

*From Nkrumah's Black Star to the African Diaspora:
Ghanaian Intellectual Activists and the Development
of Black Studies in the Americas*

Bright Gyamfi

In 1973, Dovi Afesi, a Ghanaian professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst), launched an effort to move the papers of W.E.B. Du Bois from the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences in Accra to Amherst.¹ Afesi thought this was important because the political and intellectual environment of the United States at the time was more aligned with Du Bois's vision of African diasporic unity and liberation than it was with Ghana. Indeed, Afesi was teaching in the Afro-American Studies Department at UMass Amherst, created in 1972, which was named after Du Bois.² The department was part

Bright Gyamfi is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (USA).

I would like to thank Sean Hanretta, Barnor Hesse, Martha Biondi, David Schoenbrun, Kwasi Konadu, Sara Maza, Jean Allman, Elizabeth Schmidt, Nana Kobina Nketsia V, Azmar Williams, Nana Quashie, Robin Bates, Sherwin Bryant, Reginald Hildebrand, Jeffery Ahlman, Hermann Von-Hesse, Seyi Adedoyin, Betelhem Hailu, Esmeralda Kale, Judith Boateng, George Gyesaw, and guest editors Keisha N. Blain, and Quito Swan for their feedback and assistance on this article.

1. Dovi Afesi, curriculum vitae (1992), personal papers, Easthampton, MA.

2. UMass Amherst approved the establishment of the department in 1970, but it did not begin its operation until the fall of 1972; see <https://www.umass.edu/afroam/sites/default/files/assets/afroam/deptapproved.pdf>.

The Journal of African American History, volume 106, number 4, fall 2021.

© 2021 ASALH. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. <https://doi.org/10.1086/716492>

of the explosion of Black studies programs that took place in the wake of the founding of the first Black studies department at San Francisco State College in 1968.³ Du Bois's declaration that "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line" and his interdisciplinary approach to the study of African American lives shaped and served as a guide for Black studies programs.⁴ As these programs were emerging, various people sought to shape the field according to their priorities and interests. Afesi tried to use the movement of Du Bois's papers to nudge Black studies programs, which he found overly US-centric, toward a more Africa-centered direction.

By contrast, Ghana, where Du Bois's papers had been held since his death in 1963, was moving in a more conservative direction. The 1957 independence of Ghana, one of the first sovereign countries in sub-Saharan Africa, had marked a significant milestone for Africa and peoples of African descent throughout the world. Ghana's liberation was a moment of rupture in the colonial-racial order—one that sought to establish a hierarchy based on Black inferiority. Under its first president, Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana provided a conducive environment to foster Pan-African solidarity and to challenge colonialism and white supremacy.⁵ For Du Bois, George Padmore, and other Black activists, Ghana, Nkrumah's "Black Star," was a safe haven in a world shaped by racism.⁶ Nkrumah's creation of the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies (IAS) in 1961 and his financial support for Du Bois's ambitious *Encyclopedia Africana*, an independent scientific study of Africa, placed Ghana "at the epicenter" of decolonizing African studies.⁷ In 1966, however, Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup. The subsequent military government replaced and deported the scholars who were working on the *Encyclopedia Africana* and burned some of Nkrumah's writings.⁸

Afesi's efforts to press his department to more fully embrace the scope of Du Bois's legacy, which included Africa as much as African Americans, was therefore an implicit critique of post-Nkrumah Ghana. His work paralleled that of other Ghanaian intellectuals in the United States at the time who were similarly engaged in making Africa a more visible part of Black studies curricula. These included Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, also a professor at UMass Amherst, and Anani Dzidzienyo, a professor at Brown University. Both were

3. Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, CA, 2014).

4. Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, CA, 2015).

5. Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

6. *Ibid.*, 10.

7. Jean Allman, "Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46, no. 2 (2013): 201.

8. *Ibid.*; Nana Kobina Nketsia V, interview with author, Accra, August 17, 2018.

involved in efforts to relocate some of the intellectual work from Ghana to the United States.

Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo worked to inject an Africa-centered sense of what political education and political mobilization meant in contrast with the notion of Africa as a place of distant heritage. They saw themselves as reactivating a Pan-Africanist intellectual politics that placed a priority on mobilizing members of the diaspora to secure political, economic, and cultural liberation in Africa. Scholars who focus on the development of Black studies in American universities commonly place Black student activism at the center of the story.⁹ Furthermore, scholars of Black internationalism tend to emphasize the endeavors of well-known African American activists who moved from the United States to Africa from the colonial period onward—and not those activists who moved from Africa to the United States.¹⁰ While student activism is certainly vital to understanding the development of Black studies in the United States, the current narrative of the history of the field mostly overlooks the important contributions that African scholars made and the unique perspectives they brought. Their work and lived experiences provide a more comprehensive history of the development of Black studies in the United States by highlighting Africans' contributions to the field. More importantly, their stories help illuminate the unexplored intellectual impact of African scholars in the 1970s and 1980s outside of Africa on Black internationalism. Their narratives, furthermore, enable us to trace the circuit of Black internationalism as it moves from the diaspora to Nkrumah's Black Star and back to the diaspora.¹¹

PLACING GHANAIAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE LONGER HISTORY OF BLACK INTERNATIONALISM

Du Bois's papers arrived in Amherst in 1976, a symbolic victory for the network of scholars who sought to bring the spirit of 1960s Ghana to the United States. The work of these three Ghanaian professors in the 1970s was part of a longer history of intellectual interactions between the continent and the diaspora focused on ending racial oppression, colonialism, and class exploitation. Although formal Pan-Africanism beginning in the 1890s was one part of a broader range of efforts organized through a series of Pan-African Congresses, its roots could

9. Biondi, *Black Revolution on Campus*; and Ibram X. Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* (New York, 2012).

10. Ira Dworkin, *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial state* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2017); and Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941–1960* (New York, 2015).

11. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*; and James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935–1961* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

be traced to the work of intellectuals like Edward Wilmot Blyden during the 1860s.¹² Other varieties of Black internationalism included Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), formed in Jamaica in 1914, and Cyril Briggs's African Blood Brotherhood, created in Harlem in 1919.¹³ Garvey and Briggs offered an approach that sidelined both nation-states and elite organizing in favor of a kind of populist activist movement that advanced the idea of a united states of Africa.¹⁴ The UNIA had a serious engagement with Africans. For example, Adelaide Casely Hayford, who became the president of the women's branch of the UNIA in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1919, used her platform to challenge patriarchy in African societies and endorse women's political rights.¹⁵ By contrast, many of the activists who participated in the Pan-African Congresses were lawyers and doctors rather than businessmen and revolutionaries. It was not until the fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester, United Kingdom, in 1945, that Africa was well represented and calls issued for immediate independence for African colonies.¹⁶ Du Bois had been present at every Congress since 1900, but by 1945 the momentum was shifting from his top-down form of socialism to Nkrumah's more populist socialism and political nationalism.¹⁷

Nkrumah's beliefs that African unity should be political as much as cultural, that the diaspora should be involved in African liberation, and that colonialism was also about economic exploitation that continued after independence had shaped his vision for Ghana. For Nkrumah, African unity was not simply a cultural project but rather an explicitly interventionist political agenda. It emphasized the importance of African states to be involved in, among other things, Belgian interference in the Congo, the fight against apartheid in southern Africa, Portuguese colonial domination, and the White minority regime in Rhodesia—fights that were still ongoing in the 1970s as Black studies emerged as an academic discipline and an activist project in the United States.¹⁸

The movement for African unity was an activist project that was concerned with the need to take concrete actions to help liberate other parts of the continent to build economic, political, social, and cultural cooperation. Nkrumah's

12. Harry Odamttén, *Edward W. Blyden's Intellectual Transformations: Afropolitanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church* (East Lansing, MI, 2019).

13. Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2014).

14. Kehinde Andrews, "Beyond Pan-Africanism: Garveyism, Malcolm X and the End of the Colonial Nation State," *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 11 (2017): 2508–9.

15. Keisha Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia, 2018), 27–28.

16. Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress* (London, 1995).

17. Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, NY, 2001).

18. Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York, 1963).

notion of Afro-diasporic unity centered the experiences of peoples of African descent within the framework of colonialism by highlighting the exploitation of their economic labor.¹⁹ He believed that members of the diaspora were strategically important in their ability to assert economic and political pressure on the US government and the Soviet Union to influence policies. Nkrumah's vision of liberation also included eradicating economic neocolonialism or the unequal relationship between Africa and imperial powers, a relationship that allowed the latter to extract raw materials from Africa, hampering the continent's economic growth.²⁰ For Nkrumah, Africans and those in the diaspora were entangled in a racial liberatory politics.

Nkrumah's significant role in the fight for Black liberation and his international efforts to spread, develop, and promote his ideas gave them traction well beyond Ghana.²¹ Those whom he inspired interpreted his ideas and resolved the tensions within them in varying ways. Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo all brought portions of Nkrumah's agenda to the African Diaspora, but what they shared was a belief that African liberation required an African American understanding of the continent as a site of shared struggle against oppression rather than as a place of cultural inspiration or distant heritage. At UMass Amherst and Brown, the three scholars worked from 1970 to the late 1980s to make Europe's ongoing economic exploitation of Africa, the persistence of white supremacist regimes in Southern Africa, and the US government's support of these oppressive forces key parts of the otherwise overly US-focused curricula of Black studies programs. Coupling the academic study of Africa with a practical blueprint for liberation, they were also open to the particular radical and activist nature of the US Black student movement and they took from it a sense of how best to connect political education with popular mobilization.

The role that Ghanaian intellectuals played in the United States helps us develop a more comprehensive understanding of Black internationalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Ghanaian intellectuals viewed research centers, classrooms, and public lectures as crucial battlefields on which support for Africa would be won or lost. Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo brought this specific version of political, economic, and cultural Pan-Africanism into the United States precisely at the moment when Black studies programs were being established and thus helped to shape the trajectory of US Black studies programs.

19. Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle against World Imperialism* (London, 1962).

20. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York, 1965), ix.

21. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019).

THE GOLD COAST AS A HUB OF BLACK INTERNATIONALISM

Ghana's role in Black internationalism began long before its independence in 1957. The works of intellectuals based there, including J. E. Casely Hayford and James Aggrey, were vital to shaping transnational liberatory politics. Casely Hayford, who was in dialogue with intellectuals such as Blyden, used his 1911 *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* to argue for the inclusion of Africans within the Pan-African movement and the need for them to play a vital role in its leadership.²² Aggrey was a direct link between this early era of politics and what would follow, having been the person who introduced Nkrumah to the philosophies of Du Bois and Garvey.²³ Aggrey had moved to North Carolina in 1898 to attend Livingstone College, a historically Black college, where he later became a faculty member. In 1905, Aggrey married Rose Douglas, an African American woman—demonstrating that Gold Coast internationalists' engagement with the diaspora extended beyond the intellectual and into the personal. Aggrey later became the sole Black member of the US philanthropic Phelps-Stokes Commission (PSC) to Africa in 1920 and 1923, which in turn shaped the mission of Achimota College, a colonial institution of higher learning in the Gold Coast where Aggrey served as the first assistant vice principal.²⁴ It was at Achimota that Aggrey educated and mentored Nkrumah.

Nkrumah's political Pan-Africanism would move beyond that of Casely Hayford and Aggrey by rejecting reformist politics and calling for the end of European imperial rule altogether.²⁵ Once he became prime minister in 1952, he worked to make Ghana into a hub of Pan-Africanism. Many Ghanaian scholars, including William Abraham, Efua Sutherland, and Nketsia himself, came to reflect that vision in their academic research and activism. Nketsia served as the director of the Institute of Arts and Culture and chaired the First International Congress of Africanists in Ghana in 1962, which called for the scientific study of Africa.²⁶ More generally, the early 1960s was a period of profound change for the University of Ghana. The IAS, founded in 1961, was established to study the histories and cultures of Ghana, Africa, and the African Diaspora. Its faculty organized activities and seminars centered on African unity and Pan-Africanism

22. Kwaku Korang, *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 28.

23. David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah Vision and Tragedy* (Accra, 2007), 24–25.

24. Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in Africa: A Study of West, South, and Equatorial Africa by the African Education Commission, under the Auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and Foreign Mission Societies of North America and Europe* (New York, 1922).

25. Korang, *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa*, 28 and 251.

26. Michael Crowder, "The First International Congress of Africanists," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (1963): 250–52.

and invited prominent speakers, including Wallace Johnson and Eric Williams.²⁷ It was during this period that Nkrumah sponsored Du Bois's *Encyclopedia Africana* project, which he hoped would "take [Africans] one further step towards . . . a Continental Union Government of Africa."²⁸

Ironically, most of the research produced by IAS between 1961 and 1966 was focused on Ghana. For instance, over 71 percent of the theses submitted by full-time students in that period focused exclusively on Ghanaian histories and cultures.²⁹ On the whole, IAS's work in those years was shaped more by the nationalist intellectual climate of most of the continent and did not differ much from the way Americans and Europeans studied Africa at the time.

