Diaspora engages social media to reconnect with Africa

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Abstract

South Africa has engaged mobile phones to deliver healthcare services (mHealth). Free SMS (short message service) text messages are transmitted to patients and e.Mobile television messages are transmitted on select channels. South Africa enjoys an unequaled mobile technology market in Africa, totaling $25 billion in 2006. Although broadband penetration is expensive, mobile phones have given direct access to healthcare providers who previously lacked access. The South African Health Informatics Association, and the South African Telemedicine Association, provide direction. Mobile technology makes patients' information readily available to healthcare providers; facilitates training of healthcare workers; permits communication between healthcare providers and patients; assists patients with medication intake; and provides a variety of women's healthcare services. Another goal of using mobile phone technology for healthcare delivery is to encourage the treatment and testing of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Evaluation of the use of mobile phones in AIDS/HIV has shown improvement in healthcare services and in analyzing patient data in a timely manner. However, illiteracy and software problems have hampered delivery of healthcare services. This paper attempts to trace the milestones that Mobile Health for Community Based Services has followed in using mobile phone technology to deliver healthcare for South Africans. The paper sets out to show the telecommunications infrastructure in South Africa, which places the country in the vanguard in using mobile phones for healthcare delivery. The country became apartheid-free when Nelson Mandela was elected president in 1994. Heretofore, blacks were subjected to discrimination under apartheid, which was a white-only minority government. In the article published in The Guradian, "How Nelson Mandela changed the AIDS agenda in South Africa," Boseley describes the president's commitment to fight AIDS. Mandela continued the fight for AIDS long after leaving office.

Keywords: Africa, Slave Trade, Media, Diaspora

Introduction

The world's second largest continent, Africa abounds with large masses of land and oceans. On the West is the Atlantic Ocean, and on the East is the Indian Ocean. These gargantuan, wave-swinging deep blue waters converge on the southernmost tip of South Africa, creating a flabbergasting dazzle to the daring human eye.

In March 2014, the World Population Review put Africa's population at slightly over one billion. Demographics show an influx of Asian and European immigrants by way of former British colonies of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. The population of Africa has grown rapidly over the past 40 years, especially in the populous countries of Nigeria (173 million); Ethiopia (95 million); Egypt (85 million); Democratic Republic of Congo (67 million); and South Africa (55 million).

Although Africa's low population density (65 people per square mile) is behind Asia, Europe, and Latin America, the growth rate is expected to quadruple within 90 years. Africa's anticipated population growth by 2050 is 1.9 billion, accounting for three-quarters of the world's total growth. It can easily be argued that not all of Africa's bourgeoning population will reside permanently on the continent. This is because part of the population will migrate and become totally immersed in the African Diaspora.

In defining diaspora, Cohen (1997) says it is a Greek word that means "the dispersal of a population through colonization." Today, the term implies a positive and ongoing relationship between migrants' homelands and their places of work and settlement. Rheingold (1993) refers to these dispersed populations as virtual communities that explore the potentials of new information technologies to postulate their culture and to create a bond between them and their homeland. Similarly, Tölölyan (1996) defines diaspora as "people of African origin living outside the continent . . . who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent."

Diaspora Community Centers (PCPs) in Canada attest that diaspora communities use information communication technology (ICT) to address causes in their homelands. In the meantime, PCPs serve as Diaspora Communication Centers (DCCs) that provide virtual networking. The DCCs are equipped with web-based

communication; pod casting; voice-over Internet protocols; social networking tools (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, texting); virtual networking; plus Web 2.0.

In particular, the social media apparatus gives the African diaspora an assured interactive platform during disaster or conflict. A unique example is the earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010. Successful use of social media enabled communication between the Haitian diaspora and communities in their homeland. By using a certain text code, Haitians outside the Caribbean used mobile phones to make automatic remittances.

