

THE Skanner

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a Better Future Now

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R. Dallan Adams
Reporter

Monica J. Foster
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Susan Fried
Photographer



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415 N. Killingsworth St.
P.O. Box 5455
Portland, OR 97228

Telephone (503) 285-5555
Fax: (503) 285-2900

info@theskanner.com

www.TheSkanner.com

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Opinion

'Black' or 'African American'?

In a recent televised commentary, Dr. Greg Carr, chair of Howard University's Department of Afro-American Studies kick-started a stirring conversation that has mostly taken place inside the confines of Black communities around the country.

Carr tackled the sometimes-uncomfortable topic of identifying as Black versus African American.

"Despite the dictionary definitions, there is no term that truly describes people that were taken from Africa and forced into slavery," Carr said during commentary on Washington, D.C.'s WUSA.

NNPA Newswire followed up by reaching out to several individuals of color – Blacks, African Americans – in attempt to gain the pulse of just which way many lean.

"Many Africans who live in North America but were born and raised in Africa do not like to be labelled as Black," said Dr. Tapo Chimbanga, the founder of Future Black Female, an organization that helps create opportunities for Black female youth to participate fully and beneficially in academic, economic and social endeavors.

"Growing up in Africa, where almost everyone is Black makes it difficult for people who grow up in that environment to understand, grasp and identify with Black



Stacy M. Brown
NNPA
Columnist

as a signifier the same way that people born and raised in the West do," Chimbanga said.

"While Africans dealt with colonization and many of the

“I don't like to be called Black or African American because it doesn't define me and is dismissive of my heritage and ethnic makeup

same oppressive practices of white supremacy, they were a majority and once their leaders took over government, for the most part, oppression ceased to be about race and more about tribalism and ethnic rivalry," Chimbanga said.

Harvard and Yale-trained physician, Dr. Hisla Bates, said race is a social construct and shouldn't define anyone.

"I don't like to be called Black or African American because it doesn't define me and is dismissive of my heritage and ethnic makeup. I am from the Caribbean and prefer Caribbean American rather than African American," Bates said.

"There are so many ways to be 'Black' and so many mixtures and countries that when we define people by a single color, we miss multiple parts of who they are. That is true for Whites as well," she said.

Dr. Gail L. Thompson, the founder and CEO of Inspirations by Gail LLC, said "Black is a general term that includes anyone of African descent, including indigenous Africans, African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and immigrants."

very general term, Thompson said.

Hip Hop Activist and author Sean XLG Mitchell, said there's a significant difference between the labels of 'Black,' 'African American,' and 'People of Color.'

"If we use the term Black, we are doing ourselves a disservice. Black only identifies with the color of our skin but it has no cultural connections to who we are as a people," said Mitchell, the author of "How Do We Build A Real Wakanda?"

"As a result of our slave experience, we don't understand the power and purpose of culture and we seem to be naive in how we regard and respect the unifying principles of culture," Mitchell said.

"Other races of people benefit from employing a language, education, religion, names and customs that are centered around their historical experience and we're the only people who fail to do so," he said.

Mitchell said it's important that all of African descent find time to read books like the "Autobiography of Malcolm X," "The Mis-Education of the Negro," "Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization," and "Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery."

"We would [then] have a better insight and understanding of culture," Mitchell said.

The Congressional Black Caucus Must Oppose HR 246

Think about it this way. If every tactic that was used by African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement and/or in the fight against apartheid South Africa was either criminalized or attacked by the US Congress, how would you respond?

HR 246 is a bill before Congress that attacks the Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions (BDS) movement that emerged as a NON-VIOLENT response to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. BDS is a form of economic pressure on the Israeli state that is the equivalent of an international Montgomery bus boycott. It is saying that Israeli human rights abuses and violations of international law will simply not be tolerated.

The US Congress cannot have it both ways. It cannot, on the one hand, attack the Palestinians when they have used violence to oppose the occupation while at the same time attacking the Palestinians for using non-violent protests against the Israeli occupation. This is particularly the case given that the United Nations has roundly



Bill Fletcher Jr.
The Global African

condemned the Israeli occupation as illegal.

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Efforts around the USA to criminalize those who support the Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions movement flaunt the Constitution. We are supposed to have the right to peacefully protest. There is no exception when it comes to the question of Israel. There is nothing in the US Constitution that suggests that the people of the USA cannot

protest the actions of another country.

To argue that there is something wrong with engaging in or supporting BDS is to argue that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories; the Israeli refusal to recognize international law when it comes to the right of return for refugees; and the Israeli atrocities

Call your Congressional Representatives immediately. Call them whether they are members of the Congressional Black Caucus or not. Call them and tell them that you have no interest in them siding with those who would have criminalized the Civil Rights Movement or the anti-apartheid movement.

Tell them that you side with freedom! Oppose HR 246! Here is where you can go to find YOUR Congressional Representative: www.house.gov/representatives

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is the former president of TransAfrica Forum. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook and at www.billfletcherjr.com. Look for his mystery novel: *The Man Who Fell From the Sky*.

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