Although many Ghanaian university scholars espoused some aspects of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, most did not share all of his specific views. Nketsia, for instance, supported Nkrumah's political and cultural nationalism but not his forceful modernism, his economic analysis of imperialism, or his socialism. Nketsia particularly criticized the way Nkrumah used socialism and anti-imperialism to justify silencing political dissent. Nketsia had served on the commission that recommended the creation of IAS in 1960, but in 1964 Nkrumah removed him as the chairman of the University Council after he refused to dismiss three senior faculty members who Nkrumah believed were "engaged in subversive activities prejudicial to the security of the state and would therefore have to be deported."³⁰ Abraham, a close advisor to Nkrumah, noted that even though Nkrumah would consult him "whenever he was in a corner," the men "were not friends," and Abraham took the rare step of publicly criticizing Nkrumah in the press.³¹ The relative intellectual autonomy of scholars like Nketsia and Abraham suggests that they were not simply puppets or mouthpieces of Nkrumah and took multiple approaches to Pan-Africanism even before they moved into the diaspora.

The 1966 coup halted many of these projects, including the *Encyclopedia Africana*, and IAS came under scrutiny and reorganization.³² The military government jailed many intellectuals who had been associated with the Nkrumah

27. *Institute of African Studies Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 9, May 17, 1965, 1-3, UGI/3/2/3/78, University of Ghana Archives.

28. Allman, "Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production," 199.

29. *University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, 1961-1964*, 14-16; *University Calendar, 1965-1966*, 4-7, both in UGI/3/8/4A, University of Ghana Archives.

30. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Britain and Africa" *Minerva* 5, no. 1 (1966): 91.

31. Alec Russell, "William Abraham: All Souls' First African Scholar Returns to Oxford," *Financial Times*, August 3, 2018.

32. Allman, "Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production," 201-2.

regime and forced others into exile. Despite these setbacks, the role Ghanaians played in the development of Pan-Africanist thought did not come to an end with Nkrumah's ouster. Instead, it was transformed by new circumstances. Nkrumah's overthrow propelled more radical Ghanaian scholars to move out of the country and thereby engage in a more global intellectual community. Ironically, this in many ways fulfilled the Nkrumahist project more effectively than had the institutions that Nkrumah had set up in Ghana. Rather than expecting the diaspora and the rest of Africa to come to Ghana, these Ghanaians moved to the diaspora and to other parts of the continent, enabling them to break away from the nation-state framework that had limited earlier research.

THE EMERGENCE OF A GHANAIAN INTELLECTUAL DIASPORA

In the post-Nkrumah era, a diasporic network of Ghanaian intellectuals emerged, including some who had been at IAS and others who were already living abroad before 1966. After his dismissal from the University of Ghana, Nketsia, for example, had begun working for international institutions and had thus already left Ghana before the coup.³³ As a paramount chief of Essikado Traditional Area, an active figure in Ghana's struggle for independence, and an Oxford-trained scholar, his expertise on cultural and political matters was widely sought. In early 1966, Gomes Machado, head of the Cultural Division of UNESCO, hired Nketsia to consult with scholars at the Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela and Brazil IAS locations, in preparation for a projected UNESCO Colloquium on the cultural relations between Africa and Latin America.³⁴

There were many brilliant Ghanaian women students at the time, and women played important intellectual and political roles in Nkrumah's era.³⁵ These figures included Sutherland, a founding member of IAS, and Grace Ayensu, one of the first women in parliament, as well as Hannah Kudjoe and Evelyn Amarteifio, two of Ghana's prominent nationalists. Ghanaian women intellectuals also forged linkages and solidarity with other Black people in the diaspora. Sutherland and Amarteifio formed close relationships with African American women activists, including Maya Angelou and Shirley Graham Du Bois. Almost all of the beneficiaries of scholarships to study abroad, however, were men. No woman from Afesi's 1961 cohort at the prestigious Achimota College, for example, was selected to

33. O'Brien, "Autonomy and Academic Freedom," *Minerva*, 91.

34. Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, "Report to UNESCO on a Cultural Mission to Latin America," IAS, Legon: file no. Res/Proj. 50, p. 1.

35. Jean Allman, "The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism and the Tyrannies of History," *Journal of Women's History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 13-35; and Naaborko Sackeyfiolenoch, "Women's International Alliances in an Emergent Ghana," *Journal of West African History* 4, no. 1 (2018): 27-56.

study in the United States.³⁶ This gender disparity was also evident in international gatherings such as the *New York Herald Tribune's* World Youth Forum, where, in 1960, Dzidzienyo became the third man in a row selected to represent Ghana.³⁷

During the late 1960s and 1970s, US Black studies departments rarely hired African women, let alone those from Ghana.³⁸ Consequently, the discrimination against women that existed within academia on both sides of the Atlantic and that was embedded in both university hiring practices and the scholarship system created a bias that provided men such as Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo the opportunity to work in Black studies programs. This gender bias showed up in the work these scholars did.

Dzidzienyo, Ayensu's stepson, earned his MA in Latin American politics from the University of Essex in 1968 and a year later became a research fellow at the Institute of Race Relations in the United Kingdom. At the time of the coup, Afesi was a PhD candidate at Michigan State University (MSU), where he was studying political science and African history under the supervision of the university's first historian of Africa, James Hooker.³⁹ The coup made it difficult for Ghanaians like Dzidzienyo and Nketsia to return to Ghana. Dzidzienyo's parents were active in the Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. Dzidzienyo's first met Nkrumah when Nkrumah visited his father's shop during the independence struggle. Nketsia's colleagues, including Abraham, who had been close to the Nkrumah's regime, were arrested. Ghana was unsafe and unwelcoming for Nkrumah-influenced scholars.

Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo all saw themselves as part of a broader Nkrumahist project but had diverse approaches to the actual politics of liberation on the continent. These distinctions translated into different ways of engaging with African American activist scholars and thus various ways of promoting the study of Africa in the United States. For his part, Afesi approached the study of Africa through the lens of anticapitalism. In his writing and activism, he focused primarily on the economic motivations of Western Europe, the United States, and White settlers in Africa. Europe and the United States, he

36. Cadman Atta Mills, e-mail message to author, February 27, 2020.

37. Anani Dzidzienyo, e-mail message to author, November 6, 2018.

38. The institutional records of early Black studies programs/departments in places like Brown University, Northwestern University, and the five colleges consortium underscore African women's absence. Certainly African women scholars were hired, such as Lina Fruzzetti at Brown in 1975, but she was in anthropology, not Black studies. She and Dzidzienyo would, however, coteach a Black studies course in the 1980s. Though my research has yet to uncover further evidence of African or Ghanaian women in the early development of US Black studies, future research may do so.

39. Hooker died in a car accident, and Afesi never completed his dissertation; *Evening News* (Sault Sainte Marie, MI), August 6, 1969.

maintained, "depend[ed] on Africa for the survival of their economic and thus political systems."⁴⁰

By contrast, Nketsia's extensive travels to Brazil, Haiti, and Suriname caused him to have a broader perspective on diasporic cultural practices.⁴¹ Unlike Nketsia, White pioneers of US African studies programs, including the renowned anthropologist Melville Herskovits, compared diaspora practices with historical practices during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the Herskovits model, the only Africa that is relevant to the Americas is Africa of the past. Nketsia, on the other hand, understood that the changes that had taken place in Africa since the trans-Atlantic slave trade were a necessary condition for real solidarity.