Professor Karim of the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada) recounts the early use of media in the mid-1990s by diaspora communities. Hence, scattered intercontinental communities maintained links through mail, telegraph, FAX, audio/video recordings, Direct Broadcast Satellites (DBS), as well as circulated film footage and television content. Added to these traditional media, Karim affirms, is the global spread of the Internet to maintain linkages between diaspora communities and Africa. Kim goes on, "since social media are relatively inexpensive, they provide for lateral, point-to-point contacts around the world, and enables [sic] instant interactive communication."

Methodology

The paper attempts to ascertain initiatives by the African diaspora comprised of Africans living out of the continent as a result of willful migration, or forced thorough slavery, in their desire to reconnect home with Africa and Africans. The paper is to examine cohesiveness among communities in the African diaspora to reflect on their heritage and culture and to engage in the continent's development on the one hand, and to examine how the diaspora population has artfully harnessed new media to reach out to Africa. The objective is to produce a document that reflects Africa's dispersed population, the preservation of culture, and to record cohesiveness abroad and development initiatives on the mother continent.

The paper reviewed journal articles under the subject and completed a content analysis and interpretation of content. In addition, secondary sources were consulted, including books in library holdings, newspapers, magazines, and Web sites. For primary sources, a total of 50 interviews were conducted, between November 2013 and March 2014, with individuals in Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Niger, Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. All interviewees are citizens with active use of social media and online activities within the African diaspora.

Seven topics were investigated. Topic one looked at the origin of the African diaspora. Topic two examined the emerging use of social media by the African diaspora. Topic three studied the African diaspora's use of social media to advance development on the mother continent. Topic four reviewed the use of media to address instances of abuse suffered by Africa's dispersed peoples. Topic five considered the role of social media in taking the voices of "away" citizens back to the homeland. Topic six looked at African diaspora's two prominent sons (Barak Obama and football legend Pelé) and the culture of the African diaspora. And topic seven examined social media workshops organized by the African diaspora.

Information flow provided the theoretical framework for the paper. The theory proved appropriate given the origination and dissemination of information from different parts of the globe with multiple players performing roles as sender or encoder and receiver or decoder.

Literature Review

As of 2014, Africa appears to be a long way from surpassing the current population of about one billion people. And since Africans have not attained development suited to provide for its people, the result is that poverty is prevalent; hunger is commonplace; jobs are scarce; skilled labor is sporadic; corruption is rampant; and infrastructure is poor. The wind of despair and despondency is blowing from all directions.

Notwithstanding, there is a minority of Africans who are doing well, along with those employed in the public or private sector or those who are beneficiaries of tactful politicians or their associates. The propensity of monetary fluctuations and vicissitudes of economic activity only compound Africa's problems. The reality is clear. Africans continue to seek an exit to "other world corners" in search of bread and butter, mainly in the United States (US), Canada, Europe, or China.

The Economist (May 2014), in the article, "African migrants going to Europe: Taking their chances," reports weakened African countries are unable to police borders, allowing thousands to reach the European mainland. In April 2014, Italian vessels rescued over 4,000 migrants in two days, prompting beleaguered authorities to declare a humanitarian emergency.

It is estimated that more than 600,000 people from Africa are currently camping on North Africa's shores, ready to board packed rudimentary shafts to face bruising and turbulent high seas en route to the southern European coast. According to *The Guardian* (15 September 2014), about 500 migrants died at sea after the boat carrying them from Egypt to Malta sank. There were only two survivors. On the same day, another vessel, heading to Europe off the Libyan coast, capsized. 200 migrants lost their lives.

Indeed, Agadez is a smuggling entry port in northern Niger. It is a hub for at least half of West African migrants who arrive in Lampedusa, Italy. Ethnic Tabu smugglers dominate the trafficking trade. They charge between $300 to $500 for passage to Libya. The traffickers also want would-be "diasporians" to carry drugs in lieu of cash payment. It is the kind of business that keeps Agadez buoyant.

Slavery is painful, even from a historical perspective. The trans-Atlantic slave trade marred Africa and Africans. It robbed Africans of their culture, dignity and identity and dumped them on plantation fields at the mercy of slave owners. The slaves had no option than to cultivate ways to "make it" (albeit arduously) through inescapable hell on earth.

