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Gentrifying while Black: Exploring the Concept of an African Homeland through Gentrification in Accra, Ghana

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SIT Spring 2023

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Chapter 1

Background

Gentrification is not a new phenomenon, it has been occurring for decades across the world. British sociologist Ruth Glass first used the term "gentrification" to describe the displacement of the working-class residents of London neighborhoods by middle-class newcomers in the 1960s (NCRC,2020). Since its emergence, debates on whether it is more beneficial or harmful have been argued. Some will argue that gentrification is necessary to revitalize and develop an area, as it brings in businesses and overall economic growth. Others argue that gentrification causes an increase in cost of living as well as the disappearance of historic communities that have played a major role in the communities. What can be mutually agreed upon, however, is that gentrification plays a major role in shaping urban spaces and layouts.

Specifically in Accra, this phenomenon is glaring. Upon my arrival into the city, I was able to makeout the areas that appeared to be developing to suit the needs of the wealthiest citizens. The emergence of restaurants, shopping malls, and boutiques can be found throughout these neighborhoods. And I will say, at first sight, I imagined myself being one of the residents of these communities. I pictured myself going to the brunch spots and hopping in Yango rides for a lot less than I would in Atlanta. But the more time I spent analyzing and fixating on these areas, the more I began to think about what existed in these areas before and how the landscape has changed who interacts with space and in what capacities.

Capitalism is the main driving factor of gentrification, as its main function is to maximize economic growth through exploitation. This exploitation is not exclusive to Ghana, as major

cities throughout the world. Because of this correlation, we see so many cities that function as business hubs struggling with gentrification. As countries across the globe compete to develop strong free-market economies, there will be an increasing concern around this "laissez-faire" approach. Looking more specifically at countries that have been exploited because of their lack of government regulation, the issue of gentrification is especially crucial to understand.

In order to better understand gentrification specifically in Accra, it is important to understand the city's development. As European forces moved into Ghana, they established trading ports throughout the country. In Accra, the British established Fort James, the Dutch established Fort Crevecoeur, and the Danish established Christiansborg. After the departure of the Dutch and Danish, Accra served as the capital of the British Gold Coast(Arn,1996). Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Accra experienced a significant population boom. Even as Kwame Nkrumah imagined what the city of Accra would look like, he prioritized creating spaces that would invoke pride and nationalism for Ghanaians and Africans throughout the globe.

Since then, Accra has grown to become an economic stronghold of not only Ghana, but to the continent of Africa. Home to a significant number of industries and enterprises, Accra has an expanding population of over 3 million residents. Included in this population are foreign-born residents, including North American Black people (Black Americans and Canadians as defined in this research). Black people from the west have existed in Ghana for decades, but in very limited numbers. Influential leaders such as W.E.B DuBois, Maya Angelou, and Julian Bond have all lived in Ghana for some of their life. This number has been growing in recent years though.

The Year of Return was a monumental initiative inviting members of the African diaspora back after 400 years of the first slave ship reaching Jamestown, Virginia. According to the current President Akufo-Addo, The Year of Return was able to attract close to a quarter million people from the African Diaspora and he estimated to have generated over $1.5 billion through related activities into Ghana's economy. While this initiative was started as an economic plan to bring capital into Ghana, it also represented a reconnection for many Africans in the diaspora.

Through this heritage tourism initiative, Ghana has experienced a massive influx in the number of tourists and visitors. With this increased attention came more investment, but not investment into public health issues such as sanitation and road developments. Instead, newly constructed rental properties, malls, and lounges have taken a strong footing in Accra. When trying to find Black North Americans in Accra, I've noticed these newly crafted spaces tend to be the most heavily concentrated with Black Americans, leading me to question how many engage in established public spaces such as Madina market or on the Trotro.

While Black North Americans aren't the only group of people to benefit from Accra's growing economy and infrastructure, their presence poses specific questions on homeland, access to space, and what vulnerable groups should be considered when developing urban space. As Nkrumah dreamed of Africans in the diaspora being able to find a home in Ghana and other African nations, the present-day importance of nationality and class is bringing this dream into question.

