HISTORICISING THE POLITICS OF SLAVERY AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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Abstract

African history and historiography have largely accounted for the question of slavery, colonialism, racialism and neo-colonialism. This is because the above phenomena passes as the experiences of the African people which have elicited responses from scholars and researchers of diverse civilizations largely because such phenomena have without doubt, altered the history of the continent of Africa as well as the trajectory and tapestry of the thought pattern of the African person. This paper attempts to historicise the politics of slavery as well as engage in a lucid discourse on the African diaspora which is a resultant effect of the politics that ensured both during the trade and the processes that lead to the abolition of the trade. It engages the expository and analytic methods of philosophical research and argues that the high point of the politics of slavery is evident in the fact that the trans-Atlantic slave trade would not have been successful and sustainable as it were if the Africans were not readily disposed to selling their kinsmen into slavery. This paper concludes in the final third that in view of the prevailing socio-political and economic realities of Africa, for Africa to rescue herself from, and overcome the numerous challenges confronting her, Africans should reject with vehemence, any semblance of neo-slavery, African diaspora organizations should not relent in contributing in whatever way they can to the development of African in a manner that is sustainable and accordingly, such donations and contributions should be used in prudent and frugal manner.

Introduction

For any writing to fulfill the requirement of being called the history of Africa, it must give a central place to such events as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade amongst others, both for its moral and emotional significance and for its potential importance in shaping the continents development. This is true for all historically astute people. The view taken here is that its effects were extensive, complex and understandable only in the light of the character which African societies had already taken during their long struggle with slavery. At least, slave export interrupted African's demographic growth for two centuries. The trade stimulated new forms of political and social organizations, wider use of slaves within the continent, and more brutal

attitudes towards sufferings with scores of Africans losing their lives enroute America and Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa already lagged technologically, but the slave trade helped to foster and accentuate its backwardness. Yet a midst this misery, it vital to state here that Africans survived the slave trade and that it has become platitudinous to rehash the horror that attended the phenomenon of slavery in Africa bearing in mind that a people must need be abreast of happenings in the past, connect them with the present in order to predict and forge their future.

The massive involuntary, semi- voluntary and in recent past, voluntary transnational movement of Africans or people of African descent from their home lands during and after the abolishment of the slave trade has given rise to the idea of African diaspora. A critical evaluation of the people of African descent living outside the shores of Africa reveals that only a handful of them are living above board as regards the grave inequality that exist and is melted against the black race. This notwithstanding, African diaspora as findings reveals have been in contact with their homelands and have been involved in the struggle for the overall socio-political and economic development of Africa as a continent.

It has become a norm for scholars in Africa and elsewhere to lament the inhumanity of man towards man as evident the activities of the slave merchants in the decades that slavery ensured. What is not prevalent until recently is discourse on African diaspora which is for the most part, a resultant effect of the slave trade. This paper seeks to historicise the politics of slavery and attempts to engage in a lucid discourse on the African diaspora. While the first part of the paper concerns itself with a historical analysis of the politics of slavery, the second part will concern itself with an understanding of diaspora and African diaspora, it will also attempt a discourse on their homeland relations, remittance and contributions to the development of Africa.

Historicising the Politics of Slavery

The concepts of slavery and politics have been defined variously; this study does not consider it necessary to delve into some form of conceptual clarification on same. What should be noted is that the concept of slavery stipulates both a state and a practice: a state in the terms of being a slave and a practice in the terms of having slaves as personal properties. As regards the conception of the politics and its relation or connection with slavery, the idea of the politics of slavery as construed and articulated by this paper is the clash of interest and the struggle for who gets what, when and how during the

slave trade. This is the basis and understanding upon which historicising the politics of slavery will be here articulated.

Various forms of slavery have existed in most societies from antiquity to modem times, a state of "unfreedom" defining the lives of those categorized as servants, serfs, apprentices, or slaves. In the ancient civilizations of Europe, Asia and Africa, for example, persons defined as slaves were part of a distinct social group, whose lives were routinely controlled by others. Such people in general performed arduous labor, particularly in agriculture, construction and mining, but also in households and the military, only a fortunate few working as managers, political administrators, or skilled artisans.

At the height of its prosperity in 400 BC, Classical Athens had more than 70,000 slaves. It has been estimated that during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire three out of every four persons living on the Italian peninsula were slaves, an estimated 21 million people. Slaves of varying races and colors and drawn from many cultures were sold in Athens and in Rome, Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Asia constituting the sources of supply. Yet these slaves were multi-racial, with enslavement not being considered a condition that befitted a particular race or skin color. Black Africans, for example, mostly from the Horn of Africa, were a minority part of this early European world, but, while many of them were slaves, many were also prominent free persons who made important contributions to society (Beckles: 2015).

