



## China's Racism Problem in Africa

**OE Watch Commentary:** While many in Africa are grateful for Chinese funding of numerous African-based megaprojects, initially China often brought its own workforce to construct the dams, railroads, power plants, and numerous other infrastructure projects it was financing. This generated anger in the African populace, who felt they were being left out of the employment opportunities these large-scale undertakings should have provided. Following pushback from African governments, more African workers have been hired onto Chinese-funded ventures in Africa. However, as the accompanying excerpt from the *Deutsche Welle* website notes, this increased mixing of workers has not been without trouble, as African workers claim the Chinese have exhibited racism against them.

The article's author relates how Chinese workers bring their own cultural as well as political perspectives when they set off to work in Africa. Because China is one of the most homogeneous countries in the world, with 92 percent of the population belonging to the Han ethnic group and only 0.4 percent born abroad, many Chinese have not had the opportunity to interact with people from significantly different cultures than their own. As a political analyst quoted in the article noted, being indoctrinated by one Chinese identity and one Chinese culture leads you to a xenophobic outlook. Differences in work cultures aggravate the divide. For example, the Chinese often work without a break. Another difference, according to the article, is that the Chinese tend to have a very hierarchical mindset, meaning they do what the boss tells them to do as opposed to a more independent thinking approach.

There appears to be little to no effort on the part of the Chinese contingents to address the racism issue. As the article explains, China is not promoting multiculturalism; instead its political indoctrination programs promote Chinese identity and culture. Additionally, the Chinese government does not look at it as a problem they need to address, thus leaving African governments to handle the situation. African governments, however, are often slow to criticize the Chinese as they value Chinese investments in their countries.

Looking at Africans in China reveals the situation is not much different. The Chinese city of Guangzhou is home to 16,000 Africans, the largest population from the continent in Asia. While there have been some meetings and exchanges to improve the situation, racism is still rampant and many hotels there do not welcome African guests. The term "Chinafrica" noted in the article is a portmanteau reflecting China's large and influential presence in Africa. However, as the article describes, Africa welcomes Chinese investment, but the racist mindset of some Chinese workers that accompanies those investments, not at all.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Chinese money is cranking up Africa's economy. However, the conduct of some Chinese people on the continent is causing displeasure among the locals.”*

**Source:** Martina Schwikowski, “The racist face of the Chinese presence in Africa,” *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2018. <https://www.dw.com/en/the-racist-face-of-the-chinese-presence-in-africa/a-46223068>

*Chinese money is cranking up Africa's economy. However, the conduct of some Chinese people on the continent is causing displeasure among the locals. Does 'Chinafrica' have a racism problem?*

*The construction phase of the railway repeatedly hit the headlines over allegations of racism. Kenyan journalists reported that Chinese workers did not want to share a table at lunchtime with their African colleagues, and that insults and humiliation were the order of the day.*

*The Chinese government does little against the racism of its citizens. That comes as no surprise to Steve Tsang. “China's governing elite does not really have a strong incentive to deal with bad behavior of citizens. They leave that to the African authorities,” he said.*



While much of Africa has welcomed Chinese funding for large scale projects, for example the Mombasa-Nairobi railway pictured here, there have been complaints that some Chinese workers attached to such projects exhibit racism against Africans.

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