

Ghana at Fifty Symposium: British Columbia, Canada

(A JPAS Internal Editorial)

by

JPAS Internal Special Guest Editor

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"If we do not formulate plans for unity and take active steps to form a political union, we will be fighting and warring among ourselves with the imperialists and colonialists standing by behind the screen and pulling vicious wires, to make us cut each others throats for the sake of their diabolical purposes in Africa."

In 1957, Ghana became a trailblazer for African liberation, led by visionary Pan-Africanist Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as Ghana's struggle for independence came to epitomize Africa's own tortuous road to liberation from centuries of foreign control and exploitation.

Dr. Nkrumah's vision of a united and prosperous Africa that would become the home of Africans everywhere was spelt out on March 6, 1957 at the Old Polo grounds in Accra. Flanked by his comrades and facing thousands of his compatriots, with tears of joy and premonition streaming down his cheeks Nkrumah declared: "At long last the battle has ended, and Ghana, your beloved country is free for ever!" Referring to Marcus Garvey his hero and from whom he drew so much inspiration, Nkrumah said: "He looked through the world if he could find a government of a Black people. Marcus Garvey did not find one. And he said he was going to create one. Marcus Garvey did not succeed. But here today, the dreams of Garvey... and all those who have gone before us have to reality at this present moment."

He went on to intone his now famous words: “The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with total liberation of the entire African continent.” Nkrumah’s revolutionary and Pan-Africanist ideas swept across the entire continent—from Casablanca to Cape Town; from Angola to Zimbabwe. Consistent with his independence-day declaration that the independence of Ghana was meaningless unless it was linked with the total liberation of the entire African continent, Nkrumah trained African liberation fighters, financed their movements and encouraged them to dislodge colonial rule from their territories.

On March 23, 2007 a symposium jointly organized by the Ghana Canada Association of British Columbia and Kwantlen University College in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada under the theme: Ghana and Canada-50 Years of Friendship panelists charted Ghana’s role to political liberty by looking at the past 50 years, and trying to envision the next half century. In this space, we publish some of the speeches of the panelists drawn from academia, government, diplomatic circles, and the African community at-large.

Biographical Data (via *JPAS* editor-in-chief):

Charles Quist-Adade (the *JPAS* Internal Special Guest Editor) is a Sociology professor at Kwantlen University College. Prior to joining the Department of Sociology in 2005, he taught at the University of Windsor. He also taught at Wayne State University and Central Michigan University, and Michigan State University in the U.S.A. He specializes in racialization and ethnicity with teaching and research interest in Media and Society, Social Theory, Families, Globalization, and Social Psychology.

Additionally, he is the author of *In the Shadows of the Kremlin and the White House: Africa’s Media Image from Communism to Post-Communism*, several chapters in books and scores of scholarly and popular press articles. He has presented several papers at conferences in Canada, the U.S.A. and Russia. He is the editor and publisher of *Sankofa News*, a publication with a commitment to promoting multiculturalism in Canada and beyond. He has won several teaching awards, including being cited twice in the Academic Edition of Canada’s premier newsmagazine *MacLean’s* as the top three most popular and one of ten best professor at the University of Windsor, Ontario. He was awarded the 2004 Black Community Leadership Award by the Windsor and District Black Coalition. He began his career in Ghana as a journalist before moving to Russia where he pursued graduate studies while he worked as a correspondent of the London (U. K.)-based Gemini News Service, and while in Russia, he stringed for BBC Africa Service, the London-based African magazines, *New African*, *African Concord* and *West Africa*.

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Ghana-Canada Relations: 50 Years of Friendship: What Next? Keynote Address

by

H.E. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene, Ph.D.

Ghana High Commissioner

Symposium on Ghana-Canada Relations – 50 years of Friendship

Vancouver, BC, March 23 2007.

It is my privilege and honour to give the keynote address at this symposium on the relations that have existed between Ghana and Canada over the past 50 years. As Ghana's official representative to Canada in charge of the interests of Ghana in Canada, I see this as a unique opportunity for which I am grateful to the organizers of the function.

