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Toward Reparations Policy In Ghana

A study of the Reparations Movement in Ghana, West Africa.

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Independent Study Project
School for International Training
African Diaspora Studies Program fall 2002
Ghana, West Africa
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Dean Mark Hoffman

Northwestern University Study Abroad Office

Friends at home and abroad

Meda ase paa ...

May God bless you and your family richly.

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Abstract

Ghana has a history of being an impetus for Pan-African change. However, the reparations movement that recently gained international attention at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism does not yet have an organized mass-base of consensus of awareness in Ghana. While many people agree that the slave trade and colonialism have contributed to Ghana's problems of poverty, unemployment, and limited educational resources, few have associated these needs with the term "reparations".

“I might stop right here to point out one thing. Whenever you’re going after something that belongs to you, anyone who’s depriving you of the right to have it is criminal. Understand that.

Whenever you are going after something that is yours, you are within your legal right to lay claim to it.”

-Malcolm X

Introduction

In early September of 2001, the term “reparations” gained international attention at the United Nations Conference Against Racism and Related Intolerance. At the African Descendants Caucus, delegates from throughout the continent and African Diaspora met to discuss the largest contemporary issues concerning African people. The Caucus convened and listed ten priority action points of consensus, which were as follows:

1. The slave trade, slavery, and colonialism are crimes against humanity.
2. Reparations for African and African Descendants
3. Recognition of the economic basis racism.
4. Adoption of corrective national (domestic) public policies with emphasis on environmental racism.
5. Adoption of culture-specific development policies
6. The adoption of mechanisms to combat the relationship between race, poverty, and globalization.
7. Adoption of mechanisms to combat the relationship between race, poverty, and globalization
8. Adoption of mechanisms to combat racism in the criminal punishment (penal) system.
9. Adoption of policies specific to African and African Descendant Women that recognize and address the intersection of race and gender.
10. Support for the adoption of policies that recognizes and address the intersection of race and gender.¹

Though this declaration brought the subject of reparations to international headlines, Africans have been fighting for reparations for nearly two centuries. However, it is only within the last century that Africans throughout the continent and the Diaspora have joined forces to analyse the relationships between their common struggles¹. Ghana has a history of being a meeting place and center of Pan-African dialogue, beginning most notably with the All African Peoples Conference in Accra in 1958. When choosing a project site for a study of West African perspectives on and the progress of its reparations movement, Ghana seemed to be the natural starting point. This study is centers on three themes, What is the Ghanaian Reparations Movement? What are its challenges? What role does the African Diaspora play in this

¹ Reference to Pan-African Congresses of 1900, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1945, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1963 and 1978.

movement, with particular emphasis on the African American presence? I have yet to locate a previous work dedicated to the study of the Ghanaian reparations movement.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected by means of interviews, participant observations, informal conversations, questionnaires, and literature reviews.

Interviews

I conducted 5 in-depth interviews during the course of this study. Interviewees include the department head of the University of Ghana's Department of African Studies, a Pan-African youth activist and former president of one of Ghana's Pan-African youth clubs, the Co-Coordinator of the Jubilee International Movement for Economic and Social Justice, a PhD candidate in Archaeology and African Studies, and a Professor of History who has done extensive work in African Diaspora Studies. All of the interviewees are Ghanaian nationals and have lived and worked in Ghana for the majority of their lives.

6 questions were central to each interview, but follow-up questions varied from interview to interview depending on the responses shared by informants.

Interview questions included, but were not limited to the following:

- What comes to mind when you hear the term "reparations"?
- In what context do you hear the term most often discussed?
- Are most Ghanaians talking about it? Which people are talking about it?
- What is the Ghanaian reparations movement?
- What challenges does this movement face?
- What role does the African Diaspora play in it?

Follow-up questions included, but were not limited to the following;

- What are the largest problems/issues Ghana faces today?
- Would you consider the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and or colonialism as having anything to do with these problems?
- If yes, what is the link?

