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ABSTRACT

Education in the African Diaspora unfolded under difficult conditions yet provided its communities with individual advancement, conceptual discoveries, and institutional achievements. Examining regions across the of African Diaspora, this essay explores education in the era of enslavement and emancipation (up to 1880); in times of industrialization and segregation (up to 1950); and the era of decolonization, civil rights, and high-level educational achievement up to the present. The concept of the African Diaspora is shown to be a major accomplishment of these educational interactions.

Introduction

The term “African Diaspora” describes the large and diverse community of African-descended people in the Americas and worldwide. More than a reference to color, the African Diaspora signifies the historic and cultural continuity of this large portion of humanity, tied together by continuing interaction and mutual support (Gomez, 2020; Manning, 2009). Although the precise term arose only in the 20th century, the social reality of the African Diaspora took form in the 15th century as the Atlantic slave trade began to carry millions of captives to the Americas, where the survivors built communities, first in the chains of slavery and then as free people. At present, the population of the African Diaspora in the Americas has risen to over 200 million people spread across North America, the Caribbean, and Latin America (World Bank, 2018). Many more members of the African Diaspora live in Africa, Europe, and Asia.

This essay provides a brief overview of the history of education in the African Diaspora. It is a history that has unfolded under difficult conditions. Even more, it is a history of individual accomplishment, material and conceptual discoveries, and institutional achievement. People of African descent have found ways to advance their levels of knowledge and accomplishment, strengthening their children and their communities. They have also built knowledge to gain recognition of their equality from other communities. This exchange of knowledge took place in the home, in communities, and in specialized institutions of education.

I divide this long and remarkable history into three main periods. In the years from 1500 to 1880, life under enslavement and campaigns for emancipation dominated social life. In this formative era, education took place mostly at home, in artisanal training, and in religious study. These same processes, emphasizing culture and communication, built the initial institutions of the African Diaspora. In the subsequent years, from 1880 to 1950, industrialization and empire dominated the world. These processes brought racial discrimination and segregation to Africa and every region of the African Diaspora, continuing even after two devastating world wars. The same imperial process brought huge European migrations to the Americas.

In this era, African Diaspora education continued at home but opened in elementary schools and some institutions of higher education. Diaspora institutions gained strength through travel of free people, pan-Africanism, and exchange of popular culture. In the years from 1950 to 2020, the collapse

of empires brought national independence to dozens of countries, now led by people of African ancestry. Black communities thrived and grew, gaining civil rights by relying on public education, secondary schools, and universities. Despite a backlash against civil rights and decolonization in the 1980s, the African Diaspora rebounded, exerting leadership in global cultural interactions.

The African Diaspora is at once straightforward and complex, diverse and coherent. To simplify, I distinguish three great regions: the African Diaspora of the Americas, the Old World African Diaspora of Europe and Asia, and the Homeland of Sub-Saharan Africa. But each of these continental regions has important subregions—the African Diaspora of the Americas includes North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, and nations within each region. The educational history of the African Diaspora unfolded in a rich diversity of regions and cultures. The diversity is obvious in language and religion and also shows up in many other ways. Its five main languages—English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Arabic—are accompanied by many more. Catholicism and Islam are the two main religions, accompanied by Protestant denominations and African-based religions (Manning, 2009). In their local groupings and in the commonality of their common ancestry, communities of the African Diaspora rely on education for the value of knowledge and for social advance.

Education in the era of slavery and emancipation, from 1500 to 1880

By the year 1500, people of Sub-Saharan Africa had long maintained ties to the peoples of North Africa, Europe, and Asia through migration and trade—including the *hajj* or pilgrimage of Muslims from all lands to the holy city of Mecca, the trade of African gold across the Sahara to the Mediterranean, and oceanic voyages from East Africa to India (Gomez, 2020). The African empires of Songhai and Ethiopia exchanged embassies with China, India, Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia.

But a new set of worldwide contacts opened up as European ships learned to sail along the African coast and then to Asia and the Americas. Spain and Portugal created their own empires overseas after the voyages of Columbus da Gama. They and other European shippers gained a monopoly over long-distance trade among the continents (Manning, 2020). As a result, all the regions of the world were in contact with each other beginning around 1500.

