Evolution of Nigerian Diaspora in Britain: Issues, Perspectives, and a Continuing Debate

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Abstract

This paper attempts a critical analysis of some key issues about Africa and the specific case of migration amongst Nigerians. It proceeds from the position that the presence of Africans and Nigerians in the West historically originates from their slavery and slave trade experiences. The dispersal evolves into discussions on the African diaspora. Even then, scholars are still trying to find a common ground to describe it. Contending theories however agree on the usual dispersals from continental Africa as a reference point for conceptualising migration amongst them. The paper begins by overviewing the dispersion of Africans through forced migration. It then examines how the experience and subsequent migration and resettlement occurrences progress into debates on African diaspora. It locates the Nigerian case as a specific picture of the changes. In considering the concept of the African diaspora, the section situates competing arguments on what it should mean, or how to define it. The essence is to establish the moving people within space and time, and establish how their presence in Britain came about.

1.1: INTRODUCTION

Africans experienced no fewer than 27,227 slave trading voyages during their dispersal to the "new world", between 1650 and 1867 (Shillington, 1989). A typical migration occurrence, it marked the beginning of black presence in the West (Dubois, 1970; Nwolise, 1992; Gilroy, 1993, 1997). Debate on it start date is nevertheless still inconclusive. While some scholars record 1532 as the time when the first set of Africans sold into slavery went across the Atlantic (Shillington, 1989:172), others note 1550 (Stalker, 2001). It is, however, safe to say that the Portuguese who made the first slave trading contact with Africans from the West Coast began exporting Africans from the early sixteenth century. And from then on, the stories and reports have been convoluted, even till date. This study attempts a location of the relationship between Nigerian Diaspora in Britain with the legendary study of the expulsion of blacks from continental Africa.

1.2: METHODOLOGY

This paper uses qualitative analysis, through a secondary analysis of documents and the critical examination of existing literature on the dispersal of Blacks, Africans, and eventually Nigerians, across the West especially, and in Britain, specifically. The paper evaluates core theories of dispersals, including the old, traditional notions, and the new, or contemporary ideas on the dislocation of the people in focus. Finding Britain as a key host of Nigerian Diaspora members, its highlights the role of the country in the evolution of a people in dispersal, and the place of Britain in the peoples quest for economic and political freedom.

2.1: BLACKS FORAY INTO THE WEST: AN UNENDING DISPUTE ON POSITIONS

There are academic disputes on the number of Africans affected. While some say it is 12 million in the three centuries of the slave trade (Shillington, 1989:172), others record 15 million (Stalker, 2001). Given the difficulty in specifying the exact figure of displaced Africans through slavery, partly because of sorry tales of deaths, due to disease and torture enroute destinations, arguing that it involved more than a dozen million Africans seems safest. Eventually, more than 40 million blacks, presently resident in the Caribbean and the Americas, are descendants of these slaves (Nwolise, 1992; Stalker, 2001). They were "deposited Africans in the Caribbean, Mexico and Brazil-each case to work on tropical plantations" (Cohen, 1997: 34).

Some schools, however, argue that blacks foray into the West predated slavery, even though slavery heightened the process. Frank Tannenbaum and George Shepperson (cited in Wilson, 1997:1) note the 1440 presence of blacks in Northern Europe. Critical of the undermining of black movement in the pre-slavery era, Wilson himself adds that black appearances in "classical Greece and Rome or the early Muslim presence in Spain and Portugal" (1997:1), are worthy of note. Harris (1982, cited in Wilson, 1997: 119) was detailed on the pre-slavery movement that saw Africans in ancient Europe, Middle East and Asia.

The moving people were then missionaries of different sects, and included soldiers and merchants. Importantly, pre-slave trade movement was largely voluntary as those of the contemporary world. However, movements in the slave trade period were not. There is an emphasis on the slavery period because of its mass effects, its dehumanising consequences, and because it began a chain of occurrences that still linger up to the modern world. Some of these are colonialism, post-colonialism, imperialism, and fascism (Shillington, 1989: 178). It includes the continuing accusation of socio-economic and political subordination of blacks (Fanon, 1967;

Rodney, 1972; Shyllon, 1977; Wa Thiong'o, 1981).

