

THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA: A STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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INTRODUCTION

In an academic exercise of this nature, it is incumbent upon the writer to commence with the erection of a theoretical framework. So, we shall first and foremost, look at the various International migration theories. Thereafter, we shall analyze the emigration phenomenon. In this context, we shall bring to the fore the push factors which brought in their wake the exodus. Next, we shall take more than a casual look at Immigration. In this realm, we shall discuss the pull factors, and the Nigerian physical and cultural presence abroad. Finally, we will analyze the Diaspora-Homeland Relations.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A review of literature shows enormous work done on migration studies. Commenting on this, Julius Komolafe contends that:

“For the past several decades, migration research has produced an impressive collection of studies that approach migration from different perspectives, focusing on different methods of analysis and developing theoretical models.

These include the first generation of migration research which was based on macro empirical scale studies. Such studies searched for the laws of migration.

E. G. Ravenstein, (1885) Herberle, (1938) later formulated a “pull-push” hypothesis to

explain why people move and Lee, (1966) later focused on the characteristics of the potential migrants’ origins and destinations. Short (1978) prompted the development of a more contextualised and micro influenced traditional research. However, White (1980) recognised a philosophical dichotomy in migration research between micro and macro approaches. These approaches produced the theory of multilevel modelling Cadwallader (1989), and Massey (1990). Halfacree and Boyle (1992) developed the theory of assimilation to explain what happens to the migrants in their new environments. Presently, Humanistic methodologies are used in studies that consider migrants as decision makers Thomas-Hope (1999), Riccio, B (2002) and Nadje, A (2002)”.¹

It is instructive to note that International migration theory has been divided into three major types: the macro, meso, and micro. “Macro theories stress the structural intent circumstances that perform ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors for migration”. In respect to Meso theories, it is worthy to note that, they “reject the macro focus on push and pull factors, as an alternative positioning migration stream inside a combined system of relations between states”. The two important aspects of meso theories are systems and networks. “It is assumed that migration will take place within migration system, for example, among economically, politically and

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¹ Julius Komolafe, “Searching for Fortune: The Geographical Process of Nigerian Migration to Dublin, Ireland”, [http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm] accessed on 02/03/2010.

culturally related countries” and networks present “a position of individual and collective subjects, for example, currently existing and possible future migrants, their relatives, businesses, religion, and social groups they belong”. And “micro theories stress out the aspects (a variety of expenses and profits of migration) that are affecting personal choices to migrate”. Micro level explains “concrete, small-scale, and narrow level of reality, such as face-to-face interaction in small groups within short time”.²

Migration usually encompasses more than the factors associated with the areas of origin and destination. This is true whether of migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. Between the areas of origin and destination are intervening obstacles and personal factors which exert a lot of influence upon the individual migrant. As Everett S. Lee explains:

“The balance in favour of the move must be enough to overcome the natural inertia which always exists. Furthermore, between every two points there stands a set of intervening obstacles which may be slight in some instances and insurmountable in others. The most studied of these obstacles is distance, which, while omnipresent, is by no means the most important.... Personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions elsewhere which enter into the evaluation of the situation at destination depends upon personal contacts or upon sources of information which are not universally available. In addition, there are personalities which are resistant to change – change of residence as well as other changes – and there are personalities

which welcome change for the sake of change. For some individuals there must be compelling reasons for migration, while for others little provocation or promise suffices”.³

It is instructive to add that not all persons who migrated reached that decision themselves. Children were usually carried along by their parents willy-nilly and wives accompanied their husbands though it tore them away from environments they loved.⁴

From all indications, it is pertinent to state that the holistic approach is the most plausible modality in the analysis of international migration. This is because it views historical phenomena as dimensions of a spectrum.

2. EMIGRATION

The movement of Nigerian peoples outside the country has been partly a product of developments within environmental sphere, economy, politics and social realm. It is important to note that the genesis of the Nigerian Diaspora pre-dated the 1914 amalgamation of the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. This is because millions of people were forcefully moved out of the territory that later became known as Nigeria through the instrumentality of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Our interest however is on the movement of peoples of Nigeria during colonial and post-colonial periods. Thus, we shall look at developments that constituted into the “push factors” and engendered emigration.

In the realm of the environment, it is remarkable to note that the pre-colonial period was “marked by balance in ecosystems and harmonious

² Reasons for Nigerian people migration to Europe, group 14: Gaisva Radziute Obialo, Rasa Museckaite, 4th semester in International Social Science Basic Studies, House 21.1, Roskilde University, 2008, [<http://digg.ruc.dk/bitstream/1800/3189/1/Reasons%20for%20Nigerian%20people%20migration%20toEurope.pdf>] accessed on 02/03/2010. See also – Global Migration Perspectives, No.50 October 2005, International migration and livelihoods in southern Nigeria, Chinedum Nwajiuba, Imo State University, Nigeria, Global Commission on Migration, 1, Rue Richard Wagner, CH: 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, [<http://www.gcim.org/mm/File/GMP%2050.pdf>] accessed on 02/03/2010.

³ Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration” in *Migration*, edited by J.A. Jackson, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 285, 287.

