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Beyond Slave Trade: Integration, Citizenship and Digital Partnering of the African Diaspora

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Abstract

Citizenship connotes rights and obligations. Traditional Africa citizenship is conceived from the communal perception. In different African cultures, an individual is a unit of the family, and the tribe (society) in a seamless relationship that allows easy participation and contribution (socio cultural and political role playing). The extended family unit is integrated into the community and nation. Citizenship in the colonial era, particularly in the “indirect rule” structure permitted the traditional practices, while that of “assimilation” promoted a transition to “the French man”. The migrated slaves were also assimilated into the citizenship pattern of the Americas, though as second class citizens (racist practices). In the 21st century, citizenship conception however involves a trans-national practice that transcends cultures and creates a new international networking with technological overarching advantages. The use of the internet, Facebook, Twitter, Blog...etc. and other technological innovations provides multi-dimensional advantages that facilitate interactions. This paper posits that it is relevant to give citizenship rights to Diaspora citizens (particularly the slave trade Diasporas) to participate in the socio-political and technological development in Africa, while enjoying all the legal attributes of citizenship. These crop of citizens’ (Slave trade diasporas) thirst for a reintegration with motherland, a bridge of the historical gulf created by the forced migration in the slave trade era for the purpose of rejuvenating their memories of motherland (in Diaspora tourism). The paper interrogates the idea that in the age of digital innovations, it is now pertinent for Africa to give vent to the mutual desire of her ex- slave diaspora citizens to reunite with their homeland, and to further Africa’s desire to tap into the resource of her diaspora for the purpose of achieving the coveted development. International citizenship is gaining acceptance and Africa should not be left behind in this growing opportunistic advantage to provide the relevant succor for her Diaspora citizens and to tap into the necessary advantages of their citizenship participation in the continent’s development processes. African states, through the African Union has acknowledged the growing need to include the African diaspora as the 6th region of Africa, this involves the African diaspora in the development of the region in a loose opportunity for citizenship membership. It is argued in this paper that African citizenship, particularly that of the slave trade diaspora, can be fast tracked through digital partnering –the adoption of digital networking to facilitate processing, and interaction to enlist (diasporas) their contributions in promoting Africa’s development, while garnering advantages of voting rights, visiting rights, and a full sense of belonging to their original homeland. This connotes membership of African indigenous household of choice through digital partnering and participation. It is further argued by this paper that digital partnering/virtual participation is the relevant key to achieving an embracing culture of belonging, particularly in the 21st century, as commitment is a fruit of reciprocity and acceptance. Both Africa and its diaspora citizens have a lot to gain from citizenship partnership.

Keywords

Slave Trade, African Citizenship, Integration, Digital Partnering, African Union, African Diaspora, Digital Diaspora, Virtual Citizenship

INTRODUCTION

African citizenship holds interesting dimensions of communality in participation. In every African society, the relevance of the group and group contributions is the soul of the society and this enhances development. The communal nature of Africa further promotes brotherhood and a spirit of give and take. Pre-colonial and pre slave trade African society was beautifully integrated in a bond of communal existence that factored in religion and social ethos. Even in the

religious sacrifices, individualism was not promoted. Colonialism in the promotion of westernization, (education, social ethos and religion) remodeled African culture and jettisoned the pre-colonial societal citizenship values, thus (in contradiction) promoting western individualism and discouraging communalism. Citizenship also connotes rights and obligations. Traditional Africa citizenship is conceived from the communal perception. In different African cultures, an individual is a unit of the family, and the tribe (society) in a seamless relationship that allows easy participation and contribution (socio cultural and political role playing). The extended family unit is integrated into the community and nation (Amadi, 1982). Citizenship in the colonial era, particularly in the “indirect rule” structure permitted the traditional practices, while that of “assimilation” promoted a transition to “the French man”. The migrated slaves were also assimilated into the citizenship pattern of the Americas, though as second class citizens (racist practices).

In the 21st century, citizenship conception however involves a trans-national practice that transcends cultures and creates a new international networking with technological overarching advantages. The use of the internet, Facebook, Twitter blog ... etc. and other technological innovations provides multi-dimensional advantages that facilitate interactions. This paper posits that it is relevant to give citizenship rights to Diaspora citizens (particularly the slave trade Diasporas) to participate in the socio-political and technological development in Africa, while enjoying all the legal attributes of citizenship. These crop of citizens’ (Slave trade Diasporas) thirst for a reintegration with motherland, a bridge of the historical gulf created by the forced migration in the slave trade era. (This they had attempted to assuage through Diaspora tourism for the purpose of rejuvenating their memories of motherland). The paper interrogates the idea that in the age of digital innovations, it is now pertinent for Africa to give vent to the mutual desire of her ex- slave diaspora citizens to reunite with their homeland, and to further Africa’s desire to tap into the resource of her diaspora for the purpose of achieving the coveted development. International citizenship is gaining acceptance and Africa should not be left behind in this growing opportunistic advantage to provide the relevant succor for her Diaspora citizens and to tap into the necessary advantages of their citizenship participation in the continent’s development processes.

African states, through the African Union has acknowledged the growing need to include the African diaspora as the 6th region of Africa, this involves the African diaspora in the development of the region in a loose opportunity for citizenship membership. It is argued in this paper that African citizenship, particularly that of the slave trade diaspora, can be fast tracked through digital partnering –the adoption of digital networking to facilitate processing, and interaction to enlist (diasporas) their contributions in promoting Africa’s development, while garnering advantages of voting rights, visiting rights, and a full sense of belonging to their original homeland. The research composition foreground membership of African indigenous household of choice through digital partnering and participation. It is further argued by this paper that digital partnering/virtual participation is the relevant key to achieving an embracing culture of belonging, particularly in the 21st century, as commitment is a fruit of reciprocity and acceptance. The paper concludes that both Africa and its diaspora citizens have a lot to gain from citizenship partnership. The paper is subsequently divided into Conceptual Framework, Slave trade in Africa, Historicizing African Citizenship, Citizenship Integration of the African Diaspora, Citizenship and Digital Partnering of the African Diaspora, The Way Forward and Conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Several concepts are implicated in this work. Such relevant concepts are here explained for better understanding of their usage in this work.