Participant Observation

During the course of this study, I attended and participated in 3 meetings held by the African World Reparations and Reparation Truth Commission (AWRRTC).

Informal Conversations

Informal conversations were held in person or by phone with a retired African American Dentist who has been living in Ghana for over 30 years, a former officer in Ghana's national

airforce who currently directs a research center for highlife and traditional music, an African American who has resided in Ghana for over 13 years and has been a voice in the African reparations movement, and one of the present co-chairs of the Afrikan World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were designed by author with consultation from Professor Atta Britwum of the University of Cape Coast, and were distributed with the aid of the University of Cape Coast's Student Representative Council, and on the campus of the University of Ghana. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed between the two campuses. 60 were distributed at the University of Cape Coast, and 10 were distributed at the University of Ghana. Of the 60 distributed at the University of Cape Coast, 25 were returned. Of the 10 distributed at the University of Ghana, 5 were returned. In addition to demographic questions such as age, gender, educational background, etc., survey questions included:

- Have you heard the term reparations?
 - If yes, in what setting?
 - If yes, what does the term mean to you?
- What does the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade represent to you?
- What does colonialism represent to you/
- What do you consider to be the largest issues Ghana faces?
- Would you consider slavery and colonialism as having anything to do with any of these problems?
 - If yes, what do you consider to be the link?
 - If no, what do you consider to be the source of the problem?
- How do you envisage solutions to these problems?

Literature Review

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Jubilee 2000 Coalition, “Accra Declaration”, April 19, 1998. Declaration crafted by an international team of debt-forgiveness supporters which outlines slavery and colonialism as the “root causes” of Africa’s debt crisis.

TransAfrica Forum, “United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances”.
www.transafricaforum.org/reports/unwcar_revised1001.pdf Site summarizes proceedings at the UNWAR conference.

Ghana Review International, “Panafest 97: The re-emergence of African Civilization”, September 1997, Issue No. 043 Includes highlights from the 1997 Panafest.

(author unknown) “Africa Demands Reparations”. Daily Graphic (Ghana). August 23, 2000. No. 147993. Article notes AWRRTC’s demand for reparations and repatriation rights.

Freiku, Sebastian. “America Should Repay Africans”, The Ghanaian Chronicle. November 29, 2002. Vol. 11 No. 28. Article detailing Dr. Gyasi A. Foluke’s (of Howard University) November visit to Ghana, and his reasons for justifying the call for African reparations.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using the following techniques:

- Fieldnotes from interviews and participant observations were coded based on recurring themes.
- Findings were reported to and discussed with advisors
- Field results were related to information gathered from literature reviews.

Constraints

Illness

During the first 6 days of the ISP I was confined to my bed due to a viral infection that severely limited use of my voice and limbs. I had to postpone travel, and was not able to schedule interviews.

Nature

During the majority of my ISP, I resided with a family living in Accra. Our residence was in an area sparsely populated, with limited taxi accessibility to underdevelopment. Thus, I was given 6 pm curfew for my own protection (because of darkness) during week 2 and 3 of the ISP, this limited my computer usage time, as well as the time frame during which I could conduct interviews. During week 4 my curfew was extended and my homestay family in Accra made special arrangements to grant me computer access.

Telephone Access

There were no telephone lines in the area that I resided during my ISP, thus, I was not about to receive phone calls – this made it difficult for informants to contact me with changes in our program. In order to make phone calls, I had to travel ¼ mile to the nearest communication center or travel to the University of Ghana and wait in long cues. This made it difficult to schedule telephone interviews for specific time frames.

Cancellations

On 3 occasions interviews were cancelled by informants with 1 day or no notice. On 2 of these occasions, I had traveled to different cities to meet with interviewees, and valuable time was lost. Of these three interviews, only I was able to be rescheduled.¹

¹ L. Lightner, O. Owino, L. Reed, C. David, and T. Negussie, Report on UNWCAR www.transafricaforum.org/reports/unwcar_revised1001.pdf

“Ghana has something to say to us. It says to us first that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter 1

What is the Ghana Reparations Movement?