In the book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* Rodney (1972) asserts that the slave trade discouraged nation building and land cultivation. M'Bokolo (1995) argues that the African continent was bled of its human resources via all possible routes. The writer says, for more than four centuries, "the African slave trade went on to build the Americas and Christian states of Europe."

Austen (1987) agrees. The author decries four million slaves who were exported via the Red Sea; another four million through the Swahili ports of the Indian Ocean; nine million along the trans-Saharan caravan route; and about twelve million across the Atlantic Ocean. As for African states, they fell into the trap set by the European slave traders, namely, trade or go under. This explains why local communities and states pursued an ambiguous policy of coerced collaboration. One example was control from Saint-Louis du Sénégal to the Congo estuary. Austen is adamant the slave trade permanently weakened Africa, a weakened exploitive condition that opened the gates to Africa's colonization by Europeans in the 19th Century.

As a matter of fact, African resources were devoted to the enslavement and export of Africans. Ross (2007), in the article, "Slavery's long effects on Africa," condemns exporting as many as 12 million Africans as slaves onboard ships across the Atlantic Ocean bound to work on plantations where they were regarded as three-fifths of a human being. Two hundred years after the British parliament voted to abolish slave trade, the effects on Africa are still being felt, Ross remarks. The latter continues, "Head to a village in northern Ghana [today] (or indeed many villages in West Africa) and you might wonder whether we are in the 21st Century."

No doubt, Ross believes Africa's ills are largely the result of slave trade, which caused a perpetual decline in population growth. It is said that without slavery, Africa's population would have doubled to 50 million by 1850. To the contrary, many of the able bodies between the ages of 18 and 40 were herded away like cattle with no meaningful value per head, denying the African continent the multiplier effect to reproduce humanly, economically, socially, and culturally.

Another casualty of slavery is the dislocation of cultural barriers. To Europeans, the slave trade was lucrative business. In their pursuit, they cajoled or bought over slave raiders to venture into Africa's interior to make the "catch." Consequently, many of the slaves were prisoners of war. Enslaving an enemy [future slave] soon became a motive to wage war. In Ghana, Europeans found it difficult to get slaves during peacetime. But during war, gold was scarce and slaves were plentiful.

Conflicts, slavery, and colonization are not solely responsible for the exodus that created the African diaspora. Natural conditions, such as famine, are partly to blame. Kershner (2014) is a journalist with particular interest in the Middle East. In the article, "Africans Continue to Protest in Israel," and published in *The New York Times*, the reporter says thousands of African asylum seekers flooded the streets of Tel Aviv in January 2014 to protest heavy-handed treatment at the hands of Israeli authorities. Others marched in front of embassies of the United States, Britain, Canada, France, and Italy to show support for the African diaspora asylum seekers.

The protests were in response to the new Israel's Prevention of Infiltration Law. Under the law, migrants entering the country illegally can be held in detention as long as one year. Since 2005, some 60,000 migrants from Sudan and Eritrea have crossed into Israel over the porous border with Egypt. Israel regards them as "infiltrators," insisting that most of the Africans are economic migrants looking for work. Kershner reports on the prime minster, Benjamin Netanyahu, as saying, "We will continue to deport the illegal migrants from our cities." Admitted, the Africans are subject to inhumane situations in various parts of the globe. How did it all happen?

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Section 4

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4.1 Findings
4.2 The Genesis of African Diaspora
Africans are dispersed. And irrespective of their geographical locations, they are all sons and daughters of Africa. However, the majority of Africans living outside the continent are those who did not make that decision. They were forcibly sold into slavery. Today, there are sizable African populations in Brazil, Columbia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Haiti, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Italy, Jamaica, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom (UK), and US. Here is a breakdown of the African population in the following countries: Brazil, 52 percent; Haiti, 95 percent; Jamaica, 92 percent; United Kingdom, two percent; United States, 12 percent; Portugal, two percent.