Bilateral relations between Ghana and Canada date as far back as Ghana's independence although the first Canadian missionaries arrived in Northern Ghana 101 years ago precisely in 1906. Over the past five decades of our bilateral relations, as our two nations have developed excellent relations, through partnerships and cooperation in various spheres of development, the values that we both cherish and share have shaped new visions of life to our mutual benefit.

Ghana, during this period has come to appreciate Canada's principled and proactive diplomacy in contemporary international relations, particularly in the search for social justice, the rule of law, human rights, global peace and security. Canada's commitment to the promotion of these developmental issues, as well as to issues such as women in development, democracy, good governance and private sector development has earned her a leadership role in many international forums.

Ghana is proud of her association with Canada in the pursuit of global peace and security especially in the area of disarmament and international peacekeeping. It is pertinent to recall our complementary efforts together with other national contributors to transform United Nations peacekeeping into a more responsive, multi disciplinary venture that not only monitors peace agreements, but builds on such momentum to usher in post conflict infrastructure for the restoration of democratic institutions.

Ghana's commitment to the reduction of the negative social effects of conflicts has enabled our two countries to coordinate and jointly sponsor regional workshops to conscientise the international community to the phenomenon. Particularly, we have collaborated to ensure the safety of women and children as well as the effective reintegration of ex-combatants into society. It is also refreshing to recall Canada's contributions to the campaign against the use of land mines, including its ban, of whose treaty - the Ottawa Convention - Ghana is a signatory. Ghana has also received assistance through various Canadian programs to support the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre as a sub-regional institute, for which we are grateful.

My tenure as High Commissioner coincides with enhanced relations between our two countries as long standing partners in development cooperation following President Kufuor's state visit to Canada in 2001. Ghana has benefited tremendously from Canada's official development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa and today, she is one of six countries in the region on Canada's priority agenda. CIDA continues to focus on programs that underpin the vision of the government of Ghana to sustain democratic governance, human resource development and the reinvigoration of the private sector as the engine for developmental growth. In this connection, Ghana appreciates CIDA's support for programs that focus on basic human needs such as provision of water, food security, health, education and, in recent times, budgetary support.

Towards the attainment of the millennium development goals and President Kufuor's vision of medium development by 2015, Ghana would require the support of her true friends like Canada. Ghana is, indeed, confident that she can continue to count on Canada's support in her efforts at implementing her poverty reduction strategy and lessening the impact of these problems on the most vulnerable segments of our society sooner than later.

Our two countries need not rest on our oars. We need to seek new ways to deepen our relationship to our mutual benefit. Although Ghana is Canada's third largest export market in sub-Saharan Africa this can be boosted by the current strategy of President Kufuor to reintegrate the informal areas of the private sector into mainstream economic activity. Canada can assist to boost revenue generation through training in basic business ethics and credit facility. In this way, additional export oriented activity can be generated. We would, indeed, welcome new CIDA support and assistance in the process of reintegration of this informal sector into the regular economy.

I wish to conclude by thanking you for this most auspicious opportunity to further connect our two countries. I hope this symposium will map out ways for increased growth in all aspects of our relations at the bilateral, multilateral and partnership levels in order to promote our mutual interests.

Thank you.

Biographical Data: *H.E. Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene received her Ph.D. from the University of Leicester following her research in the Department of Media and Communication. She earned her B.A .honours degree in French and Spanish from the University of Ghana in 1986. She possesses a Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) degree and a post-graduate diploma in Mass Communication from the University of Ghana where she has since September 1992 taught Public Relations, Qualitative Research Methods and Mass Communication. On June 23 2006 she was appointed Ghana's High Commissioner to Canada by His Excellency President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana and she received her Letters of Commission on June 30 2006 to assume duty in Ottawa, Canada on July 15 2006.*

Kwame Nkrumah, the Big Six, and the Fight for Ghana's Independence

by
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Ghana's 50th independence anniversary has come at the confluence of several monumental events, including the 200th anniversary of the official abolition of slavery, International Women's Day, which was marked on March 8, and International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which was celebrated two days ago.

