

The African Diaspora: A Global Geographical and Historical Phenomenon

BARBARA McDADE GORDON



During 2013-2014 I am a visiting scholar in the Department of Geography & Resource Development at the University of Ghana. UG was my academic base when I did doctoral dissertation fieldwork in Ghana as a Fulbright Scholar over 25 years ago. I have returned to Ghana several times since then for research or professional conferences and this was an opportunity to serve as a faculty member at the University. The International Academy of African Business and Development (IAABD) of which I am a member held its Annual Meeting in Ghana in May 2013. I presented a paper, "Networking among African-owned Businesses in the Diaspora (United States) and Businesses in Africa." This report examined the incidence and characteristics of African-owned business in the United States: types of businesses, size, location and geographical distribution. Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently established a program to encourage Ghanaian businesspersons living in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, and other countries to network and collaborate with businesses owners in Ghana.

The Africa Diaspora is global and reaches almost every country in the world.

The migration of African peoples has both historical and geographical resonance.

I presented a paper at the International Conference on African Studies sponsored by the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in October 2013 that captured this phenomenon - "The Geography of the African Diaspora: Where, When, Who, What." I also chaired a panel session "Out of Africa, Back to Africa: African Diaspora, Migration, and Sustainable Development." Material from my research as well as other studies on this topic will inform the new course that I am developing at the University of Florida, "Geography of the African Diaspora."

In addition to my research on the African Diaspora and follow-up on previous research on African entrepreneurs, I am teaching several courses at UG: Human Geography, Regions--West and East Africa, and Population Studies. Students at UG are enthusiastic about learning these subjects as well as wanting to know more about students at the University of Florida and life in the United States. I also learned much from Ghanaian students as well as international students at UG from China, Japan, Nigeria, Norway, Tanzania, and the United States.

In collaboration with faculty members in the UG Geography Department, I initiated a project to produce a textbook for the two-semester sequence of introductory courses, Physical Geography and Human Geography, which are required for all geography majors. One of the book's authors is Dr. Kwadwo Owusu, Senior Lecturer, who

returned to Ghana after completing his Ph.D. in geography at UF.

While here I am also doing research on Africans from the Diaspora who 'returned' to Ghana. The diversity of these groups ranges from recent immigrants from the United States and the Caribbean to descendants of Africans who escaped enslavement in Brazil in the 19th century and relocated to Ghana.

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