Rejuvenating Pan-Africanism: African American Repatriation and Integration in Ghana

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Abstract

This study examines African American repatriation to Ghana, exploring their motivations, coping strategies, and integration within a Pan-Africanist framework. Inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois's vision of global African unity, the study investigates how diaspora return advances social and economic liberation. Using qualitative interviews with nineteen participants selected via snowball sampling, the study found that African Americans leverage social capital to build businesses and networks, which contribute to Ghana's economy. Motivations often stem from a historical consciousness of retracing ancestral routes tied to the slave trade, aligning with Pan-Africanist ideals of restitution. Coping mechanisms include language acquisition and community engagement, though integration varies by marital status and length of stay. Challenges like cultural disconnect highlight tensions in defining "African" identity, contributing to the broader debate on who constitutes an African. The study addresses Pan-Africanism's social question, showing how the diaspora's contributions counter inequalities and resist imperialist legacies. It advocates for sustained Pan-African ensembles to bridge the diaspora and continental Africans, fostering epistemic justice and promoting economic emancipation. By situating repatriation within Pan-Africanist thought, this research underscores the urgency of collective resistance amid global crises, contributing to the rejuvenation of Pan-Africanism's revolutionary agenda.

Introduction

Pan-Africanism, the vision of unity and cooperation among all people of African descent, has long motivated connections between the African continent and its diaspora. Ghana, under its first president, Kwame Nkrumah, explicitly embraced the unity of Africa. As Nkrumah remarked, "I am not African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me" (Kwame Nkrumah, 1968), he invoked a political and emotional commitment to the African homeland. In practice, Nkrumah courted Black American and Caribbean activists as partners in liberation, inviting figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Maya Angelou to live in Ghana (Gaines, 2012).

Early twentieth-century thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey envisioned collective uplift, linking emancipation in America to liberation in Africa (Rabaka, 2009; Biney, 2011; Adi, 2018). Du Bois famously framed the era's "problem of the colour line" as a global issue of racial hierarchy and colonialism (Bulmer & Solomos, 2019). By the mid-20th century, Pan-Africanism was adopted during the presidency of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, when prominent personalities from African Americans and African-Caribbean advocates, artists, and professionals like W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and others visited or lived in Ghana. These personalities were drawn by Nkrumah's visions of African liberation struggles or fled political repression in the United States (Gaines, 2006). This attraction dates to the era of Ghana's independence under Kwame Nkrumah, who championed Pan-Africanism and invited members of the African diaspora to contribute to the nation's development (Gaines, 2005). Historian Keisha N. Blain (2018) observes that for W.E.B. Du Bois and his generation of Pan-Africanists, postcolonial Ghana represented "the manifestation of their political vision", the ultimate vindication of decades of struggle for African unity and self-determination.

In an attempt to engage the African Diaspora in Pan-Africanism, the African Union (AU) designated the African diaspora the Sixth Region (Kamei, 2011), and Ghana's government has leveraged Diaspora ties as an economic strategy. In recent decades, initiatives such as the 2001 Right of Abode legislation, the Joseph Project (2007) and Roots Tourism marketing are explicit efforts to encourage return, treating African-descended people of the Diaspora as partners in development (Fehler, 2011; Kleist, 2013; Mensah, 2021). Ghana's 2019 Year of Return and the follow-up Beyond the Return campaign aimed to attract African-descended visitors, investment, and homecoming (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2023).

In the migration literature, scholars note that diasporans often develop an "ethnic homeland consciousness" that motivates return. As King and Christou (2014) put it, "the homeland produces both a profound sense of ethnic consciousness and identity," hence framing return as an attempt to "reverse the scattering" caused by historical dislocation (Safran, 1991). Similar ideas have been applied to African American contexts, where Lake (1995) found strong attachments to imagined homelands, while ancestral DNA tracing has also fueled return (Fehler, 2011). The idea of return is deeply tied to the historical memory of slavery and colonialism. Ghana's "Door of No Return" at Cape Coast Castle stands as a potent symbol of rupture and displacement during the transatlantic slave trade. Scholars note that state initiatives such as the 2019 Year of Return function as forms of symbolic reparations and diasporic

reconnection, intended to honour ancestral sacrifice while addressing historical injustices (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2023). President Nana Akufo-Addo framed the campaign as both a homecoming and an act of remembrance for enslaved Africans. However, critics caution that such commemorations can be selective or commercialised, privileging U.S.-centric slave narratives while marginalising northern Ghana's historical experiences and other forms of enslavement. These critiques underscore broader tensions in how African memory and heritage tourism are constructed and who ultimately benefits (Bruner, 1996; Ebron, 2009; Pierre, 2019).

Migration theory also emphasises economic motivations and skills transfer as central to return migration (King, 2013; Cassarino, 2013). In Ghana, the state has explicitly encouraged a "reverse brain drain" by promoting diaspora human capital and investment (Teye et al., 2017). On a more theoretical level, recent scholarship suggests that diaspora returnees advance epistemic justice by recentering African narratives and revaluing knowledge long marginalised under colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mbembe, 2021). While this concept remains underexplored in Ghana's policy discourse, it frames return migration as a decolonial act, reclaiming authorship over Africa's global story and reaffirming that the continent's modernity is co-produced by those once forcibly displaced.