At first these global contacts brought interactions that were as much cordial as warlike, so that commerce and exchange initially expanded for Africans. But with the passage of time, Africans were drawn into an oppressive relationship with Europeans, in which Africans were captured, sold, and transported from their homeland to Europe, Asia, and especially America. The numbers of Africans carried across the Atlantic grew from hundreds at first to over 100,000 per year by 1800. As a result, a population of African captives and their descendants developed in the coastal areas of the Americas from Brazil to North America. From there, captives were carried far into Mexico and Peru. With time, the slave population within Africa also grew as an accompaniment to slave raiding and slave exports (Manning, 1990).

The African Diaspora of the Americas began with the settlement of captive Africans in the Spanish Caribbean, in Portuguese Brazil, and later in other American regions. In the United States, special attention is given to the first Africans delivered to the English settlement of Virginia in 1619. (They were preceded in North America by the Africans settled by Spanish colonists in Florida and Mexico.) In each region, the first issue faced by arriving captives was what came to be known as “seasoning”: They were sold to masters who imposed discipline and new names on them before putting them to work. Those already enslaved helped the newcomers to adjust. Difficult as these early stages were, life changed with time in the African Diaspora.

Under the rule of *coartición*, slaves in Catholic territories had the right to purchase their freedom. Many escaped and gained autonomy, most famously in the Palenque or Maroon community of Palmares, which maintained its independence in Brazil from 1597 to 1694 (Manning, 2009). The destruction of Palmares coincided with a widespread crackdown, including the 1685 Black Code of France, in which both Christian and Islamic authorities tightened racial restrictions and minimized

paths to freedom (Manning, 2015). New slaves were brought from Africa, while masters sold and moved slaves to different settlements. Many male masters saw themselves as owners rather than parents of the children they fathered with slave women. Some Black women, slave and free, had formal or informal marriages with Black men. For the many Black mothers who were single parents, they nurtured their children to adulthood with love and skill. Black communities, slave and free, sought to protect and teach their children through informal education, emphasizing basic skills, ethics, and survival but also learning ways to build a community. Maintaining household ties was a step toward building the Diaspora.

Even after the imperial reaffirmation of racial hierarchy, the free people of color in the Americas grew steadily in number, though they remained a minority in most places. They had access to literacy and even formal education and could provide support to the enslaved. They benefited especially from cooperation with Protestant Christians, whose beliefs emphasized literacy, especially to enable individual Christians to read the Bible. Protestants in New England colonies emphasized literacy in the 18th century (Graff, 1995).

The growing world economy encouraged migration and the formation of other diasporas; migrants came to the Americas from several European nations. These diasporas, small but influential in their own way, included migrants from Spain, Portugal, Britain, and France who maintained ties with the imperial state at home (Dufoix, 2008). Migrants from the German states, however, had no empire at home, so they had to make their way as individuals or as members of their diaspora. African migrants, too, were in the position of having no ties to their homeland and no powerful home government that could speak up for their interests. Nonetheless, the African Diaspora, through mutual support of its members, built an influential network, especially through exchange of information.

The expanding needs of the world economy raised the demand for literacy and artisanal training, which had effects throughout the African Diaspora. Wealthy merchants of West Africa sent their sons to Europe for education in schools and universities; some of the scholars remained in Europe, while others returned to Africa. At the same time, Qur'anic schools expanded in the Islamic world, including West Africa, East Africa, and Asia. In a further step beyond study with tutors at home, formal schooling began in Europe and North America in the 18th century.

Although the availability of advanced training and education was greatly restricted for Africans in every region, individuals of African descent managed to distinguish themselves as writers and public figures throughout this era of global change. In Africa, Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu (1556–1627), rector of the Sankoré University, wrote a well-known tract rejecting slavery. Ana Nzinga (1583–1663), queen of the Matamba kingdom in Angola, ruled her territory for a long time, alternately allying with and warring with the Portuguese on the coast (Cleaveland, 2015; Heywood, 2017). In Asia, Malik Ambar (1548–1626), who was enslaved in Ethiopia, rose in India to become prime minister and military leader of the powerful Ahmadnagar Sultanate (Ali, 2016). In Europe, Alessandro de Medici (1510–1537) served as the duke of Florence, and the Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–99), born in Guadeloupe, rose in France to become a famed fencer and a composer of classical music (Ribbe, 2004). Abram Petrovich Hanibal (1696–1781), born in north central Africa, was purchased by Russians in Constantinople and educated under Peter the Great to become a military engineer (Gnamankou, 1996). In the Atlantic world, Olaudah Equiano (1745–97), born in Nigeria, traveled the Atlantic as a slave and wrote, as a free person, an autobiography that became central to the antislavery campaign (Equiano, 1995).

