludes that solutions to African environmental problems should be both Afrocentric and also informed by the value of Afroecosolidarity.

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INTRODUCTION

It is rarely in dispute in contemporary times if there is an environmental crisis. It is the degree and extent that may be disputed. The environmental crisis refers to the environmental degradation, exploitation, and devastation that makes life difficult for humans and other species on Earth. Park (2012) states that the term, “environmental crisis” is used to refer to:

... the sum of the environmental problems that we face today. Key contemporary environmental problems include the greenhouse effect and global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, acid rain, and tropical forest clearance. New dimensions to the environmental crisis include emerging threats and the global nature, rapid build-up, and persistence of the problems. Whilst the problems appear to be largely physical (environmental), the causes and solutions lie much more in people's attitudes, values, and expectations (p. 1).

With reference to the African continent, there is a preponderance of environmental problems that constitute the environmental crisis. Oil spillage and pollution degrade the environment and negatively impact the lives of people in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. There is deforestation in Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. In the Horn of Africa and other Eastern African countries, in the Sahel and North Africa terrorism is rampant, which has led to the destruction of lives and properties. The presence of Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Islamic State of West Africa, and other terrorist groups is real. Terrorism is an aspect of the environmental crisis for it negatively impacts both human lives and the natural landscape. The countries in Sub-Saharan Africa bordering the Sahara Dessert are threatened by desertification and the desert is encroaching into those countries.

As Park (2012) notes solutions to the environmental crisis will come from “people’s attitudes, values and expectations” (p. 1). The central thesis of this paper is that there is a need for home-grown solutions based on African value systems. Often, Africa has looked too much for

solutions from the West neglecting their indigenous knowledge systems. There is a need for Africa to be Afrocentric. This is where the philosophy of Afroecosolidarity comes into play. As a manner of procedure, the paper will make some conceptual analyses, followed by an examination of the environmental challenges in Africa. Then the need for an Afrocentric perspective in tackling the environmental crisis in Africa will be deciphered. It is in light of that that the Afroecosolidarity vantage point shall be presented. It is imperative to note here that not all aspects of the issue at hand can be taken within the limited scope of this work. The paper takes Afrocentricity for granted and will not go into its history. The focus is on what it is and what it can do to help in solving African environmental problems.

ANALYSES OF CONCEPTS

Key terms that require explanation here are Afrocentric, Afroecosolidarity, and environmental challenges. Afrocentric refers to whatever is focused on Africa or African descent. It is what is informed by the African experience in a positive and healthy manner. It must be from the vantage point of Africa and the benefit of her people. Mungai et al. (2019) aver that the Afrocentric is concerned with treating people of Africa and African ancestry as subjects of their own history, philosophy, and culture, and not objects; and contradicts Eurocentric paradigms that marginalize African people. Nkosinkulu (2021) writes that the implication of the Afrocentric is that Africans should relate to the world from their own indigenous knowledge. Chawane (2016) writes that it means black people should see all things, especially knowledge from their indigenous perspective, and see themselves as central actors, agents, and participants in their history and not peripheral or marginal. Asante (2010) writes that: “Afrocentricity is a philosophical paradigm that emphasizes the centrality and agency of the African person within a historical and cultural context...It is a rejection of the historic marginality and racial alterity often expressed in the ordinary paradigm of European racial domination” (p. 35).

The term, “Afroecosolidarity” is well discussed by Ikeke (2021), who defines it as follows: “Afroecosolidarity...or African ecological solidarity stands for the reality that ecosolidarity is an African value and indigenous way of life” (p. 323). It is not enough for human beings to recognize their relationships or their intrinsic links with the earth or the land, they should deliberately and decisively stand in unison or unity with the earth. Solidarity is not only a human value but also an ecological value. It calls for action for the wellbeing of the earth and the ecosystems. Acting for the wellbeing and welfare of the earth is central to African understanding of the human being as being in communion with the earth. Ikeke (2023) states elsewhere that: “Afroecosolidarity is an affirmation of the African value of communalism and togetherness in standing as a being with others and acting for the wellbeing and welfare of those other lives whether they be human lives or non-human lives” (p. 33). The power of the Supreme Being is present in human beings and all beings in the universe. The notion of seeing all beings and realities in the universe as kins that is found in global indigenous traditions is prevalent in African cultures. “Afroecosolidarity” is akin to a philosophy of cosmic unity.