⁴ Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration”, p.233. For further discussion on migratory behaviour, see Clifford Jansen, “Some Sociological Aspects of Migration” in J.A. Jansen (ed.), *Migration*, 60-65; R.C. Taylor, “Migration and Motivation: A Study of Determinants and Types” in J.A. Jackson (ed.) *Migration*, 99-101; E.G. Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration” in *Journal of Royal Statistical Society*, LII (1889); William H. McNeill and Ruth S. Adams (eds.) *Human Migration: Patterns and Policies*, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), 1-401; Ian Bowen, *Population*, (London: James Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1954), 167-191; and W. Petersen, “A General Typology of Migration” in Clifford J. Jansen (ed.) *Readings in the Sociology of Migration*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1970), 49-69.

bio-diversity". "The way resources were allocated and used demonstrated man's good grasp of his capacity as well as an appreciation of the potentialities and limitations of his environment."⁵

Accordingly, and reasonably too, there was a land tenure system. This described how farmers and others held or controlled land.⁶ Commenting on this, Herbert Macaulay observes that:

"In Nigeria, there is an established system of Native Land Tenure which is based upon the fundamental conception that land is an asset God-given which is subject to the condition that a member of any community who is true to his political and social obligations to that community of which he is a unit, possesses an indisputable right to share in the bounties of the land, the ownership of which is vested in that community as a whole or in a particular family or clan through which the individual acquires security and perpetuity of tenure".⁷

The introduction of British rule in Nigeria marked the beginning of interference in the indigenous conservation and environmental policy with its attendant environmental degradation. At the heart of the whole matter is the British colonial policy of land alienation. As early as 1892, the colonial government alienated an area of fifty miles in length and a width of one mile for the utilization of Messrs. Welch and Neville at Ilaro. The plantation was later transferred to a Liverpool Syndicate headed by John Holt and Alfred Jones in 1894.⁸

In Southern Nigeria, the Native Lands Acquisition Proclamation of 1900 and a series of Ordinances regulated the alienation of land from a

"native" to a "non-native" of Nigeria. Similarly, the Land and Native Rights Proclamation No. 9 of 1910 and amended by subsequent Acts clearly specified that all land in Northern Nigeria came under the jurisdiction and control of the government which reserved the right to grant title to occupation and use of land.⁹

The British refused to pay compensation to the local people for the land acquired. An example was the Ebe Forest Reserve which she considered would be "a dangerous and possibly expensive precedent."¹⁰ She also tried as much as possible to avoid the use of the word "acquired" to refer to land alienated.¹¹ It is pertinent to admit that during the colonial period, botanical gardens were established and the Forestry Department did some useful conservation work. The colonial government imposed regulation of conditions under which forest produce was exploited.¹²

If we juxtapose the negative impact of colonial government exploitation policy and practice on the environment with the conservation work which she executed, it would take an extraordinary feat of imagination to deny the fact that she left the peoples of Nigeria with an environmental policy of doubtful merit. Thus, the seed of environmental destruction, which she sowed and nursed, was to have policy implications and lingering effects in post-colonial era. In particular, the regime of land alienation, which had the effect of cutting off some members of the ordinary people class from their means of production and survival, engendered the process of pauperization of the masses and their exposition to diseases, food crisis, starvation and untimely death. Their uprooting from the tradi-

⁵ Paul O.M. Njemanze, "The Environment and Sustainable Development" in *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Toyin Falola. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002, 579, 581.

⁶ G.I.O. Abalu, "The Role of Land Tenure in Agricultural Development of Nigeria", *ODU: A Journal of West African Studies*, New Series, No. 15 (July 1977), 31.

⁷ Herbert Macaulay, "Nigeria Land Policy," Macaulay Papers, Political History OCED, OM4, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan.

⁸ W. Ibekwe Ofonagoro, *Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria, 1881-1929*. New York: Nok Publishers International, 1979 74.

⁹ Segun Famoriyo, "The Dynamics of Duration and Alienation Aspects in Nigerian Land", *ODU: A Journal of West African Studies*, no. 15 (July 1977), 46-47.

¹⁰ "Ebe Forest Reserve (1), Memo form D.O. Calabar (2) Memo to S.S.P. (1924)," File No. R. 12/24 CADIST 1/14/7, Nigerian National Archives, Calabar.

¹¹ "Land for Native Administrative Purposes (1930-1931)," File No. S.P. 6190, CADIST 1/15/5, Nigerian National Archives, Calabar.

¹² J.B. Webster, "The Bible and Plough", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (December 1963), 418-432. See also, H.A. Oluwasanmi, *Agriculture and Nigerian Economic Development*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966, 11-12.

tional means of subsistence and security of livelihood and introduction into an alternative that was impersonal, cold and lacking in communalism had traumatic impact on the populace and formed the foundation upon which other “push factors” were built. Indeed, it was during the colonial period that Nigerian Peoples started emigrating in trickle.