Despite these powerful incentives, scholarly understanding of the phenomenon is still developing. Early studies of Ghana often focused on tourism or on singular figures, and few have empirically examined how ordinary African Americans experience life in contemporary Ghana (Lake, 1995; Gaines, 2005, 2006; Fehler, 2011; Gaines, 2012). In sum, the literature indicates multiple intertwined forces at play: ideological Pan-Africanism, historical memory, personal identity quests, and developmental calculus. However, few studies have empirically explored how these forces manifest in the lived experiences of repatriates. This paper addresses that gap by presenting new qualitative findings from Ghana. It pays special attention to themes of motivation, identity formation, cultural negotiation, and economic empowerment. In doing so, the study situates these personal narratives within broader debates about Pan-Africanism, transnationalism, and the transformative potential of diaspora engagement.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative, interpretivist approach to capture the lived experiences of African American repatriates in Ghana. Specifically, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations were used to solicit responses consistent with the view that experiences are socially constructed. Creswell (2014) explains that social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and develop subjective meanings of their experiences. As such, the researcher aimed to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied while remaining conscious of the role of positionality in the research. The qualitative research approach is useful for generating data on participants' experiences, perceptions, emotions, beliefs, and behaviours (Teye, 2012). This approach allowed for collecting in-depth data about African Americans' experiences regarding how they integrated into Ghanaian society.

Participants were selected via purposive and snowball sampling. Initial contacts were identified through expatriate organisations and referrals, and further interviewees were recruited from their networks. All interviews were conducted in Accra. According to Anarfi (2003), Ghana has two large urban areas, Accra and Kumasi, which are preferred destinations for migrants and returnees. The 2021 Population and Housing Census data reported that the Greater Accra Region accommodates the highest proportion of non-Ghanaian residents in the nation, thereby serving as a suitable and strategic site for participant identification (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

Primary data collection focused on African Americans living in Ghana. Both Face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were used to collect the data. A semi-structured interview guide was developed for in-depth interviews with all study participants. Semi-structured interviews allow respondents the freedom to express their views in their own terms, and because they are open-ended, they enable the researcher to probe or follow issues that diverge from the guide to help gain more understanding. Interviews were guided by open-ended questions about each individual's motivations for moving, expectations, coping strategies, and integration experiences. The analysis was thematic, drawing on Creswell's (2014) social-constructivist framework, which centres participants' subjective meanings while acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role.

The interviews were conducted in English, and the researcher transcribed the data verbatim. In practice, this meant coding transcripts for recurring themes and comparing experiences across cases. Since this is an exploratory study with a small sample, the findings are tentative and not generalizable, but they bring forth recurring patterns and issues related to the repatriation experience. The study focused on African Americans residing in Ghana for at least two years, since such people have been exposed to the culture and have much experience to share in terms of their stay in Ghana. African Americans who visit the country for tourism and have no intention of moving to Ghana are considered expatriates or short-term visitors. Children below the age of 18 were not included in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Generally, African Americans believe they have familial ties in various African kingdoms, while others believe their descendants are alive because their presence in the United States of America was fundamentally due to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. As a result, some are taking ancestral DNA tests to trace their lineage. Others move back to Africa because they want a space with which they can be identified, despite their existing cultural differences. Thus, the number of African Americans moving to Ghana continues to increase, especially due to the social climate in the United States.

This section examines the motives behind African Americans' move to Ghana and their efforts to gain permanent residency. This research supplements existing research on African American tourism and repatriation (Lake, 1995; Gaines, 2005; Reed, 2006; Schramm, 2009; Fehler, 2011). According to Cresswell (2006:3), mobility is a 'socially produced motion,' a human topographical motion instilled with meaning and power. Movement carries meaning when this

meaning is attributed; movement becomes "mobility." The ability to travel from one place to another can determine one's status or power in society since status and power are not collective (Sheller & Urry, 2006).