Slave Trade

Slave trade was the inhuman selling of African citizens from the 12th century to the 18th century, when the abolition and emergence of colonialism and legitimate trade finally led to its stoppage. The Trans Sahara slave trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade carted away African youths to Europe and the Americas and resulted into the emergence of African Americans and other Negroes across continents beyond the shores of Africa (Ade Ajayi, 1984, Ikime, 1984). The migrated slaves later regained their freedom and the agitation for rights and freedom resulted into the pan African congresses. This movement also created a return migration of freed slaves who settled across West Africa, creating Sierra Leone and Liberia and settler pockets in places such as Lagos in Nigeria and Accra, in Ghana. In spite of ex-slave resettlement, several blacks were left in the Americas, and across other European continents. The blacks, now referred to as African Diasporas (which includes more recent migrants) are still relevant citizens of the continent of Africa. This is more so as some have engaged in revisit programs and follow up tourism which has endeared the continent to them in nostalgic homecoming (<https://www.researchgate.net..2700>), this important group provide a focus for this research interrogation. To reintegrate this group back to their homeland is the core dialogue of this research paper.

Citizenship

What is citizenship? – A condition of allegiance to, and participation in, a governmental jurisdiction. It means for a collective order, a pledge of loyalty, commitment to actively participate in civic and community and willingness to serve when and where called upon (Aguirre: 2003). Barbalet (Cited in Mngomezule 2015: 4) argues that citizenship ‘defines those who are, and who are not, members of common society’. To Waters (cited in Barbalet *ibid*) ‘it allows one to participate in a community, while enjoying certain rights and obligations’. Citizenship according to Bellamy (2008) is ‘a particular set of political practices including specific public rights and duties with respect to a given political community. He (*ibid*) sheds light on how ideas of citizenship have changed through time from ancient Greece to present. Moving from

this conceptualizations, Mngomezule (ibid: 2015) concludes that to be a citizen of a country entails an individual 's recognition by the relevant authorities, as such, with an extension of certain protections over the person granted citizenship, be it socio-political and economic protections in exchange for which the citizen must abide by the rules of the constituted authority-the state (ibid, 4).

Mngomezule (ibid 2015) further opine that the local conception of citizenship as it entails rights and obligations might vary from country to country and would be guided by the code of international human rights or either adopted concepts of religions and cultures (ibid). It is no wonder that the American bill of rights and the French revolution inspired bill of rights guide the idea of citizenship foundations for their societies (ibid). For Africa, colonialism impacted the adoption of citizenship conception, which has further been defined by western and American ideals. The pre-colonial and traditional conception of citizenship in Africa was more communal in nature. It defined the ownership of lands, the relationship between male and female, the doctrine of societal membership and more (ibid). The adoption of this research however is designed to harmonize some positive aspects of citizenship as workable for the purpose of integration of the slave trade Diaspora.

It is scholarly (Lund, 2011: 11) noted that, a first distinction that seems to be invoked increasingly in Africa and other societies is what could be termed national and local citizenship. While people may share national citizenship, the idea of autochthony- first arrival – is often invoked as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusions (ibid). Citizenship –or political membership –implies rights to have rights, so to speak, argued Lund (ibid: 11).

Integration

Integration is processes of interaction between migrants and the individual and institutions of the receiving society that facilitate economic, social, and cultural sense of belonging at the national and local level (Gathamann, 2022). Barbulescu (2023) explain that citizenship remains the core instrument for immigrant's integration with incorporation goals tailored around milestones for naturalization. Rinus (2003) further explain integration as a process by which immigrant become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. He (ibid) further argued that this definition of integration is deliberately left upon, because the particular requirement for acceptance by a receiving society vary greatly from country to country. The openness of the definition also reflects the fact that the responsibility for integration, rests not within one particular group, but rather with many actors- immigrants themselves, the host group, institutions and communities, to name a few (ibid). This further implicates that this factors could be more.

Further to this definition, (Rinus: 2003) explained that there are two parties involved in integration processes- the immigrants, with their characteristics efforts and adaptations, and the receiving society with its interactions with these new comers and their institutions- nothing that it is the interaction between the two that determine the direction and the ultimate outcome of the integration process (ibid). He (ibid) further expressed that these two are unequal partners. For the receiving society in terms of its institution structure and the way it reacts to new comers has much more say in the outcome of the process. In the age of digital partnering however, the Nitti gritty of the integration process might not be too necessary (ibid: Rinus). Virtual membership is an interesting option and, although the real citizenship process could be encouraged, challenges of integration are natural processes faced by some societies such as the United States of America. Such countries (with multiple migration dynamics) provide adaptable standards that can help African states in the practice of integration of slave trade diaspora citizens (this is the position of this paper).

Digital Partnering

This is to leverage the power of technology and employ digital strategies in vital areas of economic, political and social relations across continents and Eco structures. It portends online partnership which refers to the creation and management of long term arrangements to promote online services on third party websites (African Digital Pedagogy, Internet Source accessed 9/5/23). The acceleration of technological development to produce a necessary positive directional change (ibid). It is referred to as technological mass migration and a shared support base in networking (Our StrategyAfrican... africandiasporanetwork.org). This focus is to present an opportunity to leapfrog traditional African development processes, bypassing physical infrastructure that the continent has lacked for the most part of a century, it is argued (ibid). The African diaspora network (ibid) adduce that this is a strategy that the African diaspora wished for to leverage the power of technology and employ digital strategies in four vital areas: connectivity, education, healthcare and finance – this is noted as unprecedented opportunity for Africa to accelerate education through technology (ibid). Health care digitalization is accelerating, allowing more doctors and other health care professionals to participate in African health systems from anywhere in the world (ibid)(this is already visible in diaspora medical assistance in Nigeria, though it involves the new diaspora and not the slave trade diasporas). Also in the area of investment and financial inclusion to build Africa's future and ensure sustainable economic future for Africa (ibid).

