



# A THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF POEMS 'AMERICA' AND 'AFRICA' BY AFRICAN, JAMAICAN AND AMERICAN CLAUDE MCKAY

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## ABSTRACT

Poems 'America' and 'Africa' were published in 1922 in the book titled *Harlem Shadows* by Claude McKay. Both poems were written with a view to retorting racism that wrought havoc on black Americans' lives and suggesting the way out. Yet, they revealed two important facts on Africa and America as two major lands in the world: while the former fell from the top of the ladder to the bottom, the latter rose to the top to become a domineering power. This article, mainly based on Claude McKay's two poems mentioned above, aims, first, to discuss America as a world power and explain the reasons behind this ascent. It also discusses Africa as a mere object due to its wretchedness since its fall and explains the reasons of this descent.

**Keywords:** America, Africa, racism, power, weakness.

## RESUME

Les poèmes 'America' et 'Africa' sont publiés en 1922 dans le livre *Harlem Shadows* par Claude McKay. Les deux poèmes sont écrits dans le but de riposter au racisme qui causait tant de dégâts aux Américains Noirs et de proposer la voie de sortie. Toutefois, ils révèlent deux réalités importantes sur l'Afrique et l'Amérique en tant que deux parties majeures de la planète: au moment que le premier est tombé du sommet de l'échelle, le dernier a gravi les échelons pour devenir une puissance dominante.

Principalement basé sur les deux poèmes de Claude McKay mentionnés plus haut, le présent article se propose premièrement de parler de l'Amérique en tant qu'une puissance mondiale et expliquer les raisons de cette ascension. Ensuite, l'article veut discuter de l'Afrique en tant qu'un simple objet dû à son état piteux depuis sa chute et expliquer les raisons de cette descente.

**Mots clés :** Amérique, Afrique, racisme, puissance, faiblesse.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout their stay in the United States of America, people of African descents later referred to as African Americans or black Americans have been victims of **racism**. Considered aliens, from a different and inferior race, they have been marginalized and have not been believed to be worth a good and human treatment. For many centuries white Americans as a whole have been the "Bad Samaritan", (Luc chapter 10: 33-35) the scourge for blacks. Slaves, black Americans were viewed as mere objects or at best pets and were treated as such for many centuries (Gray W. Deborah, 2013). They were sometimes treated pitilessly, even worse than wild animals. There were laws against teaching slaves to read and write during slavery (Horton, Rod W. and Edwards, Herbert W., 1974). They had no other rights than to

submit themselves to their masters and work from dawn to dusk without salary. They had to work hard and complete their daily tasks for fear of being severely punished. While some slaves labored under the "task" system, with a certain amount of work to complete in a day, others, worked in gangs, under the supervision of overseers or slave drivers. In certain areas the death rates were high because of poor or harsh treatment, (Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. King, 1981) and certainly because of worry and anxiety.

The passage from the state of slavery to that of freedom or emancipation in 1863 (Palmer, Colin A. 2002) had had little influence on the way blacks were treated. Considered henceforth second-class citizens, another type of species or race, systematically inferior to whites, they were not believed fit in to live together with whites, close by close. They had to be separated from whites and form a society apart without any serious human rights or dignities. Many writers and historians and many other witnesses believed that the freedom granted or won by blacks was more nominal than genuine. Indeed, black Americans, without any resource, any money, any qualification, any degree, were abandoned to themselves, helplessly.

Rather than viewing blacks as teammates and approving of their "collocation", giving them support and attention, white Americans made rivals and opponents of them and shut their door against them because of the ideology about race that was in fashion at the moment. Worst, several whites were ready to make life more difficult and unbearable for their former slaves. The situation is akin to when a wicked employer, after fully taking advantage of his/her employee and impoverishing him/her, becomes unexpectedly tired of this employee and decides to keep him/her away, poorly, without the slightest means to care for his/her needs.

Fortunately, like a Messiah, sent by the "Providence" to bring forth justice, several black elites reacted to defend their people, to heal or at least sooth their pain. Some were activists; others were writers i.e. essayists, fiction writers, playwrights, story tellers, and poets. Among black famous leaders, very concerned by the issue of race and by implication racism, and almost totally committed to sacrificing themselves and even surrounding their lives for the people of their "race" or "ethnic" group was Claude McKay. He was very grieved by the way his weak people were mercilessly treated and abused. Courageous like a lion, a badly injured lion and extremely embittered, McKay could scarcely keep in his indignation or stand by and let white Americans go on making life miserable for his "people". As an Army General in front of the battle, the fearless poet appeared along with his poetry to try to settle the crucial issue of racism, or to try to undo its effects.