Significantly, there have been different viewpoints on the dispersal of Africans. The slave trade period is nevertheless central to them. Scholars are either explaining African migration before then, during the period, or after its abolition. One is the pre-slavery period characterised with sparse, voluntary migration. The other is the slavery and slave trade period associated with massive involuntary migration. Third, is the post-slavery period. This is a little less massive, as it is a mixture of involuntary (caused by war, famine, disease) and voluntary (caused by economic, education and cultural) reasons. Shyllon (1977) argues, for instance, that the coming of blacks to Britain began from the "generally accepted date of their arrival in 1555". This was when:

> Five Africans were brought into Britain. Over the next century, more and more Africans
> were imported. By the middle of the 17th century, at least, a thriving black community
> had been established, and Britain had ceased to be a white-man's country (1997:3).

From that year, the experience of blacks in Britain began to assume different dimensions. Though they came as slaves, an initial covert activism in 1756 began a process of flight and resistance. Olaudah Equiano, Ottomah Cugoano, and Ignatius Sancho were amongst prominent activists. Slavery began declining in 1772, and with the 18th century rise of industrial capitalism, which the trade aided (Skinner, 1982:13), its economic importance reduced. The effective outlawing of slavery took place in 1807. From the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, black influence began to rise in Britain. Black population now comprises children of slaves and of black soldiers and seamen who settled in Britain after fighting in the Napoleonic wars.

There were also Africans including students, business and sports people, apart from Caribbean professionals employed in sectors of the British economy. By the end of the Second World War for instance, 20,000 blacks in Britain were living in "dockside areas of London, Liverpool, and Cardiff" (accessed at www.chronocleworld.org). More migration of blacks to Britain took place from 1950 to 1960, from especially Jamaica. The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and other laws coming six years later in 1968, then 1971 and 1981 began restricting immigration of blacks to Britain. However, by 1991-1997 regardless, "Black Londoners numbered half a million people in the 1991 census, of which an increasing proportion were London or British born" (accessed at www.chronicle.org). Many settled in places where communal networking was probably easiest. According to Gates (2000), while some are London's Island immigrants:

> Trinidadians are in Ladbroke Grove; the Barbadians in Finsbury Park, Notting hill Gate and
> Shepherd's Bush; and the Jamaicans (who then made up-as they continue to do-more
> than two-thirds of the West Indian population), concentrated in Brixton (Gates,
> 2000:169).

Nigerians are in Brixton, Southwark, and Peckham like Jamaicans. While contacts through slavery and slave trade marked the major beginning of the scattering of Africans, it evolves over centuries into other forms of transnationalism. One of this is diaspora, which I will discuss below.

3.1: THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Like the concept of diaspora, the meaning of African diaspora is still a subject of theoretical debate. Though some scholars maintain that the application of the word to African dispersal experience began from the 1950s (Edmund, et al, 1999:284), others argue that it began in the 1960's and specifically 1965. This was at the Tanzanian International Congress of African historians on "Africans abroad or the African diaspora" (Harris, 1993: 4). There are cases of opposition to the use of the word at all. This is because using the word diaspora to describe dispersing Africans means viewing them through the experiences of others-the Jewish particularly (Martin, 1993:441). Yet some feel it is accurate to the extent that it brings about senses of a common belonging (Shepperson, 1993, cited in Edmund, et al, 1999:284).

Again, a number of writers note that the African diaspora is right as a phenotypical construction (Padmore, 1956; Dubois, 1973; Edmund, et al, 1999:285), because it denotes people of sub-Saharan African origin. Others see it as a cultural narrative as it relates to peoples of African ancestry (Mintz, et al, 1976; Herskovits, 1990; Thompson, 1983, cited in Edmund, 1999: 285). It adds into an expansion of the construction of the African diaspora concept through the commonality of skin colour. Furthermore, a few see it when employed to Africans as borrowed (Shepperson, 1993: 41). Shepperson (1993: 41) adds the scriptural dimension. He refers to Psalm 68:31, "Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out hands to God". He again notes Acts 8: 26-39, which refers to Ethiopian movement as predicting the African diaspora.

The idea that the word represents sub-Saharan African descents living outside the continent is meaningful. It refers to a people bounded by colour, as against geographical origin. Though changing (Akyeampong, 2000:183), the centrality of displacement, settlement, and possibly resettlement is, as well, a trait of the African migration experience. Harris (1993: 8-9, cited in Akyeampong, 2000: 187) captures the changes and stages thus:

> The primary stage is the original dispersion out of Africa (especially through the slave
> trade); the secondary stage occurs with migrations from the initial settlement abroad to

a second area abroad; the tertiary stage is movement to a third area abroad; and the
circulatory stage involves movements among the several areas abroad and may include
Africa.