The African Diaspora

The African Diaspora is the combination of migrants from the era of the slave trade, further into the 20th and 21st centuries, who have emigrated for different reasons to live in other countries for the purpose of settlement. The slave trade diasporas however were the forcefully migrated to work in plantations in the Americas and other places. More resent diaspora migrated for the purpose of education, economic advantages, and as a result of natural disasters, such as famines, draught, wars etc. The African Diaspora is considered one of the largest in the world, coming behind the Indian and

Chinese. The African Diaspora has been declared the 6th region of the African continent by the African Union (Adu, 2018). The focus of this research is on slave trade Diasporas, as this group have been cut off by centuries and a large generational gap that makes it difficult to identify their homeland and their yearning for African citizenship in some instances could be established. The term 'African Diaspora' therefore, has generally been understood to refer to the well – established populations of African descent in the western hemisphere, whose ties to particular places, communities, or institutions on the continent had been severed by force and subsequently lost (Bernal, 'IT Diasporas' 2020). As Clarks (cited in Bernal: *ibid*) formulations further suggests, long standing motives of African Diaspora also centered on American racialized experiences. They are also referred to as established African Heritage Diasporas (Sawyer, 2008: Copeland –Carson, 2004 cited in Bernal 2020).

Scholars record that digital media had transformed the experiences and practices of African Diasporas (Bernal 2020, 2014). Social construction of digital media has grown in acceptability. To Bernal(*ibid*) this may be because the forms of sociality fostered by digital connectivity are so conducive to long standing African values and practices of sociality. He interrogated Guyer's (1993:243 cited in Bernal :2020) influential analysis summed up in the concept of 'wealth in people', notably pointing to the African value system as extending beyond kinship relations, calling it a non-genealogical accumulative logic' which considered an overtly materialistic formulation , it continues to resonate among scholars who identify with Africa, placing a high value on personal connections and actively working to develop and maintain extensive network of social ties (*ibid*) . In furtherance of this opinion Ngate's (Grosz Ngate's (2014: 80) observation is circumstantial in relation to conventional notions of friendship in the Global North to support 'non kin associations of various kinds 'offer their members sociability, moral support, and an opportunity to expand personal networks'. Social media platforms – the phenomena of 'Facebook friends' for example: that to Bernal (2020) signal outer circles of social relationships which are sustained largely through phatic communication, but could possibly be mobilized under some circumstances, in relation to conventional notions of friendship in the global north, is an interesting dimension of argument. But such relationships Bernal (*ibid*) emphasized have precedents in the extension 'on the ground' social networks that have long been a hallmark of African society.

SLAVE TRADE IN AFRICA

Slavery has historically been widespread in Africa. System of servitude and slavery transited to export trade – the Trans Saharan slave trade, Indian Ocean slave trade, and Trans-Atlantic slave trade (which started in the 16th century). Slavery in contemporary Africa is still in practice despite its illegality. ("Silja, 8/22/2019.Retrieved 9/5/23). Over several centuries, countless East Africans were sold as slaves by Muslim Arabs in the Middle East and other places via the Sahara Desert and Indian Ocean. Slavery was finally abolished in East Africa in 1909 (*ibid*). Little research on East African slave trade is excused on the avoidance by African authors on the Arab Muslim slave trade out of religious solidarity. Frohlich (*Ibid*) argue that 'it is better to blame the west than talk about the past crimes of Arab Muslims'.

In 'the structure of the slave trade in Central Africa in the 19th century', Francois (2008) explained that the political and economic history of the East coast of Africa was anchored on Arab traders and slave raiding was established in neighbouring areas. Slaves were handed over in exchange for produce while he (*ibid*) notes that most of the slaves arriving at the Zanzibar market came along this route and through a second route that was established around the shores of Lake Tanganyika (*ibid*). (Gwyn Campbell 1988, 2008). Campbell established a fact that Madagascar was an exporter of slaves, and upon Mozambique as the major supplier of slaves for the Islands of the West Indian Ocean.

The trans-Atlantic Slave trade was the largest long distance human forced migration in recorded history from the 16th century to the late 19th century. About 12-15 million Africans; men, women, and children were enslaved, transported to the Americas, sold by Europeans and Euro Americans as cartels, property for labour in plantations, between West and Central Africa, Western Europe and North and South America. Slave forth castles were in Elmina, in the central region (Ghana) Goree Islands (now Senegal) and Bunce Islands (Sierra Leone) before the middle passage. The trade existed until various European countries and new American nations officially ceased their participation in the trade in the 19th and 20th century. The Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, British, French, - were all involved and majority of slaves were taken to plantations in Brazil and Caribbean and some to north America and other parts of south and central America (*ibid*).

In spite of hard labour, hardship, and high mortalities – African music, dance, and religious ceremonies flourished, evolving into hybrid cultures and traditions across slave settlements (*ibid*) The British parliament finally passed an act to abolish the slave trade in 1807, and the emancipation Act in 1833 (*Atlantic Worlds: ibid*).

The northern branch of the African slave trade evolved after Arabs invaded and conquered North Africa in the AD 600s. Slavery became a feature of the Islamic world through the Mediterranean coasts and the near east. North

African merchants, engaged in commerce across West Africa, acquire slaves through camel caravans organized by the Berbers and Arabic speaking peoples of North Africa and the Saharan region from now Mali Niger, Nigeria, Ghana and other parts of West Africa (<https://geography.name>slavetrade>) to settlements In Arab North Africa ([https://goeography .name>slave trade –Africa.](https://goeography.name>slave trade –Africa.)), the Darfur or Sudan region, the southern Nile valley/river, Ethiopia and Southern Sudan to

Egypt along the forty day (40) road (*ibid*). Equally through Ethiopia/red sea (*ibid*). Slaves were transported from Sub Saharan Africa to North Africa to be sold to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern civilizations. An estimated 6-11 million black slaves moved from sub Saharan Africa to the Arab world, all between the mid-7th c until the 20th c when it was finally abolished (Wikipedia- Trans Saharan Trade).