All these events are connected by one theme: the unquenchable desire of people everywhere for liberty. Today, we stand on the parapet of the mid-century of Ghana's nationhood looking at the past 50 years and trying to envision the next half century.

In the life of a nation, 50 years is but a short time. However, in the lives of citizens 50 years is a long time indeed. For both the nation and its citizens, it is a time filled with realized and unrealized aspirations, fulfilled hopes and dashed dreams.

It's, I am convinced, such thoughts of mixed feelings, mixed feelings of promise and premonition that filled the heart of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the pioneer prime minister of Ghana on Independence Day, March 6, 1957 at the Old Polo ground in Accra. Flanked by his comrades and facing hundreds of thousands of his compatriots, tears streamed down his cheeks as he declared the immortal words: "At long last the battle has ended, and Ghana, your beloved country is free for ever!"

The illustrious African Martinique psychiatrist, revolutionary and pan-Africanist extraordinaire, Franz Fanon once said: "Every generation, out of obscurity, must discover its mission and either fulfill it or betray it." The Big Six, and before them, Caseley Hayford, Ato Ahoma, the Kings and leaders of the Gold Coast, Osei Tutu, Agyeman Prempeh I and Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa to name a few, discovered their mission and fulfilled it.

Their mission was the throwing off the colonial yoke of subjugation, exploitation, dehumanization, and humiliation of Africans by European colonialists and slavers. Dr. Nkrumah captured the essence of this mission in the following two noble sayings: “We prefer independence with danger to servitude in tranquility;” and “It is better to govern and misgovern ourselves than to be governed by someone else.” (Kwame Nkrumah, 1980, p.75)

These sayings by Dr. Nkrumah are testimonies to the fact that there’s nothing greater and more precious than liberty. Indeed, there is no price for liberty! Although Ghana at mid-life may be suffering mid-life crisis; although the price of freedom may seem so costly to some, I dare say we are better off as a free people to manage or mismanage our affairs than to be ruled by someone else.

In 1957, Ghana became a trailblazer for African liberation. In a recent article in the *New African* magazine editor Baffour Ankomah (2007, p.32) observed that from faraway Virginia, USA, at the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), eyes were trailing what was happening in Ghana. Barely nine months into independence, the CIA issued a report on Ghana in December 1957, which was distributed within the American government and intelligence community. The report was right in its prediction. “The fortunes of Ghana—the first Tropical African country to gain independence will have a huge impact on the evolution of Africa and Western interests there.” (Ibid) It didn’t take long for that prediction to come true. Within 10 years of Ghana’s independence, 31 other African countries had gained their own independence. And Nkrumah’s Ghana (which, in his own words: “we have got to make our little country an example for the rest of Africa”) had had a huge role in liberating Africa.

He set up training camps in Ghana for African freedom fighters, and through financial, political and other support, Nkrumah’s Ghana kept the African liberation torch burning very brightly. True to his electoral promises, Nkrumah went to work putting the economic and social fundamentals in place.

Nkrumah firmly believed that political independence was meaningless without economic independence. Notes Baffour Ankomah, “thus, by the time he was overthrown in the CIA-inspired coup of 24 February 1966, Ghana had 68 sprawling state-owned factories producing every need of the population—from shoes, to textiles, to furniture, to lorry tires, to canned fruits, vegetables and beef; to glass, to radio and TV; to books, to steel, to educated manpower, virtually everything!”(p.32)

“Nkrumah wanted to industrialize Ghana within a generation, and everything was on course until the Americans and their British cousins (according to their own declassified documents), used some disgruntled and self-serving Ghanaian soldiers, and staged that terrible coup on 24 February 1966 that truncated Ghana’s progress. It was a major setback, not only for Ghana but the whole of Africa!” (Ibid)

To quote my good old friend Baffour Ankomah again, “If Nkrumah had been allowed to complete his industrialization plan, Ghana would today have been another Malaysia on the west coast of Africa, and the modern doomsayers who now mock at Ghana by showing us the bright lights in Kuala Lumpur, would not dare show their warped tongues!”(Ibid).