The living experiences essentially constitute the concept of home that migrants carry with them from their country of origin, but also the experiences gathered in the host country. These experiences may make an African American have a collective memory about their native land; feel alienated due to the perception of not being accepted in their new homeland; see their native homeland as their ideal home; and develop a strong ethnic group consciousness that defines their way of life (Safran, 1991:83-84). Therefore, for many African Americans, finding themselves among the majority in terms of skin colour gives them a sense of home. For this reason, perceiving Ghana as the home was one reason African Americans moved. The feeling of being part of the Black race and the yearning to contribute to Africa's growth caused many to search for their "home" by taking ancestral DNA tests. This is similar to Fehler (2011), who also observed that notions of identity, home, and belonging motivate African Americans when deciding to travel or settle in their native country. In his research on how African Americans undertake a DNA test to trace their ancestry, he observed how identities become renegotiated and conceptualised through stories of make-believe links to a superficial missing 'homeland'. These storylines often help the narrator reconstruct the motherland through transnational narratives of belonging in the US (Fehler, 2011).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the only "home" known to many African descendants is their diaspora places of birth. A growing body of literature on Diasporans in Africa (Lake, 1995; Gaines, 2005, 2006; Fehler, 2011) suggests a mounting diaspora African interest in their ancestral land. The ideas and feelings held by diaspora Africans in Ghana may exemplify diaspora Africans as they encompass a broad scale of notions that reflect actual and imagined communities in Africa and the Diaspora. To understand the study participants, who are African Americans living in Ghana, it was necessary to understand what motivated them to move to Ghana in the first place. This knowledge would help the researcher assess the impact on their period of stay. Participants were asked about the reasons they moved to Ghana. Most of the participants reported feeling at home. Below are the narratives from some of the participants: Mpatopo has been living in Ghana for the past fourteen years with her husband. They have been married for twenty years. Currently, their grandchildren live with them. She considered migrating to Ghana because her ancestral DNA proved she was from Ghana. She said, "*I want to live here where my DNA says I am. I wanted to return to my roots and dispel all the negative evils against the motherland and our people. So, to begin my journey, I took an ancestral DNA test, and Ghana, Liberia, and Guinea were my countries of origin.*" (Mpatopo, 49 years old). Likewise, Tumi is sixty-seven years old, married, a restaurateur and a realtor in Ghana. He has been living in Ghana for seven years. He knew something was missing until he came to Africa; then he realised what was missing. He said, "*I also knew something was missing, and I would ask myself what it would be like living in Africa, and I knew from day one that I would be in Africa. When I got on the plane, I knew that my ancestors were bringing me home, and I am here and feel very comfortable here. I got a family here, and it is good for me at this stage of my life; although I had to wait till I retired, this stage of my life is good for me*" (Tumi). Dame, a 57-year-old man who has also been living in Ghana for fifteen years, reiterated that Ghana is

home. "*It is my home; my experiences as a youth in Ghana have made me want to contribute something back to Ghana, as this is my home*" (Dame). For almost all the participants, migration to Ghana was an individual decision; although they factored in their families throughout the decision-making process, they solely decided to move. This contrasts with De Haas (2021), who argues that NEM focuses on migration as a mutual interdependence, not individual independence. Adwo is a seventy-six-year-old man who is divorced and has been living in Ghana for sixteen years. What motivates him to stay in Ghana, living among people who look just like him. He said: "*My first trip to the continent was in 2000, and it was to Ghana, and [hmm] I fell in love with the people, place, and so forth. I have no idea what Africa was all about. It was my first experience, and the people were warm. I just liked it, and it was good to be around so many people who all looked like me …, and when I was a child, I had pictures of my great grandparents, my mother's side, and my father's; that was it. I knew nothing about our people. They did not teach us in High School. They may point to Africa on the map, and that was just about it, so before I came, I spent two weeks travelling across Ghana, about 2000miles on the ground, and the day before we were leaving, during breakfast, we were in a group about 35, and I told them that when I retire, I am moving here, so that is what I did*" (Adwo). Aya, who is 50 years old, married to a Ghanaian, and has been living in Ghana for the past 24 years, had this to say when asked about her continual stay in Ghana. She said: "*We have been disconnected from our roots for a long time, and now that I have found my identity, I am here to help build Africa, and since I have a family here, I am not going anywhere*" (Aya). Adwera, who has been living in Ghana for 40 years, had this to say: "*Ghana has become my home ever since I packed my things in 1985, and I came to Ghana. I have never regretted or looked back, although I travel to the U.S. once or twice yearly and regularly use WhatsApp to contact family. Nevertheless, I have a life here with strong connections.*" What accounted for participants' stay varied, but the underlying reason was that Ghana was home, although they had other reasons for their continual stay. As Adwera noted, "*I have my family here, and I am not going anywhere,*" alongside having a sense of belonging.

Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist leadership on the continent made Ghana a preferable destination for African Americans who wanted to relocate to Africa. During the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. in the 1960s, several African Americans reached out to African leaders who believed in the liberation of Africans on the continent (Gaines, 2012). The study also found that the decision to live in Ghana can partly be attributed to the manifestations of the ideological belief of Pan-Africanism. This finding resonates with that of Malisa and Nhengeze (2018), who argued for the pursuit of a United Africa, an identifiable group, including returning Pan-Aficanists who are descendants of enslaved people and are attempting to retrace their roots. A popular figure among this group is Rita Marley, who sometimes resides in Ghana. It was observed that, based on the belief that unity of all those of African descent is needed for economic, social, and political progress, some of the participants saw it as not just about moving to Ghana but about the achievement of the Pan African goal. An instance is Akoma, a sixty-year-old man who has lived in Ghana for twenty years. Akoma explained his decision to stay in Ghana: "*Well, I am still a Pan Africanist, and I am still trying to work towards that objective; I believe in achieving a better result, I should get closer to my people, so having a roof over my head here in Ghana also contributes to that*" (Akoma). Adinkrahene is 30 years

