



Young, James and Itihari Toure, eds. *Asa: Honoring His Life and Work*. Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2013. ISBN: 978-1934-155-844, pbk, bib, pp.154.

A collection of essays by Itihari Toure (Clark Atlanta University; The Jenga Collective), Chike Akua (Georgia State University), Mark A. Lomax (First African Presbyterian Church, Lithonia, Georgia), Charlyn Harper Browne (Center for the Study of Social Policy, Washington, D.C.), Ernest D. Washington (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), James C. Young (Clark Atlanta University), and Sarita K. Davis (Georgia State University, Atlanta) in honor of the life and work of teacher, historian and psychologist Asa G. Hilliard (Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II), Ed.D. Hilliard (1933-2007) served as an endowed professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta for twenty-seven years, led numerous study tours to Egypt and Ghana for over thirty years, authored several books and hundreds of articles, and was a founding member of the

National Black Child Development Institute and (first vice-president) the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations.

The book is organized around “critical issues facing the survival of the African community” (p.iv) throughout the world, and thus, it is designed to engage critical thinking and inquiry formulated on a paradigm of reawakening the African mind through re-socialization, infusion, mastery and the dissemination of a transformative African-centered education (pp.3-4). In chapter one, Toure frames the discourse to suggest that educational excellence was the mission of Hilliard’s work, hence an “Asafication” of excellence that would ‘locate African people’ in the context of cultural excellence wherein the production of excellence would be the norm and building for eternity an expected goal (pp.1-2). Next, in chapter two, Toure discusses restoring excellence in African education, renewing a process of social transformation, specific models of communal healing excellence, and spiritually driven and conceptualized collective experiences personified in the “Jegna Collective” community developed transformation process. Chike Akua via a series of letters from his former students outlines that education has been a cultural thread in the African American community that reflects the ancient African philosophy of education and he ends with a definition of African-centered education in chapter three. Mark A. Lomax discusses Christian spirituality in the context of leadership in the church in North America in a rambling way to suggest that self-hate and self-deprecation is retarding the African American community; Charlyn Harper Browne in a genetic manner details the importance of preparing early childhood educators and states that perhaps the most important lesson she learned from Hilliard was to “never stop questioning, reading, reflecting [and] searching for meaning, and learning” in chapter five (p.57).

Chapter six provides another generic presentation with an analysis of the new Child Development Associates credential originally developed in 1973 by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to improve the quality of early childhood education based on the idea that the new program will reduce a focus on cultural validity to instead place an emphasis on computerized norm-based statistical models of validity and reliability in a twenty-seven page treatise (p.95). In the conclusion, the collection contains an article on the question of research objectivity which observe in a “Asa” context that when people engage the African American family life and structure they need to first focus on African history and culture as an affirmative rather than from a perspective wherein the African American family, life and structure is viewed as an ecosystem in deficit (p.112). Here the book picks up its beginning energy of utilizing the ideas of Hilliard and indicate that African children in the U.S. must be educated and that preparation, consciousness and willingness are the necessary ingredients needed to adequately develop the genius in the African child (p.113).

Those seeking a biography on Asa G. Hilliard (Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II) will be disappointed, because this work is not it, although it claims to look at all aspects of his life. For example, in the many visits he took to Africa, none of the articles provide any information on why he went, what he did while he was there or how his visits altered his thinking or reasoning about African history, culture or politics. Second, many know him through his association with the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, but again, there is no solid mention of his contribution to the organization or its membership. Perhaps in the future a biographical collection may appear that will address his journey from Galveston, Texas (his place of birth) to Cairo, Egypt. In the meantime, this book serves as an introduction to inquiry and critical thinking for educators surrounding a gifted and deserving human being, Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II, a person steeped in the best aspects of African education.

Reviewer: Itibari M. Zulu,
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