When I first began to research this topic, I began asking each interviewee the same question: What is the Ghanaian reparations movement? I received the same answer, “What movement?”, “Folks aren’t talking about that here.” “There is not mass movement here.” I arrived in Ghana thinking that there would be an organised front, similar to the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations (NCOBRA), or a host of progressive organizations that made public statements on the topic – After all this is Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana, right? Rather, I found one active organization that has been working to address the reparations question, a coalition that works to advocate for African debt relief, and students, professors, school teachers, businessmen, and lawyers who have strong feelings about the damages that resulted from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism. Some might not call this a movement, but rather a few single moves toward addressing the reparations question. This chapter discusses the present state of the reparations movement in Ghana, and examines reparations sentiments among the University students, professors, attorneys, activists, and progressive leaders who completed surveys and were interviewed during the course of this project.

The first reparations conference to be held on the continent of African was held in Lagos Nigeria in 1990 under the auspices of Chief Mashood Abiola of Nigeria. The next was held in 1993 in Abuja, Nigeria, followed by the Reparation Conference in Ouidah, Benin in 1999. On Thursday, August 12, 1999 representatives of African descent from Cote d’Ivoire, Namibia, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Jamaica, Tanzania, Zambia, USA, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Barbados, Martinique, and Guadeloupe gathered in Accra, Ghana at the W. E.B. DuBois Memorial Center for Pan-African Culture for the International Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission Conference under the leadership of the Afrikan World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission (AWRRTC)¹ As a follow-up to this historic meeting, the delegates crafted a declaration that not only called for the immediate cancellation of international debt owed by Africa and all countries of African slave descendants and \$777 trillion principal with interest per annum from the nations of Western Europe, the Americas, and institutions who benefited from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism, but also for the unconditional right of return to Africa for the direct descendants of enslaved Africans. In addition, the declaration noted, “the root causes of Africa’s problems today are the enslavement and

¹Participants of the First Historic International Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission Conference, “The Accra Declaration on Reparation and Repatriation”, August 12, 1999.

colonization of Africa and of African people over a 400 year period-through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the illegal occupation by European nations on Africa's sovereign soil.²

As a follow-up to the 1999 conference, AWRRTC organized a second International Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission Conference, held July 28-30 2000 in Accra, Ghana, during which delegates drafted an action plan aimed at bringing the tenants central to the 1999 declaration to fruition.³ The plan called for African nations and those nations of African descent in the Diaspora to immediately stop debt-servicing payments, and "rightfully use debt servicing capital for domestic development"⁴, it also called for the Organisation of African Unit (OAU) to allocate four observer seats to representatives of the African Diaspora of North, Central, South America, and the Caribbean regions.⁵ The action plan also supported Ghana's Immigration Bill #573, which would give descendants of those enslaved the right of abode in Ghana, and encouraged Ghana's traditional rulers to set aside lands for resettlement and development in agriculture, small scale industry, and education.⁶

AWRRTC has also made plans to assemble a team of international lawyers to "pursue all legal means, to demand justice from those nationals of Western Europe, America, and institutions, who participated and benefited from the European Enslavement and Colonization of African Peoples."⁷ by filing a class action law suit against the accused. According to Akoto Ampaw, a seasoned attorney who has been active in the African debt forgiveness campaign, this type of suit "... needs a lot of solid preparation. The critical challenge has to do with popularizing the demand and making it a concern for the ordinary man and woman."⁸ Ampaw went on to note that even if such a suit was unsuccessful, the claim, if argued in an organized fashion, could create a solid platform that might prove to be useful in support of this cause.⁹ AWRRTC appears to be the only Ghana-based organisation that tackles the issue of reparations, debt forgiveness, and repatriation. Yet, a number of other organizations are working individually to tackle some of these issues. "The reparations could be the debt we've paid several times over... We don't owe the West anything. They owe us."¹⁰

