

# The Academic Diaspora and Knowledge Production in and on Africa: What Role for CODESRIA?

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Essay specially written for Codesria's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, "Intellectuals, Nationalism and the Pan-African Ideal," Dakar, December 10-12, 2003.

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## Introduction

The African academic diaspora, however defined, has never been larger than it is now, and it continues to grow rapidly. According to some estimates since 1990 an average 20,000 highly educated Africans, among them academics, have been migrating to the North every year. That much is clear, but far less so are the causes, courses, and consequences of this expansion, specifically the implications for knowledge production in and on Africa. Depending on one's developmentalist anxieties, globalist or cosmopolitan affectations, Pan-Africanist aspirations, or analytical predispositions toward international skilled labor migration (the "brain drain" of popular and policy discourse), the academic diaspora can be seen as either a liability depriving Africa of desperately needed professionals trained at enormous cost, or an asset providing the continent crucial connections to the North that can facilitate transfers of capital (technological, financial, cultural and political), and help mediate, in terms of knowledge production, the globalization of African scholarship and the Africanization of global scholarship.

This essay seeks to discuss the role that the academic diaspora plays and can play in African knowledge production. Needless to say, as a social formation this diaspora is quite complex in its composition and it exhibits contradictory tendencies in its practices, so that it is difficult to make generalizations about its politics or engagements. Nevertheless, I am inclined to argue that in general the diaspora, both the historic and contemporary diaspora, and its intelligentsia in particular, has the potential, which it has exercised during some key moments of modern African history, through the Pan-African movement for example, for a productive and progressive engagement with Africa. The challenge is to decipher the tendencies and instances among the academic diaspora in contemporary times – a conjuncture characterized by the vast and complex processes and projects of capitalist globalization, technological change, and new economies of knowledge production and the production of knowledge economies – that can be mobilized for African intellectual development at multiple spatial and social scales, from the local to the global and from generation to generation.

The essay is divided into four parts. It begins by trying to define the diaspora, for it seems to me it is important to distinguish between dispersal and diaspora and the historic and contemporary diasporas and the connections between them. This is followed by an attempt to contextualize the academic diaspora, to map the institutional, intellectual, ideological, and individual dynamics of diasporic knowledge production. The third part makes an effort to historicize diasporic academic production and linkages with Africa during two crucial periods, the colonial and early post-independence eras. The final part focuses on current trends and interrogates some of the typologies that have been advanced to characterize the orientations of the contemporary African academic diaspora.

In conclusion, the essay suggests the ways in which intellectual communities and networks based both in the diaspora and on the continent, such as CODESRIA, can most productively engage each other. It cannot be overemphasized, as I have argued elsewhere, that "the rising international migration of Africa's professional elites and intellectuals may indeed be a curse if dismissed and ignored, but it can be turned into a blessing if embraced and utilized. It is generated by, and inserts Africa into, contemporary processes of transnationalization and globalization, which follow and reinforce the old trails of Pan-Africanism... The challenge for Africa is how to rebuild the historic Pan-African project, spawned by the global dispersal and exploitation of African peoples over the centuries, by creatively using the current migratory flows of African peoples, cultures, capacities, and visions and the contemporary revolution in telecommunications and travel technologies. It is an old challenge in a new age that requires responses and solutions that are both old and new (Zeleza 2003a: 170).

## Defining and Debating African Diasporas

There are several conceptual difficulties in defining the African diaspora, indeed defining the term diaspora itself for it simultaneously refers to a process, a condition, and a discourse; the continuous processes by which a diaspora is made, unmade and remade, the changing conditions in which it lives and expresses itself, and the contentious ways in which it is studied and discussed. Also embodied in the term diaspora are temporal, spatial, and cultural considerations, the connections and divides of the diaspora from the times, spaces, and cultures of the putative homeland. Clearly, the temporality, spatiality, and culturality of the African diaspora are more problematic than might appear at first sight. When and why did the dispersal of the Africans start, where and what did they spread, which and whose culture(s) did they share?

Dispersal does not automatically create a diaspora. A diasporic identity implies a form of group consciousness constituted historically through expressive culture, politics, thought and tradition, in which existential

and representational resources are mobilized, in varied measures, from the imaginaries of both the old and the new worlds. A diaspora is constructed as much in the fluid and messy contexts of social existence, differentiation and struggle, as in the discourses of the intellectuals and political elites. Its development involves the mobilization and appropriation of Jacqueline Brown (1998) calls “diasporic resources” – cultural productions, people, and places and their associated iconography, images, ideas, and ideologies.

Given the multiplicity of historical conditions in which diasporic identities can be molded, there cannot but exist different African diasporas whose complex relationships and exchanges, including the trafficking of the notion of diaspora itself or blackness, are entwined in the very construction of the various diasporas. It is in the metropolitan centers, in the interstices of the “overlapping diasporas,” to use Earl Lewis’s (1997) term, that different diasporas connect and compete most intimately, thereby refashioning themselves and creating and commodifying new transnational diasporic cultures mediated by national, ethnic, religious, class, and gender identities.

There are several dispersals associated with African peoples over time. Colin Palmer (2000) has identified at least six, three in prehistoric and ancient times (beginning with the great exodus that began about 100,000 years ago from the continent to other continents), and three in modern times, including those associated with the Indian Ocean slave trade to Asia, the Atlantic slave trade to the Americas, and the contemporary movement of Africans and peoples of African descent to various parts of the globe. Our tendency to privilege the modern diasporic streams, especially the last two, is a tribute to the epistemic and economic hegemony of the Euroamerican world system which spawned them and created what Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelly (2000) call “global race and gender hierarchies” within which African diasporas are situated and often discussed.