Central African slaves were transported since antiquity along trade routes crossing the Sahara. Oral tradition records slavery as existing in the kingdom of Kanga- Indian Ocean slave trade was a type that existed historically, and pre dated local African slave systems that supported captives for slave markets outside Africa. It is noted that slavery in contemporary Africa is still practiced despite illegality. ([https:// www. aa.com.tr> Africa>thev8/5/23](https://www.aa.com.tr/Africa/thev8/5/23)). The central African slave trade continued into the 19th century. However, from the 15th c the Portuguese and later the Dutch carted away slaves from East Africa. Though some were retained at the plantations of East Africa. By the 18th c the supply routes to the Atlantic reached the middle of the continent intersecting with the long distance trade to the Indian Ocean. Later rival European buyers on the northern Congo coast spread further afield. The Dutch, the French etc. in Congo, captives became the dominant population in Saint Dominique; later called Haiti which rose to be the richest of all the worlds colonies. And by 1791, the largest supplier of sugar. The slaves carried with them some of their civil values and tried to reconstruct their communities. Bantu vocabulary and personal values were added to the creole speech of the Caribbean. Kongo religious practices were preserved in the nominally Christian colonial society. (Encyclopedia Britannica [https://www.britannica.com>place- central Africa-Development of the slave Trade](https://www.britannica.com/place-central-Africa-Development-of-the-slave-Trade)).

The abolition movement helped to end the slave trade by the late 19th c. although slavery continued in Africa into the 20th century. In east Africa, it is recorded (ibid) that 23percent of African slaves taken from their homes in the 19th century were taken to Arabia, Iran, and India. 18percent to South Africa. The veracity of believe and insight on the trans-Atlantic and Trans Saharan trade has obliterated the east and central African slave trade, it is scholarly noted. (Taylor and Francis Online: Slave trade in Central Africa in the 19th Century. <https://www.tandfonline.com>pdf> by F. Renault 1988, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki.assessed](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/assessed) 8/5/23).

Long term effects of slave trade were seen in the establishment of black populations in the Caribbean and in North and South America. It also disrupted socio political life in Africa and led to colonization. Aside from colonization, another was the loss in generation of young Africans who would play a productive role in the economic development of their homeland. This is the interest of this article as it meanders through further subthemes. (Cega.berkely, Internet Source 9/5/23)

Interestingly, research into genetic origin of the African slave trade Diaspora is now budding. This is evidenced in research as noted by Jackson-of interest is linkages and processes of interaction (ibid). There is a Yoruba public genetic data base deeply embedded in the reconstruction of continental African diversity, evolutionary history and African North American ancestry- in which Jackson (ibid) arguably concluded that “the Yoruba like any other African groups, cannot be considered the category for adequately representing the entire African continent. ‘No existing African group can adequately represent all Africans in human genetic studies noted Jackson (ibid). He further reiterated the conclusion that Africans must be sampled with non-reductionist paradigm guiding the research (ibid).

Boston (Internet Source assessed May, 2023) emphasized that variations accounted for demographic, cultural and even genetic distinctions among modern Diasporic populations. It is further noted that though Madagascars constituted a tiny percentage of the total enslaved population, their DNA is identifiable to this day among their living descendants (ibid). Toyin Falola (2013) noted other labels for the African Diaspora population as, ‘Black Atlantic Diaspora’, ‘Atlantic World’ incorporating the four continents of Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa.

HISTORICIZING AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP

In most traditional African cultural environments, citizenship was communal in perspective, particularly in the precolonial era. Sample cases of citizenship practice across the broad swath of the African continent includes;

Post-colonial developments from pre-colonial borrowings in citizenship

In the decades after the Second World War, citizenship revolved around the colonial management as was obtainable in the British colonies and the French colonies’ of West Africa. For the southern Africa, the apartheid political structure categorized citizens into racial caste structure, which was rigidly controlled till the post-apartheid era.

Cooper (2005: 14) argued that citizenship notions are continuing as it posits a one on one relationship between state and individual and collectivities to which people feel attached. He explained the logic of national and local citizenship which had implications for the notion of belonging. This is culturally ingrained in pre-colonial African practices. Pre-colonial African citizenship highly integrated individual and collectivities. The imposition of collective citizenship was the foundation of practices in terms of welfarism, religion, social organization and others (ibid). Citizenship practice in pre-colonial West Africa across the Jola, Pepes ad Serer of Senegambia, and the Sherbro and Buheam of Sierra Leone (Stride and Ifeka: 6) was equally communal and grounded on religious practices.

Amongst the coastal zone and the forest zone of West Africa, the lineage elders played the dominant part in public affairs, particularly in peacetime. In the coastal zone i.e along the coasts of Sierra Leone and Liberia, small villages were generally self-sufficient, sometimes recognizing a common chief or cooperated with each other through secret societies in which village and lineage elders played important roles in government (ibid).