The regime of land alienation continued during the post-colonial period. In this context, The Land Use Act, formerly known as Decree No. 6 of 1978, provides that:

“An Act to vest all land comprised in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the Governor of the State who would hold such land in trust for the people and would henceforth be responsible for allocation of land in all urban areas to individuals resident in the State and to organisations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Government”.¹³

During the period under consideration, Nigeria witnessed many environmental problems/disasters and threats. Human activities, population density, and over-population in urban centres were identified as culprits. Specifically, the clearing of forests for agricultural purposes as well as logging and fuel wood exacerbated deforestation. Wetlands exploitation and hunting had deleterious effects on biodiversity. Recent droughts in the North severely affected marginal agricultural activities. Soil degradation and desertification compounded the situation.¹⁴ Commenting on the environmental situation in the country, R.O. Oyegun notes that, “A number of environmental problems have become issues in Nigeria, namely: floods; refuse sedimentation; bush burning; drought and desertification; waste generation and management; slums and unauthorized structures; noise pollution; dust pollution; oil pollution; chemical pollution; unequal resources distribution and destitutes.”¹⁵

In the final analysis, it is important to state that, in spite of the efforts of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency and other stake-holders to address the environmental problems in Nigeria, the environment has remained a source of concern and one of the “push factors” in Nigerian emigration.

As it was the case in the realm of the Environment, the pre-colonial economy, politics and social sphere had more positive than negative colorations and people were largely psychologically attached to the place of their abode and the colonial economic, political and social policies and practices were more destructive than constructive and laid the foundation for emigration. And as these have been well documented by Nigerian historians, our interest, therefore, is to go straight to the post-colonial period and catalogue the “push factors” that cut across the economy, politics, and social life. This is imperative as this period witnessed the mass exodus and the formation of the Nigerian Diaspora, quantitatively speaking.

Writing on Reversing Africa’s “brain drain”, Gumisai Mutume contends that, “African professionals tend to migrate to Western Europe and North America,” that “many are dissuaded from returning home by economic and political crises that have bedevilled the continent over the last few decades,” and that “failing economies, high unemployment rates, human rights abuses, armed conflict and lack of adequate social services, such as health and education, are some of these factors.”¹⁶ In the same breadth, the international Office coordinator of the Centre for Democracy & Development, Ms. Sylvie Aboa-Bradwell, asserts that, “confronted with recent civil wars, extreme poverty, lack of employment and educational opportunities, political instability and repression in their native countries many West Africans choose to seek refuge in more stable and prosperous places, including European countries such as U.K.”¹⁷

Placing their academic search-light on Nigeria, Aderemi Ajibewa and Sola Akinrinade posit that:

¹³ *The Land Use Act* (Cases and Materials), Olakanmi & Co, 2nd, Edition Abuja and Lagos: LawLords Publications, 1978, 4.

¹⁴ “Nigeria: Environmental Issues,” *Country Review 2000*, [www.countrywatch.com] accessed 08/08/2001.

¹⁵ R.O. Oyegun, “The Relevance of Geographical Research in Environmental Policy Process in Nigeria,” paper presented at the ninth General Assembly of the Social Science Council of Nigeria at University of Lagos (24-25 March 1996), 3.

¹⁶ Reversing Africa’s ‘brain drain’: New initiatives tap skills of African expatriates by Gumisai Mutume, [http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol17no2/172brain.htm] accessed on 03/07/2010.

¹⁷ Centre for Democracy & Development, West African Diaspora in the UK: Aspirations, Challenges and Co-operation with UK Policy and Decision-Makers, 5 November, 2007, 2.

“Nigeria, for example during the last years of the 1980s and through the 1990s produced a massive wave of migrants occasioned by inauguration of autocratic and oppressive military regimes, collapse of the economy and infrastructures of state that provoked a massive push effect provoking the migration of professionals and other opponents of the military regimes. The Babangida regime in Nigeria (1985-93), contributed to the massive emigration of Nigerians to other lands in two ways. First was the introduction of the IMF-inspired Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) ... which, in its implementation, virtually decimated the Nigerian middle class... Secondly, the Babangida regime provoked massive emigration of Nigerian citizens with its dishonest implementation of its political transition programme that failed to reach its expected conclusion after more than eight years and expenditure of billions of Naira... The succeeding regime of Sani Abacha unleashed on the country a reign of terror that witnessed the assassination of political opponents, detention without trials, destruction of the homes of perceived opponents and judicial murders... Official UK records reveal that between 1993 and 1995, between 400 and 500 Nigerians applied for political asylum on a monthly basis. This compares with the figure of 50 between 1990 and 1992”.¹⁸

The deterioration of conditions over the years in Nigeria could also be attested by statistical data. In this vein, it is important to note that “despite the country’s oil wealth, many Nigerians suffer from extreme poverty” as evident in the fact that “between 1980 and 2000, per capita income fell” and “in 2004 GNI per capita stood at 400 US\$, lower than the average for all low-income coun-

tries.” In the same year, “life expectancy at birth was 45 years against 58 years average for low income countries.” Approximately, “90 million Nigerians are believed to live in absolute poverty, on less than one dollar a day.”¹⁹