old and has been living in Ghana for nine years. He also said, "*I was on the campus when I came to Ghana for a visit, mainly trying to share history on African history and politics, Pan-Africanism, and all those things. I found the students to be so bright and discovered my passion for teaching African culture, and with my belief in Garvey's ideology, I decided to stay and engage other Africans in the US, so they returned. It is time to build our continent.*" Likewise, Aban, who has been living in Ghana for twenty years, shared a similar story: "*As a Pan Africanist, even though I was born in the U.S., my culture is African. So my culture in the U.S. was African because I was with African people although they were also held in the U.S. ... they never stopped being African, so for me it is just like a Ga and an Ewe person although there are some differences they are both Ghanaians the same for an African who was born in Jamaica or Haiti or in any part of the world we are all still Africans so here I am*. As indicated by Akoma, Adinkrahene, and Aban, it was observed that the participants realised Pan-Africanism before coming to Ghana; this contrasts with Toa-Kwapong (2016), who argued that cultural identity sometimes grows into Pan- African consciousness as they start to align with Blacks.

According to Gaines (2012), Ghana's black power movement that started during Nkrumah's time had many diverse sides for African Americans. They experienced Africa, especially Ghana, as a political shelter for professional and technical opportunities uninhibited by racial discrimination and perceived it as a place for human freedom (Gaines, 2012). With racial discrimination African Americans constantly face, and instances such as George Floyd, who was alleged to have passed a counterfeit bill, such stories put African Americans in fear while in America. In search of peace and new prospects as an African American, Nyansapo came to Ghana over fourteen years ago at the age of thirty-five. She said her journey was a part of a desire to find a place where she could belong and not be stopped or questioned because of her colour for every simple issue occurring at a supermarket or somewhere. Thus, the urge to protect her family and an intense yearning to travel and see the world led her to Ghana. Despite her intentions, she has not regretted the fourteen years spent in Accra. Nyansapo said this about her decision to move to Ghana: "*Living in Ghana beats being exposed to racism and white supremacy or feeling life-threatening situations every day of our lives. So, it is a great choice to live here. Plus, it is still an excellent source of refuge from the USA*" (Nyansapo, 45 years old). Akofene is 63 years old and lives in Ghana with his wife. They have lived in Ghana for 20 years and raised their children in Ghana. He said: "*You know, I came to Ghana as a tourist and stayed for one month during that period, I noticed the place was peaceful, and it is a great place to raise kids, so I went back and discussed it with my wife, and we came here with our kids, and I must say knowing my kids grew up in this peaceful environment, I am fulfilled although they have gone back to the States I know they will come back home*" (Akofene). Fofo has lived in the United States but has been living in Ghana for the past five years. Fofo explained, "*The country's peaceful nature is everything one will hope for, especially if you come from a state like mine, whereas a black person, you walk about not knowing when someone will gun you down. After reading online about countries, I volunteered with an organisation in Africa, and by the time the voluntary activity was over, I knew this was the peace I needed, so I went back prepared, and came back the following year, and I can say I am safe*" (Fofo, 51 years). Safety is significant for every human being. For this reason, people consider how stable a country is before moving. Fofo's experience illustrates this. For some participants, the peace

and security in the country influenced their decision to move to Ghana. Interestingly, security came up in discussion with others. They disclosed that most African Americans are unaware that there is peace in Africa. The image disseminated by popular media is of a highly "undeveloped" country with high unemployment and war zones. Thus, the media and other sources' narratives make African Diasporans view Africa positively, especially regarding security.

For many African Americans, coming to Africa, particularly Ghana, brings acceptance and belonging. During the interview with participants like Akofene, Akoma, and Adwera, they shared the experience of being born before the 1960s and growing up in the American South as African Americans. They had strong recollections of painful memories of racism, discrimination, and institutionalised segregation. Akoma, recalling his youthful days, narrated how he could not enter just any shop because of the signage 'No Blacks Served Here.' Akofene recalled the bus seating arrangement where African Americans were obliged to sit at the back, with only 'whites' sitting in the front. The 'ordering' of African Americans was seen in these experiences as they were socially and physically distant from whites. The frequent visits of participants to their country of origin, communication with friends and family in the country of origin and participation in social events allowed migrants to embrace their national and cultural identities. As a result, it was observed that transnational activities influence migrants' integration experiences in various ways. The study found that some participants felt they belonged to Ghana since their ancestors were forced to leave Africa because of the slave trade. The three fundamental conceptualisations affirm this from Brubaker (2005), who describes the first feature as "'scattering' from an earlier 'homeland' territory, sometimes provoked by war, famine, ethnic cleansing, and sometimes by other forces like labour recruitment. Secondly, a sense of boundedness that preserves the group's distinctive ethnic identity in its various exilic locations; and, finally, the strong salience of the homeland, often expressed via a desire for return or some restoration of the fatherland" (Brubaker, 2005:5). However, Safran (1991) questioned if the term diaspora is no longer used when they returned to their homeland or whether it is even vital for one to reunite with their land at all. In his seminal paper, he argued that return is irrelevant for some Diasporans since there is no homeland to claim easily, let alone restoring the 'old diaspora' to their land. Nevertheless, the findings showed that even without a restored homeland, African Americans found it relevant in Ghana, but this did not automatically integrate them into the Ghanaian society. However, certain transnational activities and practices helped participants integrate faster.