The United States, from the era of its independence, played a key role in education of the African Diaspora. Phillis Wheatley, the brilliant young poet from Senegal who gained her freedom in Massachusetts, wrote an elegant poem and sent it to George Washington in 1775, praising him as he was appointed the commander of the Continental Army to lead the fight for independence (Carretta, 2011). Washington in turn sent a generous message to her. Thereafter, the free Black people of the northern United States constituted a center of education, reinforced in part through creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816. Thus, in the years before 1850, Europe and the northern United States each allowed people of African descent to advance their education. The

difference was that Black students in Europe were generally isolated, while Black students in the United States could be part of a small but vibrant Black intellectual community. Religiously trained leaders led campaigns for emancipation throughout Africa and the Diaspora, including Muslim-led antislavery movements in West Africa (Rashid, 2003).

When freedom was won—through warfare in Haiti, the Spanish colonies, and the United States or by legislation in Britain, France, and Brazil—ex-slaves sought to start new lives, joining those people of color already freed. In each territory of the Diaspora and within the African continent, communities learned from each other how to expand their learning and how to encourage both individual manumission from slavery and emancipation of whole nations. In the northern United States, it was possible to support a legal abolitionist movement: Such outstanding figures as David Walker, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass wrote and preached against slavery. Colleges were formed for students of African descent, beginning with those now known as Cheyney University (1837) and Lincoln University (1854), both in Pennsylvania. The writings and speeches of activists in the northern United States spread inspiration throughout the African world. By the 20th century, their voices were joined by those who were gaining formal education throughout Africa and the diaspora.

Emancipation was a broad social issue in the 19th century: It referred not only to freedom from slavery but also to the freedom of serfs (especially in Russia), equal rights for women, and freedom of conquered peoples from foreign domination. Haiti won two types of emancipation almost at once—freedom from slavery beginning in 1793 and then national independence in 1803 (Geggus, 2002). Once emancipation from slavery was achieved, the ex-slaves faced the task of building a new life. In Mexico, independence and the abolition of slavery came at the same time in 1829; for Venezuela, emancipation came years later. In these countries, as in the United States and Cuba, Black people fought for the freedom of their country and fought for freedom from slavery (Andrews, 2004). Emancipation was won in the United States by 1865 but was won even later in Cuba, Brazil, Africa, and Asia. In postemancipation Trinidad, under British rule, Black families managed to gain high levels of education by generating competition for students among Catholic, Protestant, and state schools (Brereton, 1981). In the United States, emancipation brought the rapid creation not only of elementary schools throughout the South but of numerous colleges, including Howard, Hampton, Fisk, and Atlanta before 1870. With emancipation and the beginnings of formal education, the African Diaspora in the Americas achieved its first great victory. These campaigns continued in the Old World African Diaspora and within Africa.

Education in the era of industrial empire, 1880–1950

By 1880, the world economy had taken another turn—industrial production expanded and with it cities, empires, and international migration. For people of the African Diaspora, the next century centered on campaigns for citizenship in the lands where they lived. People sought livelihoods on farms or in wage labor; Black migrants to cities did much to establish the culture of modern urban life. The activists of the African Diaspora did not have powerful states to back them, but they had word of mouth, literacy among a growing number, increasing opportunities to travel, and the ability to exchange funds, even in small amounts. As they gradually confirmed the end of enslavement, they turned next to campaigns for recognition of their citizenship with equality in law, rights to vote, and positions of leadership.

New obstacles arose to limit the campaigns of African Diaspora communities for social and educational equality: the expansion of industrial empires on every continent; a sharp expansion of racial discrimination and segregation resulting from fear by White elites and commoners of the advance of Black communities; and the immigration of millions of Europeans throughout the Americas, where they competed with Blacks for land and employment.

