

Dimensions of African Migration to the United States: Labor, Brain Drain, Identity Formation and Naturalization

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Here we are once again, with another issue, another editorial. Again, one member of our editorial team is en-route to Nigeria from New York, this time by way of France. This editorial is way overdue, but now she interprets its being written here and now as karma. Between the time it was meant to be written and now, the nearby mountains, as the Yorùbá say, obscured those on the horizon. There was just too much busy-ness, and all of it involved being stuck in one locale rather than being engaged in Ìrìnkèrindò. But here she is once again, on the move, and the combined force of a healthy dose of guilt, unflagging sense of dedication and responsibility, and the incessant nagging of my conscience make it inevitable that she write her part of this editorial so that the third issue of the journal can be published once and for all. So, passing through Paris' Charles De Gaulle airport, traveling to Lagos with Air France, our editor mused that it would have been more enjoyable if the editorial team had traveled in tandem, for one of us is fluent and expert in French, and the other halting and amateur. This airport is somewhat of a blur, in spite of her having passed through on two previous occasions. Were this the first time, there would have been no time to develop a serious impression since there were only approximately fifty minutes between flights with the challenge of having to change from one terminal to another. This was something that had caused quite a bit of anxiety prior to travel since any delay on the New York end would have made it impossible to make the connecting flight. Anyhow, it was a relief that things went smoothly, and that the plane ride was uneventful.

Between this issue and the last, several things pushed us to think more deeply about African migration. The first is the participation in the Democratic National Convention by Barack Obama, Democratic Senator in the state of Illinois, and Theresa Heinz Kerry, spouse of the Democratic Party's Presidential candidates. Barack Obama is a second generation immigrant whose father hails from Kenya, and his mother is a white American. Theresa Heinz-Kerry is a naturalized Mozambican American. She is a first generation immigrant. Both Obama and Heinz-Kerry drew heavily upon their African roots in their speeches, emphasizing their recent American origins. Viewing the program on the Voice of America in Nigeria exposed one to a significant amount of triumphalism by the African host who described Obama as Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King rolled into one, and characterized Heinz-Kerry and Obama's participation as a probable African foreign aid to the United States. Senator Charles Rangel, Democratic Member of the House of Representatives, from Harlem saw the two as an example of the openness and expansiveness of America's embrace of immigrants. They made such great strides so rapidly, he argued because America is the only country where it matters not a whit where you come from. The sky is the limit if you work hard and decide to integrate. He emphasized the fact that Obama is a Columbia and Harvard alumnus, a person who is not only African but American in all the senses of the word. He also cast Heinz-Kerry in the same light. Whose interpretation of Obama and Heinz-Kerry's participation should one consider more relevant, the host's triumphalism or Congressman Rangel's banality? We argue that neither interpretation is characteristic of the African immigrant experience in the United States. For one thing, these are very privileged people, and attention to the class origin and position of the individuals in question is relevant. Heinz-Kerry is wealthier than majority of Americans, white, black, or other, and even if Obama came from humble roots, by virtue of his Columbia and Harvard education, he is more privileged than most Americans as well. Heinz-Kerry also came from privileged roots, since her father was a white man who was a doctor in a country where apartheid automatically privileged whites over blacks. She also married into money, both in her first marriage and her second. Finally, Heinz-Kerry is white, and were she not to mention her Mozambican heritage, most Americans would assume that she is a multi-generational American due to the profound influence of race on American social, economic and political life. Heinz-Kerry's color offers her a kind of invisibility that no black person could have in America.

It is also important to consider that neither Obama nor Heinz-Kerry claimed to represent Africa or African immigrants. It is doubtful that their participation would

make one iota of difference to the lives of the overwhelming majority of African immigrants, and it is even likely that their prominence would generate some backlash against recent African immigrants who may be perceived by native born Americans as usurping their position and “reaping where they did not sow”. This latter point may be considered by some to be far-fetched, but only if one forgets the point made recently by Professors Lani Guinier and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. of Harvard University about recent African and Caribbean immigrants taking the places that ought to be reserved for African Americans in the Ivy League schools. Professor Gates also mused about probably having to “bottle” whatever it is that these new immigrants have and selling it to African Americans to make them similarly successful, thus trivializing the immense and enduring effects of racism in America, where it is the color of one’s skin that determines how one is treated, and not necessarily the place of origin. Or is Professor Gates right? Are white Americans using new African and Caribbean immigrants as wedges to prevent African Americans from accessing and enjoying the benefits of affirmative action, which was wrested from white American institutions only with the sweat, blood, and tears expended in long years of struggle for civil rights. Although this issue will be considered in this editorial, it is impossible to address it conclusively here, instead, its significance makes it worthy of being the subject of a special issue in the future.