Eneyo (2019) asserts that there is unity in the universe. All things are interrelated, though each individual thing is unique and is not independent of other beings, and there should be respect for all beings. Whatever affects one affects all. As the great Christian apostle Saint Paul will note, all the parts of a human being or body are important and need one another. When one part suffers all other parts suffer. In Pauline theology, suffering in the world is not just human but cosmic. He speaks of the whole cosmos groaning in bondage and awaiting liberation in “Christification” (the process of things becoming Christ-like). This process could also be called “cosmofication” (all things fulfilling the purpose for which the universe exists.) “Afroecosolidarity” is deeply concerned about the plight of sufferings of both humans and non-humans on the earth. The human duty rooted in the African spirit of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa*, and *Ukama* should preferentially opt to

ameliorate this suffering. African Ubuntu means “I am because we are”. *Ujamaa* means brotherhood, fraternity, and community. The fraternity community is not just only human beings but all lives in the cosmos. *Ukama* means “I am because of all things in existence”.

Also requiring explanation here is the notion of environmental challenges. The environment generally refers to all that surrounds a thing or being or any reality. The environment includes air, land, water, and all that is in the universe. Biology Online Editors (2023) write that environment refers to the resources, conditions, and surroundings that an organism interacts with and this environment affects the survival, growth, and development of the organisms. Human beings live in the environment. Non-human beings and all cosmic entities live in the environment. The social environment refers to the environment in which human beings live, interact, and carry out their activities. The natural environment refers to non-human aspects of the environment not made by human beings. The built environment refers to buildings, factories, industries, and other residences built by human beings. Environmental challenges refer to all the problems that human beings battle with in relation to the environment. These problems are often anthropogenic or caused by human activities. Environmental challenges include oil spillage and pollution, land and marine pollution, climate change, human-wildlife conflicts, resource wars, improper waste management, and so forth.

AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The causes of environmental problems are often the same everywhere in the world. The impact for instance of oil pollution in say Africa is likely to be the impact it has in a place by Asia or any other continent. Park (2012) writes that the following factors cause environmental problems: technological development (with more ability to master the environment humans have exploited more resources from nature from the time of the industrial revolution), population increase leading to more human production and consumption

depletes resources, production of more waste, liberal attitude to nature, and a market economy that values profit more than sustainability. Writing on the environmental challenges that Africa faces, United Nations Environment Programme (2023) states that: “Africa faces serious environmental challenges, including land degradation, deforestation, biodiversity loss and extreme vulnerability to climate change”.

A key environmental problem and challenge that Africa faces is deforestation. Pimm (2023) opines that deforestation is the felling of trees and forests for human use and activities. When trees are felled in a planned manner and the area is re-afforested, it is tolerable as human beings have a moderate right to use earth’s resources. A serious problem arises when trees and forests are felled carelessly for domestic and industrial uses without care for re-afforestation and what is happening to other organisms and their habitat. Nguyen (2023) writes:

Deforestation is one of the main factors that harm the ecological balance of the entire planet, not just Africa. Soil erosion, climate change, decreased rainfall, and many other unfavourable circumstances are partly the outcome of the clearance of forest cover for timber and agricultural land. Forested areas all across Africa have been cleared for many reasons, one of them being cocoa, one of the continent’s largest cash crops.

Another challenge that Africa faces is that of air pollution. This is one of the gravest problems in the continent. Wherever mining and oil exploration activities take place there is normally air and land pollution. Ikeke (2013) writes concerning the case of Nigeria’s Niger Delta: the Niger Delta is heavily polluted by oil and gas exploration activities. To date, there is still massive gas flaring in most areas in the Niger Delta. There are constant reports in the news of oil spillage and pollution in the Niger Delta. African cities such as Lagos, Kano, Accra, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Cairo, and many others are polluted by industrial activities. These cities are filled with inhabitants who make use of cars and

other vehicles. All through the continents there are poor environmental standards. Vehicles and other means of transportation pollute the air and not much is done about it. There should be no doubt that air pollution poses serious health hazards for human beings and other organisms in the environment. Nguyen (2023) writes that:

According to a 2019 NASA study, 780,000 premature deaths in Africa each year can be attributed to air pollution. High mortality rates are brought on by the expansion of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and South Africa, while deaths in West and Central Africa are mainly associated with fire emissions. According to a UNICEF research, outdoor air pollution deaths increased by 60% across Africa between 1990 and 2017. Air pollution in Africa can be traced back mainly to emissions of ozone, carbon monoxide, sulphur oxides, sulphates, soot, and organic carbon from the gas industry and cities, which together account for more than 300,000 deaths each year”.

