
Book of Readings

THE WORLD HISTORY NETWORK



Diaspora, Return Migration and Transnational Networking

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In an era when intellectualism, including historical scholarship has come under the increasing influence of globalization and its concomitant effects, the need to subject the current history syllabus of Blacks in Diaspora of Nigeria and perhaps other African universities to a critical review under the auspices of international scholars and researchers as put together by the organizers of the World History Research Agenda Symposium is a welcome development when viewed against the background of the constant questioning of the relevance of history to the development of societies. The current syllabus of history of Blacks in Diaspora which inter alia states: a study of the black communities found outside Africa in other areas of the world, factors of dispersal and their role in contemporary world affairs is too generalized. Issues of the course are focussed on the social and economic integration of the African diaspora and in the diasporic communities, thus making it difficult for the African diaspora to understand the challenges that face African societies. Again, of the various migratory phenomena that affect African societies only the forced migration of the trans atlantic slave trade era in which fourteen to fifty million Africans shipped to the various parts of the United States and Brazil (Uweche, 1983:353). These evidently formed the nucleus of the African diaspora and the diasporic communities that is exhaustively treated.

The mid-to-late nineteenth century world-wide migration under which non-African minorities made up of Indians, Lebanese, Syrians, Chinese etc immigrated to Africa is not treated. Another important area is the neglect of the works of migration scholars such as sociologists and anthropologists-Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc-Szanton whose research works were influential in re-shaping the framework and adjustment of migration by introducing the term "transnational migration". This has come to mean 'the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement'. (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:48). Also, the increased patterns of labour process occasioned by the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of African countries have considerably increased the African diaspora and the transnational communities around the world. These various changes that have affected migration and diaspora should be emphasized by the World

History Research Agenda. Another related issue arising from the works of the aforementioned scholars which needs to be stressed is that of return migration (a world-wide understudied area) which is now closely associated with the existence and nature of the transnational linkages established between migrants and their home country. Issues to be included in the new syllabus should be definitional problems, reasons and process of return, identification of returnees, reintegration, settlement, sustainability savings and remittances, socio-economic impact of return migration on both the sending and host societies.

The issue of transnational networking, which has equally not received sufficient attention, deserves to be included and debated. This is because African diaspora in strategic positions world-wide could facilitate the process of transnational activities and networks and also allow them to act as bridge-builders between host countries and their respective countries of origin.(Mohamoud,2005:20)

The Problem

The variety of problems range from defining and identifying concepts of migration, diaspora return, transnationalism and the extent to which globalization has affected African societies in the 21st century.

Significance of the research proposal vis-à-vis the Existing Literature The new syllabus takes a holistic approach to the issue of African diaspora. It sees the issue of phenomenon of migration as development that involves both host country and the homeland, emphasizing the contributions of migrants in Africa within the context of globalization. The new syllabus through the activities of the diaspora and return migrants tries to bring to light the contemporary challenges that face the African societies. It tries to develop a model that rationalizes the relationship between migration, diaspora, return migration, transnational networking and development in Africa. The dearth of literature in relation to the topics as it affects African societies makes it compelling for the World History Research Agenda to debate the topics. The inadequacy of space in this work makes further review of the few existing literature on African diaspora mostly found in the United States which do not lay emphasis on the contemporary challenges faced by African societies, inappropriate.

Research Methodology

The research methodology will be based on both inter and multidisciplinary approach that links history to sociology, anthropology, economics, political science etc and this emphasizes the dynamism that is required of historical studies in the 21st century. It will depend on the conduct of limited literature review, questionnaires, fieldwork, interviews, coupled with archival visits.

Epistemological Foundations of the Research

The epistemological import of this research is not only historical but also crucial to the significance of development economics in the different sociological and anthropological situations inherent in the experience of a migrant. This epistemology is