Today's African diaspora, says Palmer (1998), consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based on significant, but exclusively racial oppression and struggles against it. These descendants, observes Palmer, share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent, and who (regardless of location) face similar problems in reconstructing and realizing themselves.

The author contends that, the peoples who left Africa brought with them unblemished rich cultures and diversity, even in the face of creating reflective or imaginary cultures as circumstances allowed. Consequently, the African diaspora cannot be separated from the study of the home continent, Palmer emphasizes. What is of the essence is not the geographical location of dispersed Africans. It is the recognition that dispersed Africans have an insatiable yearning of belonging that can be put into two categories. First, they want to share stories and experiences in their struggles and livelihood in their new homes. Second, they want to reconnect with Africa as a reflection of their homeland and cultural belonging.

Demba (2013), in "The African Diaspora: Impact and Trends," writes about globalization and new information technology. Technology, Demba upholds, empowers people, ideas, and products to become mobile and transient. Consequently, people no longer have to live in their homeland; they can migrate and settle in a foreign country. This notion is akin to the adage that, "birds of the same feathers flock together." This explains why the African diaspora is committed reconnecting with the mother continent.

4.3 African Diaspora Emerging Use of Social Media

www.pcpcanada.com, in "Diaspora Communications Centers *for* Development and Reconstruction: Using ICT and operational planning to harness the social and economic power of Diaspora during times of conflict, calamity and peace," implies that the web provides a platform for groups that use it. The platform allows divergent users to interface on the web, irrespective of differences in language, culture, economic, social, ideological, or even geographical locations. Indeed, the web assures transparency, constituting a departure from older industrial based models of communication. Moreover, social media engage the electronic features of the web by supporting prompt interaction, information flow, and content analysis.

Information is vital in view of the imperative for unity among members of the geographically scattered African diaspora. Unity, though, is not automatic. It is cultivated, and steps must be taken to establish and let it blossom and flourish. Diamandaki (2003) is correct in saying, "the environment of cyberspace becomes a new arena . . . generating hybrid collective formations, such as digital nations, virtual diasporas and other online communities."

The author articulates that forms of social interaction emerge as the need to utilize cyberspace arises, and as forms of social media are used to address reflections of home, belonging, community, and identity. Diamandaki espouses the creation of mediated social networks that are populated by individuals of different national origins and cultural backgrounds. Most successful cyber space experiments presume shared history, language, and culture for the reproduction of a community in the virtual meta-space.

As for online use by the diaspora, Diamandaki highlights various identities represented on the Internet. For instance, part of e-mail and web address is the country suffix, as in knd@hol.gr or www.childernsworld.uk. And in the home pages of individuals, it is not uncommon to find symbols, pictures, text, or images that portray the identity of the creator. The author welcomes the Internet as a vehicle for strengthening "diasporic" togetherness and communication using electronic pages and discussion groups punctuated with tribal and national character(s) or colors.

On a global scale, diasporic communities can become engaged in using the Internet, as the Kurds on www.akaKurdistan.org. Diamandaki reiterates that the main purpose of diasporic websites is to build a home away from home. In the digital world, the memorable and historical past is blended with the challenging and contrasting present that individuals face. Poster (1998) states, "While pre-existing cultural forms characterize virtual ethnicity, it remains open to construction and to the imaginary." In other words, the Internet can be used as a world forum to ascertain the extent of cultural reflection or modification.

4.4 African Diaspora Social Media in Development

Being thousands of miles away from Africa builds life-long anxiety. Even for Africans who were forcibly removed from the continent, there is generally an interest in the welfare of the motherland and those left behind. Meanwhile, the bombarding media coverage, from one African crisis to another, does not go unnoticed by the African diaspora communities. Hence, social media have sprung up in recent years to establish interactive communication.

In this connection, Rouge (2013) writing under the caption, "How the African Diaspora is using social media to influence development," and published in *The Guardian's Global Development Professionals Network*, admits one thing. That is, something transformational has been happening online. African voices have begun populating social media. Rouge credits social media for generating a collective voice with the plausibility of bringing about development in Africa.