A form of pollution that is posing a serious challenge to Africa is water pollution. The Last Well (2019) states that: “Contaminated water is a major threat among communities throughout Africa. Every hour, an estimated 115 people die in Africa from diseases linked to improper hygiene, poor sanitation, and contaminated water, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)”. The author of The Last Well writes further that: “There are a number of contributors to water scarcity, ranging from the dumping of industrial waste to rising temperatures due to global warming”. In a place like Nigeria, from the experience of these authors, people carelessly dump refuse and garbage into the rivers and streams around them thus polluting them.

Africa is also facing the problem of biodiversity loss. Almost all human activities cause biodiversity loss directly or indirectly. Africa is facing rapid pollution growth. Growth in pollution requires more houses and the creation of more industries and factories to meet human needs. Mining activities also lead to biodiversity loss. Nguyen (2023) writes:

The biodiversity of Africa is crucial to the world. The continent is home to 22% of the world's mammalian species, nearly a fifth of avian species, and one-sixth of all plant species. Of the 36 biodiversity hotspots worldwide, eight are found in the continent. They include numerous endemic species and are the richest and most biologically endangered regions globally. A number of factors, including population growth, extensive farming techniques, fast urbanisation, infrastructural development, and illegal trafficking, are causing the continent to see an unprecedented decline in biodiversity”.

Writing about the problems that oil spills can cause, Nguyen (2023) writes that crude oil spills each year in the Niger Delta kill people, harms ecosystems, cause infant and child mortality, and destroys houses and other properties. People have lost their livelihoods as a result of oil spills. Communities and the people in them are displaced and dislocated. There is a need for all these environmental problems to be combatted. And they should be tackled in an Afrocentric manner.

THE NECESSITY OF AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

A brief word on the origin and history of the Afrocentric idea or Afrocentrism is important here. Onyewuenyi (2015) notes that the Afrocentric movements originally comes from African and African American educators and scholars who were concerned about African cultural heritage, history, and contribution to world cultures and civilization. These scholars, as he notes, saw the frustrations and self-alienation that Africans and people of African descent were facing in their being miseducated by the Western educational systems that saw African culture as inferior. To be Afrocentric is to work to reclaim and reconstruct African culture and history. It is to take cultural pride in what Africans have achieved all through history. Africa has been misrepresented all through history in much of Western writings. Onyewuenyi (2015) rightly notes that:

In demanding recognition of Africa's cultural and intellectual contributions, Afrocentrism is not racist. It is not asking for the suppression or denial of any technological and intellectual achievements made by the Western world and its scholars. Its concern is to recover the history of Africans as it was and as it was acknowledged by world historians (Western and African) prior to slavery and imperialism (p. 40-41).

It is imperative that knowledge and education are decolonized. Environmental philosophy, environmental theology, environmental ethics, environmental movements, etc all need to be decolonized. Adams and Mulligan (2003) are authors that have discussed the need to decolonize nature. This is crucial so that African natives and lifeways that were vital to the sustenance of African societies are reclaimed. The crucial importance of indigenous knowledge and the need for decolonization is well documented by Semali and Kincheloe (1999) in their collection of voices from the academy. Having one's indigenous knowledge taught is a human right. It is not a privilege. The United Nations (2007) states that indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop, and be educated in their cultures, languages, literature, philosophies, etc. Ikeke (2023) has shown that in most places in Africa, colonial influences still pervade pedagogy and the entire educational project. All forms of decolonization in Africa should be informed by the Afrocentric mindset and ideology. African forms of knowing as Byrd and Jangu (2009) opine that some Western scholars see Africans as debased, inferior, primitive, and backward. There are still people in the West who believe this and so they continue to promote negative forms of Western education in Africa, this is unacceptable. Afrocentrism is a necessity and should help to recover and restore authentic African environmental history and practices.