Coping Mechanisms

The first attempt to cope with the Ghanaian situation was to forget their skin colour since all Ghanaians are like them. In the US, skin colour was very critical in determining how people relate to each other, and African Americans found comfort in Ghana. As it is often said, birds of a feather flock together out of existential necessity. As one of them explained, "For the first time in my life, I walk the streets in Accra without thinking about my skin colour, without thinking that I am different." Despite crossing the colour bar, African Americans faced other hurdles. The statement below captures one of the hurdles: *It is interesting to note that*

Ghanaians call us 'obroni', even people I call friends. It is funny because I do not think of myself that way, but we are. I think Diaspora Africans have to understand that, in the end, we are all homeless Americans" (Nsronma). According to Nsronma, even though, as an African American, he tried to identify himself as an African. Ghanaians saw him as a foreigner. His intonation differed from the local spoken English, and he could not identify with a family or a clan. Perhaps the best he could do was to be adopted by a family or a clan. Even in this respect, he was still a foreigner. Although he was not happy with this, he agreed with the local people. For him, there was no place like home for African Americans because they were not entirely accepted in America either. Regardless of the difficulty African Americans faced while assimilating into other cultures, Anthony Giddens (1999) provides a sense of how global interconnectedness has shrunk distance and space by eliminating restricted access that slowed down such development. The process he describes was globalisation. One effect was how large diaspora communities had been established beyond their home countries or places of origin. Nevertheless, while located in host countries, they still maintain transnational ties with their home countries, making them psychologically dwellers of two places. Practices embedded in movements beyond national boundaries include periodic home visits, telephone calls, business participation in cultural and social ceremonies or events, and belonging to migrant home associations. While some of these activities occur across borders, others occur within the host country. Akoma has the chance to travel to Africa on several occasions, so upon arrival in Ghana, he did not set an expectation, and coping was easy for him, unlike others who found what they wanted to see in mind and what Norbye refers to as "real-life space" (2010:145). Akoma reflected on this as follows: "*Yes, better than expected, you know I do not have to worry; it is peaceful, crime is nothing here, there is more crime in the States in one day than we have in the whole year. I do not know; it is hard to explain, but I did not grow up in a state where police would intimidate you like down in the South, where they experienced that when I went to college with them, they would tell me stories, and I would hear stories, but here you're just free. I have no stress. I found out what stress was all about when I got here. I feel very relaxed, and that is what it is. There is no stress"* (Akoma). For many returnees, the rosy imaginaries of the country they had nurtured remarkably differed from 'normal' Ghanaian life. However, Akoben experienced a major culture shock upon returning. She expressed her disappointment about class division, strictly enforced cultural norms, and cybersecurity. The study observed that African Americans' engagement in embedded practice helped them cope and integrate into society.

The political economy of African American repatriation demonstrates a strategic effort to enhance economic development in Ghana, while also addressing neocolonial structures that perpetuate dependence on Western capital and institutions. Participants consistently highlighted their establishment of businesses, such as restaurants, textile industries, and consulting firms, as direct contributions to local employment, tax revenues, and skills transfer, reflecting Nkrumah's vision of Pan-African economic self-reliance (Biney, 2011).

It was observed that some participants did not come to Ghana to look for a job. They came intending to create one. However, five participants applied for jobs, and two later changed careers. The job changes resulted in their decision to set up their own business. The study found that job acquisition generally followed two paths: either the migrants gained employment

within the formal sector by applying, or they used their resources and networks to set up private enterprises in the informal sector. The participants secured jobs in the legal sector said they applied in person. Adwera is a 72-year-old widow who has lived for 35 years in Ghana. Among the participants, she has lived in Ghana the longest. She said when asked about the difficulty in finding a job: "*I have worked at two jobs in Ghana. I got both by applying in person. I had no difficulty. They called me to come for an interview. After the interview, they got in touch with me that I have a job for myself. It was that easy*" (Adwera). Aban, who has lived in Ghana for 20 years, also got a job in Ghana due to his social network. He shares this story: "*I was lucky to have landed a great job backed by an American University. Now I am exploring the world of entrepreneurship and creating and capturing value from the economy here (instead of being paid by the U.S. economy)* (Aban). Akoben describes her work experience in the Ghanaian labour market as horrible and advises people from the diaspora to pursue entrepreneurship, rather than seeking employment. This is how she puts it: *... I experienced intense work harassment, invasion of privacy, and jealousy from co-workers and my boss. They even hacked into my phone. So, I had to leave that place. I would recommend that diaspora people come with their jobs or create them* (Akoben). The occupational changes were primarily the result of accumulated capital, which allowed for independent work and self-employment status. A comparison of the migrants' pre- and post-migration occupations shows that their migration to Ghana yielded positive results. Prior studies observed that diasporans often bring entrepreneurial resources, transnational linkages, and global expertise that stimulate innovation and development in African economies (Mohan & Zack-Williams, 2002; Tiemoko, 2004). Consistent with these findings, the present study shows that African Americans in Ghana contribute through business creation, ethical labour practices, and social enterprise, linking Pan-African ideals to tangible socio-economic transformation.