Although the author laments the impediments of single channel information, Rouge recommends the use of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other forms of social media to disseminate the voices of the African diaspora. The

author is ecstatic about the advent of Twitter's short messaging network that has revolutionized political discourse and rewritten the rules governing dialogue in the sphere of international development.

There is, however, one caution. It behooves the African diaspora to effectively, and progressively, conceptualize and package information or messages for online transmission. There are two cases that can be mentioned. In the first case, a controversial development project, the "million shirts campaign," received mixed reviews and failed to attain the desired objectives. The negative feedback against the campaign, intended to dump one million shirts into the African marketplace, was so powerful that the project was quickly abandoned.

The second case was a video campaign to capture notorious Ugandan rebel, Joseph Kony. It was dismissed by prominent voices in the African diaspora as over simplified and misleading. Nonetheless, in the capacity as social media strategist at Connect4Climate, Ruge hails Facebook and Twitter as viable social forums for development initiatives.

Actually, Ruge gave her first talk on development at Africa Gathering in London (UK) after learning about the initiative on Twitter. In 2014, Africa Gathering remains an online forum coordinating annual events in Africa, Europe, and North America. Africa Gathering has remained a platform for members of the African diaspora to discuss and share information on development projects in Africa.

In 2010, Villages in Action was launched from a remote village in Uganda during activities of the 10th anniversary of the millennium development goals. Poor women at the conference worked on "names-less" statistics, charts, and figures. The conference was carried live with participants located in the Washington, D.C. (US) online facilities. The latter took advantage of social media and interacted with the Ugandan women. Ruge characterizes the event: "Social media injected their voice into the discussion on global goals, and Villages in Action was the first diaspora-led development project through online engagement."

Taurasi (2012) reports on the Improving Access to Employment Program in El Salvador. Writing under the title, "Social media for development: making the most of Facebook," Taurasi recollects the program was initially designed to engage young Salvadorans seeking employment. But the project staff realized the messages transmitted through traditional media of radio-television and newspapers were not reaching the target audience. Mindful of the popularity of Facebook among citizens under the age of 26, the project management changed course in message conceptualization and delivery. The project created its own Facebook page; and posted content that included job vacancies, employer highlights, and program-sponsored courses.

Choosing social media proved phenomenally successful. In less than two years, the project grew from 800 fans to more than 65,000 fans. Of that number, 90 percent were in the 18-34 targeted age bracket, just what the project anticipated. Noticing extraordinary online success, companies began asking to post vacancies on the project Facebook page. And during the implementation of the project, 40 private companies posted an average of 15 jobs per week. Taurisa admits creating a social media marketing strategy is not about numbers per se. It's about replacing traditional media. It's about connecting with your target audience.

As the Jamaican Diaspora celebrated independence in 2011, Jamaicans were treated to a speech in Atlanta (US) by the prime minister, Andrew Holness. The prime minister spoke of the imperative to establish social networks: "A virtual friend can become your actual friend."

Holness welcomed the desire for the Jamaican diaspora to reconnect with the homeland. The prime minister called on Jamaicans to take advantage of Twitter's real time conversation features and a wealth of information. Holness advised the Jamaican diaspora community to use social media to become informed about investment opportunities in their homeland.

Holness asked three questions pertaining to social media: What are youth doing online? How are you using new technologies on the Internet and cell phones? What do you think when you can work or play using a mobile device? To these questions, the prime minister answered, "Instead of living in an actual community . . . I live on Twitter and engage in participant observation.'

Holness left the Jamaican diaspora with two pieces of advice. First, to keep abreast by responding to Facebook conversation, even if it is just to say, 'Hi.'" Second, to remember what one teenager told him, "If you are not on Facebook, it's like you don't exist."

To reconnect with the homeland, St. Jean (2014), a community member of the Haitian diaspora, cries out: "My Lament' for Haiti." St. Jean worries about the misfortunes that plague what is said to be the poorest country in the western hemisphere. "I'm a Haitian who has never been to Haiti," she confesses. "I speak the language, eat the food, and immerse myself in a culture from which I'm separated by land and sea."