The European hegemony of knowledge and intellectual discourse is still pervasive in many frontiers in Africa. With reference to environmental philosophy and ethics and discussion of how to solve the environmental

crisis even in Africa, it is European and North American theories that fill the textbooks and boardrooms. Even textbooks written by African scholars on environmental issues are inundated with Western theories. Take the following textbooks written by African scholars on environmental issues. African theories are presented as footnotes, an appendage to Western theories. *Sustainable Development: Issues and Challenges in Nigeria* by Oyeshola (2019) has no section devoted to environmental theories from an African perspective. Even when it mentions the role of religion in combating environmental challenges, it fails to take into serious account African religious environmental ideology. Sustainable development is a Western theory rooted in Western epistemology of seeing the earth as simply existing for human sustenance. It lacks ecocentric or biocentric dimensions. Its concern is keeping the earth for human welfare and survival in present and future times. *Environmental Ethics and sustainability: An introduction to Environmental Philosophy* by Ezedike (2020) treats topics such as idealism, materialism, mechanism, organicism, value theory, virtue ethics, ethical pluralism animal rights, deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, etc. Of the fifteen chapters in the book, only one is devoted to African cultural perspectives. This paper considers this to be extremely inadequate. This is like a continuous marginalization of the African environmental perspective. Environmental cultural perspectives such as Igbo ontology and eco-communitarianism, the Oromo, the Nso of Cameroon, and the Yoruba of Nigeria mentioned by Ezedike deserve their own chapters. When in the written curriculum of Environmental Ethics, the classes or topics are almost entirely devoted to Western environmental theories and then a class at the end of the semester is devoted to African environmental ethics, students are invertedly taught that African ethics is not as important as the Western ones. A look at African Environmental Ethics journals reveals the continuous marginalization of African Environmental Ethics. While Anah (2019) devotes chapter four of his book, *The Church, and her concern for the*

Environment: A Nigerian perspective to different theories on environment and conflict, there is no consideration of any indigenous African environmental theory. There is mention of the theories of Lynn White, Myrick Freeman, Karl Marx, Lewis Coser, etc. It is as if the African indigenous traditional theories cannot contribute to solving environmental conflicts.

A globalized world is also a multicultural world. It will be wrong to take into consideration other theories from Western cultures and fail to take the ones of Africa into consideration. Ezedike (2020) rightly argues that Africans have their unique environmental theories grounded in their theories of divine origin, existential experiences, and cultural affinity. Ezedike (2020) rightly affirms that African environmental ethics are “a systematic integration of both physical and metaphysical realities” and “this is hinged on the African belief that the physical interpenetrates the metaphysical and vice versa” (p. 280).

The debates on the existence or non-existence of African Philosophy are still fresh in the eyes of African scholars. Nkonsikulu (2021) while stating opponents of the Afrocentric ideas writes that: “Mary Lefkowitz, Stanley Crouch, and Anthony Appiah are some of the main opponents of the Afrocentric idea. The Western dogma which contends that Greeks gave the world rationalism effectively marginalizes those who are not European and becomes the leading cause of the disbelief about African achievements”. When African scholars continue to write books on Environmental Ethics and devote very little section to African environmental theories, they continue to marginalize the African viewpoint. Curtin (2005) correctly notes that: “...one of the great dangers of an environmental ethic is that it will reflect only those voices that are easily heard, our own. Justice, not to mention pragmatism, requires that a new environmental ethic be plural-voiced. At a deep level, it needs to reflect the world of diverse places and peoples” (p. ix).

African indigenous knowledge including environmental knowledge has contributed to African ancestors surviving and living through

generations of colonial oppression and marginalization. These knowledge systems are still relevant today. They can contribute to solving the environmental crisis. This is one reason why they must be continuously studied. Africans have been placed at the margin of world history and even in a globalized world, they are still being placed at the margin and periphery. They must assert their identity. In Biblical parlance, this is like a kind of Christological question. Jesus in Matthew 18 asked his own intimate disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Not what others say. In opposition to what other Jews said of Jesus of seeing him as Jeremiah, John the Baptist, or one of the ancient prophets, Peter counter-culturally says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. Africans must answer for themselves who they are in history and in contemporary times. For too long Africans have allowed others to define their identity. They should promote their own authentic values more than that of others. Asante (2010) states that Africans should centre themselves on their own experiences and not be at the margin of Eurocentric experience.