The expansion of empires, especially from 1880, brought a new experience worldwide. Powerful governments, backed by industry, made war and achieved an unprecedented expansion of empires. Imperial expansion, however, was costly for the people of the African Diaspora in the New World, the Old World, Asia, and in the African Homeland. The specifics varied by region, but overall, imperial expansion brought racial theory, racial hierarchy, and denigration of the culture of Africa and of the

African Diaspora. The great powers were Britain, France, the United States, Italy (united in 1860), Germany (united in 1870), Russia, and Japan. These industrial economies carried out global searches for raw materials, markets, and laborers.

The United States and Britain dominated the Americas as a whole. They conquered indigenous peoples and maintained influence over the independent countries of Latin America. African Diaspora communities in Latin America pressed for full citizenship in regimes that were now under national rather than imperial governments. Black people of the United States and the Caribbean colonies had lived under imperial rule for centuries, and they were to undergo nearly another century of colonization. Meanwhile, in another change, the small existing diasporas of European descent in the Americas became huge. Millions of migrants left Europe between 1850 and 1940, coming to the United States, Brazil, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, creating diasporas of Irish, British, Italians, Spanish, Russians, and others. The government of Brazil subsidized migrants from Italy and labeled their arrival as “whitening” (Dos Santos & Hallewell, 2002).

In the imperial colonies of Asia and Africa, European rule was a new experience. The empires seized virtually all of the Middle East, South Asia, and the African Homeland. Britain and France ruled most of this great region; Germany, Italy, and Portugal held portions. As the empires seized African and Asian territories, they announced their intention to free slaves in those lands, though they were slow in taking action. Then, in 1927, Great Britain formally declared that slavery had ended (Manning, 2020).

Thus, the people of all regions of the African Diaspora found themselves under pressure from a White backlash resulting not only from White fear of the rising influence of free people of African descent but also because of imperial expansion worldwide, White military power everywhere, and the rise of White migration to the Americas. People of African origin throughout the Diaspora, despite their achievements, faced a severe backlash against their campaign for education, land, and citizenship. From the 1880s, with a peak in 1900–1920, a campaign of civilizational and racial hierarchy—glorifying whiteness and denigrating blackness—gained the upper hand in the leading industrial and imperial countries. The story of racial segregation and discrimination in the United States, highlighted by the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* court decision favoring racial discrimination in interstate railroad cars, is well known. Equally important is the fact that parallel campaigns of racial discrimination and hierarchy took place throughout the European colonies and beyond (Fredrickson, 2002).

In seeking the best response to racist backlash, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois carried out their famous debate on accommodation versus the “talented tenth” as strategies for Black education (Aiello, 2016). Du Bois later entered into debate with Marcus Garvey, cautiously emphasizing the dangers of militant nationalism. But as Washington and Du Bois showed, advanced training remained available to people of African descent in the United States and elsewhere in this era of oppression. The Black educational institutions and the Black religious bodies survived, even with limited funds, and produced skilled graduates. Throughout the Diaspora, university study was available to small numbers of Black men and women who were skilled, fortunate, or both: Langston Hughes, the Harlem Renaissance poet, studied at Columbia University. Medical and legal training were particular objectives of these students; it was possible to advance in the Protestant but not the Catholic clergy. In the United States, Howard University became the most prestigious of the predominantly Black schools; its first Black president was appointed in 1926.

Cuba stood out as an impressive case for political and educational advance within the African Diaspora, especially from 1860 to 1920. In Cuba’s long fight for independence from Spain, a Black-White alliance sustained the independence movement. Education too remained a high priority in this country, which was already relatively well educated. Immediately after independence, Cubans of all descriptions poured into schools. By 1920, around 60% of Cubans were literate, nearly double the 1900 literacy rate, and the figures for Blacks were quite close to those for Whites. Blacks were a much smaller proportion of teachers than Whites, but between 1900 and 1920 the number of Black teachers rose from 5% to 15% of the total (de la Fuente & Andrews, 2018).