Yet, in this article, two of McKay's poems will be discussed: 'America' and 'Africa', published in 1922. These poems appeared first in number of magazines and then later in the collection of poems known as *Harlem Shadows, the first book of poetry by*

*McKay since his stay in the United States of America.* Off course, the two poems were written within a framework of blacks' struggle against racist attitudes in the mainstream of America and with a view to counter-attacking mistreatments provoked by this phenomenon; yet number of their lines reveal two important facts about American society and African society: forwardness (terrible advancement) of American society in marked contrast to backwardness (too much delay) of African society. These facts are worth our attention as researchers especially if we are really concerned with the issue of racism that has wrought havoc in the US since many centuries, and if we wish to find a solution to this plague.

The main objective of this article is to emphasize these two important aspects through both poems: remarkable progress of America and considerable delay of Africa. The article proceeds first to a meticulous analysis of poems 'America' and 'Africa' one after the other. Then it provides a few reasons why America has become so powerful a country today. The article explains in the end the fall of Africa.

It is important to note that since the publication of the poems 'Africa' and 'America' by Claude McKay, they have been subjects of discussions, analysis, and critics by several writers and researchers. Some of them are preoccupied by the rhetorical analysis of the poems; this is the example of Heather L. Glover from Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Georgia. From 'Africa', Glover has indeed pointed out several poetic devices or techniques (Glover Heather L., 2005). The most remarkable are personification, metaphor, allusion and antitheses. Personification indeed is noticed in line 2 with the use of the terms "sucklings" and "breast" typical of feminine human species. Allusion which is typical to many poems is used in 'Africa'. This occurs in line 1, referring to the Bible book of Genesis where God brought light into existence through mere command.

In 'America' as well, there are many poetic devices including metaphor, personification, contrast or antithesis, simile, oxymoron, and diction (Jack Limebear, poemanalysis.com). As a matter of fact, in line 1 there is the use of both personification and metaphor. America is personified with the allusion of the pronoun "she" that is typical of feminine human species. Stealing my breath of life according to line 3 is an example of metaphor used in the poem. Both oxymoron and contrast also appear in line 4 with first the description of America as cultured hell and the feeling of the unexpected love of that cultured hell. An example of simile occurs in lines 5, 8 and 14 where respectively there is comparison of America's vigor to tides, comparison of the speaker to a rebel before a king, and comparison of America's "wonders" to invaluable treasures. The terms of love and hate throughout 'America' convey to another poetic device: contrast that cannot go unnoticed. Other critics or commentators are interested by their semiotic analysis.

However, this article will go beyond the rhetorical and semiotic analyses somehow to suggest a thorough description of Africa and America as lands from their origins to the present time, what has been behind the ascendance of America and what has led to the decline and loss of grace of Africa. The methodology we intend to use in this paper is deconstruction, which is a mode of reading that consists in "reading the text against itself". Such an approach calls for a deep and thorough "analysis" (Barbara, J. 1980, p.5) of any text or work under study and normally results in "mak[ing] the non-seen accessible to sight" (Derrida, J., 1976, p.158) and revealing the said and the unsaid.

## 1. Presentation and Analysis of 'America'

Poem 'America' goes:

"Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,  
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,  
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess  
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!  
Her vigor flown like tides into my blood,  
Giving me strength erect against her hate.  
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.  
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with not a shred  
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.  
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders there,  
Beneath the touch of Time's nearing hand  
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand."

### 1.1. America as Symbol of Power

The poem 'America' by Claude McKay was written in a sonnet form, measuring fourteen lines with an ABABABABABABCC rhyme scheme. The poem is, according to the sonnet structure, split into three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet. Sonnets are historically associated with love; consistently, McKay used this type of poem to express his love for the USA. In lines two of 'America' Claude McKay compared America to tiger. Tiger is a wild animal very feared by other animals in the forest because of its power and cruelty. Lines 5 and 7 mentioned respectively "vigor" and "bigness". In lines 12 and 14, McKay discussed "might", "wonders", and "priceless treasures". These words are lexicons to might and are characteristics of America. Other words which can be referred to as the synonyms of might are the following: power, dynamic, energy, force, influence, fortress, strength, grandeur, hegemony, ascendance, and preeminence.