Other ways migrants sustained ties to their home countries included businesses and investments in their countries of origin. These ties included owning and renting a property in their home country and engaging in cross-border trading activities. A few migrants had engaged in or were currently involved in these international businesses and investments. Nyansapo succinctly elucidates this in her own words: "*I was living off my American companies all these years. So, I have been boosting Ghana's economy well. We just launched a Village project bringing electricity there, starting a black soap company there, and would employ at least 30 people*" (Nyansapo). Repatriates like Nyansapo emphasise that their businesses employ Ghanaians, enhance supply chains, and integrate innovative practices derived from diaspora experiences, thereby strengthening Ghana's entrepreneurial ecosystem and reducing reliance on foreign direct investment predominantly managed by multinational corporations. This illustrates broader patterns in migration research, wherein returning diaspora individuals act as agents of "reverse brain drain," providing human and financial capital to enhance local development (Teye et al., 2017; Cassarino, 2013).

Nsroma owns a house and is in the hospitality business, which he has been operating for over eleven years. Because he owns a guest house, it was easier for him to act as a tour consultant. Thus, he organises people to come and visit Ghana, serving as an alternative source of income for him and his family. Nsroma put it, "*as I have about 92 large African portraits in history, starting about 2000 years ago, leading to Winnie Mandela. I think it is the last one I put up*

there. I also run a restaurant with a guest house attached. Through this, I engaged more African Americans to come to Ghana, so I could not leave but stay." From a neocolonial resistance perspective, these economic activities represent a form of decolonial praxis, contesting the imperial legacies that Nkrumah identified as tools of external control over African resources (Nkrumah, 1965). Investing in local sectors enables repatriates to confront asymmetrical power dynamics, promoting epistemic justice through the revaluation of African-centred knowledge and business models that prioritise community enhancement over extractive profit (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Challenges, including bureaucratic obstacles in business registration and competition from global conglomerates, underscore persistent neocolonial barriers. This suggests that ongoing policy support, particularly diaspora-specific incentives, is essential for improving these contributions to authentic economic emancipation.

Like other studies on migrant integration, the study's findings indicated that the participants who had friends outside their national group felt more integrated than those who had limited interactions with Ghanaians and other non-nationals. Though friendships and contact with fellow nationals and others were considered very important, some participants placed a higher value on their relationships with Ghanaians. Friendships with Ghanaians helped the migrants expand their networks and enabled them to understand the local dialects and Ghanaian norms and values. In a more practical sense, friendships with Ghanaians helped the migrants navigate social and legal hurdles, such as going to the hospital and registering a business. For Aya, friendships provided both tangible and intangible benefits: .... *"I have many Ghanaian friends, and they are delightful. They have helped me in many ways. Just sitting with them, even if you do not understand everything they are saying, can help because they will talk about life in Ghana"* (Aya). They also helped migrants navigate social and legal hurdles, such as going to the hospital and registering a business. Akobene, for example, spent a lot of time and money travelling to America to receive medical treatment for "ulcer-like" symptoms she experienced before getting help from a friend who took her to the Nyaho clinic. As she explains it, *"When I came to Ghana, I had many difficulties with Ghanaian food. Anytime I ate banku or kenkey, you know, we do not have these kinds of food, so anytime I ate them, mainly if I ate them in the morning, I would have these sharp pains. It was so bad. The medicine they gave me at the polyclinic was not working. I was in so much pain that my dad had to get me a ticket back to America to go to a hospital there.... I told a friend of mine about it only a few months later, and she took me to the Nyaho clinic at the Airport. They gave me an endoscopy, and the treatment was perfect after some lab tests. I did not know there were hospitals like that here. If it had not been for my friend, I would still be wasting money going back and forth to America* (Akobene) Friendships with Ghanaians were cultivated in various ways, but a common means was through their participation in community activities such as contributing to other tenants' or neighbours' funerals or naming ceremonies, having household parties where all the tenants and some neighbours brought food and shared, sitting outside and joining in on the general conversation.

Not surprisingly, cultural differences posed many problems for Africans in the diaspora trying to adjust to life in a foreign country and a new business environment. As cultural brokers, Diaspora Africans had to become skilled at dealing with people from multiple ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds different from their own. African Americans familiar with Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" also resonate here. The repatriates in this study typically