Following the decline and eventual collapse of the Roman Empire, slavery remained an important institution throughout Europe. By the end of the 13th century, slaves were still considered valuable assets in the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe, though the meaning of the term "slave" varied. However, one person's right to another's labor was becoming a separate matter from the right to own that person as property, and chattel slavery - the legal recognition of a person as property - rapidly declined during the 14th century, and it was not widely practiced thereafter in the increasingly powerful countries of Northern Europe. In these countries, the status of slave was increasingly considered one befitting only "outsiders" to kin, religion, race and nation, with the result that when the Europeans and the North-African Berbers, Christian and Muslim respectively, began to organize trading contacts with West Africa, this served to identify those already seen as outsiders as potential slaves .

Various forms of human bondage also existed in African societies at this time. The expansion of long-distance trade had promoted the use of slave labor in agriculture, and many of the early kings of Mali and Songhai, as well as of

other states, used Islam to justify their capture and enslavement of unbelievers. In the West-African state of Benin, for example, large numbers of slaves were used in agriculture, and these slaves, the private property of their owners, symbolized wealth and prosperity. The rulers of such African states also maintained large armies of slaves to protect their empires from attack, and the trading of horses for slaves that took place in the early 16th century in this region was part of a large military build-up along the Middle Niger and Senegal Rivers.

The world "slave" according to Beckles (2015) does not have a precise equivalent in many African languages. The *Yoruba* term, *eru*, for example, while often translated as "slave" does not denote the kind of chattel status familiar from the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, recent research into African history has suggested that the term "slave" would only have been appropriate for newly acquired captives, who had not yet undergone the elaborate process of adoption and assimilation. The concept of a "slave", then, is a complex one in West-African history, having very different meanings to that denoted by the chattel slaves of the later transatlantic slave trade. What this translates into is that slavery can be seen as an institution in Africa used as a means by which outsiders could become assimilated into the local kinship system. It could also act as a mechanism by which certain persons were kept in a subordinate position for labor purposes for a defined period of time and as a social marker that indicated an absence of kin and a state of non-belonging.

The above notwithstanding, Beckles (2015) further asserted the fact that the growth of slave markets in West Africa from the early 15th century onwards, in which Muslims and European Christians were the principal purchasers, weakened such traditional understandings of slavery, redefining it in the form it took in the transatlantic system. While traditional forms of slavery were generally less harsh, those trapped into lifelong slavery, or multiple sales, in the transatlantic trade could expect severe ill treatment.

Accounting for the reason for the slave trade, Eltis (2015) asserted that European expansion to the Americas was to mainly tropical and semi-tropical areas. Several products that were either unknown to Europeans (like tobacco), or occupied a luxury niche in pre-expansion European tastes (like gold or sugar), now fell within the capacity of Europeans to produce more abundantly. But while Europeans could control the production of such exotic goods, it became apparent in the first two centuries after Columbian contact that they chose not to supply the labor that would make such output possible. Free European migrants and indentured servants never traveled across the Atlantic in sufficient numbers to meet the labor needs of expanding plantations. Convicts and prisoners – the only Europeans who were ever

forced to migrate – were much fewer in numbers again. Slavery or some form of coerced labor was the only possible option if European consumers were to gain.

The politics of slavery in general and the Atlantic slave trade in particular which was (and still is) the largest long distance coerced movement of people in history can be understood in the context of the trade itself and its subsequent abolition. It is along this line that the struggle for who gets what, how and when is here construed and articulated.

The Atlantic slave trade began in 1441 when a young Portuguese sea captain, Antam Goncalvez, kidnapped a man and a woman on the western Saharan coast to please his employer, Prince Henry the navigator and being successful, Goncalvez was knighted. Four years later, the Portuguese built a port on Arguin Island, off the Mauritanian coast, from which to purchase slaves and, more particularly, gold, which was especially scarce at this time (Iliffe: 1995). The northern European settlers, among them the English, French, Danish and Dutch, arrived in large numbers a century after the Spanish and Portuguese, at a time when both Spanish and Portuguese settlers had demonstrated a preference for African over Indian slaves, the Dutch took over Portuguese ports and control over the trade.

In order to counter Dutch control over the supply of African slaves to the English colonies, the government of King Charles II participated in forming a slave trading company in 1663 called the Royal Adventurers, which traded in Africa. This company was financed by some of the leading aristocrats at Court, including the Duke of Buckingham and the Duke of Albermarle. The King's brother, the Duke of York, was also elected president of the company. In this way, the monarch and government of England formally engaged in the development of the transatlantic slave trade, since, though the company also traded in ivory and gold, slaves were its single most lucrative commodity (Beckles: 2015).

However, when the Royal Adventurers Company fell into financial troubles and a new enterprise was launched in 1672 named the Royal African Company. Beckles (2015) intimated that "his moved swiftly to establish trading posts at Cape Coast, Aga and Accra along the Gold Coast, and it soon became the largest single company involved in the slave trade. Between 1680 and 1700 it supplied some 30,000 Africans to the Caribbean. The 30 years following the establishment of the Royal African Company saw a substantial upsurge in the size of the transatlantic trade. It is estimated that nearly 600,000 Africans were shipped out in these years. in 1697, the English abolished the monopoly granted the Royal African Company to supply the English colonies

with slaves, and this opened the English trade up to freer participation, effectively enlarging it. The English South Seas Company was also awarded the permission by the Spanish government to supply Spanish America with 4,800 slaves per year".