² Ibid

³ Letter from Dr. Hamet Maulana, Co-chair of AWRRTC, September 1, 2000

⁴ Participants of the Second Historic International Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission Conference, "Accra Reparations and Repatriation Action Plan for July 2000 through July 2001", item 1

⁵ Ibid, item 3

⁶ Ibid, item 6

⁷ Ibid, item 2

⁸ Attorney Akoto Ampaw, interview by author, November 26, 2002, Accra, Ghana.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana. Interview by author, November 15, 2000. University of Ghana

The Jubilee 2000 Campaign issued an Accra Declaration of April 19th, 1998, naming the root causes of African debt, “the history of slavery and colonialism”¹¹, the debt crisis “a function of the unjust system of International Trade and Investment and of Unaccountable Government”¹², and “that the conditions and policies that constitute the framework for the repayment of these debts are unjustifiable instruments of control of the destiny of Afrikan people...that Afrika has paid by way of debt servicing far more than the original loans contracted...that these debts are simply unpayable and that Afrika will continue to be in economic bondage and its ability to develop blocked unless the debt burden is eliminated,”¹³ The composers of the declaration also called for the formation of Jubilee 2000 National Coalitions across the African continent, and for organizations in Africa to spearhead “the active mobilization of Afrikan people in the campaign to eliminate the Debt Burden”¹⁴, for “religious bodies to stand up to their moral obligation and fulfil their prophetic mission of defending the voiceless, and “On other Jubilee 2000 Coalitions to sustain and deepen their solidarity with the Jubilee 200 Afrika Campaign.”¹⁵ Other organizations like the West African branch of the Third World Network, which is based in Ghana, have supported similar initiatives. At the United Nations Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in September of 2001, in Durban South Africa, President Gnassingbade Eyadema of neighbouring Togo supported the notion of reparations, but preferred a plan that involves the cancellation of debts owed by African countries to international financial institutions.¹⁶

The aforementioned organizations have been vigilant in their efforts, yet these reparations-based organizations are few in number. There is an overwhelming unawareness about the subject, which will be discussed in depth in the following chapter. Despite general lack of knowledge on the subject, those who completed questionnaires suggested that they are in agreement with some of the central tenants that AWRRTC, the Jubilee 2000 Coalition, and the World Conference Against Racism and Related Intolerance’s African and African Descendants Caucus have advocated for. Below is a sample of the response shared.

What does the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Represent to You?

“Oppression.”

¹¹ Participants from Afrika, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, attending the Jubilee 2000 Afrika Campaign Launch in Accra, Ghana, from April 16th – 19th, 1998, “Accra Declaration”, April 19th, 1998.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ L. Lightner, O. Owino, L. Reed, C. David, and T. Negussie, Report on UNWCAR, www.transafricaforum.org/reports/unwcar_revised1001.pdf

“It was a forced exodus of cheap, but strong human resources from Africa to the ‘white’ world. It is as immoral and sinful as stealing and cheating.”

“A trade which deals with human beings as commodities.”

“It means buying of blacks into western countries as slaves by whites.”

“Disrespect to the blacks.”

“Evil trade in human beings.”

“It is a gross disrespect and abuse of human rights.”

“It was the forceful ownership of human beings, specifically Africans and in this case, West Africans by the Europeans, with the view to using them to work on plantations to develop their economy.”

“It was wrong on the part of the oppressors.”

“It is the basis of our present crisis as an African people.”

What does colonialism represent to you?

“The forceful assertion of political power on a group of people by another.”

“It presents when Europeans came to Africa and worked diligently to totally change African society and make it more European.”

“One person ruling the other in an unfair manner.”

“Master-slave relation.”

“The rule of black countries by whites. It was also an abuse of human rights.”

“It is totally wrong and unfortunate.”

“Western exploitation.”

“Oppression in the highest degree.”

“Unjust dominion.”

“It represents the dominance of man by man; that is black by white under the guise of helping the colonized to rule themselves well.”