For Asia and Africa, colonial conquest imposed great cultural change: These conquered regions suffered huge losses in the racialized backlash of the early 20th century. The Indo-European languages

of English, French, and Portuguese were imposed as official languages and languages of instruction. Schooling in these territories was available to few, mostly at the introductory level. French and British systems allowed tiny numbers of students to carry out advanced studies in medicine and administration. Qur'anic schools in Islamic areas taught young children the verses of the holy book, basic literacy in Arabic, and calculation (Manning, 1998). For the great majority of African families, education still consisted of training from parents and instruction from elders at crucial turning points in life, such as the initiations that took place at adolescence. Yet even in Africa, the limitations on university education for Black people did not halt the development of scholarly analysis and intellectual debate. Solomon Plaatje published *Native Life in South Africa* in 1915 and a reader of Setswana texts the next year (Plaatje, 1991). Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya conducted Africanist anthropological study in Britain and published the distinguished *Facing Mount Kenya* in 1938 (Kenyatta, 1938). Figures such as Plaatje and Kenyatta opened up a new political campaign for people in African and Asian lands to achieve citizenship within the states that had been imposed on them.

Therefore, in one way or another, from 1900 onward, people throughout the African Diaspora and Africa came to share two essential objectives: achievement of the rights of citizenship and reaffirmation of the culture of the African Diaspora and Africa. One impressive affirmation of citizenship and shared culture was the international Pan-African Congress organized in 1900 in London by Henry Sylvester Williams, a lawyer trained in Trinidad and working in London. The Congress brought delegates from the Americas, Europe, and Africa to consider the possibilities for greater political rights for people of African descent in both colonies and independent nations. Successive congresses, held throughout the 20th century, peaked at the Manchester conference of 1945, which prepared African leaders to launch campaigns for national independence (Adi, 2018).

Diasporas, while they do not control governments, have shown an ability to influence opinion through newspapers. Newspapers, even of small circulation, became very important to the development of Black communities in which English, Portuguese, Spanish, or French were spoken. They carried on the campaign for citizenship. *The Gleaner*, published in Kingston starting in 1804, began as the voice of Jamaica's planter class, but with the gradual rise of Blacks to citizenship, it ceded more and more space to their perspective. Black-owned newspapers were founded in Lagos, Cape Coast, Freetown, Havana, and Baltimore in the late 19th century, and in Chicago, São Paulo, New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Paris in the early 20th century.

Political activists found novels to be one tool for conveying their messages: W. E. B. Du Bois, in the United States, wrote *Quest of the Silver Fleece*, portraying the choices between urban and rural existences, while Gold Coast lawyer J. E. Casely-Hayford wrote *Ethiopia Unbound*, offering a vision of self-government for the Gold Coast (Casely-Hayford, 1911; Du Bois, 1911). These novels by elite figures become one of many aspects of the early-20th-century outpouring of creativity in popular culture in every region of the African Diaspora, largely in celebration of the end of slavery (Manning, 2009). Although these cultural advances took place everywhere in the African Diaspora, two high points in this wave of creativity gained special recognition: the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and the francophone authors of the Négritude literary tradition in the 1930s (Huggins, 2007).

Meanwhile, the competition and threats among empires led to two great disasters. After World War I had destroyed four great empires, World War II pitted the pro-racist policies of Germany, Japan, and Italy against the other empires. The war, with a huge cost in casualties, discredited racial hierarchy and destroyed all the remaining empires except the American and Soviet regimes. The United Nations, as it formed in 1945, formally rejected racism in government and social policy; a 1950 Nobel Peace Prize for African American diplomat Ralph Bunche underscored the new direction (Hill & Keller, 2010).

The era of decolonization and nationhood, 1950–2020

The recovery from World War II brought remarkable advances worldwide in education, social welfare, and political rights for people of African descent and all colonized peoples. For the African Diaspora, the improvements in health conditions and the greater freedom to migrate both contributed to great

advances in education. From the 1950s, medical services expanded in cities and rural areas of the Americas, the Old World Diaspora, and in Africa. Mortality rates declined, causing population sizes to grow because of newly available antibiotics and especially because of public health measures supported by governments and by communities that were gaining rights to demand better services. The postwar era also brought expanded migration within countries as men and women moved to seek employment and schooling, as in the United States, Brazil, and Venezuela (Manning, 2009). A trickle of migration from the Caribbean to Europe began in the 1940s, then grew to a flood. With the independence of African countries in the 1960s, African migrants began seeking work in Europe. Then in the 1980s, as economic conditions in Africa worsened, African migrants moved in larger numbers to North America and to the oil-producing countries of Asia.