Yet the trade depended also on Africans being willing to sell slaves. While the Moors (whose King supported himself with raids, which results in many slave from his own as well a neighboring countries… he sold many in return for horse) and the Wolof (who paid the Portuguese between nine and fourteen slave for each horse) accepted to sell slave, the Jola of southern Senegal, the Baga of Guinea, the Kru of Modern Liberia resisted slavery and enslavement with ferocious courage and if captured, were so liable to kill that their masters or themselves (Iliffe: 1995). This were however a few isolated cases as the most part of African elites and kings sold their subjects for horses, arms, gunpowder, just mention a few and it is in this regards that it has been argued that the African people are the only people in world history to sell their own kinsmen into slavery.

The institution of slavery as stated by Brown (2002) made profound difference in at least five ways, it produced political power, defined political interest, generated political conflict, and, by the late eighteenth century , influenced political culture. The ownership of slavery gave the British men power, as well as wealth… the renowned stability of British colonies in the half- century before the American Revolution owed much to the political supremacy of the slave holding gentry which managed with a few important exceptions in these years to prevent effective challenge to their authority from below. Slavery produced public wealth as well as private wealth and consequently figured significantly in the enhancement of national power. Duties collected by the custom service represented between a fifth and a third of the revenue collected by the state (Britain) between 1690 and 1790 (Brewer: 1989). The increased revenue helped Britain finance the war that opened in up foreign markets and expanded imperial possessions (Brown, 2002).

It can also be said that the process of empire building at time depended to a very large extent on the states investment in slavery and the slave trade and the control of slave produced commodities. According to Brown (2002), to win wars in Europe and North America, the politics of slavery in the seventeenth century necessitates that the British sometimes sacked French and Spanish plantations to deprive those empires of colonial wealth…slaves served in the British army in the seven year war, the American Revolution and in great numbers during the French revolution. Acquisition of power in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century meant in many instances, commanding the territories where the slaves were, even if it requires the reduction of

commitment elsewhere. The slave colonies became a chief prize in the high stake contest for local political authority and international supremacy (Dunn: 1972). Hence, slavery determines to a very large extent, the political authority of a state at the local level and international supremacy in its colonies and elsewhere.

The politics of slavery as Brown (2002) further noted defines political interest, according to him, "this interest exist between the state and the planters. The state raised duties when the planters wanted them reduced. Whitehall chooses war when the planters would have been happier with peace. Overtime, the British officials prove less reliable in defending white supremacy than slave holders would have liked. They established regiments of enslaved black soldiers to fight in the Americans during the 1790s and in the process, ignored the many planters who preferred to keep arms out of the hands of African slaves. The royal Governors threatened to turn slaves against their owners to restore imperial authority". This clash of interest is intended to trim the seeming growing wings of the slave owners and the planters with the intent of restoring and defending the supremacy of imperial authority.

The high point of the politics of slavery is evident in the struggle for the abolition of the trade. According to Brown (2002) "although the American Revolution spawned anti-slavery agitations in the northern state as well as in the British isle, it paved way for the substantial expansion of the slaveholding empire in the southern territories of the newly independent United States". Following the United States' successful War of Independence against the British in the 1770s, American citizens were deprived of new slaves by an English blockade around the American coasts, and as a result American traders stepped up plans to finance their own slave voyages to West Africa (Beckles: 2015). It is in the above line that one can argue that the anti-slavery agitation of the Americans during the revolution and war of independence was a gimmick and hence, the use of slavery to get their libration from the British with the intent of cashing into the trade to gain independence, local political authority and international recognition as a nation state.

The politics of slavery can also be said to be a politics of racial discrimination and inequality. According to Beckles (2015), the Europeans, dwelling on the African peoples' different physical appearance and unfamiliar cultural characteristics, concluded that they were an inferior race of outsiders and deserved ill treatment. By virtue of their being non-European, it was thought that the black African peoples could be legitimately enslaved, an idea that went with the Europeans' belief that in trading in Africa they were actually also "discovering", and where possible "claiming," new lands and their inhabitants. Such views, articulated at the time by leading European

theologians, philosophers and scientists, were shared by the Catholic Church, which supported the ill treatment meted out to the African communities by sanctioning both European wars of conquest and the transatlantic slave trade itself. The Vatican pronounced that the enslavement of black Africans was allowed under the canon law of "just war," because such peoples were pagans and should therefore be converted to Christianity, if necessary by force. In this way, Papal policy at the time supported the commercial activities of the European slave traders. In fact, it was said that the Africans have an inherent killer-instinct that needed to be perpetually suppressed. In the worlds of Brown (2002), "the slavers reacted against the rise of anti-slavery slavery sentiments by insisting on property of slaves as fundamental to the rights of the Englishmen".