What do you consider to be the largest issues Ghana faces today?

The most common responses were poverty, education and unemployment. Would you consider slavery and colonialism as having anything to do with any of these problems? If yes, what do you consider to be the link?ⁱ

“Colonialism lead the people to adopt foreign culture and all that it entails, including goods and services and breakdown of indigenous social systems, bringing in its wake immorality.”

“Yes, because the white man exploited the national and human resources of the land. Secondly, the slave trade, carried away able-bodied men at the time.”

“Yes, wasted years and loss of resources.”

“Yes, Ghana was robbed or its resources for the development of the countries of the colonial masters.”

“Yes. Ghana lost a huge part of its physical and human resources through colonialism and slavery.”

“Yes. People were not given enough opportunity to reason for themselves.”

“Our leaders are still being manipulated, the mind of dependency on foreigners is from slavery and colonialism.”

“Yes, Colonial religion and turning the people against their own people.”

“Yes. People learned wrong things at that time.”

“Yes. So many years of African dependence.”

ⁱ Of the 30 individuals who completed surveys, only 4 responded that they did not see a link. The reasons they listed were, “Laziness of the people of this country.” “Lack of education.” “Unemployment, lack of education, lack of self-control.” “Lack of jobs and the low value of Ghanaian currency.”

“You have to work for it. Freedom is never given to anybody. Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter 2

Challenges to the Movement

During the course of this project, I examined reasons that might keep Ghana's reparations movement from growing and gaining strength. I asked every person I interviewed what challenges Ghana's reparations movement faces, and I received responses that were concentrated around 4 themes:

- A mass base yet to develop
- People have a lack of knowledge of historical and contemporary issues that are causing problems.
- People don't want to visit the topic of slavery and colonialism.
- Some people feel slavery and colonialism were more beneficial than harmful.

Strength in Numbers

In 1957 Nkrumah recognized the importance of strength in numbers. He knew that Ghana would not be free until all of Africa was free¹ He understood the importance of unity in light of a common struggle. Just prior to Ghana's independence, concerned Africans throughout the continent and the Diaspora gathered to discuss the world issues that threatened the wellbeing of Africans on every continent. It was no coincidence that African nations were fighting for independence simultaneously with Africans in North America, the Caribbean, and South America for their civil rights. In 1964 in his speech *Ballot or the Bullet*, Malcolm X urged Africans living in America to take their demand for civil rights to the world court.

Expand the civil rights struggle to the level of human rights, take it to the United Nations, where our African brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Asian brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Latin-American brothers can throw their weight on our side, and where 800 million Chinamen are sitting there waiting to throw weight on our side.¹

Malcom X understood the importance of strength in numbers. However, a small mass base appears to be one of the largest obstacles obstructing the progression of the reparations movement in Ghana.

Many people do not recognise the active relevance of the reparations platform...some see it as fringe politics. They think the link is so distant and unachievable. On the flip side, there is the

¹ Reference to Kwame Nkrumah's "Midnight Speech" given at the dawn of Ghana'

¹ Malcolm X, "Ballot or the Bullet" April 3, 1964. Harlem (?)

general weakness of the social movement... In that sense, the question of reparations has not become a mass issue.²

Akoto Ampaw, Ghanaian attorney and Co-cordinator of the Jubilee International Movement for Economic and Social Justice, shared these comments when asked to speak on some of the challenges the reparations movement in Ghana faces. Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana commented on the weakness of the Ghanaian movement when asked the same question. "I think it's very weak in Ghana."³

On August 17, 2002, thousands of Africans living in all parts of America gathered in Washington D.C. to demand reparations for slavery and its vestiges⁴, after a call was issued by the African and African Descendants Caucus during the United Nations World Conference Against Racism and Related Intolerance in August of 2001 to gather⁵. Organisers of the rally emphasized the importance of creating a critical mass demand for reparations, and said that doing so would be crucial to the success of this movement.⁶ This notion of critical mass demand is common throughout social movement theory⁷, which means its absence could jeopardize the success of a social movement.

