

Activity Two – Source Discussion

Picture Source – The Front Cover of, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), by Jomo Kenyatta.



Picture Caption – “Moigoi and Wamboi* and all the dispossessed youth of Africa: for perpetuation of communion with ancestral spirits through the fight for African Freedom, and in the firm faith that the dead, the living, and the unborn will unite to rebuild the destroyed shrines.”

*Jomo Kenyatta’s father and mother.

Written Source – Extracts from, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), by Jomo Kenyatta.

There certainly are some progressive concepts in European life. They include ideas of material prosperity, medicine, and hygiene, and literacy which allow people to take part in world culture. But so far, Europeans who visit Africa have not proactively given these ideas to Africans. Europeans seem to think that police discipline and armed force are the only ways to teach Africans and they speak as if it was somehow beneficial for Africans to work for white employers instead of for themselves. To make sure that Africans receive these 'benefits', Europeans do their best to take away African people's land and leave them with no alternative. Along with their land, Europeans rob Africans of their government, condemn their religious ideas, and ignore their fundamental conceptions of justice and morals, all in the name of 'civilisation' and 'progress.'

If Africans could choose freely from European ideas, they would not adopt the gas bomb or the armed police force. Instead, they would choose peaceful concepts which are not currently available to them. Today, by driving Africans off their ancestral lands, Europeans have robbed Africans of the material foundations of their culture and reduced African people to a state of slavery incompatible with human happiness. Africans are conditioned, by the cultural and social institutions of centuries, to a freedom which Europe does not understand. It is not in an African person's nature to accept slavery forever. Africans realise that they must fight unceasingly for complete emancipation. Without freedom, Africans are doomed to remain the prey of rival imperialisms, which every successive year will drive their fangs more deeply into African vitality and strength.

Discussion Questions Sample Answers

Picture Source – The Front Cover of, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), by Jomo Kenyatta.

- 1) Why did Jomo Kenyatta choose to be photographed in traditional African clothing rather than a European suit?

Jomo Kenyatta chose to be photographed in traditional African clothing because it asserted his African identity. As authentically and proudly African, he could claim the authority to speak on behalf of African people. African dress also referred to an African history separate from European colonialism. Because Africans had a past free from colonialism, their future could be free from colonialism as well.

- 2) Why did Jomo Kenyatta choose to be photographed with a spear?

Jomo Kenyatta chose to be photographed with a spear because spears suggest the possibility of violent action against colonialism. However, if violence was the only reason for holding a spear, why doesn't Kenyatta hold a gun instead? Perhaps, Kenyatta was pointing to a more general African 'strength.' This strength was found in Africa's past and culture, represented by a historic weapon.

- 3) What was this picture's message?

African's were discriminated against primarily because of the colour of their skin and the shape of their features. Kenyatta, unabashed on the front cover in true photographic likeness, refuted the shame associated with blackness. Furthermore, Kenyatta presented himself as an African leader, a person who was capable of bring African consciousness to a wider audience.

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a) What did Jomo Kenyatta think of Europeans and their conduct in Africa?

Kenyatta admired some things about Europeans, including medicine and literacy. However, he considered European conduct in Africa specifically to be duplicitous and hypocritical. Despite representing global 'progress', Europeans also possessed regressive traits, like their willingness to use force against African people. For Kenyatta, a culture with these contradictions could not be praised.

b) What did Jomo Kenyatta think of African people? Why did he present African people in this way?

Kenyatta believed African people possessed a moral and sophisticated culture. Considering European violence in Africa, this made Africans more 'civilised' than European colonisers. In doing so, Kenyatta inverted the imperial hierarchy and suggested Africans could rule themselves better than colonial governments.

c) Did Jomo Kenyatta's writing contain a warning to colonial rulers about the consequences of continued discrimination against African people?

Kenyatta wanted colonial rulers to recognise the merits in African people. If Africans continued to be discriminated against, then colonial rulers would be viewed as tyrants rather than benefactors. Once the illusion of benevolent imperialism had been destroyed, Africans would resort to force to overthrow European power in Africa.

d) What did Jomo Kenyatta want African people to do about colonial discrimination?

Kenyatta wanted African people to challenge colonial discrimination in its physical and cultural forms. If imperial rulers refused to concede to African demands, then Kenyatta believed using armed force against colonialism was morally justified. Because of their meritorious culture, Africans would win any war against colonial power.