For my research, I explored multi-faceted questions like "In what unique ways do Black Americans alter cities like Accra?" and "Are Black Americans playing a role in the exploitation

of Ghanaian communities through gentrification?" to explore the impact that Accra's Black residents from the West are making and the concept of these residents returning home to Ghana after being separated through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. This will allow for a better approach to tangible solutions so Ghanaians are able to live and thrive in communities that are reflective of their wants and needs.

Problem Statement

Gentrification is an issue that not only displaces residents, but it impacts the development of cities. In Accra, there is a small group of people who have large amounts of capital. Of this group, a large amount have been able to make their money outside of Ghana (ie UK, Canada, US). Black people from North America who decide to relocate to Accra are a part of those who have been able to capitalize on their resources and create an alternative lifestyle than that of America. The lack of racial equality, safety, and community have been factors most often cited as push factors out of the West.

As the push for Blacks in the diaspora to return to their ancestral homelands becomes a more frequent topic, it is appropriate to think about what that looks like for everyone involved. This return must be understood as more than a symbolic moment, but a long term strategy that will affect generations of Ghanaian and Black North Americans. The conversation tends to be centered around Blacks in the diaspora, leaving the effects on African communities unexplored or researched. This may result in unexpected economic, social, and political consequences, which is why this phenomenon must be explored and understood.

Research Questions

Throughout the course of my research, I intend to use a series of questions to guide my findings and conclusion. These questions include…

- How does the presence of Black North Americans change urban spaces in Accra?

- In what ways do Black North Americans engage with Accra's various communities?

- What role, if any do Black Americans play in exploiting Ghanaians?

- What policies would help to decrease the negative effects of gentrification in Accra?

Research Objective

- Explore how the presence of Black North Americans is changing urban spaces in Accra

- Understand the various ways Black North Americans engage with Accra's communities

- Analyze the role Black Americans play in exploiting Ghanaians

- Consider how policies could help to decrease the negative effects of gentrification in Accra

Justification

Shortly after arriving in Accra, myself and a number of students began to discuss the possibility of living in Accra. For many of us, Accra represents a new beginning, a place where we would be free from the racial tensions that heavily permeate American society. But in all of those discussions, the question as to how our existence would alter the urban environment never came up. Even as I ride throughout the city, I see so many newly constructed buildings and businesses on the same streets as dilapidated buildings throughout Accra. Seeing these contrasts, I began to think about the various impacts my visit has on Ghanaian people and the communities in which they exist.

As the topic of gentrification becomes more relevant in academic discourse, I began to wonder about its function and impact outside the western world. Oftentimes, late stage capitalist countries such as the United States, are experiencing a decline in the middle class and a rise in economic inequality. This shift is impacting the way gentrification looks in an American city, but what about other parts of the world. It would be interesting to see gentrification in a society that is growing its middle class at a fairly rapid pace (poverty falling from 52.6% to 21.4% between 1991 and 2012).

In America when gentrification is brought up, there is an image of a middle-class white family using their economical resources to completely change the layout of communities that were once filled with Black people. In Ghana however, this dynamic is more focused on class, socioeconomic status, and place of origin. This leaves many questions about the impacts of urban development in a majority Black space, where most people are from the same race. Because of

these unique realities, Accra is a perfect place to understand the ways space is conceptualized to fit the needs of different groups of people.

Throughout the development of my research, I began to think about a specific class I took entitled "Americans in Africa". In this class, one of the concepts we explored was the relationship Black Americans have with Liberia and asking questions relating to whether African-American settlers in Liberia appeared equally African and American, or if existing in Liberia led them towards their American identity? Similar to the European-controlled colonies, Americo-Liberians represented a small minority group that controlled the majority of the country. Even though this group was Black, they didn't align themselves with the native people. They believed that they were different from and culturally and educationally superior to the indigenous people.

In Akingbade's *The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland,* we are more clearly able to see the treatment of indigenous Liberians in the statement "Indigenous soldiers would not be allowed to command the force. The Americo-Liberians made up the officer corps for political, social and economic reasons. The indigenous officers, they thought, could not be trusted to maintain discipline among themselves". This underscores the ways that white supremacy and ethnocentrism have been used by groups who would normally suffer under it. Through their American status, many of these Americo-Liberians saw Liberia as a chance to be superior and utilize privileges that they wouldn't be able to in the Americas. In this way, Americo-Liberians acted as an extension of America and its beliefs in what is considered a "civilized" nation.