Before we bring the discussion of the “push factors” to a close, it is imperative to see what some of the emigrants themselves have to say in respect to the circumstances that brought about their emigration. In this regard, Ngozi F. Chinwah said that, “The trend in the late 60s when we were finishing secondary school studies, was to look for an opportunity to go abroad to further our education”, that “it was something of a tradition at that time for Nigerians, and indeed in general Africans, living and schooling abroad, to make the effort to bring their siblings or other kith and kin over to join them overseas, to improve their lives and avoid or ‘escape’ being left out of the better life quest and thus ‘loose out’ as the put it so aptly those days”, and that Nigeria at that time had few universities which had few faculties and even fewer departments, and for accreditation, they depended on affiliation with Cambridge or other foreign institutions”. So, in his case and that of his brother Hezekiah (now a qualified medical doctor residing in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A. with his wife and grown up children), their senior brother, Uriah Chinwah, obtained admission for them “at Northeastern University where he was teaching while pursuing his doctoral degree in Aeronautical Engineering at M.I.T (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Boston, U.S.A.”²⁰

Another emigrant, Chimdi Maduagwu, who left the country in 2002 recounted his own experience in these words:

“I left Nigeria for a number of reasons. I recall being extremely uncomfortable at work. I am

¹⁸ International Workshop on Migration and Poverty in West Africa, March 13-14, 2003, University of Sussex, “Globalisation, Migration and the New African Diasporas: Towards a Framework of Understanding”, Aderemi Ajibewa, Centre for Democracy and Deveopment, London and Sola Akinrinade, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, March 2003, [<http://www.geog.sussex.ac.uk/transrede/workshop/IWMP15.pdf>] accessed on 25 July, 2010.

¹⁹ Working papers Migration and Development series Report 6, “International migration and national development: Viewpoints and policy initiatives in countries of origin, The case of Nigeria”, Hein de Haas, December 2006, International Migration Institute, James Martin 21st Century School, University of Oxford, A report prepared for Radboud University, Nijmegen and Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, [<http://www.heindehaas.com/Publications/Hein%20de%20Haas%202006%20Nigeria%20migration%20and%20development.pdf>] accessed on 24 July, 2010.

²⁰ Personal interview with Ngozi F. Chinwah, Creative Arts Department, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, 18-8-2010.

a university teacher and researcher, working in an environment that lacked virtually everything that a teacher and a researcher need to function with. For me, the system was dysfunctional and any opportunity to leave would be most welcome. Next, the political situation in the country at the turn of our democratic rule was messy. The political class had bastardized the system and all the hopes and promises of democracy were dashed. The economy, yes, was not all friendly too. Although there was a little reprieve, because the condition was excruciating before then, still, the major issues in wage earning, productivity, etc were not addressed. In general terms, living conditions did not change, so when an opportunity came to relocate to USA, I was happy to do so".²¹

From the foregoing exposition, it is evident that "push" factors" cut across the environment, economy, politics, and social life.

3. IMMIGRATION

In this section, we shall look at the "pull factors" and destinations, the physical presence of Nigerians, Nigerian cultural presence, Nigerian Immigrant community composition, and Nigerian immigrant-Host community relationship. In respect to the "pull factors," or circumstances that attract people, Julius Komolafe observes that, "Nigerian migrants move predominantly to countries where they are more likely to adjust rapidly in terms of being able to understand the host country's language, to secure gainful employment, and to reunite with members of their family, friends or associate with other people from their country of origin," and that "for these reasons, the United Kingdom, United States and Canada are some of the most popular destinations for Nigerian migrants."²² In the same vein, Gaisva Radziute

Obialo notes that, "Mostly all Nigerians in their answer in the questionnaire wrote that they chose Denmark as country to immigrate due to its social benefits, free education, high employment rates and salaries, safety."²³ A review of literature shows that the "pull factors" range from political stability to economic prosperity, and congenial social climate in recipient countries. This accounted more for migration to advanced countries of Europe and North America. It is pertinent to add that these also accounted for Nigerian migration to emerging economies of Asia and developing countries of Africa, especially South Africa and Ghana. As Nigerians are found in virtually all over the world, as attested by the establishment of Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) in Africa, Americas, Asia, Australia, Europe and Mid East, that goes to show that a host of personal and intervening factors complemented the "push and pull factors" in bringing about Nigerian international migration.

The demographic or physical presence of Nigerians abroad has been an issue of controversy. There is no reliable census figure or statistics of Nigerians living abroad. Thus, we have witnessed various estimates. In this context, DaHitler on July 28, 2006 submitted that, "I would estimate at least 20 million. This figure includes those that have one Nigerian parent." The writer went on to explain that, "Of course, I am basing this entirely off shady estimates I know about Nigerian population in Ghana (about 2 million), Ivory Coast (a little more than a million), South Africa (about 2 million) and then at least 5 million in UK and 4-6 million in America and the rest would come from other countries."²⁴ In the same breadth, Uche Nworah wrote in 2005 that, "Rena Singer of the American Christian Science Monitor (February 26, 2002 edition) estimates that 15 million Nigerians (more than 1 in 10 Nigerians) live abroad, these figures are validated by other sources such as Africa

²¹ Personal interview with Dr. Chimdi Maduagwu, Department of English, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, 17-8-2010.

²² Julius Komolafe, "Searching for Fortune: The Geographical Process of Nigerian Migration to Dublin, Ireland," [http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_searching.htm] accessed on 02/03/2010.