The second interesting and relevant factor is an article by Samuel Huntington where in characteristic Huntingtonian fashion, the explosion of “Hispanic” populations in the US was rationalistically lamented. The third is participating in a conference on Diasporas and presenting a paper at Windsor University, Ontario, Canada. The fourth is an article titled: “Top Colleges Take More Blacks, but Which Ones?” in the June 24th issue of The New York Times, [\[1\]](#) and the fifth, a social event – a child dedication ceremony.

The Diaspora conference had numerous interesting presentations, but one that was particularly thought-provoking was by Jayne Ifekwunigwe, who argued that there is a great deal of unevenness in the distribution of the fruits of global capitalism. Under such conditions, those peopling more affluent, economically buoyant regions of the world, as with Western Europe, want to create impregnable fortresses that cannot be breached by those fleeing dire economic conditions and unrelenting impoverishment. Because of these dynamics, she observes that there is a direct correlation between the control of borders and the people trafficking trade. There is also the paradoxical racial politics of exigency and exclusion. To a greater

degree, Eastern Europeans are more welcome than Africans, who are rebuffed. One observes therefore, refugee discourses that project xenophobia and racialized policy. Under these circumstances, it is possible to imagine connections between these new African migrants and older African dislocations of the past, which are commonly believed to involve less volition than these new dislocations, which Ifekwunigwe rightly argues are more volitional for a select few, and less so for the majority of African migrants that will risk life and limb to escape from the continent, as is witnessed by the bodies of black Africans that steadily wash ashore the beautiful coasts of the South of Spain, particularly Malaga, thus causing tremendous distress for those with finer sensibilities that want to keep the beaches pristine for tourists. We hear ad infinitum, neoimperial rhetorics about saving Africa from itself, but the necessary complex North-South dialogue is not happening on how the North's affluence directly connects into the causes of Africa's marginalization.

For Huntington, the rapid and consistent growth in these populations means that the values, principles, and ethos of America will change from the classical and better Protestant ethic to something alien and less desirable simply because these populations are reluctant to be assimilated into the body politic. They speak a different language, and are not desirous of learning English; their cultural values are different; they keep having large families, as well as sneaking in through the porous border with Mexico, and if care is not taken, they will overrun America as a result of their sheer numbers. Huntington of course, recommends a policy response that manages and possibly combats this Latino threat. I read this article in utter astonishment, because I find it to be racist and xenophobic. Huntington also pursues the old assimilationist tradition in immigration studies, which Grosfoguel in this issue accuses of racial reductionism and unilinear determinism, since it lumps all non-black peoples together in a manner that suggests that "they all look alike", and more importantly, assumes that all immigrants should as a matter of duty, assimilate into white American culture. The problem with this approach is that it is ahistorical because there is no recognition or acknowledgement that each group was received differently by the American government and public and each is incorporated differentially into the labor market. As well, each group's experiences varies by whether or not it is able to avail itself of the support of an ethnic community. Finally, there is no consideration for the differential class origin, educational backgrounds and the political economy of the host city when each immigrant group comes into the US.

For Grosfoguel, the cultural pluralists in many ways, improve on assimilationist analysis, but they also ignore the global historical and structural factors that influence the manner in which an immigrant group is received, meaning that the effects of US foreign policy, its geopolitical concerns, and its attitudes to the racial group of which the immigrants are part. The nature of US relations with the immigrants' country of origin, the country's proximity to the US, plays a huge role in determining whether or not the US would treat the immigrants favorably or not. This accounts for why Cuban immigrants may be classified as refugees and given considerable material assistance, while Haitian and Mexican immigrants may be rebuffed.