It is quite instructive that the term African diaspora only emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, although African diasporas existed long before then in different parts of the world, and African peoples were mobilized using other terms, such as Pan-Africanism. One author complains that the discursive politics of the term diaspora has “imposed a U.S. and English language-centered model of black identity on the complex experiences of populations of African descent” (Edwards 2000:47). But even African diasporic histories focused on the wider Atlantic world are partial in so far as African migrations and diaspora communities also emerged in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean worlds of Southern Europe and Asia (Blakely 1986; Alpers 2000; Hunwick and Powell 2002; and Jaysuriya and Pankhurst 2003). Michael West (2000: 62-63) has even suggested that if black internationalism, in the ontological sense, did not originate in Africa, we also need to think of a “Black Pacific”, an entity if “properly constructed, would include not just communities of African descent along the Pacific coast of North, Central, and South America, but also, presumably, black communities with no known ties to Africa — in historic times, that is – elsewhere in the South Pacific, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Australia, communities that only began to join the black internationalism earnest in the 1960s.”

Thus, the conflation of hegemony and discourse can be seen in the preeminent position occupied by African Americans in diaspora studies, despite the fact that the largest community of diaspora Africans in the Atlantic world, indeed globally, is in Brazil not in the United States. Such is the popular fascination and scholarly preoccupation with the African American diaspora that they remain foregrounded even in texts that set out to destool them, such as Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*, itself a monument to Anglophone self-referential conceit and myopia. If Africa is largely a silent primordial presence in Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, the historic Atlantic African diasporas is pilloried by Kwame Appiah’s (1992) *In My Father’s House* in his ill-tempered charge against the supposedly racist Pan-Africanisms of Alexander Crummell and W. E. Du Bois. In fact, it can be argued that except in the obligatory histories of Pan-Africanism and nationalism, the historic African diaspora tends to be ignored in much African scholarly discourse. Instead, far greater concern is expressed for the travails of the contemporary African diaspora in the North, but even here the discourse is firmly rooted in the economic preoccupations of development studies, rather than the culturalist thrust of diaspora studies (Zack-Williams 1995).

It is critical for African scholars on the continent to become more engaged in diaspora studies, to help in mapping out the histories and geographies of African global migrations, dispersals, and diasporas which are so crucial to deepening our understanding of both African history and world history for intellectual and ideological reasons, developmental and cultural considerations. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, African migrations to the North, especially Western Europe and North America are increasing (Zezeza 2000, 2002, forthcoming). Many of these migrants are constituting themselves into new diasporas, whose identities involve complex negotiations with the host African diaspora communities and their countries of origin. If the diaspora of enslavement – the historic diaspora – had no choice but to see itself in Pan-Africanist terms whenever it identified with Africa, the diaspora of colonialism and neo-colonialism – the contemporary diaspora – is more disposed to see itself in pan-national, or even pan-ethnic, terms. It cannot be taken, for granted, therefore, that the contemporary diaspora is more Pan-Africanist than the historic diaspora, which is one more reason for the different diasporas to engage each other and for institutions on the continent to engage both.

In a country such as the United States, there are in fact at least four waves of African diasporas: first, the historic communities of African Americans, themselves formed out of complex internal and external migrations over several hundred years; second, migrant communities from other diasporic locations, such as the Caribbean that have maintained or invoke, when necessary or convenient, national identities as Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and so on; third, the recent immigrants from the indigenous communities of Africa; and finally, African migrants who are themselves diasporas from Asia or Europe, such as the East African Asians or South African whites. Each of these diasporas, broadly speaking, has its own connections and commitments to Africa, its own memories and imaginations of Africa, and its own conceptions of the diasporic condition and identity. The third group is, in turn, sometimes divided by the racialized codifications of whiteness and blackness, sanctified in the colonial

cartographies of North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, and by U.S. immigration law under which North Africans are classified as white.

This merely points to the complexities of the African diasporas and challenges of studying them and underscores Kim Butler's (2000: 127) point that "conceptualizations of diaspora must be able to accommodate the reality of multiple identities and phases of diasporization over time" She offers a simple but useful schema for diasporan study divided into five dimensions: "(1) reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal; (2) relationship with homeland; (3) relationship with hostlands; (4) interrelationships within diasporan groups; (5) comparative study of different diasporas." For Darlene Clark Hine (2001) Black diaspora studies need to have three features: a transatlantic framework, an interdisciplinary methodology, and a comparative perspective.

### **Contextualizing the Academic Diasporas**

Knowledge production by the African academic diaspora, as for other academics, is conditioned by various structural and epistemic imperatives over which they do not always have much control. The contexts and constraints that shape academic production are subject to changes emanating as much from the academy itself as from the wider society. As is well known by now, in recent years the academy almost everywhere has been undergoing massive transformations tied to shifting internal and external mandates and missions. Since it is not possible in a short essay such as this to discuss these changes in much detail, I will try to outline an analytical framework that might help us capture their essential features and dynamics. Knowledge production systems involve the intricate interplay of institutional, intellectual, ideological, and individual factors.

Academic institutions can be classified according to their physical location (rural, urban, or metropolitan), fiscal base (private, public, or for-profit), academic structure (doctorate-granting, master's, baccalaureate, associates, or specialized)<sup>1</sup>, and cultural composition (historically white, historically black, or women's). The intellectual enterprise itself can be distinguished in terms of its disciplinary organization (humanities, social sciences, sciences, or professions), theoretical orientation (positivist, poststructuralist, feminist, etc), and methodological considerations (empirical, experimental, ethnographic, textual, etc). Ideology in the academy, often reflecting the ebbs and flows of wider social thought and movements, shapes intellectual discourses and practices from research and teaching to faculty hiring and publishing.

The dominant ideologies have included, among many others, racism and liberalism in the American academy, and nationalism and developmentalism in the African academy, while Marxism has found succor in both at certain times. Besides these ideological tropes, for Africanists in the American academy, including African diaspora academics, the knowledge they produce might also be framed by their attitudes to the grand ideas and images of the "West", "Africa", the "Third World", "the North", "the South", "globalization", and "transnationalism", or the diasporic demands and dreams of Pan-Africanism or Afrocentricism. As for the last factor, there can be little doubt that individual traits, values, and idiosyncrasies, especially the social inscriptions of gender, class, race, nationality, ethnicity, age and even religion and sexuality influence academics' ideological and theoretical proclivities, their institutional and disciplinary preferences, and their research and publication practices.