Might usually goes hand in hand with pride, establishing between each other the cause and effect relationship. Might is also inseparable with abuse as you can see through embargoes, sanctions, and threats imposed by the strongest and most powerful white Americans. Incidentally, analogy of "king" and "rebel" in line 8 refers to this idea of abuse which is typical of the strongest which always considers its reason as the best. While force is dictating its laws, who can dare ever refer to right? Since McKay's days and even many years before, the USA has been a symbol of might, force or power, wealth, strength, wonders, bigness and golden glory. It has got so politically, economically, financially, and technically powerful to the point where it has become later the first world power according to many analysts. These characteristics made the Americans proud of themselves, self-assumed, and self-centered.

### *1.2. Domains of Power*

Was America really mighty or powerful in the period when McKay wrote his poem? A careful look at this country since the beginning of the twentieth century pointed America as one the very advanced countries in the world in every respect: scientific field, technological field, artistic field, cultural field, political field, economic field, financial field, agricultural field, and military field.

One domain of great technological advances was transport. The means of transport which were common those days ranged from motorcycles to cars, lorries, trains, ships and planes, making movement faster and with more relaxation. Even if some of these had existed many years previously to McKay's poems, there had been progress in the way of making them. This era also witnessed great advancement in health. Thanks to very hard working and dedicated experts, the domain of health experienced a rapid expansion. There were more available medications and remedies for the treatment of illnesses or diseases like measles, leprosy, poliomyelitis, hypertension, cancer, asthma, cholera, and ulcer; likewise, preventive methods against disabilities became known.

Communication was also a field in which technological advances achieved astonishing progress. Radio, television, cinema, telegram, web site and satellite were more efficiently designed and helped people to keep in touch. Moreover, there were advances in engineering, that is, scientific knowledge applied to the design of building and control machines, roads, bridges, electrical equipment, etc. These advances contributed most to the beauty of towns and cities in the USA, in which cities and towns you could see not only well fitted buildings, including skyscrapers, but also bridges, roads, rails, and interchanges cleverly made with electricity everywhere.

Agriculture too, benefited from scientific and technological progress. With the development of machines like tractors, chemicals, agriculture helped face the needs of Americans in terms of food or diet. One of these machines, simple in appearance but which dramatically changed the course of American history, was Rube Goldberg contraption, invented in the late eighteenth century by young Eli Whitney, fresh from Yale University (Horton, Rod W. and Edwards, Herbert W., 1974). This wonderful masterpiece made it possible to cultivate the land in a large space and to have a good harvest. Other serious or remarkable achievements in the USA in both the nineteenth and twentieth century included the invention and development of sewing machine by Isaac M. Singer of Pittstown, the invention of burglar alarm, the elevator, the barbed wire, the telephone, the micrograph and the phonograph by the half nineteenth century. Important inventions in the domain of sciences and technologies during the era also involved the electric fan, the electric flat iron, the skyscraper, the commercial machine, the electric motor and the tractor.

The needs for commerce necessitated the building of thousands of railroads, canals, and telegraph lines. These infrastructures were built throughout the new world but mostly in the Northeast and Midwest to connect states. They enabled to link the regions of the huge country together so as to facilitate commercial exchange and to give opportunity to many Americans to become financially prosperous. By this moment, means of transport ranging from bicycles to cars, to trains were not just made but also improved. There were equally many factories built throughout the country in the 1820s. This was the beginning of Industrial Revolution in the USA. In the late 19th century American industry boomed. The USA became the fastest growing industrial nation in the world. By the end of the century, it had surpassed Britain in the production of iron and steel. The American railroad network also grew rapidly. In 1850 there were 9,000 miles of railways. By 1900 there were 190,000 miles. The first transcontinental railroad was built in 1869.

Meanwhile, in 1859, Edwin Drake (1819-1899) struck oil in Pennsylvania. Soon there was a flourishing oil industry in Pennsylvania. The first oil pipeline was built in 1865. American agriculture too, continued to boom. It was helped by new technology. Cyrus McCormick invented a mechanical reaper in 1834. John Deere (1804-1886) invented the steel plow in 1838. In 1854 the first successful self-governing windmill was made. In 1874 barbed wire was patented. With these conditions more than 60% of the world's cotton was grown in the USA by 1860. American population grew very rapidly as a direct consequence of boom of industrialization. In 1860 the population was 31 million. By 1900 it was almost 76 million. Immigrants from Europe poured into the USA hoping for a better life. Many people were lured by the Homesteader Act of 1862. Settlers were offered 160 acres of land free provided they agreed to till it for five years.