The social media enthusiast is saddened by war, violence, and poverty in Haiti. On her part, St. Jean uses the Internet, specifically www.twitter.com/MarthaStJean. During an online interaction, a follower asked, "Does anyone know any groups that are accepting volunteers to actually go to Haiti and help? I'm available, and could go for a month or more, as a volunteer."

4.5 African Diaspora Social Media Against Migrant Abuse

There is no need to restate the calamitous conditions that slavery and colonialism heaped on Africa. These conditions have continued to make Africans take risks to migrate to countries where even domestic work is considered better than none in the homeland. Such is the fate of the African diaspora in the Middle East. Genet (2013), writing for *Huffington Post* under the headline, "Beyond Outrage: How the African Diaspora Can Support Migrant Worker Rights in the Middle East," reports on protests by Ethiopians at Saudi Embassies around the world. They were protesting in support of online videos documenting violence against migrant workers in Saudi Arabia.

This occurred during a Saudi crackdown on unregistered foreign workers in the Kingdom. Ethiopian migrant workers in Riyadh attempted to protest. But they became the target of angry vigilante mobs that beat and killed at least three Ethiopian workers, and injuring more.

The violence is symptomatic of the lack of legal protection for migrant workers in the Middle East where abuses against Africans have been publicized through social media. "It is time to move beyond outrage and to put in place strategies designed to end the abuse of domestic African migrant workers in the Middle East," Genet proposes. As a remedy, the journalist suggests an online social forum, "Middle East Domestic Help Abuse Reporting."

4.6 African Diaspora Social Media Convey Voice

The African diaspora recognizes the power of social media. Somali journalists associated with UK diaspora started paving the way for consultations on media reform with special emphasis on utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Consultations centered on the project, XOG-SUGAN: UK Diaspora Media Consultation, a five-week process on the importance and utilization of new media. Grand-fathered by Integrity Research and Consultancy (www.integrityresearch.com), the project explores the use of social media in nation building and extends it to conflict resolution, as well as the guarantee of press freedom. www.xog-sugandiasporaconsultation.co.uk is an online platform to explore ways of using social media to reconnect with Somalia.

King and Grullon (undated) maintain that, diasporas are increasingly becoming influential actors in the delivery of aid to their home countries. The authors admit diasporas are using the Internet to make direct cash transfers and in compiling valuable information on crisis or disasters. King and Grullon go further, "new technologies . . . have facilitated the establishment of virtual connections between the diasporas and the populations of affected disasters in their home countries."

While a non-government organization (NGO) can take weeks or months to dispatch large-scale humanitarian aid, diasporas are able to transfer timely and direct assistance through e-vouchers and cash transfers to the affected communities. These online remittances help revitalize local markets, restore livelihoods, and redirect emergency funds according to local needs.

Hammond (2012) says about two billion dollars in online remittances were sent to Somali that year, and about 200 million dollars directed toward humanitarian aid and development. Hammond alludes to mobile phones, e-banking, and social media that have revolutionized the ability to support and maintain connections with communities of origin. The author discusses the increased availability and affordability of these new technologies that have strengthened communication between the diasporas and their home communities.

Ushahidi (2013) made available open-source software to track and report violent incidents following the disputed Kenyan presidential elections. In Nigeria, a Voice of America (VOA) report, "Nigerian Diaspora Seeks Credible Elections Using Social Media," narrates the diaspora's involvement in the democratic process in the homeland. A video was also uploaded to YouTube during the 2013 legislative election. Below the video was a phone number to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Citizens were encouragement to call the number to make comments or to register complaints.

Furthermore, there were hundreds of Facebook pages in support of free and fair elections posted by the Nigerian Diaspora in the US. Twitter provided a forum for interactive communication, preceded with such hash tags as "Nigeria Decides." In Nigeria itself, candidates running for office posted important announcements on Facebook and Twitter, urging the diaspora community to cast their ballots in absentia.