²³ Gaisva Radziute Obialo, "Reasons for Nigerian people migration to Europe, group 14: Gaisva Radziute Obialo, Rasa Museckaite, 4th semester in International Social Science Basic Studies, House 21.1, Roskilde University, 2008," [<http://digg.ruc.dk/bitstream/1800/3189/1/Reasons%20for%20Nigerian%20people%20migration%20toEurope.pdf>] accessed on 02-03-2010.

²⁴ How many Nigerians live Outside of Nigeria? [<http://www.nairaland.com/nigeria/topic-19072.0.html>] accessed on 03/03/2010.

Action, they recently wrote that 'No one knows the exact numbers, but it is estimated that as many as 15 million Nigerians live outside the country, in neighbouring countries and across the African continent, in Britain and throughout the Commonwealth, in other European countries and many Asian countries as well'.²⁵ And in his own estimation, a Nigerian government official, the Executive Governor of Nasarawa State of Nigeria, Dr. Abdullahi Adamu stated at a symposium organized by the Nigeria Awareness Group, at Hilton Airport Hotel, Zurich, Switzerland on Saturday, June 24, 2006 that, "About four to five million Nigerians now live and work in Europe and The United States of America".²⁶ As the "numbers game" is a wide goose chase, and thus intellectually an unrewarding exercise, we shall not attempt here to authenticate any figure. What is academically worthy of note here is that, quantitatively speaking, the population of Nigerians abroad is significant enough to place the Nigerian phenomenon alongside diasporas like the Jewish, and thus merit attention in intellectual circle.

The Nigerian cultural presence abroad, like the demographic presence, is significant enough to justify the study of the Nigerian community overseas as a diaspora. This is true whether one is talking about language, religion, dance, music, dress, food or other cultural aspects. Commenting on this, Uche Nworah aptly contends that:

A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate. This has been variously demonstrated by intra-marriage relationships and friendships amongst the Nigerians in the Diaspora, also by setting up community associations which serve as

social organisations as well. Nigerians still maintain and promote their culture in their new countries of residence, they still wear their traditional attires to churches and to weddings, they bear their Nigerian names and speak their native languages with one another, the only problem is with the generation born in the new lands, who are torn with the issue of double identity.²⁷

The cultural presence of Nigerians in the diaspora has also been acknowledged by even non-Nigerians. A case in point is a book written by Hermione Harris titled *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church In London* published in 2006. Here, the author admitted that, "The Nigerian Diaspora is now world-wide, and when Yoruba travel, they take with them their religious organizations."²⁸

In respect to the composition of the Nigerian immigrant community, it is remarkable to note that they are found in all walks of life. They "are actively engaged in different professions as practicing professionals in their host countries or 'new found homes', some of these professions are medical and health care, banking and financial services, journalism and media, teaching and education, engineering, information technology, computing sciences and sports." They are also "engaged in other activities as small business owners, private security guards, train, taxi and bus drivers."²⁹ In the Nigerian immigrant community are also found those who engage in criminal activities and vices and tend to smear the image of the country with mould.

In this realm, it has been estimated that about 10,000 Nigerian women in Italy earn their living as commercial sex workers.³⁰

²⁵ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, Uche Nworah – 5/4/2005, [<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>] accessed on 25/06/2010.

²⁶ The Challenges of Nigeria's Economic Development in the 21st Century: Baking the National Cake, Monday, July 03, 2006 [<http://www.nasarawastate.org/news1/10703121104.htm>] accessed on 03/07/2010.

²⁷ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, Uche Nworah – 5/4/2005, [<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>] accessed on 25/06/2010.

²⁸ For detailed exposition on this, see Hermione Harris, *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church in London* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 1-238.

²⁹ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, Uche Nworah – 5/4/2005, [<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>] accessed on 25/4/2010.

³⁰ Migration Information Source – Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe by Jorgen Carling, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), July 2005, [<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=318>] accessed on 02/03/2010.

Finally, in the area of immigrant-host community relationship, it is instructive to note the observation made by Uche Nworah. The writer has noted that:

“A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group. This fear has been fuelled further amongst Nigerians by the rise in xenophobia and nationalist thinking amongst the citizens of their host countries, this situation is further made worse by institutional racism and existence of the glass ceiling which hinder their professional growth, as a result, home coming is currently gaining currency amongst the Nigerian professionals in the diaspora”.³¹

To have greater insight into the relationship between Nigerian immigrant community and the host society, it is remarkable to bring to the fore the recollection of the experience of a Nigerian, Ngozi F. Chinwah, who spent eleven years (1969-1980) in the United states of America. Chinwah recalls that:

“There were actually three host communities for visitors to the U.S.; the Whites, the blacks, and Native Americans or Red Indians. The last category was not very visible and so interaction was mostly with the Whites and a large black community of descendants of freed former slaves. Nigerians in the U.S. had very cordial relations with both the blacks and the whites in spite of the racial tensions that existed between both groups as a result of historical and other antecedents. Racial prejudice sometimes resulted in grave consequences, but such incidents could be treated as isolated cases. Nigerians, like other blacks, had to prove themselves in work places and at school, by working extra hard.