Black North Americans have a unique relationship with America, in which they exist as a continually oppressed group. In relation to housing, practices such as redlining(Levittown and

Africville), predatory loans, and blockbusting have historically limited the neighborhoods Black

people could live in to areas that were undesirable to white communities (whether that be

because of environmental, educational, or economic factors). However, in Ghana, it is the North

American identity and status that privileges Black Canadians and Americans most. This

contrasting experience is what intrigued me most, as I am interested in seeing an oppressed class

functioning in a Black environment where they are not discriminated against specifically because

of their race.

While Accra is just one of the many cities affected by gentrification, my proximity to

space has also influenced my decision to center my research in Accra instead of another city such

as Kumasi or Takoradi. I have a more informed understanding of the communities that exist here

than any other city within Ghana, which has been influential in my decision to conduct research

in Accra. There is also a more prevalent finding of Black North Americans in the city of Accra

than anywhere else in Ghana. As the business hub of Ghana, much of the country's wealth is

concentrated in Accra.

Significance

As more Black North Americans travel to Accra, it is imperative that we are able to

understand the various ways they engage with the space and the lasting impact that they are

leaving. Through my research, I seek to address the positive and negative impacts of Black

people from North America relocating to Ghana, to consider how Pan-Africanism has made

Ghana a home for millions of people who have never been to the country. Understanding what

home means, if this Pan-Africanist idea can allow for the exploitation of Ghanaians, and who has

the ability to call a place home is imperative.

I am hopeful that future research will expand on the societal impact of gentrification in Accra as well as the various ways that foreign entities are contributing to the urban development of the city. While I am focusing on Black North Americans, some of the impacts that Black North Americans are leaving may also be applicable to other groups of people, such as Lebanese or Chinese residents and investors. Future politicians and community members can look to this research to understand the balance of creating economic growth through and ensuring developments are producing consistent life improvement for Ghanaians, and not just exploiting them.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Space functions not only to represent a physical area, but it also represents social interactions between people of different socio-economic backgrounds, age, religions, gender and ethnicity. These spaces privilege certain groups over others and leads to an imbalance of power. Thinking about the connections physical space and identity have, I wanted to explore these dynamics in a Ghanaian environment. With the current literature available, I have been able to build upon the conception of a homeland for Black North Americans relocating to Ghana and how this conception shapes urban spaces and communities in Accra.

Looking first for literature that discussed gentrification in a space where both the gentrifiers and the gentrified were from the same race, I analyzed *The Downside of Racial Uplift: The Meaning of Gentrification in an African American Neighborhood*. In this article, Boyd mostly discusses a prior study on a specific neighborhood on Chicago's south side that is going through gentrification. This specific case looks at Black gentrifiers and how they understand gentrification and the implications it has on their neighborhoods. This article argues that people who support attracting middle-class black groups into lower income Black communities see the use of financial and personal investment as a form of race uplift. Much of this language was reminiscent of W.E.B DuBois's ideas expressed in his conception of the Talented Tenth(Dubois, 1903). In its analysis however, it highlighted these ideas and the importance of intra-racial class conflict and challenged the notion that Black communities are homogenized because of their race.

From this article, I was able to see an example of a community being gentrified by African Americans and the thought patterns of those responsible for the neighborhood shifts. Multiple quotes were provided to have a more nuanced understanding of the interviews. Similarly to Pan-Africanist who champion a return to Africa, the language of return was used in the responses of participants. Through this, the interviewed were able to connect the presence of wealthier Black Americans in lower income communities to their identity and blackness. This same application of racial connection appears in my research study.

Through this research, there is a consistent discussion of racial uplift. This became a theme I wanted to explore to better understand its relationship to homeland conception in Black North Americans. As a concept, its goal isn't to use wealthier Black groups to disrupt political or social structures, but instead seek wealth mobility as an answer to help. It is the predecessor to Black capitalism as a means of progress for the race (Hutchinson, 1970). Playing with the ideas of individual and group success for black communities, it begs the question of *Progress for which specific Black people and at whose expense?* The answer lies in the structure of most societies, where the educated, wealthier, and more powerful people are able to benefit most from the society.