The Word on Reparations

During the course of this project, I distributed 75 surveys to students on the campuses of the University of Cape Coast and the University of Ghana, 30 of which were completed and returned. Of the 30 surveys that were completed and returned, 10 respondents indicated that they had heard the term reparations⁸, and 20 indicated that they had not. If the individuals who completed this survey represent the elite, those who have means to support their schooling, have access to university libraries, internet resources, professors and venues in which information can be exchanged, ie. classrooms, it is likely that the larger masses of the population who are deprived of such resources and do not have the luxury of spending their time milling over such issues, are even less familiar with the concept. "Food security is a real issue."⁹ Making the link

² Attorney Akoto Ampaw, interview by author, November 26, 2002, Accra Ghana.

³ Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana, Interview by Author, November 15, 2000, University of Ghana.

⁴ Observation by author, Millions for Reparations Rally, August 17, 2002. Washington, DC

⁵ L. Lightner, O. Owino, L. Reed, C. David and T. Negussie, Report on UNWCAR.

www.transafricaforum.org/reports/unwcar_revised1001.pdf

⁶ Observation by author, Millions for Reparations Rally, August 17, 2002, Washington DC

⁷ Dr. Aldon Morris, Northwestern University Department of Sociology, tape recorded interview by author, August 2002, Evanston. IL. (tape in possession of author)

⁸ Number represents 1/3 of the sample population.

⁹ Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana, Interview by Author, November 15, 2000, University of Ghana.

between an argument for reparations and every day concerns is essential. In the words of Attorney Ampaw. “The critical challenge has to do with popularizing the demand and making it an issue for the ordinary man and woman.”¹⁰

There are a number of reasons that may explain this apparent lack of reparations awareness. Perhaps people choose not to seek out information on such topics because it appears to be controversial. “Apart from absence of knowledge and any real discussion about it. It’s really a controversial topic.”¹¹ During an interview with Kojoⁱⁱ, a former teacher and leader in Ghana’s Pan-African Youth Organisation, shared a story which illuminated this notion. Kojo visited a local senior secondary school with the hopes of organizing a free Black History Month program for students. He scheduled an appointment with the school’s headmaster, and began to explain the details of the program. At first, the headmaster seemed quite interested in having Kojo and his colleagues speak to his students, but as soon as he mentioned the words Pan-Africanism and reparations, the headmaster turned skeptical and remarked, “Oh no, we don’t want any African Traditional Religion, black power, anti-Christian stuff here”, and asked Kojo to leave.¹² Upon hearing the words Pan-Africanism and reparations, the headmaster immediately associated them with something he deemed negative. In this secondary school, which operated by the local Catholic Church, African Traditional Religion, also known as Black Power, are viewed negatively. The headmaster immediately drew some type of parallel between it and Pan-African issues.

Our leaders lack the political power to push an issue like reparations forward. Some of them are too Europeanized and Americanized, that anything dealing with Afrikans, put aside. It all stems from the leadership. We need vocal exponents of this philosophy. Strong leadership to actually lead in this fight for reparations.¹³

This phenomena might also be attributed to pro-colonialism sentiments, which are anti-reparations in nature, that may influence the way people embrace the notion of reparations.

Colonialism has taught us to respect white people more than ourselves. We think it is only white people that can solve our problems for us. Colonialism had a negative effect on our society...People don’t even want to associate with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.¹⁴

¹⁰ Attorney Akoto Ampaw, interview by author, November 26, 2002, Accra, Ghana.

¹¹ Dr. S.Y. Boadi-Siaw, Professor, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, interview by author, November 25, 2002, University of Cape Coast.

ⁱⁱ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of the mentioned party.