The stages are significant because they portray not only life in the diaspora, but also transnationalism. It
is nonetheless too fluid to allow the location of their dimensions. Therefore, St. Clair Drake's in his Pan-African
perspective argues that "Diaspora studies should include an analysis of the processes and implications involved
in the mutual interpretation of the *homeland* culture and diaspora culture" (cited in Wilson, 1997: 120).
Moreover, through the cultural perspective to the discussion of African diasporic experience, Leopold Sendar
Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Jean Rabemanjara and Leon Domas, came in from the *negritude* standpoint. Negritude
rejected the prevailing Western culture, with which migrants were interacting. While elevating the African belief
system and history, the literary activism of Cheikh Anta Diop, Pathe Diagne and Alioune Diop (Asante, 2002:
112) supported negritude.

Even as the cultural activists continued their campaigns, some other scholars sought an understanding
of migration from the economic plights of Africans. Its roots are in history as the plundering impact of slavery
on Africa testified (Rodney, 1972; Gunder Frank, 1971, 1975, 1978; Amin 2000, 2004, 2005). The contacts
further eroded culture and self-believe (Fanon, 1967; Shyllon, 1977), which led to agitations for return. The
Garvey's "back to Africa movement" and African-America's pan-africanist inclinations (Akyeampong, 2000:
185) are examples. These lines of thoughts are "absolutists" in the arguments of some theorists as the identities
of the migrants have transformed overtime into new realities, possibly unrelated to any fixed idea (Gilroy, 1993).
These differences broaden daily in the late modernity. Particularities within, including the Nigerian dimension,
compete for analytical attention, which is why studying the Nigerian element represents an important input. In
the meantime, I will now analyse Nigeria migrants.

4.1: THINKING THROUGH MIGRATION AMONGST NIGERIANS

Discussing African diasporic experience within the context of individual African countries is rather rare. The
phrase "African diaspora" tends to become all embracing. It has been easily permissible because the dispersal of
Africans during slavery and the subsequent push for return to the *homeland* after its abolition resembles the
Jewish experience. The concept, as it relates to Africans, is therefore acceptable given their collective experience
of "servitude, enforced exile, and a longing to return to the *homeland* that (they) shared with the Jews"
(Shepperson, 1993: 46).

This is despite arguments by some authors like Tony Martin (1993: 441) that the use of the word
diaspora in describing the plights of Africans is wrong, as it means seeing the history of Africans in the light of
other people's plights. "Let us use some other terminology. Let us speak of the African dispersion or uprooted
Africa as somebody suggested or scattered Africa", he adds. The point nevertheless is there was an interference
(Gilroy, 1993) that unsettled Africans for years. Those happenings involuntarily began in the pre-slavery period.
It increased in the slavery period, while voluntary and involuntary migrations continue today. There are, all the
same, more cases of involuntary migration than otherwise.

That aside, the dispersal experience of Africans from different continental African countries initially
appear insignificant, because of the cover the African framework gives. It may no longer be the case, as the
collective experience of slavery accounting for the greatest number of dispersion ended about two centuries ago.
Colonialism, which succeeded the trade in slaves, began ending from the 1950's, up to the 1970's, leaving many
African countries to be politically autonomous. Though the end of slave trade witnessed the physical return of
some Africans to settlement countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and many nations along the West coast of
Africa, the fact of political divisions indicate a level of sovereignty.

The succeeding colonial delineation and administration, as finalised at the 1884-5 Berlin partition of
African Conference, further prepared the grounds for the political structuring of the continent. It then set the
stage for the ultimate political re-grouping of the African people. The eventual end of colonialism, and the
beginning of indigenous rule in many African countries, initiated new socio-economic and political experiences.
Discussing the experiences still from the common African perspective hides the details in the life of individual
countries. It also amounts to essentialising African countries into a homogenous whole.

Examining the Nigerian diaspora is significant in the light of important studies of the Indian diaspora,
the Filipino diaspora, the Chinese diaspora, the Afghan diaspora, even if they can similarly be in the broader
Asian diaspora. It is sensible to discuss the Nigerian diaspora because the Palestinian diaspora, the Iranian
diaspora, and the Lebanese are, for instance, distinctively identifiable, instead of classifying them only as the
Arab, or Middle-Eastern diaspora. The chart should place them independent of the African context, and away
from being simply a part of the broader black diaspora, or migration studies. The focus is on the Nigerian case,
even if through the realm of communication as a way of situating understanding through a particular case study.