Pre Apartheid Southern Africa also highly favored similar cultural practices, as obtainable elsewhere across Africa. Amadi (1982) emphasized that social clubs existed across post-colonial Nigeria ethnic varieties. Membership of secret societies was notable in cultures, cutting across ethnic nation states. A noteworthy development in post war Nigeria, Amadi posits, is the proliferation of social clubs whose membership often cuts across tongues and tribes (Amadi, 1982:12-13) Investigations reveal that most social clubs have code of conduct. Prominent in such codes is the stipulation

that members must not behave in any manner that will disgrace the club. He further noted that, in most rural societies, age groups operate, which he defined roughly as a generation, age of whose members do not differ by more than five-5 years or so. Among the Igbos –age group are very important. Most workers in urban areas belong to age groups in their villages. These age groups are usually active in community development. However, they may react sharply when a member fowls in his moral duties.” Generally speaking, Nigerians are much inclined to band together in social groups. At weekends, in towns and villages alike- innumerable meetings are held over drinks, pepper soup and food. Social gatherings exist in diaspora settlements of Nigerian ethnic groups and facilitate interactions with home communities, this has assisted in social remittances, such as building of town halls, king’s palaces, hospitals, school renovations and others (Adu, 2018).

Members of these social gatherings maybe drawn together because they belong to the same tribe, clan, family, spiritual church, or dance group (Amadi, *ibid*). These societies, clubs and groups, generally frown upon any behavior among their members that is likely to tarnish their good image (*ibid*). Such are the ogboni, ekpe and other secret societies. Amadi (*ibid*) further opined that they may be regarded as part of the religion and culture aspect of life of the people.

Among the northern tribes of Nigeria, there were cults and secret societies. Connected with hunting, fishing, head hunting and the like. The Kagoma tribe create a remarkable secret society that had a moral consideration on the society. The dodo secret society was to curb the excesses of married women. The Wurkum tribe also had a secret society called Zuget used to terrorize women (*ibid*: 55). In the traditional system of education, the elders taught the younger ones all there was to be learned. In traditional educational system, in every teacher student relationship, the student has to respect the teacher. That respect generated the humility the student need in order to appreciate and absorb what he is being taught (*ibid*). Traditional Nigerian society depended for its stability and effectiveness on an orderly hierarchy ranging from the Eze, Oba, or Emir or Obi to ordinary men, women, children and slaves. The young come after the ordinary adults to whom they had to accord proper respect. Amadi emphasized that respect for elders is a direct product of the virtue of gratitude. Every child depended for a long time on parents and guardians for education and survival and obedience and respect in Nigeria extended family system, which is a sign of reciprocations, he noted (*ibid*). The distinct advantages of such is a properly brought up Nigerian child, who is automatically respectful of an elder of any tribe or race. Contentment is an attribute that moderated fairness in judgment, truthfulness and moderation. This express the golden rule – live and let live (*ibid*).

The extended family system resulted in a give and take principle – for example, if a young child lost his parents, his relatives will bring him up and give him proper education, this is considered a family duty in the Nigerian case. Communal living prevented loneliness- no asylums, poor house or old people’s homes. This Amadi (*ibid*) claimed has been criticized to impede individual freedom- a western world valued structure, but individual freedom in modern day society is largely illusory. There is the argument that extended family system promotes nepotism and tribalism (*ibid*: 39). This could be adjudged as lack of restraint and wisdom in handing and application and it could be curbed with more education, wisdom, honesty, justice and fairness (*ibid*). Amadi argued that the establishment of a public complaint commission is a step in the right direction to resolve these problems.

In the more recent decades of self-rule, citizenship adjustments have been based on developed constitutional rules which are adjusted from colonial era developments, for example, in Nigeria, constitutional history noted an adjustment between the Richard, Littleton and MacPherson constitutions. It is further argued that the 1999 constitution, which has predominated the Nigerian constitutional practice was further generated from the historical colonial constitutions.

Cooper (*Ibid*) argued that the colonial handling of citizenship created varied arguments across the confines of colonialism. In the first instance, it is believed to be confining, as it posits a one to one relationship between state and individuals and are unable to take into account an opposing presented argument which claim that citizenship carries too much cultural baggage and can easily develop into a sharp division between those who are inside, but Cooper (*ibid*) opine that this distinctions could carve connections to make compromises and reach understandings of individual and collective concerns as long as they devise an institutional mechanism for doing so.(*ibid*). It is further argued that the case of xenophobia –often described as a tightly bound sense of belonging set against the rigid exclusion of outsiders –and alienation –to connote the irrelevance of the state, to the individual or community-are at two opposing ends-but tolerable by society, who have leant to live with tensions. Pure citizenship politics is believed to vary across cultures- In the United states, and Spain, as well as Togo and Kenya –and to Cooper, this does not remove the implication of personal connections. He thus concludes that as long as citizens can debate and make political choices, the tension between connectivity- a society divided into collectivities and personal networks –and individuality can be fruitful (*ibid*).

The politics of citizenship played out in the mobilization of political actors-trade unionists, students, farmers, ex-soldiers –who made claims on the state. The nationalism of anti-colonial movements beclouded citizenship connotations in academic research works of this period. Cooper further argued for the politics of claim making-He laid emphasis on the fact of post second world war concentration on getting away from the colonial states desire to keep Africans in local tribal units- Nigeria, Gold coast. Kenya, Uganda etc. Those units he concluded were seen as capable of actions –of organizing –developments –of providing resources, of responding to the social dislocations attendant upon the expansion of wage labour and urbanization (*ibid*). This to him in French West Africa was all about imperial citizenship – a transformation of individuals in the colonies and the colonist itself as part of a greater France’ This determined claim for full participation in institutions of France and on claims to socio-economic equivalence for all French men, pervaded the history of this era. Territorial or imperial citizenship threatened French and British governments-which feared demand for

social and economic resource in the same language which the colonial masters asserted the legitimacy of imperial rule (ibid: 15).

It is however concluded by Cooper that neither African culture nor the trauma of colonization prevented Africans, for a time, from acting as citizens. Citizenship were not just for autonomy, but were also material- about wages, benefits, access to public services on a non-racial basis, for education and health, such as were available in the metro pole (Cooper, 2005: 15) – workers, farmers’ students and other could pose claims-making empire into a unit in which citizenship and development were credible notions, thus exposing the visiting public of the metro poles to demands for political equality and equivalent standard of living. (ibid). By the end of the Second World War, France demonstrated that its rule was just and progressive and saw the term colony as obsolete and adopted the term ‘the French Union in place of Empire. (ibid). This was the case in African such states as Egypt, and Libya. (Cooper 2005: 14-15).

