

EDITORIAL

FAITH WAMBURA NGUNJIRI, ED.D.
Associate Professor of Leadership Studies
Eastern University, P.A.

African migration has been a subject of interest to researchers and policy analysts from various disciplinary and institutional backgrounds for the last few decades. The three papers and poem in this issue join in that small but growing body of work, providing the reader with four different perspectives on African migration. In “The Promise and Perils of Diaspora Partnerships for Peace: The Case of The US-Based Liberian Diaspora”, Osman Antwi-Boateng analyzes the role played by Liberians in the US in the political conflicts in their motherland. The author argues that Liberians in the US have contributed to both the conflict (i.e. Charles Taylor’s activities while he was living in the US), and its resolution (for example, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf lived and worked in the US before returning to rebuild Liberia post-war). The author uses interview data to interrogate the on-going activities of Liberians in the US in the post-conflict peace-building work, particularly as they collaborate with international organizations through partnerships and lobbying. He narrates the challenges involved that undermine well-intentioned collaborations.

The paper, “Racial Differences in the Tempo of Assimilation for White and Black African-Born Men in the United States”, by Stephanie J. Nawyn also considers Africans in the US, this time focusing on their earnings as a group in comparison to their US counterparts, and argues that the Black Africans are disadvantaged because of their race. The author uses a double-cohort method of analysis to figure out the role of race in the

earnings of African immigrant men between 1990 and 2000. She finds that white African-born men's earnings surpass those of their White US-born men over time, while Black African-born men continue to experience a disadvantage in earnings that suggest a racial disparity.

The third paper focuses not on immigrants in the US or the West, but on the impact of immigration on African sending countries in terms of brain drain. In "The political economy of forced migration in Nigeria: prospects and challenges in the new millennium", Shambhavi V. Murthy Gopalkrishna and Samuel Oloruntoba argue that, in spite of the benefits of remittances, African countries are losing more than they are gaining by losing their best brains – particularly professionals like physicians and others who could be contributing to nation building. They argue that African nations ought to make policy changes to mitigate the effects of forced migrations including changes to reduce the numbers of people migrating, as well as policies to better make use of the diaspora population's skills for national development.

As I read these articles and immersed myself in the theoretical explanations for migration and the social, political and economic factors that create the necessity for migration to the US and other western countries (Achanfuo-Yeboah, 1993; Adeyanju & Oriola, 2011; Hagopian, Thompson, Fordyce, Johnson, & Hart, 2004; Hatton & Williamson, 2003), I found myself looking inwards at my own story of leaving my motherland of Kenya and settling in the United States. Whereas I am now a permanent resident of these United States, I feel African, Kenyan to my very core. My own journey to the US was a search for further studies in programs that at that point, were not available in my motherland. Yet I never thought I would be here this long – 10 years

now. I had planned to study then return to Kenya. But, as often happens with many others who came not because of chaos or conflict in their countries, but for educational purposes, the opportunities to gain work experience becomes a reason to stay a while. The search for permanent resident status came about to ease my ability to travel into and out of the country, and of course makes it easier to work here without constantly having to search for a sponsor. Now I am one of those immigrant 'faculty of color' (Hernandez, Ngunjiri, & Chang, 2011), a peripheral positionality that is tedious at best (Robinson & Clardy, 2010). My changing positionality as not only immigrant faculty, but also marriage partner to an American citizen has complicated my plans and trajectory for return to the motherland. Now the US is, for all intents and purposes, home.

Stories like my own, complex stories that go beyond illustrating current theories to interrogate the lived experiences of African immigrants in the United States, need to be told. These stories need to be told for several purposes. First, these stories will help those in the motherland considering voluntary migration to get a better idea of what its really like to be an African in America or the West. Secondly, these stories need to be told to move us from looking at structural and macro-level analysis of migration (as these three papers did), to the individual level of analysis that can uncover the nuances of immigrant life. This, I believe is where we can learn strategies for success as immigrants living with multiple identities and navigating the racialized context of the United States. In other words, beyond the question of what it means to be an African immigrant in the West, are also questions of how African immigrants successfully navigate organizational and social culture, how they negotiate their multiple identities, and how they successfully participate in nation building in the motherlands.

Furthermore, these three articles had me thinking about the need for future studies at the macro level of analysis, focusing on country-level impacts of brain drain, best practices for Diasporas' involvement in their motherlands' institutional and national development, and African-born women's assimilation into the labor markets.

Finally, most African migration studies focus on the macro and micro perspectives of migration and immigration, often looking at those living outside of Africa or outside of their motherlands. I believe we should also focus our analytical lenses on those who return, because therein we can learn the personal, social, cultural, structural and political factors that enable a return. After all, our motherlands could use the skills, competencies and professional expertise of returnees in peace-building, national development and institutional growth. Stories of successful reintegration could also benefit those still in adopted homelands in making the decisions to return, by providing positive stories and examples as well as unraveling the negative media stories that tend to only focus on what is wrong in Africa.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Ngunjiri is associate professor of leadership studies at Eastern University, located in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA. She teaches courses in organizational leadership and research methods to graduate students. A graduate of Bowling Green State University (Ohio), Dr. Ngunjiri has also worked at Yale and Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. She has served as an adjunct at Regent University, Indiana College of Technology, University of St. Francis (Fort Wayne) and George Fox Evangelical Seminary. Her research interests focus on African women and leadership as well as culturally responsive research approaches; her work has been published in various international journals including *Journal of Educational Administration*, *Journal of Business Communication*, *Journal of Research Practice*, and *Global Media Journal*. She is the author of *Women's Spiritual Leadership in Africa* (SUNY, 2010) and co-author of *Collaborative Autoethnography* (Left Coast Press, 2012).

REFERENCES

- Achanfuo-Yeboah, D. (1993). Grounding a theory of African migration in recent data on Ghana. *International Sociology*, 8(2), 215-226.
- Adeyanju, C. T., & Oriola, T. B. (2011). Colonialism and contemporary African migration: A phenomenological approach. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(6), 943-967.
- Hagopian, A., Thompson, M. J., Fordyce, M., Johnson, K. E., & Hart, L. G. (2004). The migration of physicians from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States of America: Measures of the African brain drain. *Human resources for health*, 2(1), 17.
- Hatton, T. J., & Williamson, J. G. (2003). Demographic and economic pressure on emigration out of Africa*. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 105(3), 465-486.
- Hernandez, K.-A. C., Ngunjiri, F. W., & Chang, H. (2011). *Exploiting the margins: Women of color advancing in the academy*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Robinson, C. C., & Clardy, P. (2010). *Tedious journeys : autoethnography by women of color in academe*. New York: Peter Lang.