Clearly, the variables to consider in charting the contours of knowledge production by academics in general and African diaspora academics in particular are too complex for glib generalizations, whether those inspired by the solidarities of Pan-Africanism or the solitudes of Afro-pessimism. To my knowledge, no comprehensive data has been collected identifying the location of the African diaspora academics, from all the four diasporic waves I identified earlier, in the matrix of institutional, intellectual, ideological and individual factors outlined above. Much of what is known even about contemporary African academic migrants in the United States is anecdotal for little systematic research has been conducted on their demographic and social composition, occupational and institutional affiliations, let alone their ideological orientations and personal inclinations. The data problems are compounded by the fact that the universities are losing their monopoly over scholarly production to other institutions and agencies, thanks to the changes associated with capitalist globalization, namely, the liberalization and privatization of the universities themselves and the commercialization and commodification of knowledge in the wider economy and society, so that academics are no longer confined to the universities and tracking them is no easy task. For example, I know of many African diaspora academics working for NGOs, foundations, and think tanks in the United States.

Notwithstanding these limitations, several broad observations can be made about African diaspora academics. It is quite evident that their numbers in the American academy are relatively small and their influence is rather limited.<sup>2</sup> If this is true of the historic diaspora as a whole, it is even more so for the contemporary academic diaspora. According to the 2003 Almanac of The Chronicle of Higher Education (August 29, 2003: 22-23), the total number of full-time Black faculty members (U.S. citizens and resident aliens) at U.S. universities and colleges (of which there were 4,197 in 2000-3) was 29,222 out of 590,937 in 1999, or a mere 4.9 percent, far below their share of the national population, estimated at 12.3 percent. Interestingly, Asians, with only 3.6 percent of the total U.S. population, outnumbered Black faculty by nearly 5,000. No less telling is the fact that only 3.0 percent of the Black faculty were professors. The 4,784 Black professors comprised 16.4 percent of the total Black faculty, while 22.1 percent were at the rank of associate professor, 28.9 percent were assistant professors, 18.4 percent were instructors, and 14.3 percent were lecturers and other.<sup>3</sup>

The exact share of the contemporary African academic diaspora among Black faculty is not known, but it is most likely small, although it is growing. The proportion of African migrant academics at HBCUs is within the range of the 13 percent that make up "other minorities and foreigners" at these institutions (58 percent of HBCU faculty are African American and 29 percent white) (Johnson and Harvey 2002: 298). Needless to say, the HBCUs tend to

be a lot poorer and have heavier teaching loads than the white research universities. While courses on Africa are taught regularly at many HBCUs, compared to the latter the HBCUs are less internationalized in terms of their curricula, study abroad, and faculty exchange programs. Furthermore, they seem to place a higher premium on the professions and sciences than the humanities and social sciences. It has also been said that they are generally conservative politically, ideologically, and socially, a lingering tribute to their vocational and religious foundations, precarious funding, and mission to vindicate and improve the “race”, to build a Black professional elite.<sup>4</sup>

Black faculty continue to find themselves relatively marginalized in the historically white universities (HWUs), despite all the rhetoric about affirmative action from the aborted promises of civil rights. Robin Wilson (2002: A10) tells us that about half of the Black faculty “work at historically black institutions. The proportion of black faculty members at predominantly white universities – 2.3 percent – is virtually the same as it was 20 years ago.” It is not unusual on the large campuses with more than 30,000 students and thousands of faculty to find less than a 100 Black faculty, or entire departments without a single Black faculty member, especially in the Eurocentric bastions of the humanities (philosophy and classics), the aspiring queen of the social sciences (economics), the assorted mandarins of the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology), and the new high-tech interdisciplinary frontiers from information technology and biotechnology to nanotechnology and environmental technology.

While much is heard, and sometimes done, about internationalization and African studies courses and programs have expanded remarkably in the last three decades, Africa and recent African migrants find themselves engulfed in America’s eternal racial war, buffeted between the competing demands of white hegemony (manifested in the much-bemoaned control of African studies programs by European Americans) and Black struggle (articulated in the often beleaguered efforts to build viable and respected African American studies programs).<sup>5</sup> I have written at length elsewhere of the frequently bitter contestations – which are simultaneously political, pecuniary and paradigmatic – between migrant Africans, African Americans, and European Americans in the study and construction of Africa (Zezeza 2003: Chapter 5).

If the relations between the contemporary African academic diaspora and European Americans are marked by questions of race and intellectual authority, between migrant Africans and African Americans they center on nationality and institutional access. It is not uncommon for the historically white universities to hire the recent African immigrants over African Americans in order to serve affirmative action and save themselves from combative race relations. As immigrants and indigenes, the two African diasporas are driven by different memories and materialities of colonized and underdeveloped Africa and racialized and developed America, of being abroad and at home, by different motivations and moralities of personal and public engagement, national and transnational sentiments and solidarities. Not surprisingly, relations between these diasporas are characterized by the conflicting emotions and realities of accommodation, ambiguity, and animosity.<sup>6</sup>

### **Historicizing Diasporic Academic Production and Linkages**

The diaspora has been a critical site of knowledge production on Africa for a long time, and this history might hold salutary lessons as we seek to strengthen the engagements among the different waves of the diaspora and between them and Africa. As both a place and a project, a cultural and cognitive community, the diaspora has provided an unusually fertile space for imagining and writing Africa. Pan-Africanism, the progenitor of the numerous territorial nationalisms in Africa and the Caribbean emerged out of the diasporic condition experienced by the diaspora of enslavement and exposure to the diasporic experience for the diaspora of colonialism. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as colonialism reconfigured the global civilizational presence of Africans and reconnected Africa to its diaspora, the diaspora became crucial to the (re)constructions of Africa as an idea, Africa as an object of study, Africans as academics, and Pan-Africanism as a project.

