



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University

---

How to Be an African

Author(s): Binyavanga Wainaina

Source: *Transition*, No. 96 (2006), pp. 64-66

Published by: Indiana University Press on behalf of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204220>

Accessed: 11-08-2017 09:24 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*Indiana University Press, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Transition*

# HOW TO BE AN AFRICAN

*Being a Partial Account of the Meeting of the Brooklyn Association of Pan-African Seekers and Thinkers and Queens (PANAFRISTQ) PANEL II, presentation, hosted by Professor Brother (MC) Uhuru*

## Binyavanga Wainaina

My brothers, and sisters.

We all know that Leo was an African, do we not? So was Tut, Cleo, and Janis Joplin. Rock and Roll comes from Bamako.

My brothers, I lead you to the debate, held last summer in Boston, *Is A Grain of Wheat a Eurocentric Title? Why not a grain of sorghum? Or a grain of millet? But brother Ashanti made the valid point that wheat is Egyptian. And in Egypt the wheat was black.*

For the translation of the Ancient Egyptian symbol for wheat is “black grain that nourishes us.”

We here know it all started with the royal calabash. In ancient times the calabash became the tray, the plate, the saucer, and ultimately the Tupperware container, which comes from Guinea Bissau, and which to this day women talk about when they say: Oh! Go and buy some Tupperware containers from the market, the one with a suction-seal top, like our ancestors loved. We invented the bottle of wine—look at the

gourd of the Gikuyu people—used to store millet wine. My brothers, and sisters, we come from great people—look how Ancient European queens wore wigs of afro; powdered white like our ancient Africanist elders and shamans.

My sons and daughters, the twelve tribes of Israel are: the Igbo, the Amhara, the Kalenjin, the Masai, the Baganda, the Venda, the Masai, the Swahili (in Swahili, Juu means up—which comes from our people pointing up to Israel, where the Juus, the real Juus, came from). The Kalenjin still speak an ancient form of Hebrew. The Tutsi were ancient Phoenicians and Greeks. No, no. Sorry. Ancient Greeks and Phoenicians were Tutsis.

The nose of the Sphinx was cut to spite us.

Luo elders had the same pointy beard as King Tut.

Have you heard about the Black Irish?

Jesus was an African, you know.

We invented coffee.



*Douglas Cushing.*  
L'histoire de l'art  
occidental. ©2006

All of us, every single one of us, is descended from Kings and Queens. We all wore kaftans of gold and wraparound headscarves woven out of genuine Erykah Badu. Africa had no peasants. Pushkin's father was from Cameroon. Alexandre Dumas's mother was a black woman from Martinique. (She did not call herself black, but what does she know.)

My brothers and sisters, we need to talk about Angelina Jolie. Look at the syntax of the lips, the linguistics of the adoptions; notice the grammatical arrangement of the sarong, the Nefertiti nose. She is an African.

All of this information can be found in the great African library of Alexandria, which burnt down.

My son, my daughter, vault yourself to esteem through these maybes; these almost becomings. Create whole university departments of rejoinders. Take ownership of all empires.

Now my brothers, a Doctor Brace, of the University of Michigan, tells us that Nubians and Egyptians were not black Africans. He says they had black skins and Danish craniums—and it is indeed the cranium that makes the European. We are told that their skin “eventually adapted to the harsh rigors of the tropical sun.”

They will find an Aryan in a toenail.

Professor Kwame Tut and Dr. Nefertiti Dakar have agreed to draft a strategy to counter this, and at our next gathering, again at the Kentecchino Chipotle Coffee Bar in Brooklyn, we will discuss this further.

Now, let us take a break and listen to the beautiful words of Ashanti Nkrumah, a praise-singer and poet.

Ashanti: Everybody say *Mamaaaaaa*

Everybody: *Mamaaaaaa*

Ashanti: Everybody say

*Africaaaaaaaaaaaaaa*

Everybody: *Africaaaaaaaaaa*

Ashanti: OK, when I lift my hand in worship, brothers, sisters, shamans, and elders, I want you all to say, *Mamaaaaa*

*Africaaaaaa*

Everybody: *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa*

Ashanti:

I am a Nubian Queen

SexGoddess of Pride

Ride

Everybody: *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa*

Ashanti:

My hide

My black hide

Ride

Everybody: *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa*

Ashanti:

Me to Bamako

Play my blues

In Cotonou

Everybody: *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa*

Ashanti:

Call the anSISTERS

You GOD, girl

Everybody: *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa*

Professor Brother (MC) Uhuru: Let's give it up for Ashanti and *Mamaaaaa Africaaaaa!!!*

Now, let's have a break for a Kentecchino before we listen to brother Kente dia Kente rap some Bamako soul from his new album, *The Nubian Soul of Bamako Griots*. After that, our brother, Dr. George Hannington Kibwana will deliver a lecture on the Oral Literature of the Maragoli.