Notably, various scholars including George Shepperson (1958); St. Clair Drake (1978, 1990); Colin A.
Palmer (1981); Joseph Harris, ed, (1993); and Folarin Shyllon (1974), have amongst others made references to

the "Nigerian" born in the African, or Black diaspora. More meaning would emerge from the studies if a concentration had been on the Nigerian alone. The same meaning that an independent analysis of dislocations amongst Ugandans, Kenyans, or Ghanaians (Akyeampong, 2000), would produce. Furthermore, if the Cuban and the Mexican diaspora can be located in the US; the Magrebs are similarly examined in Germany (Safran, 1991; 83), while the Lebanese are discussed in their West African location (Cohen, 1997:98), analysing the presence of Nigerians in Britain seems proper. However, what is the state of the country's economy, and how do we understand it as it relates to migration?

5.1: NIGERIA: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND MIGRATION
Though the Nigerian topography is appropriate for agriculture, petroleum constitutes more than 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Castells, 2000: 101; CCDI, 2003: 3). Maier's (2000) description of the country is useful. He writes:

> (Nigeria) is the biggest trading partner the United States has in Africa. It is the fifth largest supplier of oil to the US market, where its low-sulphur Bonny light crude is especially prized because it is easily refined into gasoline. As the worlds' tenth most populous country, Nigeria represents an inherently sizeable market that could provide trade opportunities for North American and European companies. It is a vast land, stretching from the dense mangrove swamps and tropical rain forests of the Atlantic coast to the spectacular rocky outcrops of the interior and the wide belt of Savannah that finally melts into the arid rim of the Sahara desert. Its 110 million people are an extraordinary human potpourri of some three hundred ethnic groups that represent one out of six Africans. It is the pivot point on which the continent turns (2000, xix-xx).

Nigeria became politically independent in 1960, after British colonial rule. The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) country report on Nigeria says it is:

> Heavily dependent on crude oil production, which now represents over 90% of her export revenue. All these have contributed to the lack of investment in Nigeria's physical and social infrastructure, which has resulted in a marked decline affecting fundamental sectors such as transport, health and education. Living standards for the mass of the Nigerian population have deteriorated markedly in the last 15 years. Nigeria's per capita income is about $280 at present, which is amongst the lowest in the world. (Accessed at www.asylumlaw.org/docs/Nigeria).

Disturbed by the increasing migration of Nigerians in the early 1980s', the military government of General Buhari campaigned against it. The government promoted "patriotism" and "nationalism" to discourage it. Mr Enebeli Elebuwa acted "Andrew", the passionate prospective migrant who soon changed his mind to stay back in a celebrated television advertisement against *checking out*. As Maier argues, Nigerians are in most countries of the world, with many in the US and in Europe. The continuing globalisation contributes to the push and pull. The new gains in international communications and the systematic increase in international finance capital are also encouragements (Nworah, accessed at www.nigeriansinamerica.com).

The depressing economic state generates frustrated migrants who end up taking risks attached to migration, in their effort to find better living conditions. Some use "the 60 mile (96-kilometre) crossing to Lanzorote or Fuerteventura, the Canary Islands nearest to North Africa-a 20 hour trip by rowing boat" (Stalker, 2001:56), to get to Europe via North Africa. Authorities caught about 400 Africans trying to reach the Canaries in April 2006. The figure when compared with the 4,757 in 2005 (accessed at www.csmonitor.com), is alarming. Wilmot (2006: 2) puts it rather simply: "Africans die crossing the Sahara Desert to reach the so-called promised land of Europe".

Others forge identities, while some travel as visitors, but would never return. They manipulate host country's immigration rules over years, to regularise their stay (Portes, et al, 1996). The long period this may take is unimportant, because the initial reason(s) for migration is strong enough to sustain the desire to live a better live abroad. Though drawing a class line is inappropriate, many in this group are largely desperate illiterate or semi-literate. They have lost hope in the Nigerian system and now believe solution is abroad. The educated elite are a little more organised. Some of them migrate as visitors that may never return (Stalker, 2001), while some cash in on migration schemes of destinations.

Many of the skilled migrants often lose their careers back in Nigeria. They rationalise the troubles of possibly re-starting a career in hostland by dwelling on the difficult circumstances that regularly prompt departures from Nigeria. Host authorities may sometimes apprehend and deport illegal migrants. Many, including especially the regular migrants stay in foreign lands, for years, partly enabling the thinking on the gradual evolution of a Nigerian diaspora (Maier, 2001: xxiii). Their length of stay and the emergence of generations of the scattering people further justify this notion. This is however still open to debates because of the increasing criticism of the use of the word diaspora to qualify dispersing people (Tsagarousianou, 2004;

Robins and Aksoy, 2005).