Along with the changes in health conditions, population, and migration, education expanded in the postwar world more rapidly than ever before (Graff, 1995). People of the African Diaspora and Africa made highly impressive advances in education in the postwar years. For members of communities worldwide, who had almost no access to literacy or formal study as recently as 1950, their grandchildren today now find themselves in communities in which the majority of adults are literate (either in their home language or in a second language) and have access to knowledge about the world as well as their own community. The arguments for expanded education were often made more in terms of class than race or ethnicity. Thus, when the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, he fueled a social and intellectual movement that spread from Latin America to much of the world. As he argued, “The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (Freire, 2000, p. 73). For the rest of the 20th century, Freire was a central activist in the expansion of general education throughout Latin America and the African Diaspora.

In the United States, a 1954 court decision launched the era of school desegregation and greater Black school attendance. As reported in official statistics, the proportion of Black American children aged 5 to 6 enrolled in school rose from 69% in 1954 to 96% in 2002. These changes accompanied the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, including public demonstrations, court cases, and campaigns in popular media (Brooks, 2008). Similarly, education could now begin seriously in Africa. As independence came to more than two dozen African countries in the 1960s, elementary schools went up all over the continent. Elementary schooling had expanded in the 1950s, but independence expanded the priority given to education. State schools especially grew in number; in some cases, they took over mission schools. Teachers included some from overseas such as missionaries or Peace Corps volunteers, but most were from the home country. By 2000, roughly half of adult Africans were literate, though usually this meant literacy in a second language rather than their first language. Television and radio, however, allowed for widespread diffusion of vernacular languages.

The 1960s brought the first admission of large numbers of Blacks to college and university education in all regions of the Diaspora and Africa. The University of the West Indies, founded with three campuses in 1948, has remained a strong institution since. In 1960, Africa had only three universities outside of South Africa and Egypt. By 2000, all but the tiniest countries had a series of universities, some of them fully equipped, as with the University of Ghana and Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar. In the United States, too, the number of universities expanded, though from a comparatively strong base.

Further, university curricula began to recognize the lives and conditions of Black people, as faculty members and Black communities called for relevant education. African studies began in the 1950s in the United States, Europe, and Africa in humanities and social sciences and their interdisciplinary combinations. After some delay, scholarship in Latin American studies came to give substantial attention to Afro-Latin Americans. Black Studies rose in the 1960s, especially in the United States, as a concomitant to the political mobilization of Black communities. Black scholars in the United States, Britain, and some other countries reached positions of importance, and a few historically Black colleges and universities, notably Howard University, gained a place at the table of top U.S. research

institutions. The proportion of U.S. Blacks over age 25 with a college degree grew from 2% in 1954 to 17% in 2002.

The benefits of the postwar expansion in education were manifestly clear. In the 1960s, Blacks had returned to the political stage on the continent and in the New World Diaspora, and by the 1980s, they had gained great new space on the intellectual and cultural stages. As the educational and academic contacts grew within the world of African-descended peoples, the term “African Diaspora” first began to be used by scholars in the 1960s. In 1979, Joseph E. Harris of Howard University published *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, a collective work in which several authors showed the historical and social logic of the term (Harris, 1993). The “History of the African Diaspora” course was required of all students at Howard.

Nevertheless, despite the accumulating educational and social achievements, a new backlash arose in the 1980s: Its effects restricted educational advance for at least 20 years. Negative pressures of the World Bank, from the 1970s onward, imposed Structural Adjustment Programs to reduce public investment in Africa and the Americas so that schools, health, and universities were cut back. Students rebelled, and national governments (sometimes dictatorial) responded by closing universities. In the same era, anti-immigrant sentiment grew in England and France. Scholars and students from Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and even Europe sought to come to the United States. Yet there were educational limits in the United States as well: Some Black Studies programs were discontinued, and small HBCUs closed as public universities expanded. More and more, academic life addressing the African Diaspora concentrated in the United States. The period from 1980 to 2000 was a time when education was severely limited in many parts of the world but continued to function in the United States, though with difficulties, making the United States the center of a Diaspora-wide intellectual and cultural discourse during this time period.