CITIZENSHIP INTEGRATION OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

In 2013, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the international decade for people of African descent to ‘promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent’ with a theme ‘people of African descent ‘recognition, justice and development’ (ibid) (Internet source 1/5/23 @ AfricanRenewal). In Africa, citizenship is defined in the context of national and local. National citizenship is considered the legally acceptable, while local citizenship is grounded in culture and societally defined. These two definitions tend to run into each other in a thin line of separation that creates a social construction, acceptable to each unique community (Lund, ibid). This practice is usually considered peculiar and acceptable to each society in a fluid but locally acceptable way and the need for the constitutional guiding is usually opted for when there is complexity and a need for clarity of defining lines. This work focused on national citizenship as this will delimit the idea to the constitutionally imbibed concept of citizenships. Local citizenship is argued to have a continually changing feature, Lund further argued (ibid). In the light of this therefore it is expedient to explore an understanding of the citizenship integration of the African Diaspora.

In the heart of Accra Ghana’s capital, just a few meters from the United States Embassy lies the tomb of W.E>B Du Bois, a great African _ American Civil rights leader, and his wife, Shirley, the founder of the US based National Association for the advancement of coloured people (Tetteh 2019 Internet source, assessed 6/5/23). These Pan Africanist duo moved to Accra in 1961, settling in the city’s serene resident area of La borne and living there until death in August 1963 (ibid). This is recognized as a part signal to the emergence of a profound desire among Africans in the diaspora to retrace their root and return to the continent. Campaigns in many countries to amend the law to allow dual nationality have come from the Diasporas of African countries now living in Europe and North America (Benjamin Tetteh, 2019).

Since independence in 1959, successive Ghana leaders have initiated policies to attract Africans abroad back to Ghana. Ghana parliament passed citizenship Act in 2000 to make provision for dual citizenship. That same year the country engaged in the ‘immigration Act’, which provided for a “Right of Abode’ for any person of African Descent in the Diaspora” to travel to and from the country without hindrance (ibid) and in 2007, Ghana further initiated the ‘Joseph Project’ to commemorate 200 years since the abolition of slavery and encourage African Americans abroad to return. There was excitement about the initiative and in social media posts, there were expressions of excitement and interest in visiting Africa for the first time (ibid). Wolker Amber, a media practitioner, was reported to have expressed a desire to visit her ancestral home in 2019, (1/9/2019 internet source retrieved 10/5/23). She is recorded to have further noted that ‘the paradox of being an African American is that “we occupy spaces where we are not being considered as citizens and claimed it was a step in the right direction to help African Americans claim their ancestral space’. She is noted to have further suggested a truth and reconciliation process that will satisfy millions of Africans whose forefathers were sold into slavery (ibid).

In the year that marked the four hundred years since the first enslaved Africans were forcibly taken abroad-Ghana, a key departure point in the slave trade era, called for descendants to visit, live, and invest in the country. (09/07/2019 ‘for the quest to unite Africans in the Diaspora’ retrieved in March, 2023). This was a follow up to President Nana Akufo Addo efforts in September 2018, in Washington, D.C when he launched the “Year of return, Ghana 2019’ for Africans in the diaspora, giving fresh impetus to the quest to unite Africans on the continent with their brothers and sisters in the diaspora (ibid).

Increasingly the notion of new identities, transnational, dual /multiple citizenship and issues around the role and relevance of migrants in Africa and the African diaspora is gaining ascendancy in discourse. The whole gamut of diaspora interactions and developmental intervention in the age of globalization is a given, Knowledge circulation and diasporic interface is both positive and negative as the role and impact of the Diaspora is exploited by homeland (Chinese and Indian Diaspora have come into light in the area of technological information circulation) (Olajide and Ogundiran, 2013 : 255-281 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10-7722.ij-ctt31njr>. Adu, 2018), this more than anything has created new awareness of the impact that the Diaspora can have in assisting in Knowledge transfer and Knowledge circulation. Interestingly, President Barack Obama said in a speech on July 11, 2009, “the 21st century will be shaped by what happens not just in Rome or Moscow or Washington, but by what happens in Accra as well. President Obama is linked to an African father and an African American dual identity and this dual citizenship opportunity gave advantage for this historic presentation of opinion (Toyin Falola, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10-7722/now> : 343-360) which he finds cleverly exigent. Obama is described as a member of the new diaspora able to solidify his credentials by tapping into the identity of the old diaspora represented by his wife, Michelle Obama. Falola (ibid) further presented reasons arising from

the symbolic, what will African /black person in power do for Africa/ the expectation is that he will alter US-African relation towards a more positive direction and infuse it with more energy. Falola (ibid) opined this assumption to be based on both the politics of kinship and of identity. He further noted the third reason correlates with the racial implications of a black president. It was scholarly perceived as revolutionary and a transition to a post-racial era in the United States that would extend to other parts of the world. This however was not as positive as predicted. The situation however in my scholarly opinion was not totally unaffected. The pride of a historically unanticipated positioning of an African American was a plus, and the future already has a precedential advantage that can work for the integration of Diaspora citizens in the African future.

Falola (ibid: 313-342) argued in another context that powerful forces are redefining identities within and between frontiers, producing conditions that denationalize and de-territorializes us as we travel, mix, mingle, develop a global framework and reconstitute national or local identities in new spaces. He (ibid) explored the ideas that new or modified identities can emerge in the context of the high influx of immigrants who struggle with the politics of incorporation, and in the context of 'invisible migrants' who do not necessarily want to become citizens or make political and economics claims on host communities (ibid). Falola (ibid) further notes that global villages are emerging with remarkable zones of discontent and crisis, noting the fact that the leading arenas of discontent have been economic and religious, formidable pressures that turn culture into the central core of globalization itself. He further made an intention to postulate on new opportunities and disasters, changing world politics in the nation in the context of the world, culture and fear of cultural clashes and new inventions and their impact (Falola, 2013).