Economic reasons constantly determine migration amongst Nigerians, whether in a military or civil government. However, political repression remains a one-off reason that forced many to migrate. The repressive military regimes of Generals Mohammadu Buhari (1983-85), Ibrahim Babangida (1985-93), and Sani Abacha (1993-98), led to the flight of many Nigerians (Adebanwi, 2001). Whereas Babangida's harsh economic policies impoverished millions, (including the middle class), the Abacha regime was highly intolerant of virtually every critic. Search for asylum by many critics, political and human rights activists in many Western nations was common (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003). Indeed, the activists regrouped abroad, raising international awareness to what was a problem of origin.

The resettling people became a "Nigerian in diaspora". The Nigerian press also found this a suitable name to call the re-settling Nigerians. However, what kind of diaspora is this? It may appear that exile has been mistaken for diaspora (Naficy, 1999), just as travel, or even tourism (Braziel and Mannur, eds, 1993). While exile is more of an individual experience, diaspora is collective, but again often runs into a danger of overgeneralisation. Yet again, tourism tows the adventure, or pleasure line, but diaspora is more of a sober, trying experience (Gilroy, 1997). In some of these cases, as well, time has not passed (Safran, 1997) to fit them into the term in its critical sense. The word nevertheless suits their understanding in as much as it describes those who live, or are finding a home outside Nigeria.

Many migrants in these circumstances deliberately move for economic or educational reasons. The economic migrants may include those searching for advantage or those seeking to invest their resources in safer environment (Brah, 1996:178). The educational migrants could be those who travel for further education, complete their course and are reluctant to return because of the difficulties of life in Nigeria. A few stay behind after the initial push of military high-handedness.

These people dwell for years and are gradually developing, or have developed into a generation. Some could be idealising returning home even though it is hardly ever feasible. Return therefore becomes "ambivalent, eschatological or utopian" (Shuval, 2000:2). Others think of an origin; an ancestral home that would be a better place to return. Yet several may have independently migrated, while others are offspring of migrated Nigerians. They collectively form the new Nigerian diaspora. What however is the basis for the thinking that survival lies abroad? I shall discuss this next.

6.1: THE CULTURE OF MIGRATION AMONGST NIGERIANS

Nigerians tend to be keen to migrate. It is always the next ambition of one living with a disappointment, or the adventurous citizen (Nworah, accessed at www.nigeriaworld.com). To them, all forms of movements, temporary or permanent are "travels". This is not necessarily in the common sense of movements, but an expression that describes positive dislocation (Momodu, accessed at www.thisdayonline.com). The migrant seeks to move probably to begin a new economic life elsewhere, preferably at any of the Western countries. The prevalent migration interest is almost certainly a result of years of frustration, or years of non-achievement. It is not always a result of individual incapacity, or lack of requisite qualification, but because of years of successive leadership failure. Migration here, Castles and Miller wrote, "is often a way to escape crushing poverty, or even death due to malnourishment" (1993: 139). Many also see migration as an immediate response to a pain, or a momentary disappointment. Instances of this are victims of robberies, rape, road accidents, bewitchments, and house demolitions (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003). Frustrations in the work place, in marriages, over childlessness, or unemployment also lead to migration. This is because of an assumption that a new environment could be soothing. The overarching economic reason subsumes these factors.

The migrants may as well be professionals or non-professionals. The first comprise medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, lecturers, pharmacists, and engineers. They include workers who migrate for a better economic life, for better job experience, or for improved security (Parnwell, 1993; Maier, 2000). Because of their social status, and a likely concern for their reputation, migration amongst this group is usually legal. They are the regular set of migrants. Their determination to emigrate also leads many to accept lower status job in the first instance on arrival in host society. In some cases, a planned temporary job may become permanent. Some initially gain a work permit or a leave to remain through which they may become citizens. A few may well turn out to be people who move in and out of Nigeria.

The non-professionals who could as well be university graduates have different skills. Migration amongst them is a cherished desire (Smith, 2006). Amongst this category are those who overstay their visa requirements. It is amongst them that those with forged passports and identities (Stalker, 2001) can emerge. They are sometimes, however, able to remain, first living as illegal/irregular migrants, then eventually legalising their stay through a number of processes. Some of these processes are the application for asylum, bogus marriages (accessed at www.bbc.com/Africa), or patiently working through a complex statutory requirements.