The idea of Africa – descriptions, meanings, images and discourses about Africa – as inscribed by both Africans and non-Africans has mutated in various historical and geographical contexts from ancient times to the present. By the end of the nineteenth century, in the emerging “colonial library”, as V. Y. Mudimbe (1994) calls it, the African paradigm of negative difference was firmly entrenched, as immortalized in G.W.F. Hegel’s imperious dismissal of Africa as the incarnation of the “Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit”. Assaulted for centuries by European racial and epistemic violence, it is not surprising that Africans in the diaspora, rather than those on the continent, were the first to launch protracted and passionate struggles for epistemological and political liberation, in which the vindication of Africa, as a human and historical space, was central. To be sure, there were those who reproduced the narratives of derision, who yearned for unconditional assimilation and Africa’s erasure from their memories and bodies. And even among those who longed for Africa’s redemption many had internalized the civilizational binaries of the Western epistemological order and they believed Africa would only be liberated from its current backwardness by the modernized diaspora returning to the motherland.

Notwithstanding such ambiguities, or even contradictions, so well-noted by several commentators<sup>7</sup>, the vindicationist tradition, represented most powerfully in the writings of W.E.B. Dubois, William Leo Hansberry, and Edward Blyden, to mention just a few, sought to emancipate African societies and cultures from the cognitive and colonial apparatuses of European imperialism, a struggle that still continues.<sup>8</sup> It is quite remarkable, indeed, how little the defamations and defenses of Africa have changed since the late nineteenth century, a tribute to the enduring power of Eurocentricism, thanks to western hegemony in the world capitalist system, and a sobering reminder that the struggles to liberate Africans at home and abroad must continue.

The texts of the vindicationist writers constituted one foundational stream for contemporary African studies. This is the Pan-African tradition whose analytical scope and scheme varied from the Africanist tradition that

emerged after the Second World War. “Rejecting the dichotomies on which Africanist scholarship would later be constructed,” Michael West and William Martin (1997:311) state, African diaspora scholars “connected ancient Africa to modern Africa, Africa north of the Sahara to Africa south of the Sahara, and, especially, the African continent to the African diaspora. They tended to concentrate on broad political, religious, and cultural themes that transcended national and continental boundaries in the black world.”

They were preoccupied with the fundamental questions of Africa’s purity and parity, as Kwaku Korang (2003) has so perceptively observed; purity in terms of Africa’s autonomy and authenticity and parity in terms of Africa’s progress and modernity, of creating what Blyden called an “African personality”, an African ontology and epistemology that was both distinctly African and worldly in the context of an overriding European epistemic and existential presence that constantly sought to create and consume an African difference inscribed with inferiority. These large civilizational and cultural questions were generally shed from the African studies of the post-war Africanist tradition, in which the modernization paradigm – packaged in a variety of ideological and theoretical but decidedly positivist trajectories – assumed ascendancy, which resonated with the developmentalist preoccupations of postcolonial Africa.

In pre-civil rights America where segregation was legal and colonial Africa where universities were few (mostly concentrated in South Africa and North Africa), the HBCUs provided the most auspicious home for the study of Africa by both African Americans and Africans from the continent. It was at these colleges and universities that the serious and systematic study of Africa was pioneered, courses on African peoples established, and monographs and journals published, long before the historically white universities, in pursuit of national security, disciplinary excitement or belated multiculturalism, discovered African studies or diaspora studies. As is clear from Joseph Harris’ (1993) masterly collection, Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora, there are few significant intellectual or political figures in early twentieth century African American or Anglophone African history who did not study, teach, or were inspired by or had some dealings with an HBCU. The cases of Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe at Lincoln University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, or medical doctors such as Hastings Kamuzu Banda at Meharry medical school in Nashville, Tennessee are emblematic of the thousands of Africans who received their university education in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century when segregation kept the doors to the white universities shut (Veney 2002, 2003).

Thus, diaspora academic institutions were in the forefront of producing both knowledge and personnel, counter-hegemonic discourses and developmental capacities for the diaspora itself and Africa. The transformative role of the diaspora in terms of knowledge production is nowhere as evident as it is in the settler and receptive settlements of Liberia and Sierra Leone during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much has been written about the initiatives, choices, and adaptations the Americo-Liberian and Sierra Leonean Krio intelligentsia, both secular and religious, made as teachers and evangelists to reconcile their dual, and in some cases triple, heritage as a community with claims to Africa, the West, and sometimes Islam, to nativity, modernity and difference. They were led by the indomitable iconoclast Edward Blyden whose voluminous writings laid the foundations of twentieth century Pan-Africanist thought. As Toyin Falola (2001) has demonstrated in his suggestive history of Nationalism and African Intellectuals Blyden was eagerly emulated and debated by his contemporaries and later by the Negritudists and independence nationalists.

The thought and praxis of these intellectuals (there were as yet not many academics on the continent because there were few universities) demonstrated the umbilical relationship between Pan-Africanism and nationalism, the intricate web of ideas, images, individuals, values, visions, expressive culture, and institutional practices circulating in the elite cosmopolitan, not to say globalized, circles of Africa and the diaspora. Pan-Africanism would later develop different spatial and social referents, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was pre-eminently a trans-Atlantic phenomenon. As I have argued elsewhere, “the lead taken by the African diaspora in the Caribbean and the United States in organizing Panafricanism can be attributed to the fact that racial ideologies there were more severe than in Latin America. Also, Britain was a colonial superpower and later the United States became a global superpower” (Zezeza 2003: 416).