At this point, could the possibility of integrating the African diaspora be considered a realistic option? Research evidence on historical creole diaspora of the 19th century can be a point of reference. Ajayi and Crowder (Ajayi and Crowder 1984: 50-52) recorded that the Yoruba recaptives from Sierra Leone and Liberia yearned for their home. Ajayi and Crowder further emphasized that the return to Badagry and its hinterland was only part of a wider movement by the diaspora of the recaptives and creoles over West Africa (ibid: 51). This was a good example of successful citizenship integration that was initiated by recaptive slaves. This also assisted in changing the phase of civilizational achievements as a union between western civilization and the traditional African civilization produced an arguable version in terms of success, as several African scholars have opined that the introduction of western civilization defaced the traditional culture. It is however a given that civilizational clash/contact is a relevant aspect of developmental processes.

CITIZENSHIP AND DIGITAL PARTNERING OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

The relevant and important research questions that beg for answers are around the possibility of digital control of the vital partnering of the African diaspora in a process of integration. Can the slave trade diaspora be reintegrated into the stream of African citizenship? Will the future be expressive with a desire to allow the slave trade diaspora to participate in voting rights and in the development of African states and in the fact of acknowledgement of membership? This is a great effort in healing processes. An effort that is equally as weighty as the interest in repatriation and reabsorption that will assist the African Union determined 6th region to be accorded their desired sense of belonging and an opportunity to participate in the regions development processes.

A digital partner is an organization focused on helping other businesses take control of the ever changing digital landscape (What is a digital partner. atlantisdigital.co.uk <https://atlantisdigital.co.uk..what.is..>)

A digital partnership is further explained as the collaboration between two companies which share on target audience as well as or an influencer (<https://www.veronicastengberg.com> accessed 13/6/23).

In a further attempt to explain the term digital partnering, this trio (Ina, 2020) applied digital partnering strategies to high performing companies' strategies to develop partnering capability for new opportunities to grow- three strategies –increasing your reach- new customers- your range of new products or both via digital partners in the digital era. They state that digital partnering refers to increasing reach and range via digital connections with other companies. These connections enable you to have more partners at a lower cost and develop unique value propositions while focusing on what you do best. The authors focused on reach range and range reach with data driven advantages- the company example –used triple goal to expand distribution, add product, and gain insights from data on customer's activity in partner environments- this process is also referred to as 'wealthscape' integration and 'change store development' –or it is also referred to as wealthscape integration and exchange statecraft –an interwoven mechanism that integrated wealth managers. For the purpose of this research, digital partnering is applied to interconnectivity, with digital advantages of technology networking, social relations that can form an eco-system to link citizens across geographical space beyond the limits of the currently identified units referred to as countries and continents.

Several interesting developments dominate the era of digital partnering. An important aspect of which is international citizenship. The age of technology makes available technological overarching possibilities that are being exploited in political, economic, and social environs and this could also be explored in relation to diaspora integration. The Indians and the Chinese have explored the idea of international citizenship to crop the advantages of their diaspora citizens (Adu, 2018).

There is a better interconnection between Africa and its diaspora- a result of digital exploration. There is now more fluidity and confidence in the exchanges, as evidenced by the financial assistance of the diasporas and many other initiatives in favour of the continent. (<https://talntzafrica.com>). The digital revolution has deeply transformed the relations between Africa and its diaspora. Digitalization for the diaspora means a tool to be closer to the ground realities.

Remittances (ADB, 2016) were up to 65 billion dollars in 2016, more than the official development assistance and foreign direct investments. (ibid). The intellectual and financial value of the Diaspora's revenue.

Entrepreneurship creativity and innovation is thrown up by the digital revolution –interactive interconnectivity and intercontinental expertise is emerging as a new power for Africa – (ibid) an intellectual revolution is expressed through digital channels: creation of startups and e-businesses, -a borderless generation is born, disregarding geographical boundaries-this has been described as pan Africanism, conceived rather as a value, than a mere identity slogan. The watchword for all Diasporas seems to be the search for solutions to the problems of the continent (ibid).

The caveat on ground, according to one, about the African political class governing according to western models and interests, with no real origin, innovation, 'contextualized development projects and not involving the local populations and the Diasporas first (ibid) is a critical point of reference that is further thrown up in the interactive processes of networks, which expectedly must have some challenges. In spite of this, the role of diaspora cannot be downplayed. To this end, the digital is believed to be an exceptional tool for free expression, undertaking, monitoring, investing, finding carriers, learning or contributing to the influence of the continent (Talentafrica.com, ibid).

For instance, diaspora populations are increasingly connecting and engaging with their home countries in cyberspace, using social media as a tool for awakening consciousness – they are also invoking their dual citizenship agency to influence inter-state relations between their home and host countries. (Falola, 2023 Retrieved 6/6/23)

The works of Professor Farooq Kperogi, a US Based Nigerian, a most vocal and factual socio political critic in Nigeria challenge the tenet of journalism practice as advocated by traditional journalism media. Falola (ibid) explored this narrative in the explanation of the growing digital media presence. As Toyin Falola reported;

The Nigerian diaspora has involvement and contributions, although largely in economic and financial aspects of Nigeria's lives, extend to active citizen engagement and socio political discourses. (Falola, Ibid). Having witnessed other countries processes, conditions and operations, Nigerians in the diaspora serve the purpose of politically and socially awakening Nigerians to the need to not settle for the less –than- humane realities of the average semi-formal social criticism and citizen engagement of the likes of Farooq kperogi ,there is an emerging category of diaspora Nigerians heavily involved in citizen engagement through video content on new age and youth –targeted social media platforms'(ibid).