retain U.S. citizenship even as they settle in Ghana, living with "a dual identity" as African and American. Try to remember a time when you were entering a new area. Maybe it was a new school, a new neighbourhood, trying a new hairstylist, a new place of employment, or a new country, in the case of these study participants. As much as African Americans want to stay in Ghana and call Ghana home, most of them have no intention of relinquishing their United States of America citizenship. Thus, what was known as 'double consciousness' by W.E. Du Bois applied as they navigated their dual identity in both societies, that is, the USA and Ghana. The interviewees similarly reported ongoing negotiation of belonging in two worlds, just as Du Bois described Black Americans as possessing an "American" and an "African" self. Cultural norms showed that they still had difficulty meeting expectations, especially with their employees. There were several cultural differences between African Americans and Ghanaians, particularly concerning the employer-employee relationship. Employers typically provide their employees with a salary, health care benefits, vacation and sick days, and social security within the US business settings. In addition to meeting these basic employee expectations, the participants said that they were regularly asked to make financial contributions toward their children's education, for funerals, weddings, and engagements within the Ghanaian business environment. In this regard, the participants said that many of their employees expected them to provide extra income in addition to the salary they were already receiving. This was a significant cultural difference within the workplace. Some participants maintained that this difference in the work culture exists because of Ghana's social relationships. Social relationships at the workplace extend into areas of their employees' private lives. In the US business context, there was a separation between an employee's work and home life; in Ghana, this distinction was blurred, resulting in employers having additional obligations to their employees. Dame has lived in Ghana for fifteen years. He did not see anything wrong with the Ghanaian merging work with social life. He said, "*The US taught me the value of professionalism. Importance of work ethic and keeping one's word. Ghana has reminded me that there needs to be a balance in one's life to affect quality. More specifically, the importance of human relations, developing and cultivating a non-contentious relationship with others*" (Dame). "I would have started a business here in Ghana, but the way they all wanted me to pay money, ~~and~~ all that money could have been used to start a business. Therefore, I did not do that. I do not want that stress, even though it could have helped others. So that is one frustrating thing, but hopefully, I will be able to work through that. Still, there are opportunities here, but they are not using those opportunities to take care of the people. Ghanaians can do anything they want to do here." "*There is a company in Florida that produces telephones owned by a black person. I am trying to get him here to talk to the administration. Can you imagine if we could build our phones here instead of importing them from other parts of the world*" (Adwo).

Another difference that was brought up was the issue concerning time. That is the concept of American time versus Ghanaian time. In Ghana, the emphasis was not placed on being on time; instead, it was more important to show up for work. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), a Nigerian author, in her presentation on "The Danger of a Single Story" at the TED Talks, said, "I must say that before I went to the U.S., I did not consciously identify as African. However, in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways, I

think of myself now as an African." Like Adichie, this is how other African migrants become conscious of their cultural identity. For this reason, they represent Africa and become ambassadors of their countries. Based on Diaspora Africans from the US, one can assume that Black-American culture, for the most part, took a preeminence over other black cultures globally. Blacks received help from the US imperial or neo-colonial hegemony. Arguably, this put Black American Diaspora Africans in a unique position in terms of the amount of power they wielded and the number of resources they had access to as compared to other African descendant populations.

Renegotiation of Identities

Identity reconstruction emerged strongly, with the rejection of American identity and the embrace of African roots. Awia described, *" I'm not an African American. I'm anti-American. That means I'm against America, and I've always been ever since birth. We never stood up for the National Anthem or the Pledge of Allegiance, and we realised that Americans were the enemies…If somebody told me I had to go to the US at gunpoint? Well, guess what, there's about to be a gun battle, because I'm going to shoot the one who's trying to force me to go to the US. I'll shoot them before they shoot me if I'm unarmed… I wouldn't go to the US at gunpoint."*

The theme of belonging came up when the respondents were asked how well they ~~had~~ integrated into the Ghanaian society. Diasporans may return based on the feeling of being part of the society, as stated by Cohen and Safran. Reasons for feeling alienated included not looking like a Ghanaian (especially with dreadlocks for males) and always being treated like a foreigner, as well as a language barrier. Local perceptions shaped interactions, thus participants noted being seen as "obroni" (foreigner) despite shared Blackness, leading to cultural misunderstandings. Nsua had this to say, *"As soon as I open my mouth, they know that I'm 'Obroni'."* Awia also had this to say, *"…I feel like just looking at light-skinned people who come here, it must be difficult because they grow up their entire lives being treated as black people. Then they came here, and someone said Obroni', Obroni' to me in the US. I empathise with those whom you know in the US, they would be considered brown skin. But again, because, like the colour shifts, the spectrum shifts here in Ghana, they're like, wow, is your father Lebanese? Are you half caste? Whereas in the US, all brown people are black.'*

For him, because he is black, he fits into society, but his hairstyle makes him an outsider. Awia emphasises that *"No, I've never gotten the white man treatment. People who are light-skinned get the white man treatment. I've gotten Rasta. Even today, someone was asking for directions, he said, "Oh, I'm near some place where the rasta is". The treatment you get here is very similar to, let's say, Ghanaians who go to the US."* As much as African Americans want to stay in Ghana and call Ghana home, most of them have no intention of relinquishing their United States of America citizenship. Thus, what is known as 'double consciousness' by W.E. Du Bois applied as they navigated their dual identity in both societies. The participants who felt they were well integrated associated it with speaking a local language and practising traditional culture. A classic example is Awia explained why he feels like he belongs: *"No, because I speak Twi, I actually teach Twi. So, the people I'm interacting with, I'm interacting with them in Twi"*. Nsuo has attended a social function, and the ability to communicate with her

neighbours makes her feel accepted into Ghanaian society. Nsuo said, "*I attend social functions and can communicate with my neighbours too, so my integration is quite good*". Nsuo also felt accepted after living in Ghana for seventeen years and finally obtained citizenship. She explains; *I have a Ghanaian passport. I became a citizen of Ghana; I think it was three or four years ago...Ghana is my home forever*. The reasons given are in contrast with some arguments made by Africans. According to some Africans, aside from skin colour, African Americans are different from them in many ways. Lake (1995) similarly found that despite shared racial ancestry, many Ghanaians felt they had little in common culturally with African Americans, leading to social distance. It was also observed that the participant continually negotiated identity in their interactions and environment (Ufomata, 2012; Zalanga, 2012).

