

Text N°8: Africa's Diaspora Generation without Hang-ups

The African diaspora youth are moving back and forth between the continent and elsewhere. They feel that this is their global village. Today's African diaspora youth have highlighted Africa's cultural contribution to the world. There is no one speaking for them: they are speaking for themselves. They feel firstly black, then African, then Ghanaian or Malian – in that order.

5 They are the gatekeepers of their cultural heritage and language, and they don't feel unwelcome in areas where maybe 15 or 20 years ago people of African descent might have been scared or uncomfortable to venture into. The Afro-Punk weekend in Brooklyn in August is a huge money-maker for the city and these kids created that. Twenty years ago you didn't hear about things like that.

10 When I came to the United States, I was part of the first generation of Africans straddling two worlds. We were saddled with this tribalism baggage which has hindered progress so much on the continent. But for this new generation, they feel that this global village represents their world. The African diaspora youth are moving back and forth between the continent and elsewhere. A lot of them want to go back. And even though they've planted roots in the United
15 States, they don't feel that they have to give one up for the other. They feel that this is their global village. They are cultural vultures.

They feel so confident and entitled, and this is why this generation of diaspora youth is looking at Africa as a place that is right for them, where they feel an entitlement to opportunities. When I look at my daughter's generation, they are made up of so many different hues and regional
20 representations, speaking various languages. But at the same time they are one unit. They are not saddled with a lot of that cultural and traditional education that hindered us.

In the work we do with the New York African Film Festival and its outreach programmes, we try to bring everyone into the fold, not only in the US but also in Africa. We are working in collaboration with young Africans who have returned to Africa to start arts festivals – for
25 example the "Lights, Camera, Africa" festival in Lagos at the end of September. These young 'repats' are so confident and their contribution to the global cultural landscape is immense.

I wanted to work in cinema because I wanted to know who I was. I wanted to know my people, my continent and the rest of the world as an extension of that. When the lights go down I enter that space – and even if that person doesn't look like me or speak a language that I understand
30 – because of emotion or the way they laugh, I know that person. Film shows us that our similarities are so much greater than our differences. But it also shows us that our differences are so amplified that they consume everything else, so much so that sometimes it's really hard to see how much we are alike.

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