Technical or technological knowledge in its immaterial components is the foundations of technological globalization. It is thus important that Africa keys into the growing full blossoming of the digital era of technological ecosystem that engages the slave trade diaspora citizenry. The use of digital and emerging media to explore a reintegration of slave trade diaspora citizens is a good emerging opportunity that Africa must explore for mutually beneficial advantage.

A landmark phenomenal result of technological innovation in the advancement and the web 2.0 game changer that brought globalization in all ramifications with the growth of one single simple virtual super society that is regrouping humans of different ages, races, and background, a game changer that made how humans use the internet to connect relate, and transact, a new mind blowing innovation that cannot be jettisoned is further acknowledged (Brill <https://brill.com/afdi/article>. Pp.1-2)

Severed from the familiar terrain of their homelands, and dispatched to the overcrowded bowels of slave vessels, the abducted Africans forged out of necessity, a virtual community of intercultural kinship structures and new languages in which to express them (Everett 2009 :2 Cited in Bernal 2020. Internet source).

As Bernal (2020) observed a creative response constructing new forms of Diasporic identity and virtual community 'of the Eritrean example of different religious and ethnic backgrounds dispersed across numerous countries but created a network on the first Eritrean diaspora website.dehai.org.

Bernal's (2020) analysis of digital medicalization of sociality-eulogized Everett's depiction of enslaved Africans forging new communities as applied to the contemporary digitally mediated sociality of Diasporas today(ibid). As Bernal (ibid) formulation suggests, the essence of diaspora is some form of displacement coupled with relations of belonging and identification that link members of a diaspora to each other and to a shared origin. (Braziell and Mammur 2007 cited in Bernal 2020). In theorizing the digital, Bernal studies of digitally mediated sociality examined the old idea of a focus on online communities and cyber cultures, viewing the internet in terms of virtuality, but as digital media and devices, particularly the smart phones became more mobile and pervasive, the distinctions between online and offline dimensions of communication, and interaction faded and connectivity is now entwined with their lives as part of carrying out everyday activities (Boyl 2012 in ibid). Archambault, 2013, Rutten and Nwangi, 2012). Digital media offer Africa in working with Bernal (ibid). The concept of African Digital Diasporas as used in this research is not limited to online communications but reflects the integration of digital connectivity into people's lives (ibid). Bernal further (ibid) emphasized that research on digital Diasporas brings together complex intersections of technology, culture, political economy, and agency that are diverse and evolving. Candida et al (2019: 14 cited in Bernal ibid) further clarified that digital Diasporas are mutually constituted here and there, through bodies and data across borders and networks, online and offline, by users and platforms, through material, symbols and emotional practices that are also reflective of intersecting power relations. Thus Bernal (ibid) concludes that the understanding of digital diasporas, therefore, must be attended to. 'the changing structural conditions of migrants and the bifurcation of forms of media (Andersson 2019:142 in Bernal ibid.). In spite of this, Africa is being called 'invisible users', because of circumstances, habits and desires that did not figure into the thinking of digital developers- Royston (ibid) cited 'diaspora homeland connections for Africans as a

whole are not well-mediated by the large engines of this connection, namely global telecommunications forms. Yet Africans on the continent and in diaspora have used digital media, have innovated and adopted it for their own diverse purposes, he revealed (in Pype: 2016). (Archambault 2013, Rutten and Nwangi, 2012). Digital media offer African diaspora an immediacy of connections to people and institutions in homeland as well as to communities and compatriots in Diaspora. To get and communicate across geographic and political borders to create new public spheres, forms of protest, social groupings, and spaces of imagination (Bernal, Ibid). This also are included in socio political practices.

While much scholarship has focused on the frictionless and inexpensive nature of digital communications, Turner and Berckmoes (cited in Bernal, *ibid*) reveal how the immediacy of connections can also pose a burden on Diasporas. Their (*ibid*) research counters ‘the impression that the Diasporic engagement simply grows with the growth of info flows due to the spread of ICT and social media across the continent. Citing how Burundians developed strategies to manage their engagements and filter info flows in order to temper the emotional impact on their lives. In highlighting the emotional work involved in managing connectivity in the shifting context of homeland conflicts (bernvic-African digital diasporas: technologies, tactics, and trends’ internet source, 15/5/2024) cyber activism of Eritrean refugees in Israel is further noted as being impactful but there is need for further research to reveal the full political potential of digital diasporas.

THE WAY FORWARD AND CONCLUSION

Integrating the African diaspora in citizenship is not new. In the body of this paper citations presented the initiative of Ghana in a similar project. An interest by some African Americans in citizenship of homeland is also established. It is further relevant in the age of technology where virtual advantages and dual and multiple citizenship have become a workable opportunity to suggest to Africa that similar initiative of other Diaspora goodwill be further taken into consideration in the integration of the African Diaspora through citizenship participation. The paper considered the history of the Diaspora, beginning with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it examines how the African Diaspora could be opportune to partner with the larger African society in terms of integration and citizenship. It looks at the history of diaspora, beginning with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and its after effects on the communities and the wider space. It further explored how in different African cultures, an individual is a unit of the family, and the tribe (society) in a seamless relationship that allows easy participation and contribution (socio cultural and political role playing), and how the extended family unit is integrated into the community and nation. It thus examines how the African diaspora can be able to partner with the larger society in citizenship as well as the positive and negative aspects associated with such partnering. It explored the importance of cultural exchange and shared values in this processes, laying emphasis on the globalization advantage of exploitation of the digital available open window. It further looked at the potential role of the African diaspora in bridging the gaps between the Africans continent and other parts of the world. The paper concludes that the African diasporas successful integration and citizenship partnering, particularly through the exploitation of digital partnership is an important step towards improving the quality of life of the African diaspora and Africa at large.

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