The European abolitionist movement (whose origin lay in the disastrous experience of the American) was dominated by members of religious groups, by certain thinkers and philosophers and by a smaller number of radical political leaders. However, many of these people were less than fully committed in their condemnation of the trade, and most fell short of calling for its outright and immediate abolition. The opposition of the Roman Catholic Church was also intermittent and largely ineffective…those clerics who were concerned about slavery protested against the enslavement of the native population rather than that of the Africans, effectively lobbying the Vatican and European governments for the abolition only of the trade in Indian slaves and of Indian slavery. As a result, whenever success was achieved in improving the conditions of the Indians, it was done at the expense of African slaves who were imported as substitutes. In fact, there was a consensus among Church, state and settlers in the American colonies that the trade in African slaves was the answer to the labor shortage associated with the decline in the Indian populations.

However, the loss of North America colonies to a very large extent occasioned changes in the politics of slavery. The campaign against colonial slavery transformed the British political culture, Abolitionist helped unite a nation recovering from the loss of North America and the political divisions the conflict has caused. At the same time, the anti-slavery movement initiated significant change in public politics. The campaign provided an unprecedented opportunity for political participation among disenfranchised groups. It helped the marginalized, particularly Quakers and Anglican evangelicals to achieve social respectability. They thought that the abolitionism as a way to make religion matter in politics and public life. A times between 1787 and 1838, the issue of slavery dominated national politics. The formal debates in parliament generated extensive discussion out -of-door,

an outstanding number of anti- slavery petitions and a substantial corpus of controversial literatures (Brown, 2002). The anti-slavery society as Beckles (2015) intimated was supported in parliament by the evangelical leader, William Wilberforce, the Member of Parliament for the town of Hull, Charles Fox, and by the Prime Minister, William Pitt. Clarkson campaigned against the trade by arguing that it was unprofitable (to the British, having lost their colonial holds in America), that it led to large loss of life among the English crews that manned the slave ships and that it damaged both African and colonial societies. For his part, Fox stated that "slavery itself, odious as it is, is not nearly so bad a thing as the slave trade," and Pitt, always the economic pragmatist, argued that the evil of the trade should be removed provided that English financial interests did not suffer. The following year, the British Privy Council in London launched an investigation into the trade. This prompted other European powers and America to begin think along the lines of possibly putting an end to the trade.

However, it was the Americans, once they had achieved their independence from Britain, who took the lead in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Thus, many newly independent American states, such as the Carolinas, Maryland and Virginia, outlawed the importation of slaves from Africa in the 1780s, and when the Massachusetts legislature again debated an anti-slave trade bill in 1778, the commerce was described as tainted by an immoral "lust for gain," with Virginia voting to free all illegally imported Africans. This notwithstanding, the Spanish and Portuguese governments and colonists declared their support for maintaining the transatlantic slave trade as a "life-line of colonial development", denouncing what they called English duplicity and hypocrisy. England, they said, had only decided to enforce anti-slave-trade policies because its own colonies were developed and no longer needed African-born slaves. What England was attempting to do in suppressing the trade, they said, was to deny the same opportunities for development to the Hispanic region of the Caribbean and Latin America that the Anglophone region had enjoyed.

This entire struggle was not to last for a long time as the institution of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade was abolished in 1807 in England and subsequently outlawed in 26 years later. Time and space does not afford this paper the opportunity to account for the time line of the abolition of the trade in all the nations but it suffices to state here that by end 1888, the trade was finally abolished in Brazil who were the very last of the slaver nations to abolish the trade. It should be noted that the politics of slavery might also be understood and told as the history of the rise and fall of the British Atlantic planter class as well as the slave merchants who bought and sold slaves and

their efforts to establish, command and sustain the institution of slave bondage through a series of internal and external challenges. It can also be articulated in the political powers its produces, the political interest it defines, the political conflicts its generates and the fact that it shaped the political culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth century with Americans gaining their independence in the process through the revolution with Lincoln's election to the presidency (amongst others) resulting from the complicated American political situation of the 1840s and 1850s, centered on the divisive issue of slavery.

One of the resultant effect of abolition of slavery in general and the Atlantic slave trade in particular which perhaps was (and still is) the largest long distance coerced movement of people (the people of African descent) in history and of which according to Beckles (2015) is estimated to range from about 9.6 million at the lower end of the scale to about 15 million at the upper, is the institutionalization of the idea of African diaspora – historicizing of which will be the subject of discourse in the next section.

African Diaspora

The present epoch could reasonably be referred to as the diasporan age. Globally, it has been estimated that some 125 million people migrate from one country to another annually (De Montclos in Akinirade and Ogen: 2011). Indeed, more than ever before, diasporan historiography and discourses have grown exponentially in recent times. In spite of this impressive historiography, the Nigerian diaspora has largely been subsumed under the general categories of studies dealing with Africans or Blacks living outside the shores of Africa. Curiously, rather than concentrating on country specific diasporas, African scholars are continuously being encouraged to become more engaged in the African diaspora because this arena is believed to be crucial to the deepening of the understanding of both African and world history (Zeleza: 2010).