Grosfoguel also emphasizes the importance of the manner in which race and ethnicity are constructed to determining how well immigrants are received in the US. While European immigrants are constructed as white, non-Whites are classified as "Blacks", regardless of their being of mixed racial origin, thus, the same treatment is meted out to Puerto Ricans in this category and Mexican Americans who in any case, originate from places that are virtual American colonies. This is why immigration must be considered as a process that is both structural and historical. As well, the time, space and class elements of immigration must be considered to make sense of why some groups are better incorporated into the labor market than others, why some groups are able to go into the professions and take leadership positions in public and private enterprises and others are not, and why some groups are more successfully incorporated to the labor market than others:

The immigrants' place origin, their period of arrival, their class origin, racial/ethnic composition, place of settlement, the geopolitical, economic and social elements of their migration process, how the immigrants are received, the political economy of the region of settlement, the relationship between their country of settlement and their host country, the nature of the narratives of nation in the host country and its consequent effects on the immigrants identity and racialization all affect how the immigrants construct their identity. They affect the immigrants' life chances and the ease or difficulty of their adjustment to the social, political and economic changes that they encounter in their host country. With these prior issues taken into consideration, it becomes clearer why and how different groups are incorporated into the labor market and how they negotiate the challenges of being aliens in a strange land through the establishment of institutions that facilitate immigrants' problem solving. Were these issues not to be considered, any analysis would be flawed by reductionist stereotyping that blames the victims and valorizes

the success of some immigrant groups as due to their possession of racial and ethnic characteristics that distinguish them from the less successful. Many immigration experts consistently assume that possession or lack of hard work, discipline, level and strength of motivation, and social capital are responsible for immigrants' success or failure. Grosfoguel also recommends the avoidance of an economic interpretation of the concept of mode of incorporation by not restricting its usage and applicability to the labor market, but by considering "the global, national, political, cultural and social dynamics of the processes of incorporation to the new society". In essence, the entire nature of immigrants' "socio-political mode of incorporation" must be considered.

To return to Huntington, his analysis reflects a significant degree of xenophobia. This brings to mind the fact that there were several of the nation's founding fathers who wanted to keep the "lily white" of America pristine, as did Thomas Jefferson. Jeffersonian genius also was responsible for plans to solve the slavery problem once and for all by shipping all post-puberty slaves to Hispaniola. There were also those for whom teaching in German and other European "ethnic" (read non-English) languages foreshadowed the witting damage of tender young children's brains. There were those that found the Chinese to be part of a "yellow peril". There were the "know nothings" and their rabid xenophobia; there was the American colonization society that refined the Jeffersonian plans of mass shipping of enslaved Africans to Hispaniola by sponsoring the repatriation of freed American slaves back home to Africa.

There are also today, many honest, God-fearing and nice Americans who would much rather all these immigrants go back home immediately because they are lowering wages; they are strange, and do not want to be American because they continue to maintain close ties to their home countries; they refuse to spend money here and remit prodigious amounts of money that is made here back to their home countries. One could go on and on.

Somehow, I expected better from Huntington because he is a scholar, and at the same time as I express that expectation, I realize that this is a naïve hope. In the free marketplace of ideas that America fosters, Huntington has as much right to his opinion as I do mine. He does not have to agree with my views, and he does not have to cave in to pressures from "knee jerk" liberals who refuse to see the dangers to which he points. What is more interesting than lamenting Huntington's lack of sympathy is to have Ifekwunigwe engage him in a dialogue. Indeed, Huntington

chooses to disregard American complicity in creating the circumstances that drive Mexicans and South Americans to seek to leave their home countries to use Ifekwunigwe's term, "by any means necessary".

The US as the sponsor of the "good neighbor policy", and under the guise of "promoting democracy", supported many dictatorial and autocratic regimes; under the pretext of supporting "freedom fighters", they supported right wing insurgencies, most the most famous of whom (given the blowup over the trading of drugs for arms and Colonel Oliver North's very public exposure to Congressional inquiry) are the Contras in Nicaragua. US support for these right wing movements also is responsible for the opening up of the doors of the infamous "School of the Americas", and the training of paramilitary forces in counter-revolutionary and counterinsurgency tactics. Low intensity conflict, a.k.a. not-quite nuclear, or conventional war has been a fact of life for many South Americans. Of course, people want to flee from conflict-ridden countries, or from regions within such countries. US support for right wing dictatorial regimes also meant support for highly exploitative class relations. Those for whom the opportunities for survival and upward mobility were foreclosed sought alternatives. The US had a special appeal as "El Norte" (the North), experienced in the people's imagination as the land of luxuries, untold wealth, hope, and unqualified success. The moment of truth awaits in the future, for it is only when the starry-eyed immigrants arrive on the shores of El Norte that they awaken to the harsh reality that if the streets of America are to be paved in gold, they would be the ones that supply the ill-paid and marginalized labor that does the paving.

