

# AN ANTI- SUPERSTITION CAMPAIGN MANIFESTO FOR AFRICA

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The time has come for the recognition of the negative and harmful of superstitions in Africa. The time has come to combat the dark and destructive influence on the continent. The time has come to launch and execute a campaign against superstition and unreason in the region .

Superstitions are irrational beliefs and notions. They are misconceptions of what is. Superstitious beliefs are based on fear, magical thinking, ignorance and blind faith. They lack evidence or proof and do not have any basis in logic, fact, commonsense or in reality. Superstitions include doctrines, dogmas, customs, traditions, practices often connected with religion, with the unknown, with the mysterious and with the supernatural. They include belief in gods, ghost, juju and charms, witches and wizards, in ritual sacrifice and medicine, in magic and miracles.

Other superstitious notions are bilocation, divine revelation, communication with the dead. fortunetelling, rain making, palmistry etc. These beliefs have enslaved the minds of Africans, shackled their intelligence and imprisoned their reasoning faculties for ages. Superstitions have undermined the emergence and emancipation of Africa and the realization of African enlightenment and rebirth.

Superstitions have corrupted African conscience and constitution including the African educational, legislative and moral systems. Superstitions have corrupted the intellectual culture in Africa.

Superstition have been weapons for human rights abuses and crimes against humanity.

Over the centuries, superstitious beliefs have been used to oppress women, abuse children, support racism and xenophobia, justify torture, murder and genocide, exploit the poor, the weak, the aged and other vulnerable groups. Superstitions have been used to orchestrate death and destruction of lives and property.

Irrational beliefs have been used to incite hatred, cause division and conflicts in families and communities across the continent. Witch hysteria continues to spread like wild fire across the region. Today it could be rightly said that many Africans are suffering and dying because of superstition and irrationalism. In Angola, Malawi, Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the Congos, etc those accused of witchcraft are murdered, tortured or banished by family members. In Tanzania, many albinos have been killed by those who believe their body parts can be used to produce magical potions that can make people rich or lucky. In Nigeria, children and the aged suspected to be witches and wizards have been thrown and abandoned by their families. In Kenya at least 11 people accused of witchcraft were killed in 2008. And in the Gambia, over 1000 persons suspected to be witches and wizards have been victims of a government-backed witch hunt. In Angola and Tanzania, Africans continue to kill each other for ritual sacrifice and to secure human body parts for the production of charms and other fetish objects. Unfortunately the superstitions and beliefs behind these savage acts have gone challenged. Hence the harmful effects, their dark and destructive consequences have become daily, common and recurrent experiences and reality in Africa.

Till now, there have not been any organized efforts to critically analyze, debate, debunk, dispel and explode superstitions, myths, misconceptions and erroneous notions in Africa.

There has not been any major campaign to promote criticism, the will to doubt and the spirit of inquiry on the black continent.

There has not been any major effort to enlighten Africans and get them to leave superstitions and embrace science, reason and critical thinking. Instead throughout the continent what we have is a dominant and dangerous mentality that identifies superstition, magic and witchcraft as 'African science', and evidence based knowledge (and medicine), rational inquiry, critical thinking and technological intelligence as western values.

As long as this mistaken view prevails in Africa, the continent will not grow, develop or progress. Africa will not defeat the darkening and destructive forces of superstition and unreason. Africans will not break the 'jinx' of underdevelopment. Because reason, science and technological know how constitute the manistay of modern development and civilization.

Today, there is an urgent need to get Africans to break with a past of superstitions and magic and embrace the presence of reason, science, and free inquiry. It has become imperative to get Africans to understand that science, reason and critical thinking are human, not western, values. That western societies had- and still have their superstitions. That the process of renaissance and the enlightenment transformed the West and caused the countries to adopt reason, not religion, science, not superstition, critical thinking, not dogma technological intelligence, not magic as the basis and the defining currents of their thought, culture and society. And that early in this 21st century Africa needs to undergo such transformations in order to grow, emerge and prosper.

This year the [Center for Inquiry](#) is launching an anti-Superstition Campaign in Africa. The campaign aims at dispelling the forces of superstition with the values of reason, science and critical thinking.

This campaign is a program for change and renewal in Africa. It is a campaign for cultural transformation and rebirth of the black continent. This campaign will encourage critical investigation and analysis of superstitious and paranormal claims including claims by witch doctors, marabus, sangomas, prophets, priests, imams, diviners, sootsayers, spiritualists and other promoters and pueveyors of paranormal wares.

This campaign will sponsor and support research, studies, seminars, workshops and conferences devoted to understanding the superstitious beliefs in different African countries. This campaign will articulate the experiences and impact of superstitions on Africa and on Africans.

This campaign will be used to lobby African governments and institutions to take measures to combat superstitions and promote policies and education based on rational inquiry, critical thinking and scientific outlook.

It will document the landmarks of superstition, and highlight those incidents and events that have taken place in different African countries as a result of irrational and magical beliefs. This campaign is a call to Africans to wake up from their dogmatic and superstitious slumber, to abandon primitive beliefs and cultivate values of New Enlightenment.