TACKLING AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES THROUGH AFROECOSOLIDARITY

What is the place of Afroecosolidarity in the African environmental crisis? Taking the vantage point of Afrocentrism, Afroecosolidarity argues that there are African indigenous eco-cultural values that hold viable tips in helping to mitigate the environmental problems in Africa. Afroecosolidarity is ecosolidarity that is Afrocentric or Afro-focused. It looks at the environmental crisis in Africa from an African viewpoint. Africans must be agents in solving their environmental problems and not waiting to implement Western solutions which are baked in the West to solve Western problems. Africans should stop echoing and parroting Western eco-solutions to the detriment of their own indigenously-grown solutions.

It is indigenous to Africa that Africans felt a deep and intimate affinity with the Earth. They felt solidarity and oneness with the Earth. They did

not see the Earth as distant from them. Most African rituals were deeply related to the Earth. A child is born and the umbilical cord is buried in the Earth showing the child’s rootedness and connection to the Earth. Africans saw the Earth as nurturing and nourishing mother and they prayed to the Supreme Being before taking from nature. This kind of attitude to the Earth matters. This attitude of reverence for nature needs to be re-awakened and revived. When there is a cultivation of this attitude to nature it can help to foster Earth protection. This attitude is different from a Western capitalist attitude that saw the Earth simply for its resources and what profit it can bring. How did indigenous Africans experience their environment before the brutal intrusion of Europeans into the continent? There are viable aspects of these pre-colonial experiences and thought systems that should be recovered. Africans experienced the Earth not as an object but as a subject. The Earth in some communities was perceived as divine, a “goddess”. Nwaigbo (2015) in drawing similarities between deep ecology and Igbo philosophy asserts that Igbo people are like other indigenous people in Africa, in their philosophy of life, there is a unity of creation, the universe is one holistic existence, “there is no strict boundary between nature and human habitats”, they reflect connectedness with natural sacred powers, and affirms harmony and balance in the universe which implies that nature is not to be exploited, abused. He argues further that Igbo philosophy affirms a community of life in which human beings have rights, and lives of plants, mountains, and other natural resources are to be protected from unbridled exploitation; and denying non-human beings such as birds, animals, and fish their rights also amount to injustice. In Igbo cosmological thought the earth is seen as Mother Earth.

The whole belief in communitarianism in Africa is ecocentric for the community for traditional Africans is not just the physical human community but also the world of the ancestors, the entire spirit world, unseen beings, vital forces, etc. All lives mattered in Africa, not just human lives. The practice of totems attests to this reality.

Totemic animals and plants show that humans have animals and plants as their kin. A vital practice in Africa that helped in sustainability and mitigating climate change is sacred groves. Sacred groves were so common in Africa in pre-colonial times. From colonial times till now, many of Africa's sacred groves have been killed or destroyed. Factors that have led to their destruction include Western religious missionary beliefs that saw all African religious practices as fetish, superstitious and un-Christian. These Christian beliefs were wrongly articulated. After some European missionaries taught African people to destroy their sacred groves, today in Western countries there are many "secular parks". And protected areas. You will wonder why did they tell us to cut down our sacred groves? In colonial times, while telling us to cut down our sacred groves, they were at the same time creating government reserved areas (GRA), where the Whiteman will stay. There is a fundamental need to reverse the erroneous teachings and practices of the Whiteman. In colonial times and for a long time after independence, many African people have no access to them. After independence, they became the preserve of rich politicians and economically wealthy Africans, and other elites. This is both economic and environmental injustice against our people. Maseno (2011) cites the great theologian H Richard Niebuhr who in his book, *Christ and Culture* proposed five various ways that Christ relates to culture (Christ above culture -exclusivist Christianity, Christ and culture in paradox-conflict between Christ and culture in a parallel manner, Christ the transformer of culture-reinvigorates human works, Christ of culture - focuses on elements of culture in agreement with the gospel and Christ against culture-no interaction between the gospel and culture). Many missionaries operated from the perspective of Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ against culture. The implication of these is that the missionaries often saw nothing good or worth keeping in African culture, including African environmental thoughts and practices/rituals. This missionary paradigm is still the one that many churches and Christians in Africa operate. These missionaries' attitudes and

outlooks are fundamentally erroneous for it is not true that there are no good values in African culture. This is one reason why there is a need for continuous decolonization even in Christian thought.