Like Nketsia, Dzidzienyo emphasized the unity of Africans and peoples of African descent but also shared some of Afesi's interests in economic inequality. Most distinctively, Dzidzienyo brought an emphasis on what Africa meant for Afro-Latin Americans and the ways to mobilize Black people in Latin America for the fight against white supremacy worldwide.⁴² Connecting with Africa, Dzidzienyo opined, would allow peoples of African descent to develop a globally attuned racial political consciousness.

The ways Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo engaged the politics of African Diaspora studies in the United States were shaped not only by their Ghanaian backgrounds, but also by US debates over the meaning and place of Africa in African studies. Their intellectual work was also informed by debates over who had the authority to study and teach African Diaspora studies. Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo arrived in the United States at the cusp of the Black Power era, a time when Cold War politics and Black nationalism had turned Africa into an abstract political symbol for many Black activists rather than as a place of ongoing political struggle and sociocultural transformation. The Black Power era marked a significant turning point in American intellectual history. Black university students during the 1960s and 1970s demanded a curriculum that challenged the Euro-American focus within American universities and called for the creation of Black studies departments.⁴³ It was during this period that the marginalization of Black scholars within the African Studies Association (ASA) precipitated a conflict over whether White rather than Black intellectuals should interpret

40. Dovi Afesi, "The International Implications of Africans Liberation Struggles," *The Drum* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 29.

41. Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, "Africa and the Black Diaspora," *The Drum* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 37.

42. Anani Dzidzienyo, "The African Connection and the Afro-Brazilian Condition," in *Race, Class and Power in Brazil* ed. Pierre-Michel Fontaine (Los Angeles, 1985), 135-53.

43. Biondi, *Black Revolution on Campus*.

African history and cultures. This conflict led to the formation of the breakaway African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) in 1969.⁴⁴ Ironically, the agenda of the AHSA became more centered on the United States than Africa.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, some Black scholars, such as John Bracey and Michael Thelwell, were eager for a more Africa-centered account of Africa's history and circumstances. The Black Power era, then, posed a challenge for Ghanaian scholars like Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo. Some in the United States were receptive to their project, but others lacked either enough direct knowledge of Africa or any political incentive to be more global in the way they brought Blackness into the diaspora.

By 1970, as American universities were beginning to approve of departments that focused on Blacks in the Americas, these Ghanaian scholars were working both to link Black studies and African studies as academic disciplines and to connect Africa and the diaspora as overlapping spaces of political struggle. With experiences and concerns that differed from their US colleagues, these scholars attempted to reorient Black studies in the United States. The courses that they developed and taught, the programs that they pioneered, the conference and study abroad programs that they organized, their published and unpublished works, their informal and public lectures, and their participation in organizations such as the Association of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS) all contributed to their efforts to shape African Diaspora studies.⁴⁶ Whatever their scholarly differences, Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo worked closely on this project, bringing an activist sociopolitical, cultural, and economic as well as Pan-Africanist approaches to the study of Africa and its diaspora. Together, they helped build a broader network that stretched well beyond the United States to include West Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas as a whole.

That emerging network—which built on the older ties established by earlier Black internationalists—included the likes of John Henrik Clarke in the United States, Shirley Graham Du Bois in Ghana, Abdias do Nascimento in Brazil, and Maurice Bishop in Grenada. Indeed, the various versions of African studies that developed in the Americas during this period reflected the efforts of this Ghanaian diaspora in significant ways. Their work represented an important shift from the scholarship that had been carried out in the name of Pan-Africanism in Ghana up to 1966. In many ways, their work more fully realized

44. John Henrik Clarke, "The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA): Some Notes on the Conflict with the African Studies Association (ASA) and the Fight to Reclaim African History," *A Journal of Opinion* 6, nos. 2/3 (1976): 5.

45. *Ibid.*, 7.

46. The Association of Concerned African Scholars later changed its name to the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars. This was because not all its members were African but all studied Africa.

Nkrumah's hopes for academic work that would link Africa and the diaspora than had been possible in Ghana itself. This global outlook was not, however, necessarily shared by the Black studies scholars in the United States with whom they worked. Ghanaian scholars' efforts to connect with their US colleagues thus required them to engage their US coworkers' own priorities and perspectives. In the process, the politics of Black studies came to transform their own visions for the study of Africa.

REORIENTING BLACK STUDIES

In 1972, civil rights activist Michael Thelwell, chair of the Department of Afro-American Studies at UMass Amherst, invited Afesi to join the faculty.⁴⁷ As an assistant professor, Afesi became instrumental in developing African studies within the region's Five College Consortium, which included UMass Amherst, Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, and Smith College. This move amplified the influence of his scholarly work.

As the only member from a developing country on both the Faculty Senate Committee on Overseas Programs and Exchanges and the Statewide Committee on International Studies and Program, Afesi ensured that Africa became a core focus of the university's affairs.⁴⁸ In 1974, he initiated the International Exchange Program to send students to the University of Lagos and the University of Cape Coast and to bring African students and African junior faculty to UMass Amherst. This program aimed to build a personal bridge between Africans and African Americans as well as to increase their awareness of one another's histories and cultures.⁴⁹ A year later, Afesi initiated and chaired the first Five College Faculty Seminar on Africa, which provided a formal forum for intellectual exchange among the consortium's Africanist faculty. The seminar had over seventy faculty participants. By 1977, Afesi's colleagues recognized his efforts as having been central to the institutionalizing of African studies in the US Northeast.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Dzidzienyo was also exercising an important influence in the region. In 1969, Brown University had appointed Rhett Jones, an African American scholar, to establish and develop an Afro-American studies program

47. Michael Thelwell, interview with author March 25, 2019.

48. Dovi Afesi, "Request for a Support Grant for Travel to Ghana and Nigeria," December 4, 1980, personal papers, Easthampton, MA.