Global economic relations have contributed in no small measure to the erosion of social and economic well-being in many parts of the world. In this regard, the US is no exception. Today, one of the hot button issues in the election campaigns by President George Bush and his Democratic opponent, Senator John Kerry, is the migration of jobs offshore, and while a few years ago, the complaints focused upon Canada, and especially Mexico, the North American partners of the US in the North American Free Trade Association as the sites of American jobs, which were going across these borders so fast that Ross Perot considered them "whooshed" out, today, India has become the poster child of offshore jobs. One of the lessons today, which organized labor has learned particularly well, is that the jobs may have migrated to Mexico's maquiladoras, but Mexican labor is not deriving significant benefits from such exploration. Thus, it is clearer now than ever before that global capitalism benefits only a select few, in whose hands the world's wealth is concentrated, even

while contributing to the tremendous expansion of the world economy. This is why in the post-Seattle (anti-World Trade Organization demonstrations) world, US organized labor makes connections between its plight, and those of overexploited third world labor.

If the maquiladoras and the migration of jobs were favorable to Mexico, would we have so many Mexicans paying coyotes, traveling through dangerous, rat-infested tunnels, scaling barbed wire fences, and doing just about anything to get into America? If South American countries had thriving economies, would most of those for whom migration into El Norte has become the only viable survival mechanism not choose to be tourists rather than reviled, exploited, and marginalized undocumented aliens? If the world's resources were divided more equitably, would there be as much resentment of those countries that are perceived as having come by their wealth through massive exploitation of others? These are the questions that Ifekwunigwe raised (with reference to African immigrants to Europe,) and answered in her presentation. I expected Huntington to, in like manner, consider the causes of massive Latino/Latina migration into the US.

What of Huntington's fears of the "Hispanic threat" to US national security through the dilution of the fundamental bedrock of American values? To assume that the transformation of values, ethos, and mores would only happen with the influx and numerical expansion of a given population is to believe in a static world where American values had remained essentially the same from the country's founding until the present. It is to assume that were changes to occur through the incorporation of Latino/Latina values into America, these values would have a corrosive influence on a superior culture. This is what makes Huntington's analysis for me, racist and xenophobic. Ifekwunigwe showed that the Europeans have erected fortress Europe, and while there is a need for migrants to make up the shortfall in population growth that the continent is experiencing, Eastern Europeans are believed to be better candidates than Africans, and among Africans, each European country has its favored "ideal minority."

Grösfoguel in the last issue of this journal, showed that the United Kingdom, US, Holland and Spain each had from among the migrant populations from old colonies, the "select" "ideal" ones who are given relatively more opportunities than others that are more reviled. In like manner, Spain, which colonized Morocco, and thus, is the destination of many migrating Moroccans, reviles the Moroccans more than the Sahelians, forgetting the past relationship between Spain's Moorish

citizens and Morocco, or are they maybe retaliating for their conquest and colonization by the Almoravid and Almohad empires? As one of our editors found out in the summer of 2002 when she participated in a conference in Paris, the Algerians are considered suspect, believed to be guilty until proven innocent, and the Sahelians, while disliked, are considered to be “better”, being less troublesome. Someone from whom her family asked for directions, who concluded that they were American tourists, warned them to be wary of the African pick-pockets, and not to patronize many of them who were part of the “riff raff” that congregate around the Eiffel Tower, but to buy only from established businesses.

Being at the Diaspora conference in Windsor, Canada, revealed the extent of the long arm of American capitalism. The University has a Chrysler Hall. A look on the map of North America would show the curious that Windsor, Canada is quite close to Detroit, Michigan, only separated by a bridge no longer than that separating Brooklyn from Manhattan in New York City. The cab driver who took Okome to the University from the airport told her that the long line of trucks clogging the highway were headed into the US, and that this was the biggest headache in Windsor, because oftentimes, the highway looks more like a parking lot than a road. Unfortunately, a few yards to the University, the car broke down, and the driver had to call on a friend to pick me up and take me. This new cab driver was Somali, as was the cab driver who took me back to the Airport on my departure date. Okome learned that there is a large population of Somali in Windsor, that her departure date cab driver had graduated from the University of Windsor, had a job with a dot com start-up company in the US during the brief bubble of the late 20th /early 21st Centuries, and having lost his job, had now gone back to school, and is in a Master’s program in Political Science, and that his area of concentration is International Relations. The cab ride was not boring, because he engaged in a sophisticated analysis of the Somali crisis, and the politics of migration.