African environmental practices in which Africans showed solidarity with the ecological world are still relevant today. In traditional African villages and towns, there were no government-reserved areas. It goes against the African spirit of communalism. Afroecosolidarity requires seeing all lives both that of human beings and non-human beings as one planetary cosmological community. The universe is one community of life. It is the same spirit of the Supreme Being that rules in human beings that rules all life. The dualistic Western thought of radically seeing human beings as distinct and separate from other beings in the cosmos is not African. A reading of the Judeo-Christian scriptures reveals the story of God asking Noah in his generation to make an ark to save his family and also seven pairs of ritually clean animals and one pair of unclean animals. Noah was also to take birds into the ark. When Noah comes from the ark God makes a covenant with him and all creatures. This is what God says: "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark" (Genesis 9:9-10, RSV). The Biblical story of Noah could be read in a multicultural and even multi-religious and Afrocentric perspective. Like Noah and the humanity that emanated from him, Africans see themselves as being in covenant with the Supreme Being and also being in covenant with other creatures. This is why there is a deep respect for wildlife in Africa. Afroecosolidarity expresses the covenantal relationships that human beings have with God and all creatures. It is a bond of unity of eco-communal living. Environmental solutions to African ecological problems should recognize non-human creatures' realities that have subjective agency of their own. Nature or the environment is not just objects to be manipulated.

There is a communion of life in African culture. It behoves human beings to stand in ardent and active solidarity with all life—living, dead, animals, plants, spirits, etc. Muya (2003) rightly notes that in Sub-Saharan Africa that: “Life is not limited to the terrestrial world, but comes true the network of relations between the living and the dead... A careful analysis of this conception of life detects its going beyond the simple biological sense, so as to integrate the animal as well as the plant worlds... The African then considers himself as living in a life current that receives him, and that he shares with other beings beyond the self” (pp. 120-121). Afroecosolidarity is Afroecocommunity. Solidarity is useless if it is not with the entire community of life. Ecosolidarity is not sectional solidarity. It is solidarity with all of life grounded in African values of love and respect for life. In all that the African does then he should think about how it affects other lives and the welfare of other lives. Ecosolidarity is truly altruistic and benevolently compassionate when it sees the suffering that the environmental crisis has brought to other lives. In authentic solidarity, it struggles against all that is anti-ecological life. Afroecosolidarity is not a neutral value system. Its sides with the suffering earth and suffering humanity. It is a philosophy that mobilizes for ecological action or positive and healthy environmentalism. It seeks an eco-civilization in which both humans and other beings in the cosmos live in mutuality and cooperative existence. Mulago (1969) writes that life in Africa is communitarian and a communion for all existence draws from one common source and this requires solidarity, and this life is meaningless if there is no land. The land is what nurtures human life and other beings on Earth. Njoku (2002) cites Onwuejeogwu, who writes that a Western machine culture that devalues the earth and its ecological life should be rejected. The United Nations (1992) has seen and acknowledged that there are indigenous beliefs and values that help in combating the environmental crisis. The African value of ecological solidarity is such a belief and practice and should be upheld.

The authors of this paper categorically state that African environmental problems being peculiar to Africans merit African-generated solutions and not the solutions packaged in European environments. As previously noted, Afrocentrism is not a denial of viable or good ideas from the West. However, we have to guide against over-reliance on only African ideas. In essence, the solution must come from Africans. But Africans’ ideas and solutions to their environmental problems could benefit from inspiration from other environments on the grounds of we all share in humanity and live in one world as a home for all humans! Therefore, contributions of ideas from other environments should only be consulted to help to enrich what we already have as solutions to our African problems. The idea of Elkins (2019) is essentially the position of this work, that inputs from outside should never be ignored, but Africans should be the final decision-makers and arbiters in their matter. While reclaiming and reconstructing what is indigenously African; Africans are open to dialogue with other civilizations. This is not Eurocentrism. It is an enlightened Afrocentrism.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined the imperative of Afrocentrism in tackling African environmental challenges. It showed that the Afrocentric idea is necessary for Africa. The achievements, history, and culture of Africa for a long time has been vilified, denigrated, and suppressed. Many western scholars have condemned Africa as a land of superstitious and fetish beliefs. These are erroneous notions about Africa. The paper has highlighted that Africa has rich cultural values including indigenous environmental ideas and beliefs. These environmental beliefs were described here as Afroecosolidarity. It was noted that applying African ideas to solve African environmental problems does not mean Africa cannot accept healthy inputs from outside the continent, but it must be on African terms. Africa needs then enlightened Afrocentrism.

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