By and large, we successfully completed our studies, and held down good jobs thereafter, either in academics or in the public and private sectors. There were also marriages between the host communities and Nigerians in

the Diaspora, to buttress the point of good relations between the two”.³²

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Nigerian immigrant and host community relations depicted a typical immigrant-host community relationship with its characteristic co-operation and disaffection in line with the iron law of in-group and out-group attitudes.

4. DIASPORA – HOMELAND RELATIONS

Nigerians in the Diaspora largely have positive identification with the homeland. This proclivity has been captured by NigerianDiaspora.com in the following words:

“...without any large scale and formal structure, the Nigerian diaspora also contributes to the development of their home communities and Nigeria. They typically aggregate around cultural, religious, hometown, alumni and social groups and sometimes are able to fund developments in Nigeria as a group. For example, the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas (ANPA) regularly visits Nigeria to offer assistance to patients and doctors in Nigeria. Remittances from the Nigerian diaspora also contribute significantly to their home communities and the Nigerian economy. The money they send home helps stabilize foreign exchange demand, provides opportunities for employment and is used for educating relatives. But just as in other African communities, most of these remittances are used for consumption (food, clothing, education, health care, etc) by family members in Nigeria. In 2003, Western Union announced that transfers via Western Union to Nigeria had averaged about \$3 billion per annum for the past seven years. A significant portion of these inflows are remittances from the Nigerian diaspora. At NGEX we estimate the remittances from the Nigerian diaspora total approximately \$6 - \$8 billion per annum. When this is compared to Nigeria’s 2004 (est.) GDP of \$72.1 billion and foreign reserves of \$19.59 billion (January, 2005) it is evident

³¹ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, Uche Nworah – 5/4/2005, “<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>” accessed on 25/06/2010.

³² Personal interview with Ngozi F. Chinwah, Creative Arts Department, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, 18/8/2010.

that the diaspora's financial contributions to the Nigerian economy are significant".³³

Besides socio-economic contributions to the development of the homeland, Nigerians in the diaspora have also demonstrated interest in the political development of the country. It is worthy to note that, "Nigerian Diaspora-based human rights and pro-democracy movements were in the forefront of the struggle against military dictatorships in Nigeria."³⁴ It has also been observed that, "government's current efforts in several areas of the national life of Nigerians are also heavily scrutinised, praised or criticised," and that "they do sometimes sponsor fellow diasporas to stand for elected positions in Nigeria, they also set up their own political parties and support existing political parties through making financial contributions, in addition to setting up local branches of the political parties in their respective countries of residence"³⁵

In 2009, when the House of Representatives Committee on the Diaspora Affairs, represented by the chairperson, Abike Dabiri-Erewa and three other members: Isa Keta, Kalu Aguma and Ega Isadobi visited Canada to hold Town hall discussions with the Nigerian immigrant community, the latter tackled the former on the issue of voting right.³⁶

Recently, a delegation of 22 Nigerians living in the United States, Europe and Asia, led by Mr. Alister Soyode, visited the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Attahiru Jega, to discuss the prospects of Nigerians living in the Diaspora voting in the 2011 general election. Soyode said that out of the 20 million Nigerians living abroad, no fewer than 5 million would be eligible to cast their votes if the opportunity was given to them. In his own words: "It

would be ideal to include the necessary ingredients and devise means of registering Nigerians who are in the Diaspora to enable them to partake in the process of choosing their leaders" and that the government should adopt biometric data in their international passports for use in the registration of those in the Diaspora. Prof. Jega responded that it was not feasible to register Nigerians in the Diaspora during the new voter registration because of the size of the Diaspora population and time factor.³⁷

Another dimension in the espousal of the Diaspora-Homeland relationship is the issue of home-coming. It is pertinent to state right away that the relationship has been characterised by both positive and negative tendencies. It would be illuminating to present here the comments of two returnees. On this, Ngozi F. Chinwah remarked that:

Nigerians who succeeded in America and had good jobs or established viable businesses, had cause to celebrate and be celebrated on their return home. The initial return home were usually temporary visits and not permanent relocations in the first instance. This afforded returnees opportunity to assess the situation and subsequently plan a permanent return home if that was the decision on the next line of action. Among those who chose to return permanently, there were those also who eventually went back overseas for a variety of reasons, while those who stayed, chose to do so for better or worse.³⁸

Speaking from his own experience, Chimdi Maduagwu submitted that:

"On my return, I faced the greatest dilemma: I felt rejected by my own people. I had to start all over. All the people who were below me, in

³³ The Nigerian Diaspora – Reach, Study, Market, Understand and Interact, The Nigerian Diaspora, [<http://www.nigeriandiasporacom/diaspora.htm>] accessed on 22/06/2010.

³⁴ International Workshop on Migration and Poverty in West Africa, March 13-14, 2003, University of Sussex, Globalisation, Migration and the New African Diasporas: Towards a Framework of Understanding by Aderemi Ajibewa, Centre for Democracy and Development, London and Sola Akinrinade, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, [<http://www.geog.sussex.ac.uk/transrede/workshop/IWMP15.pdf>] accessed on 25 July, 2010.

³⁵ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, [<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>] accessed on 25/06/2010.