Generally, these migrants face diverse challenges. Apart from allegations of discrimination in the host country, the more entrenched native black population may as well be prejudiced (Christian, ed, 2002). Their

accents become an issue, adding communication problems to their trials. Loneliness takes it toll, following the immediate loss of communal attachment that was available in the more traditional African society. In most cases, the migrant do most things her/himself, given the absence of a likely usual family, paid, unpaid, or underpaid assistance. While these changes are continuing and sapping, friends and families at home may now be restless, should the desired economic advantage that could lead to remittances be late in coming (Adeniyi, 2006). The migrant who is to meet their needs, becomes a disappointment! Meanwhile, the migrant qualification from origin could have become irrelevant. Concern is no longer with career or job satisfaction, but with "survival". Perhaps desperate, as is possible, they therefore make do with what Stalker (2001) called "dirty, difficult and dangerous" jobs.

In moving, they settle in different countries of the world with the Western industrial societies predominating amongst destinations as a "natural" endpoint (Braziel and Mannur, eds, 2003: 285). These popular destinations include the US, with preferences for cities like New York, Washington, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Florida; the United Kingdom (UK), with a high preference for London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds; and Canada, with Ontario and Toronto as major receivers of the migrants. Then France is one more hostland with Paris as a point of attraction. Berlin, Frankfurt, and Verda Bremen in Germany are also receivers of the migrants (Castles and Miller, 1993; Stalker, 2001).

They as well go to other Western countries like Sweden, Norway, Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Austria, Switzerland, amongst others. Non-Western societies like China, Singapore, South Korea, are alternatively attractive to them. Then countries that Akyeampong (2000:1) calls "non-traditional points of migration", including Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Taiwan, and Japan as well fascinate them. A few of them who cannot reach Europe divert to other African countries with better economy, or with greater stability of politics, like South Africa and some North African Countries like Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Morocco. United Arab Emirate (UAE) is another prominent option because of its growing financial prowess.

Interestingly, Nigerians are sometimes going to destinations in accordance with ethnic preference (Odi, 1999; Zachary, 2005). For instance, while the Igbos which is a major ethnic group in the country of over 250 million ethnic groups are fond of the US with Huston, Dallas in Texas as a major point of settlement, the Yorubas, another major ethnic group prefer London, England. With commerce in their minds, the Igbos easily associate with notable trading countries like the UAE, and the rising industrial societies of Asia and the Pacific Rim including Japan, Singapore, South Korea and China (Odi, 1999:2; Zachary, 2005:1).

As previously noted, the Igbos are known to moving because of 1967-70 succession war, as it pitched them against other major Nigeria ethnic groups. It has ever since created "re-assimilation" problems of a sort, notwithstanding the "no victor, no vanquish" declaration of the then opposition, following their loss of the war (Odi, 1999:2; Zachary, 2005:1). As an instance of a vibrant diasporic presence, the Igbos in America have an annual celebration day, the *"Igbo day",* where they gather to celebrate their culture, with the participation of prominent natives from Nigeria, following invitations.

The Yorubas travel mainly in pursuit of educational accomplishments, while the third major group, the Hausas, travel to further business interests. They (the Hausas) also travel for religious and cultural reasons, especially   as   it   relates   to   the   Islamic   faith.   This   they   share   with   oil   rich Saudi Arabia and the stable monarchies of North Africa (accessed at www.nigeriamasterweb.com). Educational attainments of the migrants sometimes define destinations. While the well-educated tagged "highly skilled", by some Western countries, prefer the developed West, the less educated are indiscriminate about destination. This is all to say that there remains a high level of flexibility on migration trends. While abroad, their activities eventually turn into a network, as I will now examine.

7.1: NETWORKS OF NIGERIAN MIGRANTS

The migrants, like many others, function within networks. The networks thrive around the cultural, the social, the economic, the religious, and the political. Though the boundaries around these are probably weak, they are cultural when hometowns or home villages within the larger state context come together like the London based *Odoziobodo* club of *Ugwashi-Uku*. They aim to foster the shared beliefs of their people, besides working for the progress of the hometown (Van Hear, et al, 2004: 10). Aims could be social as the US Igbo Association that regularly organise an annual Igbo Day, while ensuring the presence of prominent Igbo citizens in, and outside Nigeria. Group aims could be political when the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) was for instance formed abroad to fight former dictator, Gen. Sani Abacha (Adebanwi, 2001).