In understanding the concept of African diaspora, an understanding of a generalized diaspora is key. The concept of diaspora, no matter how and in whatever dimension it is construed, has its origin in the Greek "diaspora" which means dispersal. The above validate the position that the concept of diaspora is of Greek derivation. In recent years, according to Dodson (2014), there has been a great volume and variety of use of the word "diaspora". Consider for ex ample, that as at May 2013, some 42,597 Journal Storage (JSTOR) citations were noted to have used the term. The variety in the use of the idea is equally numerous. This record would have as a matter of fact increased over time.

Defining the generalized diaspora, Armstrong applied the concept to any ethnic collectivity which lacks a territorial base within a given polity. On the general idea of diaspora, Levitt situated it as the massive involuntary and semi-voluntary transnational movement of a cultural people from their lands of origin (in Dodson: 2014). Akinrinade and Ogen (2011) however seems to be thinking in the line of Dodson (2014) as regards the variety in the use of the concept of diaspora when they asserted that "the meaning of the term diaspora are as varied as the types of diaspora s that have been identified. For instance, there are references and discourses on corporate diaspora, cultural diaspora, trade diaspora. academic diaspora, macro, micro or overlapping diaspora as well as cleft, endo and ecto-diaspora". It is on the basis of the above disparity in type and numerous variations that the definition of the concept of African diaspora is articulated.

Defining the African diaspora, Alper (2001) asserted that we are familiar with it (African diaspora) primarily as an historical artifact of the Atlantic slave trade that is used to refer to the forced dispersal of African peoples in the Atlantic world, especially in the western hemisphere. He further stated that the phrase is neither unproblematic nor deeply rooted historically, having been first employed by George Shepperson in a paper presented at the International Congress of African History held at the University of Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, in 1965.

Alper (2001) further intimated that "until the 1960s its use was confined to the scholarship of the Jewish and Christian religions. Indeed, when George Shepperson first joined "African" to "diaspora" in 1965, he explicitly did so because of the close parallels he saw between the Jewish diaspora and the dispersal of Africans as a consequence of the slave trade. Shepperson argued that African American and Caribbean intellectuals themselves had for a long time recognized and articulated connections between their own people in exile and that of the Jews. By his application of "diaspora" to the experience of "The African Abroad," as the session at which he presented his paper was entitled and his paper makes plain, he declared as an historian and an outsider that he, too, saw such parallels".

Shepperson's achievement here was to recognize the great similarities in the comparative histories of these two great dispersions, especially the role of "slavery and imperialism" in the forced migration of both Jews and Africans, and to name the one by the term used for the other. As he notes, it as "not difficult to see why the expression "the African Diaspora' has gained currency as a description of the great movement" which resulted in millions of people of African descent in the Western hemisphere. Shepperson, according to Alpers (2001) was determined to extend the definition of the African diaspora

"both in time and space" so that it could "be made of maximum value for the new African historiography". At the same time, he was clear in his understanding that not all African migrations could be subsumed under this rubric, restricting "the concept of the African diaspora" to that "which is the study of a series of reactions to coercion, to the imposition of the economic and political rule of alien peoples in Africa, to slavery and imperialism." He did, however, include within the African diaspora "the migration of Negro slaves and servants to Europe before the opening of the trans-Atlantic slave trade' and "the enslavement of Negroes by Muslim powers." Nevertheless, he asserted that "the period of almost four hundred years of the European enslavement of Africans remains the heart of the African diaspora.

Shepperson further extended his definition of what was properly within the orbit of the African diaspora to include "the dispersal of Africans . . . inside (Africa), both as a consequence of the slave trade and of imperialism. Thus, he offered "the creation of Sierra Leone," on the one hand, and "the dispersal of Africans from Malawi" throughout eastern and southern Africa, on the other. This point is quite instructive as it seeks to prove that the dispersal of Africans isn't to the west alone but also within Africa and hence, the institutionalization of the idea of African diaspora(s) within Africa.

Joseph Harris, the scholar who was purportedly said to have chaired the session where George Shepperson presented his paper on the African Diaspora and articulated same in the International Congress of African History held at the University of Dar es Salaam examined the multiplicity of historical details related to centuries of exorbitant deaths, excruciating sufferings, outrageous tribulations, normative upheavals and traumatic living experienced by Africans and their descendants. The conditions existed in their continental lands of origins and in the experiences of being transported from their cultural homelands to locations throughout the globe, particularly to the Americas. He (Harris: 1982) defined the African Diaspora as a "resultant effect from unique historical developments, namely, the global slave trades conducted for centuries primarily by Arabs and Europeans, and the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 that partitioned Africa and set boundaries that continue to divide ethnic groups and inspire irredentism". Dodson (2014), in his analysis of Harris' definition gave credence to its logicality, its historical accuracy and the fact that it is theoretically sound and positions the African phenomenon within a larger global context that constructed it as a social formation. He further enunciated that "Harris definition also separates the African Diaspora from activities, events, and results that belong to imposed transnational migrations of other human populations. For example, the African global phenomenon stands distinct from Chinese, Indian, Armenian,

Greek, Palestinians, or other diaspora occurrences even as each adheres to the larger conceptual definition".