Transatlantic Panafricanism was articulated most concretely in the first half of the twentieth century through political movements and the traffic in expressive culture. The movements included W.E.B. Du Bois’s elitist Pan-African Congresses, Marcus Garvey’s populist conventions and bungled “Back to Africa” scheme, and a whole range of organizations formed by African students and African American activists, such as Paul Robeson’s Council on African Affairs, especially in the aftermath of the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia – the beacon of successful African resistance and freedom from colonialism – which enraged and galvanized the African world. The trans-Atlantic circulation of expressive cultural practices, from music to dress to language, were powerful signifiers of Black cosmopolitanism, and in highly racialized colonies such as South Africa African American cultural forms were adopted as performative tools that disconnected modernity from whiteness by subverting, mocking, and reversing the “racial time” of white modernity “that locked Africans into static ‘uncivilized native’ categories” (Kemp and Vinson 2000: 141).

Clearly, Pan-Africanism involved far more than trans-Atlantic political discourse and engagement, it also represented the globalizing cultural flows between Africa and its diaspora, in which cultural imports and exports were traded in complex circuits of exchange throughout the trans-Atlantic world. The circulation of many forms of popular music from rumba and jazz, to reggae and rap is fascinating story that has been told by many, so is that of the connections between the literary movements of Africa and the diaspora, most significantly the Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude movement in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the religious linkages from the role of diaspora missionaries and models in the spread of Christianity and the growth of Christian independency (also

called independent churches) to Africa's contribution to the development of diaspora religions, such as Candomble, Santeria, Voodoo, and Rastafarianism. In short, an African cosmopolitanism emerged in the trans-Atlantic world. Cosmopolitanism here refers to a cultural phenomenon that is both local and transnational, social islands of practices, material technologies, conceptual frameworks, and lifestyles that circulated internationally but were localized in their production and consumption.<sup>9</sup>

As the storms of decolonization gathered moment in Africa and the Caribbean and desegregation in the United States, trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism entered a new phase, in which it was increasingly supplanted by new Pan-Africanisms and territorial nationalisms. To be sure, there were continued reverberations between these nationalisms and Pan-Africanisms. For example, the nationalist achievements in Africa and the Caribbean inspired civil rights struggles in the U. S., while civil rights activists in the U. S. provided crucial support to liberation movements fighting against recalcitrant settler regimes in Southern Africa by applying pressure on the American state and capital. But there was no denying that other Pan-Africanisms were rising, both in practice and in discursive terms.

The most significant discursive intervention was Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic, a form of Pan-Africanism that is largely confined to celebrating the creativity and construction of new cultures among the African diasporic communities in the Americas and Europe, excluding continental Africa. The other Pan-Africanisms were as much conceptual as they were organizational, namely, continental, sub-Saharan, Pan-Arab, and global. The first has focused primarily on the unification of continental Africa. The second and third have restricted themselves to the peoples of the continent north and south of the Sahara, and in the case of Pan-Arabism, extended itself to western Asia or the so-called Middle East. Gamal Abdel Nasser proudly saw Egypt at the center of three concentric circles linking the African, Arab, and Islamic worlds. The last, which seeks to reclaim African peoples dispersed to all corners of the globe, is the weakest in organizational terms, although it is assuming intellectual salience as diaspora scholars seek to map out the dispersal of Africans in the Indian ocean and Mediterranean worlds and configure their African diasporic identities.

The political transformations associated with the nationalist and civil rights struggles transformed the institutional bases of Pan-African academic knowledge production and linkages. The terrain changed significantly for the independence generation of African students both at home and abroad. In their countries they were no longer confined to the awfully few regional universities belatedly set up by the colonial states as new national universities were established, while in the United States they were no longer limited to the HBCUs as the white universities were officially desegregated. What they gained in access, they lost in scope. In other words, unlike the pre-independence generations, the post-colonial generations of African students and even faculty often lacked exposure to Pan-Africanizing experiences of the old regional universities and the HBCUs, even if they might express Pan-African sentiments about Africa's common future and the need for greater unity and sympathize with civil rights struggles in the diaspora.

Despite its proverbial failures to realize the fruits of Uhuru, territorial nationalism succeeded in turning the cartographic contraptions bequeathed by colonialism into objects of desire and discord for the increasingly despondent citizens and professional elites – including academics – of the postcolonial state. If decolonization engendered nationalist identities (notwithstanding the fissiparous tendencies of ethnicity) for continental Africans, the enfranchisement that came with desegregation in the United States strengthened national identity among African Americans (even though racism persisted). Thus encounters between post-colonial Africans and post-civil rights African Americans were increasingly mediated by territorial nationalisms that were far more muted during the era of Nkrumah and Du Bois.

### **Tendencies of the Contemporary Academic Diaspora**

The contemporary African academic diaspora has to engage and negotiate with multiple constituencies as academics, as immigrants in another country, and as emigrants from specific African countries.<sup>10</sup> As predominantly academics of color, to use the American nomenclature for racial minorities, they must learn to climb the slippery poles of the highly racialized American academy, come to grips with the complex institutional, intellectual, and ideological imperatives of the largest and most diversified and differentiated higher education system in the world.

As immigrants, they confront, on the one hand, the legal issues of their resident status, now further complicated by the imposition of a stringent homeland security regime following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there are the infinitely thorny challenges of social adjustment, which require them to navigate the contours of race, ethnic and gender relations in America, to negotiate relations with the dominant white society and with African Americans as well as other immigrants (including those from their own countries, other African countries and elsewhere in the African diaspora especially the Caribbean), and to ascertain their participation in the country's social and political affairs.

As emigrants, they face unending demands from home, both real and imagined, ranging from the intimate obligations to family and friends, often to provide financial and moral supports, to the more abstract compulsion to defend and promote Africa in a country where things African are routinely denigrated and demonized. In fact, the devaluation of Africa frequently seems to parallel the depreciation of their own qualifications and status, a condition that induces acute agonies and tortured adaptations, as they are forced to pay an additional cultural tax for being African usually on top of the racial tax that African Americans have always paid for being Black, while for the women among there is an extra gender tax.