It could be religious when the groups cluster in churches to fulfil spiritual needs like the estimated 15,000 worshippers in the 50 different assemblies of the Christ Apostolic Church in London (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003:6). There are foreign branches of many churches with headquarters in Lagos. Some of these are Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church (MFM), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), and the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC). They command thousands of Nigerian migrants' followerships across Europe and North America. The aims and functions of these networks may be applicable to some, or all of the

groups above, it is necessary to note that migrants form clusters for various reasons.

They range from assisting prospective migrants to improving the lots of irregular/undocumented or regular/documented migrants, and for the development of country of origin (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003:6). These groups importantly represent themselves online through websites, newsgroups, *blogs*, listservs, and usenets. Besides a representation, some of the groups are online solely for virtual interactions. Beyond this, many sites, news groups, listservs, and usenets with Nigerian interest multiply to embrace these "minor" groups. They combine to constitute what are becoming Nigeria migrants online, which represents a variation of diaspora network.

Some professional elites find themselves clustering in groups and associations like the Nigeria IT professionals in America (http://www.nitpri.org/index.html); Association of Nigeria Physicians abroad (http://www.anpa.org/); Nigerian lawyers Association (http://www.nigerianlawyers.org/index.asp); and the American Association of Nigerian Pharmacists (http://www.aanpweb.org/); amongst others. The professionals, in most cases, form the core of the "influential" migrants as the less skilled easily ease out of international migration process (Parnwell, 1993: 50).

With some of the migrants changing status to permanent, naturalised settlers in a process of mixing cultural structure (Gilroy, 1987:161), some integrate into loose communities (Cohen, 1997: 180) in the bid to associate with fellow migrants. This unsteady character of migrants and migration results in different shapes of Nigerian migrants. For instance, a 1980 and 1990 official US government figures says one third of black immigrants to the US are Nigerians; while Georgiou (2000) notes that they represent a good chunk of labour migrants in Greece from 1985 to date.

A 1991 US census estimate also says that 21,000 Nigerian physicians are in the US. British Home Office Statistics show that higher number of Nigerians sought asylum between 1994 and 1990, period of military dictatorship, while it went down between 1999 and 2002, a period of democratic reign. Becoming "migrants and vagrants" (Adebanwi, 2001: 49), many often feel a sense of dejection, while returning may not be a solution (Olaniyan, 2003: 1).

Besides this, the people are sometimes constituted into groups and associations like the Nigeria Community Leeds (NCL), Association of Nigerians Abroad (ANA) and the transcontinental Nigeria Diaspora Organisation (NIDO). It is significant to note that an advertisement of the existence of these bodies take place online. The NIDO, for instance, has a detailed site, where Nigerian migrants desiring information can choose from a drop-down menu on their country of location. Country-specific information, which may be in demand, is accessible.

Apart from dispersion onto various countries, before reconstitution into associations and professional bodies, the web has become a space where the people cluster in different sites depending on interests for networking. Researching the limitless extent of the Internet will however be overwhelming, if not impossible. While I shall record their online interactions across territories, I have chosen the UK as a case for the investigation of their activities, and particularly, for understanding their online and offline communication practices in migration.

8.1: MAPPING NIGERIAN MIGRANTS IN THE UK
The UK census figures of 1971 say 27,000 Nigerians are in England and Wales (accessed at http://www.ukcensusonline.com). Hardly was there a significant increase in the number until the early 1980s when Nigeria's oil economy began to decline. From the figures, 30,045 were in the country in 1981. It moved to 46,231 in 1991 (Van Hear, et al, 1998:10). From the 2001 estimate, 88,105 Nigerian born were living in Britain. From the BBC records, it means, "0.15% of Britain's population was born in Nigeria by 2001". The figure indicates that Nigerian born UK residents are the largest set of Africans after South Africa and Kenya. (South Africa posts 140,201 and Kenya 129,356) (Accessed at www.bbcnews/uk/bornabroad/nigeria.).

The figures above may have largely excluded the growing number of undocumented migrants who perhaps avoid counting for fear of arrest. The point is that a significant number of Nigerian migrants are in the UK. In addition, as a world economic power, it remains an attractive destination for troubled Nigerians, given its soothing promise. A focus on it could therefore represent the experience of Nigerian migrants elsewhere, perhaps in the Americas, in Asia, the Middle East, or to some degree, other African countries.