³⁶ Nigerians In Canada Tackle Reps On Voting Right, Others, [<http://www.diasporacommittee.com/Nigerians-%20In%20Canada%20Tackle%20Reps>] accessed on 24/06/2010.

³⁷ The Punch: 2011 elections: Nigerians in Diaspora can't vote – INEC [<http://www.punchng.com/Article2Print.aspx?theartic=Art20100804...>] Accessed

³⁸ Personal interview with Ngozi F. Chinwah, Creative Arts Department, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, 18-8-2010.

terms of position and rank were all above me, not because they have become more productive, but because the policy is that I just had to start anew. I also found out there have been some developments in my absence, but the developments lack foundation. Several gaps exist and most of the new structures appear to have been appropriated from other systems without proper consideration of how the systems work. The result is that the new structures are inadequate for sustainable development. I feel a sense of regret for returning. There are no significant improvements in the general conditions of living and working in Nigeria between the time I left in 2002/2003 and the time I returned in 2007/2008”.³⁹

The foregoing is not to suggest that the Nigerians in the Diaspora are all supper stars and champions or have been the only people calling the shots in the Diaspora – Homeland relationship. In deed, some of them have been outright liabilities and parasites depending on the homeland for sustenance/existence and have been source of concern for the Federal Government of Nigeria.

At this point in our Homeland – Diaspora relationship discussion, it must be stated that the relationship has been a symbiotic one. It must be recalled here that some Nigerians who travelled abroad either for educational training or for “greener pasture,” did not do so with their own finances, but were already socialized into the Nigerian society and then sponsored by family members, relatives, friends, or communities. So, their remittances and other services should be seen as repayment.

In addition, and still at non-governmental level, the people at home have continued to see to the interest of those abroad in all spheres of life in the spirit of kinship and true communalism. This is true whether one is talking of providing money to take care of their needs while still trying to find their footing in their host communities and during period of financial turbulence or one is talking of procuring wives, cultural items, traditional food, etc for the rejuvenation of their Nigerianism abroad or one is talking of taking care of their projects and/or interests at home.

At the governmental level, the Nigerian state was quick to recognize that at this age of globalization, no society, whether it likes it or not would live in a state of “splendid isolation.” With the attainment of independence in 1960, she started opening embassies and sending ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic staff. That marked the official presence of the Nigerian government in the host countries abroad. With this development, the consular needs and other interests of the Nigerians in the Diaspora stated to receive attention.

Another area which attracted the attention of the government was the issue of overseas training for acquisition of the critical skills for the development of the country. In this realm, it must be admitted here that the Federal Government of Nigeria sent a good number of her citizens abroad. Inadvertently, the Federal Government increased the Nigerian Diaspora population as many who tasted the “milk and honey” overseas opted to live abroad. Unlike some home countries, the Nigerian government never had the policy of sending her citizens abroad to live there, earn foreign exchange and remit back home for development purpose. Rather, it has been the policy of the Federal Government to see her citizens live at home for good or for worse. This is evident in the efforts of the government to check the exodus and to lure the Diasporans back home.

In respect to checking the exodus and “brain drain”, it is illuminating to recall the “Andrew, don’t check out” Television series when the military government urged Nigerians to stay at home and salvage the country together. Commenting on this, Uche Nworah states that:

“In 1984, the then military government of Buhari and Idiagbon, conscious of the growing phenomenon of mass emigration, as well as the consequences of the brain drain syndrome on the socio-economic development of Nigeria mounted series of propaganda campaigns in the mass media, aimed at promoting nationalism and patriotism and dissuading Nigerians from leaving or ‘checking out’. A popular Nigerian actor (Enebeli Elebuwa) was drafted to play the role of “Andrew”, an aspiring immigrant who later saw reasons not, as

³⁹ Personal interview with Chimdi Maduagwu, Department of English, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, 17th August, 2010.

he was about to 'check out' of Nigeria. While the T.V. series became popular with Nigerians, especially because of its use of humour, it however failed to dissuade Nigerians from leaving in droves because the government at the time did not match action with words, as the economy continued on its downward slide".⁴⁰

As the military government failed and the country continued to witness "brain-drain," the civilian government of the fourth republic, realizing the enormity of the problem, started making appreciable efforts towards reversing the trend. In this context, Gumisai Mutume observes that:

"Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is one of the leaders actively attempting to address the challenges of the brain drain. On his trips abroad, President Obasanjo often meets professionals and Intellectuals who have left the Nigeria to ask them how they can contribute to their country's development. President Obasanjo also is one of the architects of the continent's new development framework, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The New Partnership calls for the establishment of a reliable, continental database to determine the magnitude of the problem and promote collaboration between Africans abroad and those at home. An important NEPAD priority is to develop Africa's human resources and reverse the brain drain. Under NEPAD, African leaders explicitly call for the creation of the "necessary political, social and economic conditions that would serve as incentives to curb the brain drain".⁴¹

In this context, Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nigerian Diaspora Trust Fund, appointed Okonjo-Iweala, Adeniji, and four

others from the Nigerian Diaspora and paid them in dollars.⁴²

In this sphere, also, the Nigerian government established the Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) "to give the Nigerian professionals in the diaspora a formal avenue within which to volunteer their skills while in Nigeria on a short or extended visit." The NNVS is located within the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation.⁴³