The number of African immigrants in the United States has been increasing steadily since 1970 for reasons we cannot go into here, except to point out that this is related to changes in migration pressures in Africa itself and

immigration conditions and law in the United States. According to the latest U.S. 2000 Census, there were 700,000 African born residents in the United States. While this number may appear large and has nearly doubled since 1990, it only represents a mere 2.5 percent of the foreign born population (estimated at 28.4 million, which accounted for 10.4 percent of the total U.S. population, the highest since 1930). An indication that many African residents are recent migrants is demonstrated by the fact that the median length of their residence is 10.2 years while the proportion of naturalized citizens is 37 percent, both of which are lower than for most of the other major regions.<sup>12</sup>

Where African migrants trump everybody else, including native-born Americans is in education. In 2000, 94.9 percent of African-born residents age 25 and older had completed high school or more education, compared to 86.6 percent for native-born Americans, and 67 percent for all foreign-born residents. Among the African-born residents, 49.3 percent had a bachelor's degree or more as compared to 25.6 percent for the native-born population and 25.8 percent for the foreign-born population as a whole.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, African residents in the United States constitute the most educated population in the country, while residents from America's historic backyard in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean have the lowest educational levels.

Not surprisingly, African residents are mostly to be found in the professions, despite the proverbial stories of Africans with Ph.D.s driving taxis in New York, Washington, or other major American cities. More than a third, 36.5 percent to be exact were in managerial and professional specialty, 22.1 percent in technical, sales and administrative support, 19.6 percent in service occupations, 4.2 percent in precision production, craft and repair, and the remaining 17.1 percent are laborers, fabricators and operators. In contrast, the occupational distribution for residents from – using the Census classifications – Latin America, the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and South America – are weighted to the less professional and managerial occupations and include sizeable groups in farming, forestry and fishing (p.41). Yet, in terms of household income and poverty rates, African residents tend to do less well than their educational levels would seem to suggest.<sup>14</sup>

The irony cannot escape anyone: Africa, perhaps the least educated and most underdeveloped continent in the world has the most educated population in the world's most developed country. This gaping mismatch, a testimony to the asymmetrical linkages between Africa and the North, is undoubtedly a tragedy, but it can potentially be turned to Africa's favor if effective strategies are developed to transform the "brain drain" into "brain gain" or to turn it into what some have called "brain mobility". The latter involves building expatriate knowledge networks and establishing connections between the migrant professionals and their countries or regions of origin, which can facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge and the transfer of skills (Granovetter and Swedberg, 1992; Murdoch, 1997).

The African academic diaspora, I have argued at length elsewhere, "as cultural producers, have an important and specific role to play in brokering relations between Africa and the North, in [Africanizing] the Atlantic. They must resist the seductions of the Northern academies to become native ventriloquists, complicit 'others' who validate narratives that seek to marginalize Africa. Nor should they let themselves be manipulated as a fifth column in the North's eternal racial wars by disavowing the protracted struggles of historic African diaspora communities for the full citizenship of racial equality, economic empowerment, and political power." (Zezeza 2003: 162-3). And I proceed to outline some of the possible strategies, which need no repeating here, that might be used to turn the contemporary African academic diaspora from liabilities into assets for African intellectual development in terms of the triple mission of the academic enterprise – research, teaching, and service (Zezeza 2003: 161-170).

Prescriptions, of which Africa always gets in abundance, of course often sink in the quicksands of reality, in this case the realities of both the African and American academies and knowledge production systems. One issue is to look at the actual linkages that have been established between the two, and the other the profile of the contemporary African academic diaspora in the United States, who are by no means homogeneous and whose tendencies can facilitate or hinder productive and progressive linkages with their colleagues on the continent. Earlier I alluded to linkages between the HBCUs and Africa. These linkages of course continue, although since the 1950s and 1960s they have increasingly been eclipsed by the entry of the historically white universities, bankrolled by the foundations and the state itself (for example, through the federally funded Title VI area studies programs) into African studies and academic exchanges with African institutions.

Briefly, as I have also shown elsewhere, the patterns of academic exchange between the United States and Africa have been unequal, patterns that the contemporary processes and projects of globalization are helping to reinforce and recast. Historically, academic exchanges between the United States and Africa have involved student and faculty exchange programs, short-term training programs, and technical assistance for specific projects. Since the 1990s new patterns of academic exchange and mobility between American and African universities began to emerge. Three can be identified: first, the growth of what is called "transnational" education (often involving the establishment of overseas university branches of American universities); second, the globalization of American scholarly societies (expanding their global reach by aggressively recruiting foreign members, including from Africa); and third, the expansion of online education (using the Internet to export curricula and instructional expertise, especially in the lucrative fields of science, engineering, and business) (Zezeza 2003: Chapter 3; 2003b).<sup>15</sup>

It is not easy to identify the tendencies among the contemporary African academic diaspora. There is of course no shortage of impressionistic accounts of their politics and scholarship. For example, Falola (2001: 282) has observed that "like all communities they have their tensions, petty rivalries, and resentments toward members who are perceived to be especially successful", and he discusses how they deal with the questions of identity politics and scholarly audience, singling out the experiences of Manthia Diawara, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nawal el

Saadawi. However, his tantalizing distinction between “migrants as revolutionaries”, as people with “alternative allegiances”, and as “agents of culture” is not further developed (Falola 2001: 281-293).

The Kenyan scholar, Francis Njubi Nesbitt, offers a more compelling typology of the African academic diaspora. He has argued that the Duboisian “double consciousness” of African migrant intellectuals in the North, which is spawned by the contradiction between their high academic achievements and an inferiorized identity in America’s unyielding racial hierarchy and between their alienation from Africa (where they are often condemned for abandoning their countries) and the need to come to terms with their Africanity and to promote Africa, produces three “types” of migrant intellectuals: the comprador intelligentsia, the postcolonial critic, and the progressive exile.