While she was in Windsor, Okome also read from the local newspaper that a young Somali woman just graduated with a degree in Medicine. It was reported that she was the first Somali woman doctor, and that was something that she promised herself that she would have to check out. Windsor, being so close to the US was also subject to constant high powered policing of the border that it shares with the US. As a matter of fact, Ifekwunigwe, whose paper focused upon the analysis of the documentary, Exodus, commented that when she saw the beautiful, serene waters that divided Windsor from Detroit, and saw the boats that plied the waters so peacefully, she had a poignant feeling of recalling a similar short stretch between

Morocco and Spain, and how that stretch is policed with the express purpose of turning back determined and desperate migrants. Luckily, we were all disabused of the notion that one situation differed much from the other by Linda Feldman, the conference organizer, who informed us that the “peaceful” boats were US Coast Guard vessels whose express purpose was to stop all surreptitious migrants from getting into the US. Thus, the US is very much like Europe in the sense that it is erecting a fortress around itself to keep out immigrants that are hell-bent to get in by any means necessary.

What is the experience of immigration without some social events and merry-making? There were quite a few of these between this issue and the last – weddings, birthday parties, independence celebrations, even funerals. However, only one will be discussed here in detail. It was a baptism and dedication service. As usual, there was so much to do, and so little time. Now seated in the reception hall waiting for the party proper to begin, more people show up for the party, and we whiled away the time, listening to Ibo music from speakers that are much too close for comfort. How for do? As they say in pidgin English. Had we made it on time for the service, we could have left soon after, but propriety demands that we wait for an obligatory couple of hours. I wonder if we’ll be able to stay until the dancing begins.

Looking around, one sees many fine examples of the latest Nigerian fashions – women decked out in gored and bell-shaped skirts and blouses with matching damask head ties and shawls. There are vibrant colors galore. Fine examples of Swiss, Austrian, French and Korean lace was coordinated with German and other European damask – this of course is the haute couture of the moment. Guinea brocade and aso òkè (cloth hand woven on looms) also featured prominently. The women as usual, are dressed to the nines. There are also titled Ibo chiefs here. As a matter of fact, the baby’s dad is a double-titled chief. He got one title from his hometown and the other from Badagry.

For the mandatory kolanut ceremony that is integral to all Ibo social events, the baby’s father handed the kolanut over to another titled chief, who hands it over to an older man, who explains that the ceremony would be conducted in Ibo because Nigerian gods like to hear their own languages. I fully expected an English translation, but was to be disappointed. Prayers commenced in earnest. The opening prayer was conducted in English by an elder, a woman who asked for blessings on baby, parents, and all present. The kolanut ceremony was conducted according to all requisite protocol. The high chiefs got served kolanut first, in order of seniority,

as were those from afar, and then, the Americans among us, and then the rest of us, the masses. The food came late. This is nothing unusual. Just as usual, people take it in stride, and modify the program accordingly. All the while, new people kept arriving, adding more color and liveliness. The hall is filling up, but not quite to capacity. I'm sure if I were to take a poll, there wouldn't be too many non-Ibo people here. There is also a sprinkling of white and African Americans. This follows the norm for most of the events that I've attended. There is not so much cross-fertilization among Nigerian ethnic groups. Maybe this will come with second generation Nigerians in America. The musical offerings became more diverse as dinner was served. Makossa music and soukous were liberally interspersed with Ibo music. It was an enjoyable event, a relief from the tedium and tensions of everyday life.

Finally, Okome had occasion to visit the US Consulate in Lagos, Nigeria. It was quite an experience. There was a long line of applicants for US visas who had been invited for their visa interviews. There were also numerous people who stood in a cordoned-off space opposite the Consulate, right by the Lagos lagoon. As well, there were some who were seated on long benches under a makeshift canopy that shielded them from the late morning sun. Each of those "lucky" persons paid fifty naira for the privilege of sitting, and was duly given a receipt indicating that they had the right to be seated. Several enterprising entrepreneurs and intelligent beggars circulated, advertising their products or praying copiously for the seated and standing (that God would look favorably on their quest and grant them a US visa). The products offered included also prayers by "men of God" who charged money in order to pray for the success of the visa seekers. In addition, there were photographers; "visa experts" who promised to secure visas to those who had been turned away sans the valued document; hawkers of soft drinks, snacks, and sundry other products. A palpable sense of anxiety pervades the place. From the perspective of a twenty year immigrant in the US who is now a citizen, and who did not to stand on the line or wait under the hot sun, or pay for a seat under the canopy, but gained immediate access to the consulate after producing her US passport, what occurred to Okome was that a veritable tragedy was being played out. She was saddened because majority of the visa seekers were young, apparently bright and intelligent people. Many who were overheard in conversation saw travel to the US as their only viable option in life. Their entire life, so it seemed, was hinged on departing Nigeria as soon as possible and getting to "God's own country". How is Nigeria to develop if all the best and brightest become frustrated enough to leave? Should they be able to leave, how do they cope with the problems that they are