In the second edition of Global Dimension of the African Diaspora, Harris (1982) asserted that the African Diaspora concept subsumes the following: the global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history; the emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition; and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa. Thus viewed, the African Diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography, class, and gender (Alpers: 2001). The above statement constitutes the first clear attempt to define the Diaspora beyond the original boundaries set forth by Shepperson in 1965 and stems from the extending horizons and frontiers of research on the African diaspora after decades of interlocution on the subject matter under review.

The term "African Diaspora" has been widely accepted and used in the world over, this notwithstanding, Tony Martins in Alpers (2001) contended and argued for the complete rejection of the term "diaspora" as applied to the African experience. He forthrightly argued and stakes out his position, declaring that the "term diaspora be deleted from our vocabulary, because the term African diaspora re-enforces a tendency among those writing our history to see the history of African people always in terms of parallels in white history. . . . We should do away with the expression African diaspora because we are not Jews. Let us use some other terminology. Let us speak of the African dispersion, or uprooted Africa as somebody suggested, or scattered Africa". While his position should not be regarded as some form of intellectual joggling and thrown away, it is instructive to state here that the concept or idea of African Diaspora has gained acceptability and currency and had gone farther than the degree of arguing and calling for its attenuation or substitution.

The foregoing notwithstanding, emerging issues and trends in contemporary analysis of diaspora are hinged on the ability to exert considerable socio-economic and political influence in both the homeland (Africa) and the host land. It is in line with the above that the definition African diaspora by the African Union as quoted Bakewell (2008) which states the fact that the "African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship or nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union" is here adopted as the most credible in that it fall between the ambit and purview of the role of African diaspora in the overall development

of African which is an emerging as well as a contending issue in diasporan studies in the 21st century.

Statistically, pegging the total number of Africans in diaspora has not been achieved as all the figures available are either piecemeal or along national or country lines. This notwithstanding, Africans in the diaspora are globally spread out across the continents and estimated thus: in North America, there are 39 million from the African diaspora, 113 million in Latin America, 13.6 million in the Caribbean; and 3.5 million in Europe (World Bank estimate in Home Coming Revolution).

One of the emerging issues in the conceptualization of African diaspora in recent times, is that of the question of whether the concept encompasses or covers those whose migration was involuntary (predominantly, during the trans- Atlantic slave trade) and those whose migration is voluntary. Initially, dynamics within the phenomenon had been distinguished by involuntary trans-national global migration of aggregated groups of Africans. As Dodson (2014) captures it, "independence of African began to re-characterize the transnational global migration as by national individuals….It was no longer an involuntary or forced dispersal of aggregate groups of Africans and their descendants. The movement of individuals was now semi-involuntary, "push and pull" phenomena associated with global economic, political, and/or environmental issues. For example, Africans were pushed from their countries by violent changes in home governments, depressed local and national economies, military campaigns that pitted one ethnic group against another, egregious natural disasters, and/or famine. The moving individuals also were pulled away from their national locations by more developed nations' changes in immigration policies, or multi-national businesses' advertised lures of economic opportunity in other locations. Often these pulling enticements work in tandem".

It is in line with the above that Dodson (2014) further asserted that contemporary changes in the dynamics of African nationals' transnational movement leads many researchers to assume that current migration, including related social phenomena, is not part of earlier patterns connected with the African Diaspora. While he rejects the above position, he asserted that it was "ahistorical and are linked to political sentiments about and/or for a post-racial world where global movement can allow individuals to attempt to avoid racialized social exclusions that regularly accompany the migrations", some researchers like Zeleza (2010) chooses to consider "African descendants' modern day migration and settlement as a New African Diaspora". In whatever way it is construed, it is the opinion of this paper that the fact that they are of African descent and are dispersed outside Africa and

their homelands, is enough fact to validate the fact of their being appended with the designation of African diaspora, not minding whether their migration is voluntary, involuntary or semi-voluntary.

Another issue that has taken the front burner and can as well be referred to as an emerging issue in African diaspora is that of the condition of African and African descendants living outside the shores of Africa. These conditions range from social, political and economic conditions. Scholars like Hamilton reflected on these conditions and specifically stated that oppressions, domination, and subordination are the social conditions of inequality that circumscribe normative realities for Africans and African descendants (24). Dodson (2014) corroborated Hamilton and asserted that the situation of African diaspora revolves around the relative permanent nature of inequality and socio-political conditions of those members of the African diaspora. Citing Fierce, he asked the question of how is it that after some five centuries, and unlike generations of other migrating cultural groups, collectively and disproportionately African descendants continue to experience political, social and economic inequality, no matter their geographic location. How is it that after multiple generations' migration, resettlement, and laborious struggles to achieve successful social integration into new national societies, African and African descendants as a group continue to hold unequal socio-political location in their societies?.