Members of the comprador intelligentsia cynically use their Africanity to authenticate the neocolonial and neoliberal agendas of the international financial institutions; they are infamous for defending the global order and condemning African countries for corruption, “tribalism,” and ineptitude. For their part, the postcolonial critics see themselves in a mediating role, as expert interpreters of the African experience to the West and transmitters of the ever-changing panorama of Euro-American perspectives – from liberalism, modernization, Marxism, dependency, and the “posts” (postmodern, poststructuralism, and postcoloniality) – to Africa and to “explain” the African experience. The progressive exiles seek to use their space of exile to develop a dignified Pan-African identity by unabashedly promoting African knowledges and participating in the liberation struggles of both the diaspora and their countries of origin. Njubi suggests Ngugi wa Thiong’o as the paragon of the progressive exile and Kwame Anthony Appiah for the postcolonial critic, and one could point to a George Ayittey (1992, 1998) as the quintessential comprador intellectual.

When Njubi presented this paper at CODESRIA’s 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in December 2002 in Kampala, some participants pointed out that the categories could be expanded or were not mutually exclusive, a point the author himself in fact emphasized. “Intellectuals who consider themselves progressives in one context” he wrote, “find themselves allied with global capital and neocolonial forces in another. Take the case of the independence generation... It is this generation that gave us hopeful theories like African personality, Consciencism, and African Socialism. Yet, once they returned home from exile and seized the reigns of power, an alarmingly large number of them abandoned their progressive politics for the worst forms of neocolonial clientilism and despotism” (Nesbitt 2002:74).

Undoubtedly, one could come up with other typologies based on different criteria. Njubi’s classification primarily refers to the contemporary African academic diaspora’s ideological positioning toward African liberation. They could also be classified in terms of their disciplinary orientation – as humanists, social scientists, scientists, and professionals – each of which has a bearing on the kinds of research they conduct and the possible collaborations they can establish with colleagues and institutions on the continent because each of these organizational branches in the academy has its own intellectual requirements and institutional and reputational resources. For example, research in the humanities is more poorly financed than in the sciences, and scholars in the literary disciplines can conduct their textually-based research without ever going to Africa, which would be frowned upon for historians or anthropologists who need to conduct empirical and ethnographic research. Also, in many social science and humanities disciplines it is common to work individually, while in many of the sciences collaboration is often necessary given the cost of the research apparatus and the academic culture that has evolved in the sciences.

The permutations and implications of the disciplinary schema as a basis for organizing knowledge production and classifying academics and assessing the nature of their potential or actual engagements with Africa obviously deserve consideration. Yet, one cannot resist the search for a more comprehensive typology that incorporates as many of the dynamics that frame academic knowledge production as possible. Earlier we identified four of these – the institutional, intellectual, ideological, and individual factors. With this in mind I would propose, very tentatively it must be stressed, three broad classifications of African diaspora academics: the Pan-Africanists, the Americanists, and the globalists based on the organization and content of their research, publishing, and teaching practices. Members of the first group conduct their research and derive their research agendas, and do their publishing and sometimes their teaching (conventional and electronic) in both Africa and the United States, while the second are largely focused on the United States in their research, publishing, and teaching practices, and the third are connected to multiple sites besides the United States and Africa. Needless to say, these “choices” are driven by ideological and individual predispositions, as by institutional and intellectual predilections.

It cannot be overemphasized that this is a rather rudimentary typology, that many people straddle these categories at different times in their careers. Indeed, many African academics circulate between Africa and the United States as students, faculty, or visitors. It simply underscores the fact that for African diaspora academics located in the United States, it is not just their personal politics toward Africa and its struggles that are important as far as knowledge production is concerned. Equally important, perhaps even more so, are their academic practices, which do not always coincide with their personal inclinations or ideologies. A more comprehensive typology would in fact also help us to differentiate among those in the historic African diaspora who are engaged in African studies, and identify the tendencies among the two diasporas that continental research networks and organizations such as CODESRIA might fruitfully engage for mutual benefit. Beyond these “natural constituencies” of Africa in the United States, there are of course the European American Africanists, and many others who have more than a nodding acquaintance or interest in knowledge produced in and on Africa. The African knowledge production enterprise in the North is indeed a house of many mansions.

### **Conclusion: What Role for Codesria?**

There can be little doubt that the contemporary African academic diaspora in the United States and elsewhere in the North is becoming a force to reckon with in knowledge production on Africa. It is also becoming more consciousness of itself as a diaspora, of the many ties that bind it together and to the historic diasporas and to Africa, but also of the many tensions that tear it apart internally and from the other diasporas and the continent. This is a diaspora often brought to the United States through chain migration (after studying or working in other countries, including foreign countries in Africa), so that it has rich reservoirs of transnational experiences and empathies.

Indeed, the revolution in telecommunications and travel, which has compressed the spatial and temporal distances between home and abroad, offers this diaspora, unlike the historic diasporas from the earlier dispersals, unprecedented opportunities to be transnational, to be people of multiple worlds, perpetually translocated, physically and culturally, between several countries or several continents. They are able to retain ties to Africa in ways that were not possible to earlier generations of the diaspora. Lest we forget many of the people who have worked for CODESRIA, including the current and past two executive secretaries have had their sojourns in the diaspora. Thus, CODESRIA is not only a Pan-African institution, but a beneficiary and beacon of intellectual energies from and for the diaspora.

The challenge for CODESRIA is to recognize and strengthen its diasporic communities and commitments. Institutionally, this entails giving the diaspora, both the contemporary and historic, a formal voice in CODESRIA's governance and deliberations, a subject that was raised forcefully by several participants at CODESRIA's 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The mechanics of doing this are of course problematic, but the principle should not be. Intellectually, the challenge is also to incorporate diaspora academics in CODESRIA's research networks, institutes, and publishing programs. There might be reluctance if resources are seen in zero-sum terms, but this need not be so if it is understood, and insisted upon, that the diaspora has access to and should harness and channel its resources to these research activities.