¹² Kojo, Pan-African youth activist, interview by author, November 19, 2002, Cape Coast, Ghana (pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Baba, Ghanaian PhD candidate in Archaeology and African Studies, Syracuse University, interview by author November 27, 2002, University of Ghana (pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant)

Professor Manuh shared similar insights. “Some people in school are taught the benefits of colonialism.”^{iii 15}

ⁱⁱⁱ Of the 30 questionnaires that were completed and returned during this study, two contained comments that suggested that the respondents thought somewhat favourably to favourably toward colonialism

¹⁵ Professor Takyiwaa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana, Interview by author, November 15, 2000, University of Ghana.

“...Many of them have made no small contribution to the cause of African freedom. Names which spring immediately to mind in this connection are those of Marcus Garvey, and W. E.B. DuBois. Long before many of us were even conscious of our own degradation, these men fought for African national and racial equality. Long may the links between Africa and the peoples of African descent continue to hold us together in fraternity...”

-Kwame Nkrumah

Chapter 3

The Role of the Diaspora

African American Presence

“Every one in this room is an African. Black folks been struggling’ everywhere. Don’t come up in here with that ‘I am the true African’, just because your skin is jet black and you were born in Asanti or Eweland. We are all Africans. There are plenty of brothers and sisters in America far more African than the man born and bred in Ghana or Nigeria who thinks the white man is God, and everything African is wrong and everything white is right.”¹

Pan-African Organisation on Reparations in Ghana

Upon my arrival to Ghana, I assumed that the majority of leaders in Ghana’s reparations movement would be Ghanaian national. Instead, I found that in many cases African Americans were introducing the notion of reparations with support from Ghanaians. I was not aware of the large community of African American who had resettled in Ghana. According to the African American Association of Ghana, there are over 1,000 African Americans currently residing in Ghana², many of whom have played active roles in Ghana’s Pan-African movement, whether leading reparations based-organisations, teaching black studies courses, hosting seminars, or establishing businesses.

In the United States, there are a number of organizations that have devoted their time and energy to the movement towards reparations, among them are the National Coalition of Black for Reparations, The National Black United Front, and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Some of these organizations have made plans to establish chapters in Ghana. A number of other, smaller African-American founded organizations have already established Ghanaian chapters and are growing¹, but some feel that even more links need to be formed. “Somehow there has not been enough attempts to links up the movement. In has very weak roots in Africa.”³

“Go to the DuBois Center, that’s where the African Americans like to hang out.”⁴ During each of my 5 visits to the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Center for Pan-African Culture, I met at least one African American, on 2 visits I met Afro-Brits, on 4 visits I met Nigerians, and on 2 occasions I met Africans from Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Virgin Islands. The DuBois Center hosts a number of weekly programs aimed at promoting Pan-African understanding,

¹ Comment made by an African American audience member at a Pan-African forum, November 9, 2002, W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Center for Pan-African Unity

² www.africanonline.com.gh/AAAG

¹ Names will be kept confidential, at the request of organisation leaders.

³ Professor Takyiwa Manuh, Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana, interview by author, November 15, 2000, University of Ghana.

⁴ Dr. Robert Lee, conversation with author on November 8, 2002

including a weekly reparations forum that is lead by an African American professor who also co-chairs the African World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission.

I first became interested in Pan-Africanism after participating in the first Panafestⁱⁱ in 1992. That is when I and some of the other brothers first became conscious. That is when I first head about reparations.⁵

Panafest is another medium for men and women from the continent to connect with men and women living in the Diaspora. During the next Panafest scheduled for July and August of 2003, a whole day's activities will be devoted to the subject of reparations.

Sentiments About Diaspora Involvement with Ghana's Reparations Movement

During the course of this study, I found that the Diaspora's presence, particularly that of African Americans, could not be escaped.

They have been very vocal in putting forward the idea for reparations. One hears a lot more about it in the U.S. than in Ghana... The input from the outside world would be helpful, but if those who bring input come with the understanding of the way our system works, and can fit in accordingly.⁶

In a society that has traditionally valued the importance of family, cohesiveness and understanding seem essential to the success of a social movement. Dr. Siaw illustrates an important concept, there are differences, be they small or large, in the experiences of Africans living in the Diaspora and those living on the continent, which have shaped the way people think about concepts of retribution and restitution. Understanding those differences, as well as the undeniable similarities, is key to the development of alliances that can prompt positive change.