Remarkably, although economic growth and formal education faced severe limits, popular culture of the African Diaspora grew to reach a steadily wider audience. Kente cloth and braided hairstyles were but two symbols of the expanding African Diaspora culture. In this period, Black writers from many parts of the world were at once critically acclaimed and commercially successful. Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian playwright and essayist, was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1986 (Soyinka, 1981). From the Caribbean, poet Derek Walcott won a Nobel Prize in 1992 (Walcott, 1974). In the written works of these authors, the medium was little changed, but the expression within the medium drew more deeply on the language and outlook of the communities portrayed. From the United States, Alice Walker wrote of the American South in *The Color Purple*, and Toni Morrison, after a series of deep yet successful novels, won a Nobel Prize in 1993 (Morrison, 1987).

Black intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences also came to greater prominence during the 1980s. The most prominent Black scholars include historian John Hope Franklin, economist W. Arthur Lewis, political scientist Ali Mazrui, and literary scholar Henry Louis Gates (Franklin, 1947; Lewis, 2003). Two Jamaican-born sociologists gained great prominence: Stuart Hall in the United Kingdom and Orlando Patterson in the United States (Hall, 2017; Patterson, 1982). More slowly, Blacks gained recognition in engineering, mathematics, computer science, and in the physical and biological sciences.

Scholars of the African Diaspora developed new ideas about the function of global cultural connection in the development of human society. Jamaican-born historian Colin Palmer published a series of works on the African Diaspora; the Black British sociologist Paul Gilroy developed a somewhat different vision, “The Black Atlantic,” which focused on postemancipation cultural exchange among African-descended and other writers (Gilroy, 1993; Palmer, 2000). In a still-larger change, the nations of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador each adopted laws in the early 1990s that gave recognition to African ancestry within their populations, in addition to the Europeans and indigenous peoples who had long been recognized. The results brought changes in law, in the national school curriculum, and in rights to land. Similar changes took place in Brazil after 2000. As a result, the number of people in South America who formally identified themselves as of African ancestry grew significantly.

Since the opening of the 21st century, advances in education have continued throughout the African Diaspora. One can see examples of growing institutional strength in education across the African Diaspora, both within the United States and abroad. Nigeria and Ethiopia each have over 100 postgraduate institutions; education has expanded in every corner of the African Diaspora. Further, the institutions that provide support to research and educational structures of the African Diaspora are growing in strength. In one key example, the Council for Economic and Social Development of Africa (CODESRIA, <https://www.codesria.org>), founded in 1973 and headquartered in Africa (Dakar), is expanding its leadership in social science for the African continent and Diaspora with triennial conferences and publication of substantial numbers of books in English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic (Manning & Jamie Miller, 2019). In addition, the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD, <https://www.aswadiaspora.org>), founded in New York in 2000, continues to grow and flourish, with biennial meetings in Africa and the Diaspora—a high point of its early growth was the 2006 conference in Rio de Janeiro.

Another source of connection in African Diaspora affairs is the global scope of Black popular culture. In music, literature, dance, film, video, online networks, and debates, culture nurtures discussion and exchange among virtually all subgroups within the African Diaspora.

The concept of diaspora is now much more widely understood. It is now clear that neither powerful governments nor the borders of nations are sufficient to explain the world of today. Groups of migrants—and communication among migrants—is now so widespread that diasporic links among common people are central to the outlooks and culture of today. The African Diaspora, with its distinctive character, spread over four continents plus the home continent, is an important social structure for the world of today. The concept of Diaspora, deployed in the cross-disciplinary fields of Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, and African Studies—and relying on a principled exchange of multiple perspectives—is giving fuller expression to the life and culture of people of African descent and showing, at the same time, the role of the large-scale social structure of diaspora in human society overall.

Author bio

Patrick Manning has specialized in the contributions of Africans and Africa's descendants in world history. He has written widely on Francophone African economic and social history for the 19th and 20th centuries and on slavery and African populations from the 16th to the 19th century. He is the author of *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (2009) and other works on the African Diaspora and has been active in the affairs of the African Diaspora Consortium. He was founding director of World History Centers at Northeastern University (1993–2004) and University of Pittsburgh (2008–2015). His most recent book on world history is *A History of Humanity: The Evolution of the Human System* (2020). He served as President of the American Historical Association in 2016.

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