An objective consideration of the African diaspora under the lenses of the above questions reveals that of course, there are individuals, and small pockets of individuals whose lives do not overtly reflect oppressive socio-political domination and/or visible racial discrimination but this is generally not true for most African descendant persons. One would think that after some five centuries of struggle and accomplishments against racial oppression, domination, and subordination, the collective contemporary social position of African descendants would bear no resemblance to their past societal situations. This is not true for the majority of African and African descendants across the globe as disproportionately they do not share in benefits derived from industrial and technological development, nor in profits from these products of modernity (transafrica.org/people-of-african-descent).

In the words of Omni and Winant (1994), the complex and elaborate ideology of Euro-centric superiority, in all of its manifestations, has been transmitted hegemonically throughout the globe as racial hierarchy. It also has been internationally rationalized to ensure distribution of privilege, position, and resources to those phenotypically of white-skin European descent or to those who appear to be close to that icon. Most African descendants do not come close to the criteria. The reality of racism and racialisation that affects them are

intricate and multi-level complexities of social infrastructures inherited from earlier historical periods, and the inheritance continues to produce stratified realities for African descendants, as well as other people of color. This is quite disturbing and disheartening and lives the writer in a bewildered state in that such sentiments still hold sway in the 21st century and in the face of an increasingly globalized world.

African Diaspora: Home Land Relations, Remittance and Contributions to African Development

Until relatively recently the debates on the effects of international migration on developments in Africa have tended to be largely dominated by the negative impact of the loss of Africa's skilled manpower to the developed world, a phenomenon popularly referred to as the brain drain syndrome. However, growing evidence would seem to suggest that international migrations from the continent have had and is still having some positive developmental effects on socio-economic and political developments in Africa. Even the hitherto most vociferous African governments, international development agencies and critics of the population movements out of Africa are now beginning to recognize the developmental potentials of the African diaspora with regard to the attainment of rapid and sustainable development in Africa.

As a matter of fact, emotional attachment to the homeland is a general characteristic shared by all diasporas. There is no doubt that diasporas help to set-up local businesses boost social infrastructure, promote trade and enterprise as well as the sustenance of democratic principles (UNDP as quoted in Akinrinade and Ogen: 2011). This is specifically true for Africans and African diaspora as members of African diaspora are now heavily involved in transnational and diplomatic activities that are capable of effective integration or fostering integrations and creating linkages between their host countries and their countries of origin or African as a whole in an increasingly globalised world. They have also demonstrated that they are not only veritable agents of poverty reduction in African but key players in the process of Africans socio-economic and political transformation and developments.

The recognition of the potential role of African diaspora at fostering and enhancing development in Africa is evident in the setting up of diaspora organizations by almost all African nations for the purpose of tapping from their wealth of experiences of their nationals in the diaspora for national development. Giving examples, Akinrinade and Ogen (2011) asserted that former Nigerian president, Olusgun Obasanjo launched a presidential dialogue with Nigerians abroad in 2002 and this marked a significant

milestone in government-diaspora relations. The presidential dialogue was aimed at incorporating the Nigerian diaspora in national development". The government also established the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization, (NIDO) which has an office based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abuja. The government does not only focus its hope on individual Nigerians abroad to invest in Nigeria, Nigerian diasporan organizations are also ascribed a role in running and sustaining development projects. NIDO has set up a network of branches in Nigerian embassies abroad. Nigerians living abroad are officially encouraged to organize themselves and to link up with NIDO branches in their respective host countries. Arrangements were also made to have NIDO branches not only in almost all European countries and also three branches in Asia (81). It is as a result of the new initiative by NIDO that former US-based Professor Peter Nwangwu, a world renowned clinical pharmacologist who ranks among the top ten pharmacologists in the world decided to relocate to Nigeria in order to assist the Nigerian pharmaceutical industry with his expertise and technical knowhow (Babawale: 2008).

According to Onuorah and Okwe (2009), as a direct response to the NIDO initiative by government, a new group known as the Industry Growth, Investment and Competitiveness in Africa (IGICA) has emerged. IGICA aims at providing networking opportunities between private sector and governments, between emerging markets and developed markets, between small businesses and international private sector, as well as between universities and industry and between parastatals and the private sector. IGICA is also interested in creating networking environment for Africa's knowledge transfer partnerships and commercialization of innovation for industrial growth and investment in Africa.

Closely related to the above is the UK based organization, *AfricaRecruit* launched in 1999. This organization has effectively utilized the skills, knowledge, remittances and networks of the diaspora for the benefit of Nigeria and several African countries. The agency has also been facilitating interactions between recruitment agencies in Europe and job seekers from Africa (UNDP in Akinrinade and Ogen: 2011). The Nigerian diaspora remittance as at 2014 experienced a phenomenal growth from 21 million United States Dollars in 2012 to a whooping 63 million United State Dollars in 2014 ranking fifth (highest diaspora remitting nation) in the world and first in Africa. As at December 2016, Nigerians in the Diaspora sent $35 billion home. According to the Nigerian Tribune (2016), The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora matters, Abike Dabiri-Erewa made the remittances revelation when she paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman,

Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Babatunde Fowler and other members of his executive board.