The USA seemed to be less satisfied of just being among the powerful nations in the world. This country has so struggled that since the end of the nineteenth century, big nations of Europe and Asia have started respecting it. The USA has become today the leading nation in almost all domains – politic, economic, financial, technological, industrial, innovative, and military, with other nations very far behind. Many analysts refer to the USA as the first world power or the Super power. Jehovah's Witnesses for their part think that the USA is the seventh world power predicted in the Bible book of Daniel.

The world entered into the twentieth century with other wonderful discoveries and inventions thanks to America ingenuity. In 1903, Orville Wright and Wilbert Wright challenged the gravity law with the invention of airplane ([www.Sciences and technologies in the usa.com](http://www.Sciencesandtechnologiesintheusa.com)). In 1922, Dr. Albert H. Taylor and Leo Young created the radio Detection and Ranging also known as RADAR. The Early 1920s witnessed a remarkable expansion in the domain of health with the discoveries of vitamins A, B, C, D, E and K, helping to improve Americans' lives as well as other people around the world. It is not surprising that as Claude McKay observed in the introduction to *Harlem Shadows* no sooner had he set foot in the USA, white Americans looked beautiful, healthy, strong, full-grown, fresh, and attractive (McKay Claude, 1922).

On economic or financial viewpoint, America was again more in advance over most of other big nations in the world. Most of the richest or wealthiest people in the world in twentieth century were Americans. By the same logic, the most beautiful and most envied places in the world during the era included America. In military viewpoint, America was in the twentieth century the leading figures of entire world. Evidently, poem 'America' expressed and celebrated the achievements of white Americans who were by far in a high position in the world.

White Americans are powerful people who have always been a law unto themselves and who have, justifiably, like many other people across the world, been guided by the law of the jungle for many decades if not throughout their history. Although white Americans have equally experienced colonization, subjection, and to some extent a kind of slavery, they are today believed to be the most powerful countries in the world in economic viewpoint, in cultural or educational viewpoint, in political viewpoint, and in military viewpoint. Nobody or nothing virtually resists the USA. It possesses the power and right of veto over other powerful countries round the world and it is able to put an embargo at will on their movements, actions, and even expressions. Without any doubt, the largest contingent is from the USA.

In passing, I was so moved and so seduced by the United States' power or ascendance that I dedicated a poem to this marvelous and wonderful part of the world a few years ago in a book titled *Africa, Wake Up!* Under the title 'Before You, I Prostrate, USA' the poem pays tribute to the USA because of its achievements. The

poem reviews the different domains in which the USA has evolved and imposed itself. 'Before You, I Prostrate, USA' reads:

“When I think about all that you have done, oh USA!  
When I reflect on all the works of your hands, USA  
When I contemplate all your achievements, USA  
When I lean over communication which you have revolutionized, USA  
When I linger over transport that you have improved, USA  
When my heart goes to road infrastructures, USA  
When I start looking at real estate infrastructures, USA  
When my thought moves towards sanitary facilities, USA  
When my spirit makes a direction towards kitchen facilities, USA  
When I take stock of your uncount exploits, USA  
I feel completely lost, far, out of this world, USA  
When I sum up your countless wonders, USA  
I have the impression that I am dreaming, USA  
When I start analyzing your numerous miracles, USA  
I feel like fleeing far, far, and far from your face, USA  
When I call on my reason, USA  
I realize that there is no place where to hide from you, USA  
When I assess my knowledges of you, USA  
I realize that you are present everywhere on the earth and the spaces, USA  
When I set in motion all my experiences, USA  
I remember that your eyes, your radar can see me everywhere I set foot in, USA  
When I have to appreciate with honesty, I realize that I owe you things, USA  
When I want to have a clear conscience, I owe you respect and distinction, USA  
Here am I prostrated before you as symbol of worship, oh world power!

### ***1.3. Key Dynamic Factors Stimulating the USA Power***

A many factors have contributed to American power. Three of these factors are worth discussing. The first of them is faith combined with hard work. Indeed, faith, not in God or any other superior being, but faith in oneself, has always been the motto of America. Americans believe in themselves. They believe that there is success as a result of every hard work. With Americans quite everything has become possible. They struggle to have everyone and everything submitted to them. Through faith combined with hard work, Americans have achieved the most unimaginable things the world has ever witnessed: discoveries, inventions, creations, and explorations.