49. W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, "Du Bois Lines" (Winter 1979), Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

50. Johnnetta Cole received by J. V. O. Richards, W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst, October 19, 1977.

on its campus.⁵¹ In 1973, Dzidzienyo—who was fluent in English, Ewe, Fanti, French, Portuguese, and Spanish—became the first tenure-track professor that Jones hired, a decisive choice that Jones never regretted.⁵² Jones later declared that “Brown’s Black Studies unit was among the pioneers in what now is called the study of the African diaspora [because of] Dzidzienyo.”⁵³ Dzidzienyo ensured that Brown’s approach to the diaspora would be genuinely hemispheric in scope. In 1975, Dzidzienyo played the central role in creating Brown’s Center for Portuguese and Brazilian Studies and Bilingual Education. Dzidzienyo helped to make Brown’s program renowned for excellence in research and teaching in the Portuguese-speaking world, especially on Afro-Portuguese societies.⁵⁴

Dzidzienyo used his teaching to bring this broader diaspora to the attention of Black studies students. In the late 1970s, for instance, he developed two year-long courses: “African History and Society” and “Blacks in Latin American History and Society.” With Dzidzienyo’s courses as models, the faculty in the Afro-American Studies Department then created two other year-long courses: “Afro-American History and Society” and “Caribbean History and Society.” These courses, which were multidisciplinary in approach, focused on the Black past as well as contemporary issues across the African Diaspora. As a result, Brown University came to an early prominence in the study of the African Diaspora.⁵⁵

Dzidzienyo’s intellectual contribution to this work was his exploration of the connection between African and Latin American countries as well as what the memory of Africa had come to mean for identity and emancipatory political movements throughout Latin America.⁵⁶ Focusing primarily on Brazil, Dzidzienyo explored both historical and contemporary linkages. He was one of the first anglophone scholars to highlight the unequal socioeconomic and political positions of Afro-Brazilians as a challenge to the then-prevailing notion of Brazil as a racial democracy.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Dzidzienyo noted that Afro-Brazilians had been largely excluded from Brazil’s growing political and economic engagement with Africa.⁵⁸ He believed, however, that African independence and the subsequent arrival of African diplomats in Brazil in the 1960s had begun to increase interest

51. Rhett Jones, “Dreams, Nightmares, and Realities: Afro-American Studies at Brown University, 1969–1986,” in *A Companion to African-American Studies* ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Malden, MA, 2006), 33.

52. *Ibid.*, 48.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Brown University, “About This Department | Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies,” <https://www.brown.edu/academics/portuguese-brazilian-studies/about-department>.

55. Jones, “Dreams, Nightmares, and Realities,” 49.

56. Anani Dzidzienyo, telephone interview with author, April 24, 2019.

57. Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society* (London, 1971), 5.

58. Dzidzienyo, “African Connection and the Afro-Brazilian Condition,” 136.

and awareness among Afro-Brazilians in contemporary African political, economic, and social developments. This, in turn, had begun to undermine their own political isolation. It was for this reason that he insisted that scholars shift their attention from a "frozen Africanity," which simply celebrated specific African historical, cultural, and religious retentions, to a study of the diaspora as a "dynamic variant," one whose crosscurrents shaped the sociopolitical realities of contemporary Africa and Latin America.⁵⁹

Reflecting his belief in the power of education to cultivate an Afro-diasporic consciousness, Dzidzienyo suggested that if Afro-Brazilians became more aware of the struggle of Africans and African Americans for political, social, and economic independence, they would begin to identify with those political movements and thus strengthen their own relationship to Africa.⁶⁰ Dzidzienyo observed that in Brazil, Black people and their culture were demonized. The White regime portrayed darker Brazilians as "primitive" and "backwards," the same descriptions Europeans used to portray Africa and its peoples. He noticed that many Brazilians, including "mixed-bloods," drew distinctions between subtle variations in skin tone.⁶¹ In doing so, they distanced themselves from darker or Black people. Based on this observation, Dzidzienyo rejected the term "people of color" as a contribution to the fable of the racial egalitarianism.⁶² He explained that the Brazilian government, through policies like *branqueamento* (whitening), hoped to ensure that its citizens aspired to whiteness and thus allowed the country to escape from the "black predicament."⁶³ The myth of racial equality that the Brazilian government sought to project, Dzidzienyo posited, had isolated Black Brazilians from participating in or embracing the global "Black consciousness."⁶⁴ For Dzidzienyo, the wave of independence in Africa created an avenue for Afro-Brazilians to link their struggles for equality with African independent movements while maintaining their "Brazilianness."⁶⁵ This call for diasporic unity was centered on racial unity but also was based on an activist liberatory politics.

Two years after Afesi's arrival at UMass Amherst, the third leg of this northeastern intellectual trio came into place when Nketsia became an adjunct professor of African culture in the university's W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies and a visiting scholar in the Five College Consortium.

59. *Ibid.*, 139.

60. *Ibid.*, 19.

61. In fact, these variations were connected to one's position vis-à-vis three axes: European-ness, African-ness, and Indigen-ness; see Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, CA, 2015).

62. Dzidzienyo, *Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society*, 7.

63. *Ibid.*, 12.

64. *Ibid.*, 5.

65. *Ibid.*, 19.

Despite his more recent arrival in New England, Nketsia's earlier prominence in Ghana and his global experience made him the group's intellectual leader. In his 1974 article "Africa and the Black Diaspora," Nketsia set forth the most comprehensive picture of the intellectual project that he and his colleagues Afesi and Dzidzienyo were bringing to the United States. He placed their efforts within a long genealogy of Ghanaian activists in the diaspora. Nketsia outlined the important and interconnected contributions of colonial-era Gold Coasters in the struggle for liberation at home and abroad, dating back to the eighteenth century. He pointed to Ottobah Cugoano, a Gold Coast-born abolitionist and ex-slave, who in 1787 had published the abolitionist tract *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*.⁶⁶ Nketsia noted that Chief Alfred Sam, another Gold Coast-born but London-based merchant and Black internationalist, had intended to finance many Black Americans to Africa in the early twentieth century but had been blocked by the British colonial government. Nketsia argues that Sam's ideas about a new "back to Africa" movement in turn influenced the young Marcus Garvey, who had worked in Sam's London office.⁶⁷

Nketsia highlights J. E. Casely Hayford's belief that Africans and Black Americans needed to engage in a collaborative project in which Africans taught those in the New World about African cultures and histories, and those in the Americas educated Africans about Western science and technology.⁶⁸ Nketsia claims that Casely Hayford's ideas, which explicitly went "beyond the seas along the middle passage to his Brothers and Sisters in the New World,"⁶⁹ directly shaped the political struggles at the turn of the twentieth century in the Gold Coast and thus established the foundation that would lead to Nkrumah's emphasis on African Diasporic unity. He argued that continued collaboration between Africans and peoples of African descent would create an avenue for the exchange of ideas that would be useful in empowering both communities.

Nketsia's presence in the region was felt beyond UMass Amherst. His home became an intellectual hub for Black intellectuals. Black Power leaders such as Michael Thelwell and Stokely Carmichael met with him to learn more about Ghanaian cultures and those of other peoples of African descent.⁷⁰ According to Thelwell, Carmichael had told him that Nketsia was a "Western-educated man, yet strongly invested in Akan traditional belief and practice, and with

66. Nketsia, "Africa and the Black Diaspora," 34.

67. Kendra Field and Ebony Coletu, "The Chief Sam Movement, Century Later," *Transition* 114 (2014): 108-30.

68. Nketsia, "Africa and the Black Diaspora," 36.

69. *Ibid.*, 35.