bound to encounter? How soon would they be able to find their feet? These are questions that have no ready or easy answers.

The papers in this issue are diverse, yet related by the theme of migration. Ramón Grosfoguel's paper, "Puerto Rican Migration to the United States" analyzes Puerto Rican migration within the framework of Caribbean migration to the United States. The article combines a theoretical exploration of Caribbean migration with an analysis of its historical origins. It also considers the relevance of the post 1960's Caribbean migrants' class origin to the manner in which they are incorporated into society in the US and the strategies through which Puerto Ricans assert their identity as well as the interplay between these forms of identity formation and traditional conceptions of identity.

E. Ike Udogu's paper, "African Development and the Immigration of Its Intelligentsia: An Overview" considers the enduring issue of African development, the oft-examined but yet to be resolved issue of the brain drain and the role of the intelligentsia as facilitators of development. What would it take for the exiled African intelligentsia to return home to contribute to the development of their countries? The short answer it seems is: "only a miracle." This however is no frivolous question, since the major multilateral institutions have all considered this question and researched the issue extensively. The United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), the International Office of Migration, (IOM), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the Union for African Population Studies have all studied the brain drain and made recommendations. There are also initiatives underway by all these institutions and several others, and also by International non-governmental organizations, (NGOs) formed by African immigrants to facilitate either virtual or real life returns that transform the brain drain into a brain trust. African countries are also interested, or they should be, in finding an answer or solution to the brain drain,[\[2\]](#) although as an African scholar abroad, I often wonder if there is any genuine commitment on the part of Africa's governments to the repatriation of their intellectuals. Many governments realize in the first place, that the remittances from immigrants are a substantial source of foreign exchange. The amounts reputedly remitted are staggering. What then would be the incentive to cut off this inflow of resources that provides private subsidy for many of the duties and responsibilities that states have abandoned in the neoliberal economic world of belt-tightening economic policies? There is an additional advantage to the migration of intellectuals from the perspective of stability-biased or favoring governments; and this lies in the fact that many intellectuals are

“recognized troublemakers” who belong within the historic middle class of Barrington Moore’s democratic theory, that would rise up and compel the authoritarian state to democratize as done in Europe’s earlier democratization.

For African states which all claim to love, value and nurture democracy, even while being seriously illiberal, it is the “recognized troublemaker” cognomen that resonates. The presence of intellectuals in significant numbers can only portend impending crisis because they are perpetually malcontented, and not shy about expressing their displeasure, and often exhibit unmitigated gall by also recommending solutions. This could turn the minds of the increasing masses of the poor, immiserated, unemployed, underemployed to either organizing or joining actions that demand positive change. Given the prioritization of economic liberalization over the political, the more intellectuals that migrate or stay out the better for the government.

Another dimension of the intellectual flight problem is that some have suggested that the information technology revolution may offer a mechanism for ameliorating the problems caused by the brain drain because in the first place, it provides for the possibility of building networks of scholarly and professional communities across temporal and geographical divisions that can develop epistemic frameworks of operation which harness the intellectual powers of members and also enable asynchronous and synchronous communication across time, space, and without regard to national boundaries. Thus, Africa’s immigrant intellectuals can build collaborative networks with colleagues back home, or in other African countries. Some efforts are already in progress to build such networks.[\[3\]](#)