The second and third factors are respectively education or culture and a good social organization. It is important to underline that education and culture, at least in this article are inseparable. The two terms go hand in hand. A good social organization including political management has also contributed to raise America as a powerful country in the world. On social viewpoint, the USA is well organized. Almost all American citizens know the importance of education. Parents are very responsible

because not only have they voluntarily adopted family planning but they are also always ready to send their children to school, pay school objects and school fees. It is also a custom for parents in America to properly nurture their children and to provide for other needs. Such arrangements help children in return to use all their capacity for studies and to develop their thinking ability, to be creative, and to be able to contribute to their nation's development by discovering, inventing, and innovating.

## 2. Presentation and Analysis of 'Africa'

Poem 'Africa' goes:

"The sun sought thy dim bed and brought forth light,  
The sciences were sucklings at thy breast;  
When all the world was young in pregnant night  
Thy slaves toiled at thy monumental best.  
Thou ancient treasure-land, thou modern prize,  
New peoples marvel at thy pyramids!  
The years roll on, thy sphinx of riddle eyes  
Watches the mad world with immobile lids.  
The Hebrews humbled them at Pharaoh's name.  
Cradle of Power! Yet all things were in vain!  
Honor and Glory, Arrogance and Fame!  
They went. The darkness swallowed thee again.  
Thou art the harlot, now thy time is done,  
Of all the mighty nations of the sun."

### 2.1. Africa as Symbol of Weakness

'Africa' is a sonnet, a type of poem Claude McKay was very familiar with. In the very first line of the sonnet, it was question of the adjective "dim". According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, "dim" can be used to describe a light which is not bright or a place where one cannot see well because there is no much light. Africa, as correctly described by McKay had been an unknown land until its discovery in the late seventeenth century by westerners. This discovery happened as when the sun, a figurative sun brought forth light on something which people could not see because of darkness.

The second line mentioned a reality that had been for long time kept hidden to many people. In fact, contrary to popular belief Africans were the founding fathers of sciences and even technologies. In other words, instead of "Eurocentricity" according to which the knowledge or philosophies including the emergence of science and reason, the moral order, books and education, and the clash of classes, stem from Greece, one would rather discuss "Afrocentricity" which, justifiably points Africa as the basis of knowledge that preceded Greek philosophy. Eleven famous Africans

who could be considered as the true fathers or pioneers of philosophy are Ptahhotep, Kagemni, Duauf, Amenhotep, Amenemope, Imhotep, Amenemhait, Merikare, Sehotepibre, Klunanup, and Akhenaten (Asante, Molefi Kete).

The popular belief of Greeks being the father of philosophy is but wrong. The genius of Africans, as objects whose shape could not appear distinctively because of a dim light, had been kept hidden, unknown for so long time until the figurative sun brought fourth its light. The civil engineering talent of Africans was showcased in the pyramids that one could see in Egypt as mentioned in line six. The Egyptian pyramids are ancient pyramid-shaped masonry structure located in Kamet, today Egypt. There were more than a hundred of them. Most were built as tombs for the country's Pharaohs and other important personalities during the old Middle Kingdom periods. One of the earliest known Egyptian pyramids is the pyramid of Djoser which was built during the third dynasty between 2630 BC and 2611 BC. The pyramid and its surrounding complex were designed by the architect Imhotep, and are generally considered to be the world's oldest monumental structures masonry constructed or dressed.

The most famous Egyptian pyramids are those at Giza pyramids and are counted among the largest structures ever built. The pyramids of Khufu at Giza are the largest Egyptian pyramid. It is built between 2589 and 2566. It is the only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world still in existence. The builders including slaves as mentioned by McKay in line four had to work hard and skillfully for such achievements. The Egyptian pyramids, combining with many other achievements hoisted the country up to the first world power that the poet referred to in line ten as "cradle of power", the world as a whole including western regions, being at its very start in the womb (see line 3). These accomplishments had been cause for "honor and glory, arrogance and fame" according to McKay in the next line.