The above, apart from the dwindling oil revenue is the highest income of the Nigerian State. The above undoubtedly, is the high point of the home land relation, remittance and contribution to the development of Africa by African diaspora. More recently is the passing of the bill for an act to establish the Nigeria Diaspora Commission by the 7th National Assembly which according to Ajayi (2015) will "contribute three (3) trillion USD to the nations upon its take off". The above, in view of the fact that Nigeria been the first highest diaspora remitting nation in Africa can undoubtedly be taken as a representation of African diaspora remittance and all these remittance, in whatever form, are geared towards the development of their home countries.

The above notwithstanding an interrogation of the concept of remittance is both in line with the philosophic temper of taking nothing for granted and is here considered necessary. The concept of remittance, properly construed and situated presupposes and precludes a sum of money that is sent to somebody as payment for something. If this defining returns true and cohere with the actual state of affairs as would be argued for by anyone who is still in touch with reality, then the concept as appended to the financial contributions of Africans in the diaspora is both misleading and inappropriate as it conveys the thinking that the contributions made by the people of African descent in the diaspora is somewhat obligatory or taxed and by implication, may perhaps lead to some form of sanctions that would be activated and melted against them upon defaulting on this obligatory function.

It is in the above thinking and in an attempt to push back the frontiers of this misleading as well as inappropriate nomenclature that have been employed unguidedly and appended to the somewhat voluntary contributions of the people of African descent or elsewhere to their homelands that this paper proposes a total departure and rejection of the concept of remittance in this regard and the employment of such concepts as "contribution" in the voluntary sense, "donations" and other such concepts that stipulates some form of voluntary and free-will contributions rather than the concept of remittance which stipulates an obligatory contribution and in the opinion of this paper, is both misleading and unacceptable.

One other area that the African diaspora's efforts at fostering development in African can be seen is in the area of support to the building and deepening of democracy in Africa. The African diasporas have played and are still playing a role in the formation of pressure groups devoted to influencing political developments in their respective homelands. In this regard, they actively

promote these through their forged transnational networks, radical political change geared to reshaping the political thinking and expectations of the people on the continent. This is evident in their demand for democratic and well functioning public institutions that are accountable to the people, transparent, and respect freedom of expression.

Contributing to discourse on the contribution of African diasporas at fostering development in Africa, Awil Mohammoud (2015), the Director of the Amsterdam-based African Diaspora Policy Centre based in Amsterdam, asserted that "the African diasporas have helped positive political forces at home to make contact with important and powerful political networks abroad. For example, some individuals are members of established political parties in the host country. This strategic position enables them to facilitate valuable networks for the political parties in the homeland through the established political parties with which they are affiliated in the EU countries. This is a tangible process through which the African diasporas can and have contributed to international efforts which impact positively on their respective homelands in terms of democracy-building in Africa".

He further asserted with the Eritrean example that the African diaspora have played a very important role in the area of capacity building. According to him, the African diasporas have played a very important role in the area of capacity building. In this aspect, they have contributed to democracy building in Africa by making their professional skills and expertise available to the government and to political parties in their respective home countries. A concrete case is the Eritrean diaspora which made their expertise available for drafting the country's first constitution after its separation from Ethiopia in 1993. In turn, the diaspora were given voting rights in the future elections of the country. It is against the above backdrop, that this paper posits that the African diaspora has been (and are still) emotionally attached to their home land and this is evidently manifested in their contributions to the economic and socio-political development of their home lands while doing same for their host lands.

Conclusion

I conclude this discourse on historicizing the politics of slavery and the African diaspora, not because it is impossible to continue but because neither time nor space allows me to engage in a more encompassing manner and account for all (with examples) the conditions of people of African descents during and after the slave trade, the challenges faced by African diaspora immediately after the abolition of the trade till present, their homeland relations and their remittance as well as their efforts at checking the excess of

heads of government of their homeland and creating linkages for the overall development of African.

What is to be noted is that, these efforts notwithstanding, much is still left to be done in the face of the present socio-political and economic realities in Africa where sit-tight syndrome and rule by political tyrants still exist in nations like Zimbabwe, Cameroon and Burundi, civil war in Somalia, Sudan, insurgency and terrorism, abject poverty and a seemingly sorry situation where the economies of the most part of African nations like Nigeria are perhaps, in their worst state in history. What should be done is that Africans should learn from their past and reject with vehemence, any semblance of neo- slavery. Again, deliberates and concerted efforts should be made to harness the human and material resource of African diaspora for use in their homelands, prudent and frugal use of their voluntary contributions and donations (what is called "remittance" inflow) to African should also be prioritize with the intent of rescuing Africa from the jigsaw of poverty, economic and socio-political quagmires as well as other challenges confronting the continent that houses the most part of the black race.

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