

Rwomire, Apollo (2001). Social Science Problems in Africa: New Visions. Praeger. West Port, Connecticut. List Price \$67.95

The editor of Social Science Problems in Africa: New Visions, Dr. Appollo Rwomire, and the collaborators of the book, are on a mission. Their mission is to reinvent social science studies that would rid Africa of eurocentric and "americo-centric" textbooks which currently dominate the social science discipline. The book does not overtly call for change; rather, African scholars are asked to discover themselves and to grapple with their own problems. A major theme of the book is the call for a new social science paradigm allowing proactive movement into the twenty-first century. It is maintained that people who see themselves locked in the past cannot go places.

Questions spotlighted in this book include: What are social problems? What is the relationship between language and politics? What causes rural poverty? What are the causes of conflict in Africa? The authors present several real, compelling problems facing the continent with lucid illustrations. The book is divided into four sections.

The first section is the introduction where the editor attempts to define social problems. Section two presents repetitive information in an attempt to reinforce the concept of social problems into the mind of the reader. This reviewer finds this irksome when the same argument makes the same point. Notwithstanding, the argument presented in the two sections are stimulating and give the book strength. The third section of the book deals with poverty and inequality. This concentrates on the "Feminization of poverty in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa" and the migration of Africans to the cities. The writer attributes the problems to lack of employment and African governments inability to create jobs in rural settings. Section four of the book discusses "conflict and violence" in Africa. The authors in this section cast the blame on colonialism. One of these authors, Dr. Mushanga, supports this viewpoint by illustrating the unfortunate incidents that occurred in Rwanda and Burundi where the colonialists advanced the interests of the Batusi against the most populous Bahutu. The resentment, domination and oppression of the towering Batusi overlords who have dominated the Bahutu for centuries led to an insurrection. When this failed, the Buhutisi "exacted frightful vengeance by slaughtering" hundreds of thousands of Bahutu men, women and children.

The most compelling argument in the book deals with "Language and the Politics of Power: The Case Study of Africa." Dr. Kezilahabi captures the problem in the opening of chapter three in these words:

he continent of Africa has many theatrical performances of the absurd. One of them is being staged on the platform of language. The platform is raised for everyone to see. The tragic clowns on the stage are the African intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie of the neo-colonial

states of the continent. The peasantry is the audience which does not seem to understand what is going on, but what they can hear and see makes them laugh (p. 41).

Dr. Keilahabi sees the languages Africans inherited from their colonial masters, as oppressive to the masses who do not understand what their leaders are saying. For this reason, he has called for a language that is African specific. In his argument he leans towards Kiswahili. He believes that this would be capable of uniting the whole of Africa and, more importantly, bring long lasting democracy to the continent. How this is to be achieved in a continent with several thousands of languages is not explicit. To further complicate this proposal, every state in Africa is protective of its sovereignty. For example, Nigeria alone has more than 250 languages.

What is to be said about this book? The book is admirable for its clarity. The collaborators intelligently present their ideas. Scholars who are expert in their fields have prepared each chapter. As a result, this well written, never boring, book defines social problems in Africa. It represents a renaissance of thought in the right direction. The major identified deficit in this book lies in its failure to address the social problems in Northern Africa. Because the book focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, it makes the work parochial and biased in scope. Nevertheless, it is a noble attempt that calls for a new paradigm. It is a well-drawn social science book that would enliven the social science collection. The work represents a cross pollination of other disciplines.

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