## *2.2. A Sudden Change*

Referring to Claude McKay's poem 'Africa' again, African continent certainly enjoyed a long moment of power and its corollaries. Yet, there has been a sudden change; the yesterday-world power has become the today-world weakness. Indeed, since Claude McKay's day up to our days Africa has been behind the schedule. The most undeveloped or poorest countries are found in Africa, causing people to call the whole continent the Third World, certainly to mark the absolute difference between this continent and other continents in the world despite its past glory. Yes, Africa's time, in Claude McKay's words, is done" (line 13), and so is the cause for her pride. The reading of this poem had surely made African Americans proud of their past but sad of their present conditions. The opposites of power – weakness, tiredness, mere speech, dependence, inferiority, and in some contexts, impossibility, fragility,

shortcoming, defect, incapacity, cowardice, helplessness, vulnerability, incompetence, and frailty – reflect or mirror the state of black Americans.

Black Americans, on the contrary, are fragile, weak, and vulnerable people. To the opinion of Claude McKay and many other writers, black Americans as well as their fellows in African land and other parts of the world were still asleep (McKay Claude, 1922). This state has scarcely changed up to today. Indeed, the relation between black Americans as a community and white Americans as another community has steadily remained that of domination versus submission, ruling against subjecting, torturer or lyncher versus sufferer, powerful master against helpless servant or slave, hero versus secondary or subsidiary character, poor subject against wealthy object, oppression as opposed to suppression; oppressor against oppressed; offender against offended; attacker versus defender; exploiter against exploited; provoker as opposed to victim; dominion against protectorate; aggressor versus aggressed; accuser against accused; invincible against vulnerable; inclusion as opposed to exclusion; celebration against mourning; the list is not closed. Little wonder that blacks are always in the state of pity and misery. They are the people who must always complain, murmur, claim back, shout, ask for help, ask for justice, plead no guilty, moan, sigh, and even cry. They must incessantly wait for someone or an organization or a supernatural being to come to their rescue.

In his book of poems named *Black Wake Up*, cited above, Oyédékpo recapitulates the position of Africa over which he bitterly wept in his poem entitled 'The Unhappy Aunty'. Made up of twenty lines, the poem reads:

“There are five of us in the promotion  
The other four have known success  
They have succeeded one after the other  
They have succeeded in every respect  
History has revealed that I am the first born  
I was born before the other four  
It also seemed that I was once very powerful  
I must be the first world power  
But today, I am very weak  
I have become the first world weakness  
Without the others, I can't live  
I need the others so as to eat  
I need the others in order to drink  
I need the others in order to dress  
I need the others for accommodation  
I need the others for entertainment  
I need the others for movement  
I need the others for everything  
I have little choice but to lead a beggar-life way  
A hopeless case, I have never got independence.”

### **2.3. Major Obstacles to Africa Backwardness**

Four main factors are behind Africa backwardness. The first factor is mental laziness which includes waste of time, slowness, delay in doing things, lack of initiative, resignation, and postponement. The second factor is ethnic conflicts or wars which Africans have waged among one another for many years and which have prevented them from enjoying peace and rest of mind. The histories of Dahomey (today Benin) and Ashanti (today Ghana) before European civilization are tangible examples. Metaphysic or spiritualism combined with blind faith in God is the third great factor why Africa is underdeveloped. Metaphysic and spiritualism have provoked insecurity, fear, and stress for lots of Africans who therefore dream of fleeing their own countries to live in western countries that they view as spiritual homes, perfect paradises. Blind faith in God on its part has led many other Africans to expect from God everything they can do on their own. Proliferation of religions in every corner in Africa is without any doubt a result of this blind faith in God and deities. The fourth factor is political mismanagement along with defects such as corruption, fraud, theft, greed, bribery, embezzlement, favoritism, nepotism, impunity, wars, as corollaries.

### **CONCLUSION**

Claude McKay's poems 'America' and 'Africa' have revealed two important truths about America (the USA) and Africa. America is a permanent symbol of power while Africa is a characteristic of weakness. Indeed, since the 1920s, the period of the writing of the two poems, America has so much increased in power to the point where it has today been referred to as the first world power by many analysts (Fisher, M. May 2015; Clarke, M. May 2019), usually taking into consideration the following factors: education, technology, military arsenal, politic, economy, health and care, space, and well-being. It is far from being nonsense if Americans seem to have a feeling of strong pride of their land because of their achievements and remarkable contribution to the development of humanity.

Africa, on the contrary, the birth place of black people, that was formally one of the leading regions in the world, has become since many centuries the "first world weakness". It has lost its position, almost definitely and has become extra or subsidiary, being treated as a mere appendage of other parts of the world.

It is time intellectual Africans became conscious and unanimously took actions to help Africa rise up so as not to lag far and eternally behind the rest of the world.

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