70. Michael Thelwell, interview with author, March 25, 2019.

impeccable nationalist credentials in struggle.”⁷¹ This combination allowed Nketsia to convince Black intellectuals to think about the present connections between Africa and the Americas rather than just the influence of Africa traditions on diasporic cultures. This required acknowledging that Africa had not stood still since the era of the slave trade and that Black studies and Black Power alike needed to take into account the present realities of the continent.

Together, Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo represented a broad spectrum of Ghanaian intellectuals who had a profound impact on the study of Africa and Black studies in the United States. They argued for the necessity of understanding contemporary African culture and politics to achieve Black liberation in the diaspora. Afesi's tireless institution building, Nketsia's emphasis on using cultural similarities to build political solidarity, and Dzidzienyo's interest in racial consciousness in Latin America ensured that their US colleagues could not simply fold Africa into either a mythic past heritage or a history frozen in the eighteenth century.

Other Ghanaian scholars played similar roles elsewhere in the United States, including the Columbia University-trained scholar Wentworth B. Ofuately-Kodjoe, who served as president of AHSa from 1985 to 1989 and helped establish the Africana Studies Program at Queens College, City University of New York (CUNY) and the graduate programs in African Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center.⁷² Though Ofuately-Kodjoe was an astute academic, the density of connections among Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo made their impact greater than the sum of their parts. At the same time, however, their emphasis on building networks and on transforming their host communities by reaching out to these new audiences and interpreting Africa for them meant that they in turn found themselves transformed.

THE IMPACT OF THE UNITED STATES ON GHANAIAN INTELLECTUALS

UMass Amherst was an auspicious and generative home for Afesi and Nketsia. The core faculty in the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, where Afesi and Nketsia were both appointed, included scholar-activists from the Black liberation movement: Thelwell, Bracey, and William Strickland. UMass

71. Nketsia's thesis had been on the sacred ritual, secular ceremony, and symbolic historical reenactment" that had accompanied his own enstoolment as a Fanti traditional ruler; Stockley Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael* (New York, 2003), 629.

72. William Sales, "Passing of Wentworth Ofuately-Kodjoe," March 19, 2009, <https://lists.h-net.org/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-afro-am&month=0903&week=c&msg=QOXpvg5kW7ix265C9a%2B6RA&user=&pw=>.

was one of the first American universities to divest from apartheid South Africa.⁷³ The radical and activist culture on campus influenced and enabled Afesi to connect his political economic analysis of African liberation struggles, especially those in southern Africa, to the political education and mobilization of African Americans.

It was under the influence of the activist nature at UMass Amherst that Afesi used his 1974 publication “The International Implications of African Liberation Struggles”—which appeared in the same issues of UMass’s journal, *Drum Black* as Nketsia’s “African and the Black Diaspora”—to stress the importance of an activist approach to the study of Africa, one that situated the issues of European economic exploitation, ongoing colonial rule in southern Africa, and United States and Portuguese militarism within a broader context of capitalism. In the essay, Afesi argued that “African liberation aims at the liberation of the land” and that political freedom without economic independence was meaningless.⁷⁴ He noted that the economic relationships between newly independent African countries and their former colonial masters were still one of exploitation.⁷⁵ Afesi noted that Europe’s dependence on African raw material resources, including cobalt and phosphates, was the primary reason for Africa’s poverty.

Furthermore, Afesi explained to his audience that the United States benefited economically from the slave trade and that its corporations, including Ford and IBM, had started to exploit the continent.⁷⁶ Afesi observed that most Americans were unaware that American industries exploit African farmers to extract kola nuts, coconut oils, and coffee to meet its consumers’ demand for soft drinks, soaps, and chocolate.⁷⁷ Afesi argued that Western capitalist economies were united in their opposition to the liberation of Africans and peoples of African descent and that this was why the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States consistently protected, defended, and invested in the White minority regime in Southern Africa. While Afesi posited that the fundamental aim of colonialism and neocolonialism was exploitation, he maintained that “such exploitation cannot exist when a people are liberated; that is in control of their destinies.” For Afesi, until Africans and peoples of African descent recognized and acknowledged the global nature of their exploitation and the importance of collaboration, they would remain in captivity.

Afesi’s US colleagues pushed him to think carefully about African American perceptions of Africa. In a department where the core faculty were mostly

73. John Bracey, interview with author, March 25, 2019.

74. Afesi, “International Implications of African Liberation Struggles,” 26.

75. *Ibid.*, 27.

76. *Ibid.* 28.

77. *Ibid.* 29.

activist scholars, Afesi adopted ideas about the importance of public outreach. He developed a political education program for the African community and African Americans in the Amherst area.⁷⁸ Afesi argued that Africans' fight for independence faced "formidable opposition from the forces and vested interests of western monopoly capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism."⁷⁹ For Afesi, Western Europe, the United States, and White settler colonialists were invested in controlling Africa's natural resources to ensure their survival and prosperity. Indeed, this was a time when the US government was providing Portugal with planes, weapons, and landmines to use against the independence movements in their colonies, something that gripped the attention of scholars of Africa more generally.⁸⁰ Africanists in the United States created the ASA journal *ISSUE* for hosting discussions on US Africa policy. Across college campuses, Africanists showed films on southern Africa, signed petitions, and campaigned for divestment for companies operating under the apartheid regime. These efforts were aimed at changing the US government's policy toward southern Africa.

Afesi endorsed these efforts but chose a different audience. He wanted to impress on both Africans and African Americans that colonialism was an international project that required a collaborative resistance. He explained that "Angola is not fighting Portugal, Angola is fighting a system. It is not just the South African white who is responsible for the dehumanization of the African—he is only part of a larger system."⁸¹ For Afesi, the most effective way for Africans to challenge their oppression and exploitation was to unite globally: "in other words for the liberation struggle to be successful, it must be Pan-Africanized."⁸² That Pan-African commitment was, of course, something Afesi had, like Nketsia and Dzidzienyo, inherited from Ghana. But his new home forced all three to think about the need to engage the African Americans around them politically to bring Nkrumahist ideas to the American public for the sake of the emancipation of Black people throughout the world—Pan-African liberation. Afesi's call for Africans and African Americans to "strive to achieve [a] kind of political-cultural bond" that would enable them to attain political, social, and economic independence was a further attempt to connect the study of Africa to the global political development in Africa. For instance, in 1976, Afesi used WMUA, a student-run college radio station, as a platform for discussing the "Liberation Struggles in

78. "The Publicity Committee W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies" (1974), 1, Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

79. Afesi, "International Implications of African Liberation Struggles," 27.

80. David Wiley, "Militarizing Africa and African Studies and the U.S. Africanist Response," *African Studies Review* 55, no. 2 (2012): 150.