While this research was very helpful in conceptualizing gentrification in a Black space, the topic was limited to one Black majority neighborhood in an American city. My research seeks to explore this topic in closer relation to Accra, Ghana, as my research is more heavily focused on the relationship between Black North Americans and Ghanains in Accra and the conception of an African homeland. This source hints at the idea of a Black homeland, which is also an interesting topic to explore. Because this source was conducted using an ethnographic analysis, it also lacked the structure of a case study. This made it difficult to compare

methodological approaches, as they are vastly different. My research prioritized primary information through interview participants instead of the exclusive engagement with literature.

Komiete's *The new middle class and urban transformation in Africa : a case study of Accra, Ghana* describes the impact urban transformation is having on Accra residents and the new formation of the city. The research was able to explore place-making strategies used by the new middle class, in order to explain how they are reshaping and controlling urban space. It also questions the function of class in public and private spaces such as restaurants, clothing stores, and schools. In this study, it is through their economic power that middle-class Ghanaians are able to create environments that align with their vision of Accra.

This study draws many distinctions from my work, however. Unlike my research, there is no racial element expressed in the study. This is simply because Accra functions as a majority Black city within a majority Black country. It doesn't have the same history of racial discrimination and hierarchies of countries such as the United States and Canada. Because these racialized dynamics don't exist in the same way as they do in North America, I thought it would be interesting to see how gentrification functions. While the title suggests a case-study methodological approach, I was unable to see any aspects of interviewing or participant engagement. Instead, the source more substantially analyzes unique media coverage, policy briefs, scholarly works, plans and census data.

Looking more specifically to the conception of homeland and its connection to gentrification, there is a growing amount of research looking to Jerusalem as an example (Haban, 2020). Instead of looking towards economic models and outcomes, this literature aims to provide more cultural context into gentrification and thinking more closely about the motivations

of foreigners looking to move to Israel. Haban makes the claim that the motivation to move is often emotionally driven and acted out as a way of holding onto this conceived heritage. There is also a discussion of the role the state plays in this transnational gentrification, as neoliberal policies are frequently promoted and adhered to.

While this research is not centered on the idea of an African homeland like my research is, it is effectively able to dive into diaspora relations within city space. While the histories of members of the Black diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora are contrasting, I find the belief of a homeland based on connection to ancestry to link the two. The source allows for a broader understanding of diaspora relations and how it creates ideas of homeland as a critical role in identity building for diasporans. It also aligns with my more cultural analysis and interpretation of gentrification.

Comparably, Raphael and Sternburg's *Transnationalism:Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)order* draws parallels to both Jewish Zionism and my research. Positioned as the only fruitful solution for Black communities to exist, the author delves into the origin of this ideology and its place in contemporary academia. Through this lens, a return to Africa represented the return to a promiseland. This is more apparent in a hymn that states

"Oh I'm bound to go to Africa,

I'm bound to go there soon.

I'm bound to go to Africa,

To wear those golden shoes."

This source impacted my thoughts on what this would mean not only for the African communities resettling these people, but the impact this move would have on those left behind. Thinking of the detrimental effects of Israeli occupation of Palestine in the name of homeland, I started to evaluate more of the future impacts of transnationalism. While drawing these comparisons, it is relevant to remember the distinctions as well, in order to avoid generalizing all homeland movements based on Jewish Zionism.

The Jewish Zionist movement largely mirrors Liberia, which is more closely connected to my research. It serves as an example of homeland theorization and reverse migration patterns. From this country's establishment, a real-world example of homeland and the return is evaluated. *Pan-Africanism, and the politics of African citizenship and identity* further discusses this concept. .While I am not sure if either movements of people forecasted such distinctions between themselves and the indigenous peoples that continually occupied the areas, that is the result that happened after the reverse migration took place.

Thinking about my literature, I noticed the conversations around this Pan-African homeland to be largely discussed by western academics. In order to engage with African perspectives, I searched intensely before finding Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *African Identities: Pan-Africanism in the Era of Globalization and Capitalist Fundamentalism*. This research questions the reality of uniting the Black race in an era where capitalism and globalization are so impactful.

She argues that in order to create a more united continent, there must be anti-colonial work done to undo European sanctioned borders that have separated and dislocated communities. Her version of unification, however, does not seek to simplify or homogenize the continent of

Africa. Instead it works to appreciate the variation of language, culture, and identity to find commonality through the impact of colonial powers.