In Kenya, hate speech was featured on social media. *The Star* (2013) printed the article, "Kenya: Diaspora Should Stop Hate Speech." Aware that the Kenyan Diaspora inundated the social media with hate speech, the paper editorialized that, senders of hate speech seem least bothered by the havoc the speech may trigger back home. *The Star* accused the Kenyan diaspora for the spate. The violence that sprung after the 2007 general election, the paper comments, was largely caused by sentiments posted on Facebook and Twitter.

4.7 African Diaspora Prominent Sons and Culture

Africa might be the "dark continent." Notwithstanding, Africa has a few glowing spots thanks to worldly accomplished sons in the African diaspora. Two of the continent's sons have gained international repute in political ingenuity and sportsman's accomplishments, along with the yearning to preserve African culture which have spurred the African diaspora communities and kept aflame cultural chatter on social media.

Let us first refer to Barack Obama, US president. Obama grew up in the US, but his father was Kenyan. Butty (2013), in, "African-Caribbean Diaspora to Take Part in Obama Inauguration," commends the community for playing an important role in the Presidential Inaugural Ball to mark the president's second term in office. Butty recalls one organizer saying, "We're cognizant that people of African and Caribbean Diaspora have been praying that president Obama is re-elected because he's one of us. He's a son of Africa."

On the flashy, flamboyant world football stage, there is one, and only one Pelé. www.en.wikipedia.com chronicles Pelé's actual name as Edson Arantes do Nascimento. In 1999, Pelé was voted World Player of the Century by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics. He was elected Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In 2013, Pelé received the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) "Ballon d'Or Prix d'Honneur" for career achievements as a global football icon.

Pelé is the son of Africa's great, great, and great grandparents, forcibly pulled from Africa by the Portuguese during the barbaric slave trade. Slaves taken to Brazil were mostly from West and Central Africa. And despite the hundreds of years in the diaspora, Africans in Brazil not only make up about 52 percent of the population in their new homeland, but also maintain the black pigment of their skin. This applies, too, to the indomitable Pelé.

That Brazil was given the odds of winning the 2014 World Cup in Brazil is a tribute to Pelé, says Samuel (2014) in the article, "Die-hard fan Sid ready to Samba in Brazil." The writer admits there is only one Pelé, winner of three World Cups, truly the Sportsman of the Century. Samuel describes Pelé as one in a class of his own, "The game is an art and only those with the artistic skills can play it to perfection, the writer continues."

Samuel's above title partly says, " . . . ready to Samba in Brazil." www.daijiworld.com (2014) concurs, using the title, "It's Samba time! Football World Cup kicks-off." In effect, the *Daily Mail* (2014) caption, "England arrive in Brazil under protection but still dancing to the rhythm of a samba beat," showcased the cultural trait. Speaking of Samba, CNN (2012) did a story on samba, a cultural dance that stems from the estimated four million slaves who were brought to Brazil over a 300-year period (four times those taken to the US).

In Brazilian culture, carnival is celebrated throughout the country. Imbedded in carnival celebrations is samba manifested in forms of music and dance. One explanation for the origin is a Catholic church (Our Lady of the Rosary) built by slaves in the 1700s. It was ordered by slave masters who wanted the slaves to convert to Catholicism.

The black people were part of this congregation, with most of them coming from Congo. CNN ascribes to Joao Carlos Desales as saying, "So when they were able to organize a celebration they would choose a man and a woman to be king or queen of Congo."

4.8 Greasing African Diaspora Social Media

It is true that learning is not static. So, too, is the use of social media in light of evolving information technology. The African diaspora is actively conducting social media training and workshops on the continent. Accordingly, a social media week (the first of its kind) was held in Lagos (Nigeria) on 18-22 February 2013, under the theme, "Who Needs the African Diaspora?" Two groups, Vote or Quench, and Sleeves up Nigeria, organized the interactive debate on the relevance of the African diaspora in Africa.

www.facbook.com summarizes the purpose of the weeks' event as "an international conference to reconnect people and content in order to promote interaction on social media." The event brought together leaders from other African countries to discuss the significance of new media and imperatives for connectedness with the African diaspora. A demonstration of the Google Moderator and online platform permitted homeland Africans and African diaspora communities to participate in the activities of the social media week.