81. Afesi, "International Implications of African Liberation Struggles," 29.

82. *Ibid.*, 29.

Angola: the International Implications.” That same year, Afesi organized a rally in support of Angola at the Amherst Commons.

After the university denied Afesi tenure in 1977 for failure to produce a monograph, Bracey advised him to write a book based on Du Bois’s essays in *The World and Africa*.⁸³ Under pressure to publish a monograph, Afesi attempted to return to MSU to complete his doctoral dissertation, which focused on Du Bois’s last years in Ghana and his influence on historical scholarship on and in Africa. In a 1980 letter to MSU historian David Robinson, Afesi explained that there were no major studies on Du Bois’s relations with Africa, “particularly in terms of his contributive activities (*Encyclopedia Africana*); his relationship with Nkrumah; his ideological perceptions; his continued efforts on behalf of Pan-Africanism etc.”⁸⁴ Afesi stated that despite the fact that Du Bois consistently opposed Marcus Garvey on the issue of African Americans repatriating to Africa, “ironically, it was [Du Bois] who finally went ‘home’ to settle.”⁸⁵ For Afesi, studying Du Bois’s later views and sentiments on repatriation and other related issues revealed the ways that Ghana’s sociocultural and political milieu may have shaped and influenced African Americans’ relations to Africa in a way that could force them to engage with the realities of modern Africa.

Later in the 1970s, Afesi became involved in the Association of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS), an organization established in 1978 by scholars and students of Africa. ACAS opposed US activities that were detrimental to Africa, including the US government’s support for South Africa’s apartheid regime and for a South African- and US-backed rebel movement in Angola.⁸⁶ In the same year, Afesi organized a conference at UMass Amherst titled “The Role of the United States Military Involvement in Southern Africa.”⁸⁷ In his presentation, Afesi revealed the ways in which Europeans used racist ideologies to justify their violent conquest and exploitation of the peoples of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia as well as imposed White-minority rule in those countries.⁸⁸

83. John Bracey, interview with author, March 25, 2019.

84. Dovi Afesi to David Robinson, History Department, Michigan State University, October 1, 1980, personal papers, Easthampton, MA.

85. Ibid.

86. Wiley, “Militarizing Africa and African Studies and the U.S. Africanist Response,” 149.

87. W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, University of Massachusetts, “W.E.B. Du Bois Lines” (Winter 1979). While the university denied Afesi tenure, the Department of Afro-American Studies retained him as a part-time lecturer.

88. Dovi Afesi, “The Roots of Conflict in Southern Africa,” in *US Military Involvement in Southern Africa*, ed. Western Massachusetts Association of Concerned African Scholars (Boston, 1978), 18–35.

While Afesi's interactions with US colleagues influenced his activism, it was Nketsia's travels throughout the Global South that helped him realize the depths of the connections between Africa and its diaspora. This realization shaped his belief that the vibrant presence of African cultures in the Americas could serve as a unifying force to promote political collaboration. Nketsia argued that the continued use of the matrilineal family organization, chieftaincy, the Ashanti court dance, the use of the Akansafo (Coromanty marital songs), as well as the talking drum—which were found in the Americas, especially in Suriname and Guyana—represented ongoing connections between Africa and its diaspora.⁸⁹ Based on his experience as a student in the Gold Coast and as a professor in the United States, he felt that many Africans were largely unaware of the experiences of those in the New World slavery and that most Black Americans did not know the full effect of the slave trade on African society.⁹⁰ By acknowledging that some African traditions had become extinct, Nketsia recognized that when looking at the connections between Africa and the diaspora, one must be aware that cultural practices in the homelands could change.

The United States also provided Dzidzienyo with an intellectual community beyond Brown University that was interested in questions about race, class, and power in Brazil. Dzidzienyo's interlocutors included Michael Mitchell, the director of the Black studies program at St. Peter's College, and J. Michael Turner, a program officer in the Rio de Janeiro field office of the Ford Foundation.⁹¹ Through discussions and debates with scholars like Mitchell and Turner, Dzidzienyo came to see the importance of bringing Africa into the African Diaspora, particularly in Brazilian discourses.

THE AFRICAN DIASPORA NETWORK OF GHANAIAN INTELLECTUALS

Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo saw their ideas develop dialectically, with their Ghana-specific inheritance interacting with the Black Power era activism of their colleagues. One objective in their work in Black studies was to draw attention to the diaspora in the Americas more broadly. The pioneer in this effort was Nketsia, who, as early as 1966 while working as a consultant for UNESCO, had traveled through Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. During these journeys, he forged an extensive network with activist intellectuals who advocated for an approach to Africa that stressed contemporary comparisons between the continent and Latin America.⁹² These comparable conditions, Nketsia

89. Nketsia, "Africa and the Black Diaspora," 38.

90. *Ibid.*, 37.

91. Anani Dzidzienyo, telephone interview with author, April 24, 2019.

92. Nketsia, "Report to UNESCO on a Cultural Mission to Latin America," 14.

posited, allowed for Africans and peoples of African descent to develop a collective identity in their struggle to overthrow global white supremacy and the vestiges of colonial rule.

Nketsia challenged the popular notions that Africa's only genuine connection to the diaspora was the slave trade and that contemporary affairs on the continent were not relevant to the fate of the diaspora. Instead, Nketsia asserted that Africa was very much part of the diaspora and thus was vital to understanding the present and future of the Americas. It was in this context that he first developed his insight that cultural development could not take place in a vacuum but that the cultural ideas, values, and institutions that Africans transported to the New World had "in some significant cases been subjected to new ideas, values and institutions in the new environment."⁹³ He maintained that the existence of African religions and Catholicism in Africa influenced and shaped religious and cultural rituals in the Americas. He also emphasized the importance of studying theater and folklore as another way to highlight the ongoing connections and to include non-elites in African studies.⁹⁴

For his part, Dzidzienyo's expertise in Latin American political activism prompted him to build his own networks in the region. His integration into the Afro-Brazilian diasporic network gave him the opportunity to observe Nketsia's role there and to observe how Nketsia sought to foment a Black consciousness. In a recent oral account, Dzidzienyo discussed Nketsia's connection to leading Afro-Brazilian scholar-activist Abdias Nascimento. Dzidzienyo noted that among Nascimento's papers, he discovered a handwritten note dating back to 1962.⁹⁵ The note contained a recollection of the words that Nketsia had addressed to Nascimento in Rio de Janeiro at the apartment of Marietta Campos Damas, an Afro-Brazilian activist and friend of Nascimento's who was married to the Martinican-born Léon Damas, one of the founding fathers of the Negritude movement. Dzidzienyo stated that Nketsia was moved by Nascimento's anger at the oppressive nature of Brazilian racism and the exigency to combat it. In this gathering, which brought together Afro-Brazilians and Afro-French Guianese, Nketsia "conveyed a holistic vision of the African universe and the inclusion of South American African descent brothers and sisters in a manner which did not allow language barriers to subvert the sense of solidarity."⁹⁶ While the problems that Afro-Latin Americans and Africans faced were diverse, Nketsia opined that it was vital that they generate solutions allowing for collaboration, because the struggle against colonialism, imperialism,

93. *Ibid.*, 18.