Questions of returning home as a Westerner into a non-Western society is something that is whispered throughout academic journals relating to Pan-Africanism, but it plays a large role in the way Black North Americans interact with this newfound homeland. Coming from countries such as Canada and the United States, This isn't to say Black North Americans are the only ones engaging with the conception of a homeland. Ghanaians are also participating in the conception of this homeland, often through tourism. Right outside of Elmina or Cape Coast Castle, you will hear Ghanaian merchants using terms like"sister" or "brother" to connect with Blacks in the diaspora before offering them a chance to buy something commemorating this shared identity.

Transnationalism and Identity: the Concept of Community in Ghanaian Literature and Contemporary Ghanaian Culture mentions this, as it looks to African literature to answer the question "How do Ghanaians understand and construct different notions of community?". The research explores human understandings of a community and homeland, which is denoted by shared values, interests, and goals.

Literature Gap

Most of the literature on gentrification lacked one key concept that I wanted to discuss, the relationship between transnational gentrification and its relationship with the African homeland . After spending months in Accra, I was able to see the true impact of foreign entities. While they are small in numbers, they are able to utilize resources and capital to create spaces that shape the layout of the neighborhoods in which they exist. Because I noticed this gap in research, I wanted to observe a group who would fall into this category. Considering the

historical relationship Ghana has with Black Americans and the lack of discussion on Black

gentrifiers in majority Black communities, I decided to formulate my research question with

these factors in mind.

While the literature used was crucial in my development of an African Homeland for

Black North Americans, a large portion of it lacked the practical aspect that I wanted my

research to have. With mostly theoretical sources, I found myself looking to loosely related

literature to explore the methodologies and approach that I felt most suitable for my resesarch.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In order to better understand how Black American and Canadians interact and engage with spaces in Accra, I used qualitative methods to conduct my research. By using this method, I was able to address the complexities and various realities that help in understanding how Black North Americans interact with Ghanaian communities and how they impact the society. The social understandings of gentrification in Accra, as well as the relationship Black North Americans have with Ghanaians are interconnected and help us to understand broader themes of identity, cultural imperialism, and capitalistic exploitation. I conducted a case study, which allowed me to gather a more detailed understanding of how gentrification takes shape in Accra through the lens of Black Canadian and Americans and the unique role these Black North Americans play.

Through a series of semi-structured interviews (both in person and virtual), I was able to examine the responses of both Black Americans and Canadians living in Accra to understand the different ways urban development affects them and how they see themselves in relation to the general region of Accra. In the end, I wanted to have a better understanding of the attitudes towards urban development, gentrification, and its appearance in Accra. Because Black North Americans represent a very small percentage of the people in Accra, it was substantially difficult to find enough Black North Americans who lived in Accra within 3 weeks. To maximize the number of possible interview participants, the participants were often found using the snowball method, where research participants would help to refer other Black North Americans to

participate in the study. Using this method was significant in allowing me to reach my desired sample size.

In total, there were over ten participants that were interviewed throughout Accra. The interviews took place in various settings around Accra based on the availability and comfortability of each individual participant. Seven of the interviewed participants were Black Americans who live in Accra and the other 4 were Black Canadians who live in Accra. While I initially intended on only including Black American perspectives, having a wider scope of Black people from North America made finding participants more successful. By using these different groups of people, I was also able to receive more nuanced responses and understandings of how Black North Americans were shaping the communities and spaces in Accra.

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed to analyze and share the unique perspectives through text. These transcriptions allowed me to analyze the responses of participants carefully and critically. After looking at all of the transcriptions, I used both the individual experiences and larger commonalities within the sample population to examine the impact of Black Americans existing in Accra socially and economically.

Ethics

In order to ensure my research is ethical, all participants were voluntarily interviewed. If at any point a participant decided that they no longer wish to be interviewed, I made sure not include them in my research in any way. There is also the importance of keeping my participants fully informed on the subject matter and the purpose of the research, so I worked to explain my research to every participant, how the interview would be used, and that their identity and

responses will remain anonymous. I also informed participants that they would be made aware of my findings and completed research.