Udogu’s argument is that African countries must take a proactive approach to engendering their scholars’ return home by creating a conducive environment within which they can operate. Is this what Nigeria’s current government did when it recruited the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala from the World Bank at a salary that many fellow ministers would kill or die for? Is it the rationale for recruiting the Minister for External Affairs from the UN under similar terms? Of course there is no doubt that these super ministers may have taken pay cuts and are enduring more hardship than they would otherwise have faced were they in their world bank or UN jobs, but the fact is that there is a sort of apartheid between the super ministers and the others that may not be justifiable under any circumstances. This is the same concern that necessarily arises when one considers the issue of providing an enabling environment for intellectuals to thrive. The recommendation

is sound, but to my mind, it is only meaningful if the development of the various African countries were undertaken not just for the purpose of attracting the intellectuals and luring them back home, but with the express purpose of benefiting the entire country. This would mean therefore, that rather than create an apartheid-like system where those recruited from abroad are remunerated at a higher rate than those recruited at home, comparable jobs would attract comparable wages across the board. It would also mean that priorities on economic planning and spending would have to be changed. This is easier said than done, and not only due to the much-broadcasted failure of the state as institutionalists and the neo-modernization school claim, but because the notion of state autonomy is non-existent under conditions of structural adjustment.

Another problem is the lack of funds. Many African countries are broke and it does not seem likely that they would experience miraculous economic recovery anytime soon. It appears as though in the absence of the miraculous, Africa and Africans would just have to muddle through. In this valley of distress, the promising element on the horizon is the aforementioned possibility of building epistemic communities that link immigrant intellectuals with their colleagues in Africa in networks that undertake joint research, scholarship and even teaching. These networks would not develop or thrive without a great deal of individual and collective initiatives supported by state and multilateral policy and funding.

Abdul Karim Bangura's paper, "African Immigration and Naturalization in the United States from 1960 to 2002: A Quantitative Determination of the Morris or the Takougang Hypothesis" tests Morris' 1985 hypothesis that "a smaller proportion of the eligible lawful immigrants in the United States seek naturalization" and Takougang's 1995 and 2003 that there is a difference between African immigrants to the United States in the 1960s and the 1970s and those who came more recently. While the former desired an American education like their predecessors, they differed from them because they sought speedy return home thereafter to contribute to nation building, most contemporary African immigrants desire permanent resident status and American citizenship. Bangura's analysis concludes that the Takougang hypothesis is more valid than Morris'. This quantitative analysis is significant because it provides persuasive quantifiable evidence of strong correlation between higher levels of immigration by Africans into the US and high incidence of permanent residence and naturalization.

If more Africans are becoming naturalized American citizens, what does this

portend for Africa? What does it mean for the US? What are the implications for the immigrants and those left behind at home? These are large questions that are still under-researched and underexplored and the comments made are by no means final. There are a multiplicity of effects that immigration has on country of origin, country of settlement, the immigrant, those left behind and neighborhoods and communities. No attempt would be made here to be exhaustive.[\[4\]](#)

One significant and enduring effect of immigration is the transnationalization of Africans. There is also the formation of new and burgeoning African Diasporas that promise to transform our understanding of the concept itself. Further, these new Diasporas must necessarily encounter and engage old Diasporas with the promise that we will also have a transformation of African identity. However, there will also be tensions, conflicts, and contestations between old and new Diasporas who will by and large, struggle for access to the same resources, the new Diaspora fails to, or is disinterested in understand(ing) the history of the old, and the old in like manner, by and large is similarly disposed. However, within both communities there are enough well informed people – a trend also found historically – to engender the development of new communities, new identities, new cultures and new values that are grounded in Africa but deploy different understandings of what it means to be African and how people should relate to Africa as well as the manner in which they will assert their African identity.

For one thing, the higher number of naturalized Americans among immigrant Africans means that race and ethnicity are becoming more complicated. Who is an African? Who is African American? Is there a new category of American Africans? What does it all mean in terms of concrete social, political, and economic relations? The jury is out. The nature of neighborhoods would also necessarily change as would the faces and character of many communities, particularly where large numbers of immigrants from the same source country or ethnic group settle in close proximity to one another. Udogu considers some elements of the portents to Africa by alerting us to the continued relevance of the brain drain and the need for corrective government policies. However, if there were the possibility of a reverse brain drain as he advocates, and the return of a critical mass of intellectuals to Africa, it can only benefit the continent and exponentially increase its chances of succeeding in the contemporary world system. In addition, if more virtual networks develop that bridge the gaps that exist, then, there is the possibility that the brain drain does not even have to be reversed for collaboration on many different levels to occur and thrive.

