

FACULTY RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

“To be a *man* in these times:
Post-national identity and the education of Black Men (Boys)”

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An analysis of the academic performance of African-American students (and boys in particular) suggests a number of shortcomings in the current form of education. Among the shortcomings are a ‘culturally irrelevant pedagogy’ and a culturally biased out-comes oriented assessment system. Educators in the United States note the disproportionate representation of Black or African-American students in special education programs and the general nihilism prevalent in African-American youth. Other educators observe that recent Black African immigrants (in the United States) are comparatively more academically successful when compared with African-American students regardless of gender and socio-economic status. However, there have not been many theoretical forays into how the academic success of recent Black African immigrants can be used to bolster the academic achievement of African-American students, or on how the recent immigrants can build on the knowledge base of African Americans to survive societal and institutional discrimination. This paper examines some of the ways through which Black African and African American students can contribute toward their academic and social success by fostering a sense of social agency and collective identity. It also explores some of the ethical and historical obligations related to that contribution, as well as the need for Black Americans to continually rethink conceptions of Africa. This entails not only re-conceptualizing African-American masculinity, but also rethinking what it might mean to be a Black man within a post-national context. For those engaged in the education of young Black males, this paper examines some of the cross-cultural issues that might make it easier to nurture a spirit of academic engagement and success of African-American students.