Chapter 3: Findings and Conclusions

Interview Analysis

The participants represented a varying class, gender, nationality, and age makeup. Some of the participants were living on salaries paid in cedis, while others jobs were able to pay in the form of dollars. The latter was the most popular occurrence in the group. There seemed to be a minor distinction between the American and Canadian responses, though the Canadian sample that was used was more informed about the topic of homeland conception because of their proximity to the work.

From the interviews, I was able to see the ways different Black North Americans engaged with Accra and all of the encompassing parts of its identity. For some of the participants, Ghana represented a comfortable environment for them to return and connect with their African heritage and identity. For others, moving to Accra came spontaneously and did not carry such a heavy racial symbolism. This isn't to say this racial element did not play any role in relocating for these participants, though. The factors that led participants to relocate to Ghana had a major impact on their ability to community build with everyone in Accra, including native Ghanaians. Even with these varying push factors, all of the participants specifically chose Accra, Ghana. So what does Accra, Ghana represent for these relocating Black North Americans?

I found that participants who returned to Ghana in the name of Pan-Africanism and building global connectivity in the African diaspora actually tended to spend lots of their time surrounded by other Black North Americans. The theoretical framework of racial uplift was supported in the responses of some participants. The idea that simply being in Ghana was beneficial to the larger goal of Black solidarity was not the common mentality of participants,

but a small portion did have these ideologies. These residents were also less likely to engage with Ghanaians. One participant proudly boasted "Yeah there are plenty of Americans and foreigners around here, I feel at home". Hearing a Black American who moved to Accra under the notion of Black unity describe an environment that does not include any of the people who have lived in the space for centuries "home" makes me wonder if this "homeland" concept allows Black people from the West to exploit communities in Africa. When mentioning the communities they surrounded themselves with, the only Ghanaian person they could think of was their wife and driver.

This lack of integration into Ghanaian society was not limited to those who saw themselves as Pan-Africanist, though. Other participants moved to Ghana to avoid the harsh conditions that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic in North America. More expensive places such as East Legon, Osu, and Airport City tended to be the most popular responses given for areas that participants lived and frequented the most. When asked why these areas, a little over half of the participants would mention reasons such as the amount of restaurants, quality of living accommodations, and the amount of Western Black residents.

Meanwhile, there were other Black North Americans who were able to find community with Ghanaiains. These participants made it known that they wanted to live as "locally" as possible and engage in community building with Ghanaians. Oftentimes, these participants prioritized thinking critically and consciously about where they spent their money and questioned if it benefited Ghanaian people or foreign business owners and investors working to accumulate more wealth and influence in Accra. For example, one of the respondents who prided themselves on their integration into Ghanaian society made the comment that "My area is full of

Ghanaians, I am one of the only Black Americans for a couple kilometers". These residents seem to take pride in engaging in spaces where there are more Ghanaians.

There was a general consensus from the participants that their relocation did not pose any significant impacts when analyzing the gentrification of Accra, Ghana. One respondent, who jokingly stated that they are not "Not a part of the problem, I am married to a Ghanaian person and for the most part I've been able to stay away from Mecolm."

Aftering conducting interviews, I was reminded of the various motives of Black North Americans who relocated of Accra in that "They represent all areas of the diaspora and span the whole range of personalities and ideologies so aptly discussed…among them can be found the imperialistic soldier of fortune out to make a financial killing, the optimistic newlywed Afro-American wife, the committed political activist, and many who just want a place to be free.". For me, this quote personally touched on the most commonly found personalities when it came to Black North American participants in my research.

When answering how Black Americans engage in community, one of the organizations that was commonly brought up multiple times was the African American Association of Ghana (often referred to as the AAAG). The opinions of the organization were varied, with some respondents speaking dotingly of the space it gives for African Americans. Other participants, who tended to be more dedicated to community-building with Black people more broadly, were critical of the organization for lacking a care for Ghanaian people and instead functioning as a social space for Black Americans.