It is somewhat encouraging that a consortium of philanthropic NGOs made the establishment of relations of partnership between African and American universities a matter of priority. It would also be desirable for those NGOs to make dispersed Africans integral and central to these partnerships so that they do not become pedestrian replays of old partnerships that benefited the Western partners overwhelmingly and the African partner sparingly, if at all. Of course, it is not suggested that the mere inclusion of African faces to these partnerships would in and of itself, cause the necessary transformation, but that their inclusion would facilitate a reversal of the brain drain and that they may have unique insight to contribute that would make the partnerships more beneficial for all concerned.

Mary Ann Watson's paper, "Africans to America: The Unfolding of Identity" explicates the concept of identity, a person's development of a sense of the self, as a dynamic and constantly shifting phenomenon that responds to both internal and external changes experienced by the individual. African immigrants to the United States then experience identity as a multi-layered, ever-changing aspect of their being. Watson sketches two models of identity formation and development – the chronological developmental model and the ethnic minority model. She demonstrates the validity of the latter model to show how thirteen first and second generation African immigrants from five African countries in the Denver, Colorado, metropolitan from five separate families that came to the United States from Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda between 1977 to 1992 develop strategies that ease the transition from new to older immigrant. She also presents us with these families' analysis of their personal understanding of US culture and how their own identities develop and change as they become part of the social fabric of the United States of America.

Watson's paper clearly addresses the question of some of the causes and consequences of African immigration to the US. We meet the individuals that she interviewed for her paper at a more personal and intimate level than is the case for immigrants studied in the other papers. Discrimination and prejudice, ethnocentrism and xenophobia are experienced by these African immigrants, but they remain undaunted. Instead, they build institutions individually and collectively that challenge and attack marginalization. This institutionalization process has the impact of generating new religions and the sanctuaries designed for their members as houses of worship, ethnic restaurants where people meet and mix, social clubs and community based organizations that plan and execute the celebration of national holidays and festivals, informal and more formal educational institutions

that teach children indigenous languages and familiarizes them with the cultures and practices of their ethnic groups. The end result of this process is that new forms of identity are formed through a three-stage progression described by Watson as pre-encounter, encounter and internalization. The immigrant changes, the community changes, and so does the social fabric of the United States of America.

Adétóyèje Oye(yemí's paper, "Skill, Professionalism, Self-Esteem and Immigration: The Case of Nigerian Physical Therapists" studies one aspect of the brain drain – the emigration of large numbers of Nigerian Physical Therapists to the United States. He contends that while there are more and better opportunities for career advancement and upward mobility, there are also tremendous challenges faced by new immigrant Physical Therapists. He studies the likelihood that Physical Therapists in the US would have higher self esteem than their colleagues and counterparts in Nigeria and concludes that despite the significant challenges faced, these professionals maintain a relatively high sense of self esteem because they attain a high standard of living in a relatively short time, they have numerous opportunities to further their education, they are able to practice in multiple settings – as private practitioners who own and manage their own businesses; independent contractors who could be home care practitioners, school based therapists, staff members of rehabilitation departments in hospitals, nursing homes and specialized rehabilitation centers; and university professors. They are also highly paid and have high status. Compared with these elite professionals, their Nigerian counterparts have experienced a consistently declining standard of living from the 1980s until now, they have little flexibility in employment, cannot easily combine higher education and in-service training with full-time employment, and they are significantly poorly paid than their US colleagues. These factors generate the urge to migrate, particularly when these professionals consider the higher material and emotional rewards that are accessible to their counterparts in the US and other developing countries.

What then can Nigeria do to retain these much-needed professionals? Again, Udogu's paper provides some of the answers, but given the impossibility of compelling people to forego better material conditions, the Nigerian government and other African states may have to explore more seriously how to use digital technology to create linkages between these health care professionals and their colleagues back home in a manner that contributes to solving health care and other problems.

The story of African migration is constantly being written and re-written, and the continent's political economy both generates the outflow of migrants and responds to the consequences of their migration. The papers in this issue contribute in no small measure to throwing more light on the issues and processes that are generated.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Sara Rimer and Karen W. Arenson, "Top Colleges Take More Blacks, but Which Ones?" The New York Times, Thursday, June 24, 2004.

[2] Tom Chiahemen, "FG to Woo Nigerian Academics Overseas" Daily Independent Online, Wednesday, March 03, 2004; Gumisai Mutume, "Reversing Africa's 'brain drain': New initiatives tap skills of African expatriates Africa Recovery, Vol.17 #2 , (July 2003).

[3] Mutume, op cit.

[4] For a more detailed examination of the same question, see Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké

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