94. *Ibid.* 30.

95. Anani Dzidzienyo, e-mail message to author, November 6, 2018.

96. *Ibid.*

and white supremacy was not an isolated dilemma, but a global phenomenon. The adoption of a Black consciousness—which, on the one hand, urged Africans to become involved in the fight against the oppression of Afro-Latin Americans, especially Afro-Brazilians, and, on the other, encouraged Afro-Latin Americans to contribute to the liberation in Africa, especially against Portuguese colonial domination—was instrumental in the global Black struggle.

While Nketsia's and Dzidzienyo's networks were concentrated mostly among Afro-Brazilians, Afesi became involved in Grenada. In 1980, Dessima Williams, Grenada's ambassador to the United States, asked Afesi to organize a local "Grenada Support Group" at UMass Amherst to solicit books, posters, and films to support Grenada's Department of Education.⁹⁷ Later that year, Afesi gave a talk titled "Imperialism and the National Liberation Struggle" at a festival that the Grenadian government had organized to mark the one-year anniversary of the overthrow of Eric Gairy, the country's first prime minister. During the visit he also delivered a lecture titled "U.S.-South African Relations and the Current Crisis in South Africa" at the International Conference in St. George's, Grenada.⁹⁸ Carol Davis, Grenada's permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education, informed Richard Nolan, dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Fine Arts at UMass, that Afesi's lecture was well received by the government and the public. Therefore, she sought Nolan's permission for Afesi to return to "conduct a series of lectures going into details on the History of African Liberation Struggles and United States Policies in Individual Territories of Southern Africa."⁹⁹ Such a series of lectures, Davis maintained, would satisfy the Grenadian public's desire to learn more about African affairs.¹⁰⁰ A couple of months after this trip, Afesi informed his colleagues of his desire for the department to establish formal relations with the University of the West Indies, Grenada. He suggested that the best way to initiate such collaboration would be for the department to involve itself in supporting a library at its partner institution and requested that faculty donate any books they could spare, noting that Grenadians were extremely passionate about materials that Africans and African Americans had produced.¹⁰¹

97. Dessima Williams to Dovi Afesi, Embassy of Grenada, Washington, DC, February 19, 1980, personal papers, Easthampton, MA.

98. Grenada Government, *Festival of the Revolution: First Year of People's Power, From Backwardness and Oppression to Liberation, Education and Production 1st- 13th March* (Grenada, 1980), 15; Dovi Afesi, curriculum vitae, (1992), personal papers, Easthampton, MA.

99. Carol Davis to Richard Nolan, March 27, 1980, Ministry of Finance, Trade, Industry and Planning, St. George's, Grenada.

100. Ibid.

101. W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, Faculty Meeting Minutes, May 16, 1980, 3, Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The extent to which these Ghanaian intellectuals worked to establish ties with one another, their US colleagues, and scholars and publics elsewhere in the diaspora reflected the type of political organizing and academic analysis that they wanted to foster. They worked to build connections between parts of the diaspora that would facilitate the mutual liberation of peoples of African descent wherever they were. For Nketsia, this could be achieved through cultural solidarity and diplomacy and, in the cases of Dzidzienyo and Afesi, by jointly confronting global capitalism. Their legacies in the institutions they worked for and with, as well as among the students and publics to whom they addressed their efforts, significantly exceeded and extended the work that had been done in this regard at IAS in the years before 1966.

CONCLUSION

While the overthrow of Nkrumah had significant political implications both at home and abroad, the endeavors of Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, Dovi Afesi, and Anani Dzidzienyo demonstrate that the coup compelled some Ghanaian academics to become more globally focused. The result was their pioneering work in the study of Africa and the creation of the field of African Diaspora studies that would permit an emphasis on African cultural retention in the New World to stand in for a potentially revolutionary emphasis on Africa's contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural dynamism. Through this work, they continued to develop and spread Nkrumah's version of intellectual Pan-Africanism—one that linked the study of Africa with the fight of Africans and peoples of African ancestry for political, social, and economic independence.

Through their work with Black Power intellectuals in the United States and other scholar activists throughout the Global South, these Ghanaian academics helped to expand the contours of Black internationalism. They made this possible through their engagements with African Americans. They shifted African Americans away from an idea of an Africa frozen in time. Afesi, Nketsia, Dzidzienyo also introduced an Africa-centered understanding of political education and mobilization in the curriculum in Black studies departments. They challenged their colleagues to acknowledge the importance of Europe's ongoing economic exploitation of Africa, the persistence of white supremacist regimes in southern Africa, and the ways the United States supported these repressive forces. These intellectuals insisted that mutual emancipation required that African Americans view Africa as a place of ongoing political struggle and socio-cultural transformation instead of seeing the continent merely as an abstract symbol or distant heritage.

The varied ways that Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo approached their research and their involvement in diasporic politics shaped their interactions

with one another and with their African American colleagues. Afesi's structural analysis of the contemporary relationship between Africa and the West in the context of global capitalism differed in both content and political implications from Nketsia's interest in the ongoing contemporary cultural similarities between Africa and its diaspora. Dzidzienyo, on the other hand, investigated what Africa meant for Afro-Latin Americans—particularly for Afro-Brazilian identity and political movements—thus broadening the program at Brown and other institutions beyond the simple Africa-US conversation. By shaping and influencing African Americans' engagement with Africa, they gave programs that had emerged in response to domestic struggles an explicitly international orientation. In this, they managed to bring a version of Nkrumah's political and intellectual vision to a new context, reshaping that original vision as they went along.

The impact of Ghanaian intellectuals on the history of Black internationalism and the study of Africa and its diaspora cannot be grasped by looking only at their influence in Ghana. In their own ways, Ghanaians in the diaspora continued the project begun by Nkrumah in 1961 with the founding of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. While the radical vision that Nkrumah had articulated may have been ignored or abandoned in certain centers of African studies in the Global North, or advanced only by European and Euro-American scholars, historians cannot ignore those spaces—often dedicated to the study of Africa and the diaspora—where radical African thinkers remained in control of the intellectual agenda and where, through the 1970s at least, the liberation of Africa remained the central goal.