While making efforts to work on the "push factors", thus retaining prospective Nigerian emigrants and luring some Diasporans back home, the Federal Government of Nigeria has not been oblivious of the fact that the Nigerian Diaspora has come to stay and something concrete must be done to address the matter or see to their well-being as well as how to make them more relevant to the country's development. In this breadth, the Federal Government established the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization, with locations in Africa, Americas, Europe, Asia, Mid East and Australia. According to the publication on the official website of Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation Europe, established in 2000 and registered in England and Wales in 2002 under the Companies Act and with Headquarters in London, for example:

"The Government of Nigeria recognizes the organization as the official platform through which individual Nigerian Diaspora, their Community Organizations, and Corporate Bodies can channel their development efforts to Nigeria. In this sense, the organization partners with Nigerian Community / Professional Organizations as well as public and private businesses in focused areas such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), professional networking, stakeholder advocacy, me-

⁴⁰ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora, Uche Nworah – 5/4/2005, [<http://www.globalpolitician.com/2682-nigeria>] accessed on 25/06/2010.

⁴¹ Reversing Africa's 'brain drain': New initiatives to tap skills of African expatriates by Gumisai Mutume, From *Africa Recovery*, Vol. 17, no. 2(July 2003), 1., [<http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol17no2/172brain.htm> accessed on 03/07/2010 15:00]. See also, Reversing Africa's Brain Drain: The Africarecruit initiative and the challenge to Governments, the Diaspora and the Private sector, Dr. Mohan Kaul, CEO, Commonwealth Business Council, [<http://www.africarecruit.com/downloads/REVERSING%20THE%20BRAIN%20DRAIN.pdf>] accessed on 25 July, 2010.

⁴² The Nigerian Diaspora Trust Fund: No Similar Fund by UNDP Anywhere Else by Kennedy Emetulu, [http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/index.php?option=com_content] Accessed on 03/07/2010 11:05.

⁴³ Global Politician – Study on Nigerian Diaspora by Uche Nworah, 5/4/2005, [<http://www.globalpolitician.co./2682-nigeria> accessed on 25/06/2010]. See also Nigeriaworld Feature Article – Reflections on the Nigerian Diaspora Scientists' Conference by Akinbola Patrick Ph.D., [<http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2005/nov/024.html> accessed on 03/07/2010] 13:13.

dical missions, educational support and skills transfer to Nigeria".⁴⁴

In the same context, the Federal Government set aside 25 July every year as the Diaspora Day. Initiated in 2006, "the Nigerian Diaspora Day is part of the efforts of the government to mobilize and encourage the participation of the Nigerian Diaspora in Nigeria's development process thereby providing the Nigerian Diaspora ample opportunities to contribute to the transformation of Nigeria into a modern industrialized nation."⁴⁵

Furthermore, the House Committee on Diaspora Affairs has been charged with the following functions:

"To promote the exchange of ideas between home country and Nigerians in Diaspora.

To collect and maintain data on Nigerians in Diaspora from consulates, ministries of foreign affairs, education, justice, the population registers, censuses, employment agencies and statistics divisions of international organizations and international census bureau for domestic planning and uses.

To initiate policies needed to recognize and harness the potentials of Nigerians in the Diaspora in support of development and growth in both their home and host countries.

To encourage and monitor Diaspora networks and organizations and assist in the realization

of their agenda and promote institutional change to help public servants collaborate effectively with Diaspora representatives.

To participate in dialogues within governments, regional and local authorities on Diaspora matters in their home and host countries".⁴⁶

Finally, and currently, the Nigerians in Diaspora (Establishment) Commission Bill, 2009, is receiving attention at the National Assembly. The explanatory memorandum in the Bill states, "This Bill seeks to establish Nigerians in Diaspora (Establishment) Commission, provide for engagement of Nigerians in diaspora in the policies, projects and participation in the development of Nigeria and for the purpose of utilising the human, capital and material resources of Nigerians in diaspora towards the overall socio-economic, cultural and political development of Nigeria."⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Diaspora, as a segment of the African Diaspora, has measured equitably with the well established Diasporas of the World and deserves greater attention in the ivory tower and research institutions. This is true when one looks at the paucity of evidence in the areas of demographic and cultural presence, immigrant - host community relationship and Diaspora – Homeland relations.

⁴⁴ Welcome to NIDO Europe's Official Website, [<http://www.nidoeuropes.org/>] accessed on 25/06/2010.

⁴⁵ Nigeria High Commission, Canberra, Australia, [<http://nigeria-can.org.au/news/recognising.htm>] accessed on 26/06/2010].

⁴⁶ Nigerians in Diaspora: House Committee on Diaspora Affairs: Official Website, [<http://www.diasporacommittee.com/aboutus.html>] accessed on 24/06/2010.

⁴⁷ Nigerians in Diaspora (Establishment) Commission Bill, 2009, [<http://www.diasporacommittee.com/nigeria-diaspora-bill.pdf>] accessed on 25 July, 2010.