Elsewhere, the Ugandan Diaspora Social Networking Event was held in Kampala in December 2013. The organizers used Facebook in promoting the event and completing registration. Described as "Pearl of Africa," the event aimed at reconnecting the Ugandan diaspora with their homeland, stressing the importance of online cash remittances that form the second largest source of income in Uganda.

Higher education, too, promotes studies on the African diaspora. The University of Texas at Austin (US) held a conference on 3-6 April 2014 on "African Diasporas: Old and New." The conference was to establish a worldwide interdisciplinary dialogue on Africa and Africans on historical and contemporary perspectives. Another aim of the conference was to bring together scholars representing a variety of disciplines to share information on the use of social media and online information technology in teaching content and conducting research on the African diaspora. Conference topics included Transnational, Immigration, and Citizenship; Religion and Culture; Creolization in the African Diaspora; Slavery and the Diaspora; and New Media and Social Media in the African Diaspora.

5. Conclusion

Despite the pejorative categorization as "dark continent," African countries have not given up on development, particularly in light of global communications and the opportunities presented by information technology. Africa has embarked on establishing an infrastructure devised to exploit Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, and Messenger. On the other hand, and since it takes two parties to engage in constructive communication, African diaspora communities have seized on the importance of social media and are sparing no efforts to harness them to reconnect with Africa.

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Meanwhile, the African diaspora is actively conducting social media workshops on the continent. Accordingly, a social media week (the first of its kind) was held in Lagos (Nigeria) on 18-22 February 2013, under the theme, "Who Needs the African Diaspora?"

In relation to African culture, heritage is of prime importance. Dispersed African populations have a yearning for their homeland. They harbor a pleasant desire to be reconnected with the homeland, although it may be reflective or imaginary or virtual. For descendants of Africans who were forcibly removed by the cruelty of slavery, virtual conceptualizations persist of what would "home" would be or simply creating fondness, intimacy, and belonging.

Other Africans left the continent to pursue greener pastures and have resettled mainly in Europe and North America. For some, Africa still controls the heartbeat in them. They, too, use social media to be reconnected with the homeland. Likewise, they form associations intended to keep them abreast with happenings and to share information using online platforms. But Genet (2013), writing for *Huffington Post* under the headline, "Beyond Outrage: How the African Diaspora Can Support Migrant Worker Rights in the Middle East," reports on protests by Ethiopians at Saudi Embassies around the world. They were protesting in support of online videos documenting violence against migrant workers in Saudi Arabia.

The African Diaspora has left no stone unturned in its love for the mother continent. This is exemplified by cash remittances during disaster or national development projects. In several instances, these online remittances are made with lightning speed thanks to online capability, beating the conventional procedural transmissions pursued by NGOs and even governments. Additionally, the African diaspora has formed social media communities in their new homelands to discuss and share ideas on reconnecting with Africa and on cultural revival.

Above all, the African diaspora has just about stopped worrying about the undeniable ills of slavery, which was conveniently followed by colonialism. Yes, numerous chapters document the continent's human history of disenfranchised Africans and a western-imposed system of division to exploit and control the destiny of Africa. Notwithstanding, the African diaspora communities have redirected their energies, not to lament over dispersions and subsequent calamities, but to nostalgia. The latter has opened exploitation of cyberspace.

And as long as Africa has massive lands and waters, there will be drumbeats championed by the African diaspora in such global corners as Haiti, US, Jamaica, and Brazil. In the latter, samba, an African import, thrives nationally. There will be use, and increased use of social media by the African diaspora so long as nature, culture, and nostalgia abound. Indeed, a marriage has been contracted between social media and the African diaspora whose divorce is too distant to contemplate.

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