"It is not just the African American problem. It is the African problem. It is the problem of the Africans."⁷

Others feel that movement will begin with Diasporans, and if successful, will be adopted by those living on the continent. "It's the African Americans who are talking about it. The Africans are waiting to see if we will get anything out of it"⁸

ⁱⁱ A bi-annual Pan-African cultural gathering that was founded in 1992 in Ghana

⁵ Kojo, Pan-African youth activist, interview by author, November 19 2002, Cape Coast, Ghana (pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant)

⁶ Dr. S.Y. Boadi-Siaw, Professor, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, interview by author, November 25, 2002, University of Cape Coast.

⁷ *Kojo, Pan-African youth activist, interview by author, November 19, 2002, Cape Coast, Ghana (*pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant)

⁸ Dr. Robert Lee, phone conversation with author on November 8, 2002

Some feel that Diasporans cannot be left out of the discussion at all.

“I really have my doubts whether a reparations movement could be started in Ghana. I can only see one being started by Ghanaians and Africans in the Diaspora. We still need input from both sides...”⁹

⁹ *Baba, Ghanaian PhD candidate in Archaeology and African Studies, Syracuse University, interview by author November 27, 2002, University of Ghana (pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant)

Conclusions

As time rolls on, it is likely that new discoveries will be made and assessed from the very same collection of data presented in this study. I look forward to those discoveries. Until that time arrives, I will conclude with observations made while still in Ghana.

When I first began this research, I was warned that the task of studying Ghana's reparations movement would be quite difficult for a number of reasons. First, I was told that there was no reparations movement in Ghana and I was told that reparations is an issue that most Ghanaians are not concerned about. I listened carefully to these warnings, but promised myself that I would not let them taint or skew my vision and perception of my own discoveries.

Contrary to popular belief, there is a reparations movement in Ghana, it's just small at the movement. The tenants central to the international movement suggest the following:

- Slavery and colonialism were not beneficial to Africa's development as a continent of strong, sovereign states.
- Slavery and colonialism did not benefit the overwhelming majority of Africans dispersed throughout the world.
- The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was a crime against humanity. Africa's poverty as well as the African debt crisis are directly related to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism.
- Something should be done in order to properly address these circumstances.

The data collected in this study supports each of those tenants; however, it also indicates that many people do not yet associate these concepts with the word "reparations" thus, large masses of people aren't rallying behind "reparations organizations" or advocates who are campaigning for the cause. But rather, people are hearing the word and are ascribing their own meaning to it despite their familiarity or lack there with it. People feel strongly about these ideas, and many support them, they simply haven't created or joined the proper vehicle to link them. Further, since this connection is not yet being made, people are concentrating on problems they view as isolated, but are really intertwined.

For example, a woman knows she and her family is hungry, but she may not know that the reason she can't grow food or catch fish is because the local gold mining company has stripped her land and deposited waste into the local river. She also doesn't know that the majority of the money gained from this mine is being sent to another country, and the money that stays in her country is being used to support the school the children of the mine owner attends. She can't afford to send her children to school. She just knows that she is living on gold, but she

and her family is hungry. Her task is to feed them and take care of them as best as possible. She doesn't know that the logic behind a word called reparations might meet her needs, nor does she know there are men and women all over her country facing the same problem, and men and women in different countries facing similar problems on different scales.

Ghana's reparations movement might better be named, people moving towards understanding the need and its cause. Some people are standing still, many are stretching, and some are moving.

Suggestions for Further Study

- A comprehensive study of reparations movements throughout Africa and the African Diaspora.
- Character maps of individuals leading these movements.
- An analysis of the relationship between Ghana's fight for independence and the modern international reparation movement.
- Methods for developing and implementing a Pan-African school curriculum.
- A study on opposition to Pan- African movements.

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