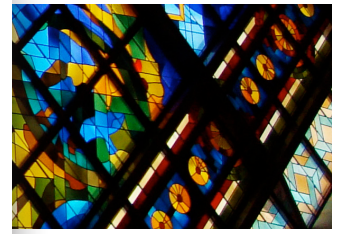




# 40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on Anti-Racism



DAY 35

## Anthropology and Racism



### Learning

Samuel V. Dansokho

Advent is a time of shadows and light, reflections and projections. This is an appropriate time to consider the life and work of Cheikh Anta Diop from an anti-racist perspective as we approach the end of the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#) and its theme of recognition, justice, and development.

Few people are familiar with the work of Senegalese anthropologist Cheikh Anta Diop (1923–1986), yet we all are the beneficiaries of his research and bold Afrocentric position.

He established the first African laboratory to use the carbon-14 dating method and made a significant contribution to popularizing the technology used to determine the actual age of the Shroud of Turin.

Diop especially distinguished himself in the field of African historiography, more specifically through approaches to studying the history of ancient Egypt. He was one of the first intellectuals to

have had the vision and courage to investigate and do justice to pre-colonial African history. We owe him a debt of gratitude for having established beyond all doubt, at least among serious researchers, that Africa is the cradle of human civilization.

With passion and determination, he opposed the exclusive position of Western Egyptologists who had up until then depicted ancient Egypt and Pharaonic civilization through the prism of ancient Greece. Diop affirmed the precedence of African civilization and demonstrated the African-descendant roots of the Pharaohs. Throughout his life, he struggled for the world to acknowledge the place of Africa and its progeny in world civilization.

His multidisciplinary approach brought him harsh criticism from members of the scientific community who were deeply troubled by his sustained efforts to promote the dignity of Africa and its peoples. The truth is that he himself

was well aware of the enormous scale of the task he had undertaken and clearly counted on future generations of Africans to continue his work, subjecting it to scientific rigour where he was not able. Cheikh Anta Diop also extended his scientific and cultural battles to the political arena because, on one hand, he saw this as a necessity and, on the other, he saw history not as a static narrative of the past but as a living force influencing the present and the future. As a deeply committed PanAfricanist, he laid the groundwork (that unfortunately has not been followed up) for a federal African state.

Of his many books, two in particular are worth mentioning: *Nations nègres et culture: De l'antiquité nègre égyptienne aux problèmes culturels de l'Afrique Noire d'aujourd'hui* (1954) and *Civilisation ou Barbarie : anthropologie sans complaisance* (1981).



## Faith Reflection

*Emo Yango*

Read [Psalm 137](#).

Reflection questions:

- Why do you think the women of Israel felt dishonoured by the request from the Babylonian soldiers? List as many reasons as you can imagine.
- In our current climate of race relations in Canada, how can we demonstrate that we honour the respective histories of diverse Indigenous and racialized peoples?



## Children's Activity

*Emo Yango*

### Activity A

Find a map of the world (could be a globe, online, or a map in a book).

Close your eyes, turn around three times and point anywhere on map.

Open your eyes and read which country you pointed to.

Find a book in the library or search for the country online.

Learn at least three things about the people of that country, especially about the children. Some things to look for:

What makes them proud about themselves?

What language or languages they speak?

What are the roles of their grandparents?

What kind of music do they listen?

What musical instruments do they play?

How big are their cities? Towns?

How many people live in single homes?

If a child from that country came to Canada, how would you welcome that child?

### Activity B

Read the book [Stolen Words](#) by Melanie Florence.

After reading the book, discuss these questions together.

- Why is it important to learn a language?
- What would it be like if your teachers told you to use a language that your family did not speak or understand?
- How would you feel if you knew this story really happened in Canada?
- Why was it important for the girl and her grandfather to learn their own words or language? How did it make them feel?



## Group Commitment

*Emo Yango*

With a group of people from your community of faith, research the makeup of cultural diversity in your neighbourhood or community. Identify at least one ethnocultural group you would like to welcome to your church.

Imagine welcoming the group above into your community of faith by highlighting what makes them proud of their cultural history and practices. How could you find out about this?

Organize a roundtable in your community of faith, invite people from the group you want to welcome, and plan a cultural exchange event or program together.

The United Church of Canada has adopted an [intercultural vision](#), identifying that one part of becoming an intercultural church is to become a welcoming church. Read and reflect on this six-part intercultural vision. What might it really mean to welcome one

another? How might that welcome be a mutual one, embracing what it means to be intercultural—“examining ourselves, building relationships, and distributing power fairly”?



## Advocacy

*Emo Yango*

Extend the program arising from your Group Commitment to become a community-wide event that will include more ethnocultural groups. Are there some common advocacy concerns that you could work on together?



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**Emo Yango** is originally from the Philippines. He works at the national office of The United Church of Canada where his work portfolio includes racial justice and intercultural ministries. He had previously worked overseas in international development in various inter-faith contexts.