I had my own experiences with the organization, as I attended an event hosted by the AAAG. Even before attending the event, I was hopeful in using the organization to connect with

African Americans in Ghana. I thought the organization would be a great resource for understanding the interaction between Black North Americans in Ghana and a place where I would find participants interested in my research and possess a desire to become an interview participant. In an effort to better understand the goals and mission of the AAAG, I researched the organization. On its website it stated that the organization was "determined the need to establish a permanent means to promote our cultural, social, spiritual and economic well-being and re-integration into Ghanaian society"

Looking to engage critically with the AAG and understand its role in re-integrating Blacks in the diaspora into Ghana, I attended a Reading Rainbow Event at Jerremite International School in partnership with the AAAG. Linking the school's goal of education and the AAAG's goal of cultural probation of African Americans, the event had the mission of exposing Ghanaian youth to the African diaspora through books. Unfortunately, there were no members in attendance. This was puzzling, considering how an interviewee was just informing me of the wide turnout of members to a social gathering that included food, music, and entertainment. I thought surely this was an isolated event, but the organizer of the event made it apparent that this was a recurring issue. Overall, my experience caused me to think more critically about what organizations like AAAG are doing for the community (overall community of Ghana), as their 200 cedi membership fee must be used to promote some sort of Pan-Africanism.

While I wasn't able to engage with any Black North Americans at this event, I was able to engage in conversation with the organizer of the program. In his understanding, Blacks in the diaspora and Ghanaians have a similar relationship with oppression because of their shared homeland. He described his times in Black American ghettos as a source of familiarity between

his upbringing in West Legon. This further informed me that the Pan-Africanist ideas espoused by a portion of Black North American interview participants were also supported by Ghanaians through similar language.

Another interesting trend that persisted was the impact age had on respondents' ideas on ancestry and homeland. For the participants that I interviewed over forty, there was a uniform belief in Garvey and Nkrumah's vision of Black unity and empowerment. These North American residents often saw themselves aligned with historical figures such as Nkrumah, Du Bois, and CLR James(and even Dr. Umar interestingly enough). I was able to infer that through Black empowerment movements of the 60s and 70, race was a crucial piece in identity for these respondents. These trends did not appear in participants younger than forty, although they possessed an awareness of Pan-African ideologies and the various important figures to the movement.

While all of the residents live and interact with Accra in different ways, there seems to be a general consensus that the growth of Accra will not be sustainable if measures are taken to improve the public spaces. They all cited traffic as one of the most frustrating issues to affect their mobility in Accra. Like any group, individual interests influenced the prioritization of these developments. For some of the businessowners in the group, there was an immense response to the lack of road and transportation development. For one of the participants, who recently became a mother, education was seen as needing immense reform.

A lack of hope in government intervention and a prevalence of corruption was often cited as the primary reason for a lack of political engagement. One of the respondents, frankly stated "I don't know! As much as I'm willing to pay my fair share in taxes, knowing that a corrupt

politician and his family will be the ones benefiting from them rubs me the wrong way."
Thinking about the introduction of Black North Americans into the economic pool-whether small
or large-led to questions about taxation and land-owning ability. Because of this homeland
conception, over a third of the respondents saw it as their "right" to own land in Ghana, as they
understood this as the original home before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

But what was perplexing, was the general uninterest in Ghanaian citizenship for many
participants. Out of the eleven interview participants, there was only one participant that stated
they were making a conscious effort to become a citizen. Becoming a citizen is more than just
filling out dozens of pages. Obtaining citizenship represents a fundamental symbolism in
deciding to become a part of a political, social, and economic community that seeks to improve
the nation. But this desire didn't exist. This speaks to the awareness that not only are the
Canadian and American passports powerful, but they allow an escape route in case of an
emergency. The complicated relationship of a homeland becomes more complicated when the
need for American citizenship is questioned.

In fact, the participant who was going through the process of becoming a citizen, was
born in Ghana to American parents. More specifically, the interviewee's parents were both Black
Americans working with Kwame Nkrumah to establish his vision for Ghana. It was through their
birth that this participant felt deserving of citizenship, but because her family had to flee during
Nkrumah's coup, she was never able to establish citizenship. This is something the participant
highlighted as a nonsensical barrier to citizenship.

Some ideas of Western superiority in comparison were also found, but these views
represented less than a third of the overall participant population. One participant spoke about

the need to "bring American models for education and skill development to Ghana and everything will develop". When further asked to explain what this development looks like, the respondent mentioned "A Black America without racism". As Black North Americans, it is understandable that Accra's growth would be placed in proximity to America and Canada. This constant comparison begs the question "If Ghana looks like America developmentally, will some forms of exploitation and increased inequality naturally appear?".