As the premier African social science research network on the continent, CODESRIA has a responsibility to promote critical and informed public debate and discussion about African issues globally and relations between Africa and its diaspora. In building more effective linkages with the African diaspora, it might be necessary to expand the boundaries of research by integrating more actively research domains associated with the sciences, the so-called professional fields and the new interdisciplinary areas, not only because it makes eminent intellectual sense in this era of furious disciplinary reconfigurations, but also to tap into the intellectual energies of the African academic diaspora working in these areas that is seeking active collaborations with African social scientists in addition to those they may already have with their academic fellow-travelers. I am often quite amazed at the exciting research being conducted on the burning issues confronting Africa today by diaspora academics outside the traditional humanities- and social sciences-dominated circles of North American African studies.

Many of these academics already collaborate with colleagues and institutions on the continent. Indeed, many of us in the diaspora maintain strong personal linkages with colleagues in Africa and we will continue to do so. The challenge and opportunity for CODESRIA and for us is to channel and enrich these engagements through CODESRIA's inclusive and energizing intellectual umbrella that has prevailed and prospered during thirty years of trials, tribulations and triumphs in building a viable African research community. It is time CODESRIA set its sights to help (re)shape the world of Africa's own academic diaspora. That might be its singular contribution to Pan-Africanism in the new century.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is the classification used by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which is the leading typology of American colleges and universities. See <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classification/>. Needless to say, different classifications of higher educational systems operate in different countries.

<sup>2</sup> For studies of Blacks in the American academy see Washington and Harvey (1989), Jones (2000), and James and Farmer (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Of 29,222 the Black faculty 14,660 are men and 14,562 are women; and women made up 35.7 of the professors, 44.3 of the associate professors, 54.0 percent of the assistant professors, 56.2 percent of the instructors, and 57.7 percent of the lecturers and other.

<sup>4</sup> For histories of the HBCUs see Willie and Edmonds (1978), Garibaldi (1984), Anderson (1988), Roebuck and Murty (1993), and Sims (1994).

<sup>5</sup> For some interesting studies on the struggles of African American, Afro-American, Africana, or Black studies – the nomenclature is itself indicate of the field's contestations and continued search for a viable identity – see some of the following Alkalimat (1990), Azevedo (1998), Manning (2000), Skinner (2000), Kasonde. 2001, Hamilton (2003), and Barrett and Carey (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Recent examples of conflict between African migrants and African Americans include the widely publicized altercations at Virginia State University, an HBCU, in which the institution's Black president was accused of demoting African American heads of department in favor of foreign-born faculty, including Africans, under a reorganization. See Wilson (2001). In a different twist an African-Lebanese man from West Africa sued Loyola College in Maryland in federal court after he was turned down for a position allegedly on the grounds that Black faculty members were pressuring for the hiring of an "African-American that was visibly black." See Clegg (2002).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Mudimbe (1988), Davidson (1992), and Korang (2004).

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<sup>8</sup> See for Blyden (1857, 1867, 1971); for Du Bois (1970, 1976, 1994), for Hansberry (1974, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> On the influence of African American cultural practices in South Africa see Magubane (2003) and on cosmopolitanism in Zimbabwe as expressed through music, see Turino (2000, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> See the following recent studies on African immigrants in the United States, Lewis (1998), Ashabraner and Ashabraner (1999), and Arthur (2000).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the implications of this see Mazrui (2002), Veney (2003), (Zezeza, 2003), and the special issue of Chronicle of Higher Education, The. (2003).

<sup>12</sup> The median length of residence years for U.S. residents born in the following regions are as follows: Europe 25 years, Asia 14.3 years, Latin America 13.5 years, Caribbean 17.6 years, Central America 12.9 years, Mexico 12.8 years, South America 13 years, Northern America (mostly refers to Canada) 24.8 years, and other 13.2 years. Comparable figures of naturalized citizens among the foreign-born resident population from the other regions are as follows: Europe 52 percent, Asia 47.1 percent, Latin America 28.3 percent, Caribbean 46.5 percent, Central America 21.1 percent, Mexico 20.3 percent, South America 38.6 percent, Northern America 43.1 percent, and other 24.3 percent. U.S Census Bureau (2001: 19-21).

<sup>13</sup> Comparable figures for the other regions in terms of proportion of those with high school or more education are: Europe 81.3 percent, Asia 83.8 percent, Latin America 49.6 percent, Caribbean 68.1 percent, Central America 37.1 percent, Mexico 33.8 percent, South America 79.7 percent, Northern America 85.5 percent, and other 50.8 percent. As for the proportions of those with a bachelor's degree or more the figures are: Europe 32.9 percent, Asia 44.9 percent, Latin America 11.2 percent, Caribbean 19.3 percent, Central America 5.5 percent, Mexico 4.2 percent, South America 25.9 percent, Northern America 36.2 percent, and other 10.5 percent. See U.S. Census Bureau (2001: 36-7)

<sup>14</sup> In 2000 they earned an average \$36,371 as compared to \$41,733 for residents from Europe, \$51,363 for Asians, \$36,048 for the foreign born altogether, and \$41,383 for native-born Americans. In terms of poverty rates, it was 13.2 percent for African-born residents, 9.3 percent for European-born, 12.8 for Asian-born, 21.9 percent for Latin American-born, 20.6 percent for Caribbean-born, 24.2 percent for Central America-born, 25.8 percent for Mexico-born, 11.5 percent for South America-born, 7.4 percent for Northern America-born, and 17.8 percent for other. See U.S. Census Bureau (2001: 36-7).

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed examination of linkages between African and American institutions of higher learning see Samoff (2002).