According to the World Fact Book (accessed at https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uk.html), Britain is the fourth largest economy in the world. Its GDP estimate was $1.664 trillion, going by a 2003 figure. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded a 3.1 percent growth rate in 2004. Generally, the economy has witnessed a steady growth from 1992. The country has such resources as natural gas, silica, oil, gypsum, lead, tin, coal, Iron ore, limestone, salt, clay and chalk. Its over 60 million population is the third largest in the EU. It is also the 21st largest population in the world. Its capital, London, is the largest city in Europe, registering over 7 million residents. Employment level is high at above 74.6 percent, just as literacy rate is at over 90 percent. Communication networks are wide ranging,

and are still growing.

A 2001/02 assessment says 65 percent of households have mobile phones, representing an increase from the 1996/97 figure of 17 percent. Forty percent of household have Internet access. The same figure is nearly the case with satellite, digital or cable receiver (accessed at www.statistics.gov.uk/). Credit facilities are available in different forms from many financial institutions. Comfort, convenience, or ease of life is likely, depending on the status and preference of a prospective beneficiary. Against this trend is the tendency to abuse the process by sections of Nigerians, and other immigrants. Citizens may as well be culprits sometimes. A Chatham House 2006 report notes that:

> Nigerians arriving in Britain suddenly have access to benefits not available at home. Even though British governments have been putting in place tougher conditions for paying housing and unemployment benefits, there are still plenty of opportunities for defrauding the system. For some people used to receiving abuse rather than benefits from the authorities in their own country, the opportunity is too good to miss. 'They are not used to being treated decently,' says one banker, 'You now have people who have found an open system and exploit it'. (Accessed at www.chathamhouse.org)

The story is often not about abusing an advantage. For many, it is in relation to rewarding investment. Lots of them seek productive employment, while they reinvest credits in Nigeria with a determination to repay. Importantly, the UK is a habitual destination. A concentration on it, with London and Leeds as sample areas is not only reasonable, but also helpful when cost and convenience are in consideration.

Some individuals with historical connections with Nigeria, who have made marks in Britain, are again an evidence of a significant relationship between Britain and Nigeria. The eighteenth century feats of Olaudah Equiano-a Nigerian slave migrant whose anti-slavery campaign reached across the Atlantic, is a case. Richard Akinwande Savage also made his mark at Edinburgh University between 1897 and 1905, where he was a student leader, and assistant editor of *The Student*s and co-editor of the *Edinburgh University Handbook* (Shyllon, 1993: 235).

Bandele Omoniyi, another Nigerian student at Edinburgh contributed to African consciousness through his piece, *'Defence of Ethiopian Movement'* (Shyllon, 1993) in 1908. In recent times, Britons of Nigerian descent have made marks in the UK in different fields. Some of these are Ben Okri whose novel, 'The Famished Road', won the Booker Prize in 1991. There is Shade Adu, the musician, and John Fashanu, the former football star, amongst many others. Of course, several quiet achievers exist in different niche businesses. The list further supports my argument that Nigerian migrants' activities in the UK can be a representation.

Again, the migrants form a notable number of the British 2.2 million foreign populations, which is 3.8% (Stalker, 2001:16) of the country's total population. Besides, colonial affiliation lingers since the British departed Nigerian shores in 1960. Other pull factors are the English Language (British native language), which is Nigeria's official language. Nigerian people's exposures to the British educational system and to some extent, its way of life, as learnt from the period of their rule, are also encouraging. The two countries' membership of the Commonwealth (the association of Britain and her former colonies), supports these arguments. London being only six hours away from most Nigerian cities is another reason. The short distance, relative to the distant Americas and some recent economic powers of South-East Asia, could mean cheaper fares.

9.1: CONCLUSIONS

In 2007 a book "Nationality: Wog, The Hounding of David Oluwale", was published in Britain. It details the story of a Nigeria immigrant murdered in cold blood by security agents in Leeds in 1969. The writer, Kester Aspden, discusses the problematic issues of racism and particularly Britain's true readiness for multiculturalism. Aspen reconstructs an incident, which occurred nearly forty seven years ago (the time of this paper), as another reminder of the centrality of the Nigerian migrants to issues of travelling, accommodation of foreigners in Britain, in the past, the present, and in determining its future. There have been many of these individual and even group studies, with a lot borne out of experiences. These varying experiences, of course, continue in view of shifting notions, and the increasing complexities around migration, integration, or the absence of it, and the regular need to review, or to examine the process.

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