This intra-racial exploitation is a theme that seemed to come up in conversations about gentrification. Understanding the dynamics of power within the Black race is crucial in formulating a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Four respondents who employed Ghanaians made it known that they do their best to pay Ghanaians fair wages. What these fair wages are is not apparent, except in the case of one respondent. This interview participant was proud to say they have instituted a policy of not paying any Ghanaian less than 500 cedis a day, which she noted is close to some Ghanaians monthly income.

In order to conclude my interviews, I posed a question looking at the future of Accra and how they see the space altering and its impacts. When imagining an improvement in road construction, sanitation, and job rates, there was a distinction between the American and Canadian perspectives. For many Canadian participants, they saw the future of Accra as one heavily influenced by foreign entities and global powers. There was only one American respondent who saw this reality as the future.

Looking towards a more optimistic view, most Black Americans once again used terms relating to Pan-Africanism such as return and ancestral connection. They spoke about the

feelings they get in Accra and the comfort in which they exist. For them, even with inflation and rising costs, there is no other place they want to be and belong.

Conclusions

I also think there needs to be a reframing about the concept of returning to African countries to "build" up Africa and create the Pan-African vision. These ideas of African communities needing Western communities to improve society are largely rooted into Western superiority complex and the idea that Western approaches to problems will work in all parts of the world. This largely downplays the culture and specific dynamics of a space such as Accra.

This isn't to say Black North Americans can't assist, but there shouldn't be an approach to solutions in an all knowing way by virtue of being from the more "developed" West. Instead, through living and interacting with Ghanaian people, Black North Americans living in Accra can become more involved community members in the spaces they exist in. This could look like patronizing smaller restaurants, supporting Ghanaian run and developed non-profits, or just doing research on the area you are moving to and its relationship with gentrification.

Returning to countries like Ghana shouldn't function as the sole way of connecting with Blackness, as Blackness is found globally. This idea of connecting to Blackness has largely become mythical and based in Western perceptions of the continent. Simply thinking more critically about race and its European construction will help to address these more nuanced issues.

There should be a goal of connecting and investing in your communities at home as well, because you have experienced them most and have the most awareness of this environment. If one the objectives of Pan-Africanism is rooted in transnational collaboration, why should leaving

be the only option to forge this collaboration? Leaving home and leaving communities of disenfranchised Black people does nothing to help their lived experiences.

This isn't to say people of the African diaspora can't relocate and must suffer through the racism, oppression, and burden that North America brings. Before relocating, it is imperative to understand not only the personal push factors, but the specific pull factors to Ghana specifically and who is being impacted by this relocation. Black North Americans should also engage with the impact that having passports and currency as powerful as the United States and Canada's has on their everyday realities.

Upon relocating, the importance of class interactions and distinctions must be understood in a Ghanaian environment. By doing this, Black North Americans can be mindful of not recreating the same exclusionary spaces that white people in North America are known to make to exclude Black communities. Simply looking around these places and asking "Who tends to be in the same spaces as me?" as well as the individual role in shaping that space. Minimizing exploitation of the relaxed market system that exists in Accra is also pertinent.

Limitations

As with the majority of studies, the design of the current study was subject to limitations. One of the main limitations to accessing information and participants was the limited amount of time. For this research, I was only able to dedicate two weeks towards finding participants and conducting interviews. This limited time made it difficult to build a rapport with the North American Black community in Accra and access these networks. While I initially thought I would be able to conduct up to thirty interviews- after conducting multiple interviews that lasted

up to an hour and half- I realized conducting thirty interviews and transcribing them wouldn't allow me to fully analyze them and their significance.

There was also a difficulty to find African centered academic perspectives on Pan-Africanism as it relates to homeland conception. If given the opportunity, I would want my literature review to be more balanced with non-Western perspectives.

As I was going through the interview process, I found issues with my limited sample size. Because Black North Americans represent such a small population found in Accra, it was difficult to find participants. When located, it was then time consuming to accommodate the various schedules to provide time for a lengthy interview. Oftentimes, interviews had to be rescheduled or canceled because of this

If conducted again, it would be beneficial to have a longer timeframe for the research. In doing this, there would be a better chance of finding available participants. There would also be more time dedicated to analyzing and summarizing the data found.

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