Transnational migration aids in observing how migrants participate at home and abroad in politics, economy, culture, and social settings (Faist, 2000; Portes, 2001), which helps explain how migrants integrate into their new environment. African Americans try to maintain ties with their home country by taking part in events and ceremonies. The study found that participants were engaged in social events like funerals, weddings, parties, naming ceremonies, and Independence Day celebrations. Adwo had this to say: "*I have been going back every year because my goddaughter lives there, and I have a host of cousins, and we have a family reunion every year, but some of them are beginning to come over for a visit, so that makes some difference.*" Nsuo also had this to say*: "I'm going to a funeral this Saturday. It's one of my daughter's mothers who passed... I helped bury my night security man, who had been with me for 17 years, his family, and what have you. I donated water, money, and all six of his kids got money, and the two wives got money. Okay. I know the customs as far as funerals. I know the customs as far as weddings. I know the customs of most family life.*"

Before one's movement, most migrants perceive the host country. These perceptions can differ from one's expectations due to misinformation or inadequate information from other migrants. Perceptions can also be shaped by several factors, such as how people are welcomed, facilities, social amenities and information shared or received. The study examined whether expectations were met and, if they were, whether they influenced their continued stay in Ghana. Most of the participants answered in the affirmative. Those who gave an affirmative answer did not have much expectation when they decided to move to Ghana.

Conclusion

African American repatriation to Ghana exemplifies a renewed Pan-Africanism on the ground. Motivated by ideological, cultural, and personal factors, returnees pursue an emotional homecoming that challenges long-standing imperial separations. Traditionally, diaspora identities, by and large, were concerned with nation-state-based identities. The study population aligns with Safran's (1991) definition of a diaspora as a dispersed group characterised by shared memory, identity, and a connection, either symbolic or tangible, to a homeland. African Americans' racial consciousness was grounded in a historical context of systemic discrimination that had influenced their collective identity and restricted complete assimilation into mainstream American society. Pierre (2019) observes that the identity of the African American diaspora was intricately linked to historical trauma and a dual sense of belonging to both African and American cultures. The population of African Americans in

Ghana was relatively small; however, they frequently held considerable social capital, enabling them to establish extensive networks that yielded notable cultural and economic impact. This was especially true in terms of mobilising humanitarian efforts in Diaspora communities. It was observed that African American migrants had used their resources while in America to develop further Ghanaian resources. However, several of the migrants interviewed experienced a generally positive socio-cultural outcome. The migrants accessed opportunities and benefits such as finding jobs, establishing businesses, investing, and buying property. The socio-cultural indicators of integration, such as informal social connections with Ghanaians, feelings of belonging, and factors such as length of stay and marital status, played a more significant role in determining the migrant's ability to integrate into Ghanaian society. Generally, the process of integration was experienced by African Americans. Although no singular or unique experience existed, one can discern shared experiences. These can be summarised under these main points. Firstly, although they live in Ghana, members of these African Americans seek to maintain norms established in their countries of origin by visiting their countries once a year. Besides, they seek to distinguish themselves from Ghanaian society; for the most part, they point out that African Americans face an institutional challenge. Secondly, African Americans contribute to Ghana's development by setting up businesses in Accra. In a conversation with Nyansapo, she said, "*We are contributing to the economy in various ways, from the person who runs a restaurant, and the other who runs a textile industry*," because they would employ people, pay taxes, among others. The findings showed that many participants have well-thought-out Ghana as a second home. Finally, even though symbolically, the slave trade impacted the world, some participants retraced this journey and reflected on their ancestors' similar route. As a result, participants noted that moving back to Ghana was linked emotionally or symbolically to their ancestors' ancestors.

In conclusion, based on the challenges migrants face with accommodation, the study recommends creating a law or policy in Ghana to standardise rental agreements for Ghanaians and migrants. This would include minimum requirements for rental properties, such as providing individual electricity and water meters, a standard minimum deposit required for renting, adequate sanitation, and refuse collection. When enforced, the law or policy would also prevent arbitrary price hikes and exploitative demands by landlords and rental agents, helping both migrants and Ghanaians when searching for accommodation. This present study is qualitative and based on a small sample of African Americans living in Ghana. For this reason, the study recommends research using a quantitative approach to examine the extent to which similar integration outcomes occur in a large population would allow for a comparative study among different migrant groups.

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