“But Nkrumah was overthrown, and we are now left with nostalgia and what might have been. After the coup, the IMF rubbed salt into our injuries by sending a delegation to Accra to tell the military junta to discontinue Nkrumah’s industrialization program. And they did! And, as a reward, some of them got airports named after them!”(Ibid)

Forty-one years after the dastardly coup, almost every Ghanaian (except those still suffering from acute blindness and amnesia) now realize the enormity of our loss as a nation. It has taken the country more than years of blood and tears to barely hold our heads above water through four turbulent decades to arrive at the current political and economic stability achieved, since 1992, under four terms of constitutional rule—first under president Rawlings’ NDC (1992-2000) and then President John Kufuor’s NPP (2000 to date).

Ghana has learnt its lessons the hard way, and it is right and proper that President Kufuor’s current government is stressing national reconciliation and the lowering of political tensions in the country.

Here is Baffour again. “The President must be applauded for this. For example, it was nice to hear President Kufuor (coming from the NLM-United Party Busia-Danquah political tradition that boycotted the 1957 independence ceremonies and thereafter fought bitter political battles with Nkrumah and his Convention People’s Party for control of the soul of Ghana), describe Nkrumah in his acceptance speech as African Union chairman in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in January this year, as “that visionary and African freedom fighter”. (p.32)

Baffour advises that that is how politics should be conducted in Ghana after the golden jubilee celebrations—praise when praise is due and critics when criticism is due. The country, he adds, should not continue on the disastrous road of pull-him/her-down politics that has ensured that instead of being a Malaysia in our 50th year of independence, Ghana is still rationing electricity because the dam that Nkrumah built has a low water level.

As we mark Ghana's 50th independence anniversary, it is important to be reminded by the wisdom entailed in the mythical Sankofa bird of the Akan people of central Ghana; the bird that looks back as it moves forward: we cannot move successfully into the future without looking back into the past. We must learn from our past mistakes and never allow the destructive "mate me ho" (secessionist) and the ill-conceived one-party politics of the past to return. People who do not learn from their past mistakes are doomed to repeat them.

Let me conclude by saying that it is only befitting and proper that we doff our hats to those great sons and daughters of our beloved country who fought and died for the freedom and dignity of Ghanaians, Africans and indeed all peoples of African descent everywhere. Let's pay homage to the big six- Kwame Nkrumah, Obetsebi Lamptey, Ako Adjei, Akuffo Addo, Paa Willie, J.B. Danquah. We thank them for forming the two political parties—the United Gold Coast Convention and the Convention People's Party, which mobilized our people to fight against British colonialism. Let's pay tribute to Sergeant Adjetei, Corporal Attipoe, Private Nii Odartey Lamptey and Nii Kwabena Bonnie who shed their blood in 1948 fighting against the oppressor's rule. It is their heroic feats on that fateful day that ignited flames of struggle that led to our country's eventual liberation from more than a century of foreign domination.

Let's honour the memories all the kings and chiefs, and indeed the multitude of unsung heroes and heroines among the Ghanaian masses, who in various ways, big and small, facilitated our country's independence. These valiant compatriots of ours died so we may live. They sweated, toiled and shed their blood so we may reap the fruits of liberty, even if that liberty is still tainted and bitter. Let the story of their courage and sacrifice inspire and embolden us to discover and fulfill the mission of our generation—the economic and true political liberation of Ghana and Africa.

Happy 50th anniversary, mother Ghana!!!!

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Canadian NGOs and Grass Roots Leadership/ Democracy in Ghana

by

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Presented at the Ghana Golden Jubilee Symposium,
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Introduction:

Grass roots leadership and democracy in Gold Coast's independence struggles provide an important key to understanding the success and failures of Canadian and other foreign NGOs in post-independence Ghana. Those NGOs that tap into Ghanaian grass roots leadership and democracy are able to facilitate development in civil society. Those that do not tap into this vital resource contribute to growth without development.

NGOs emerge to fill the gaps in civil society left by the disconnect between the State/Government and the grass roots. Many Canadian NGOs in Ghana are motivated by the love for Africa, to help the poor and the disenfranchised—A LAUDABLE GOAL. However, because of their disconnect from grass roots leadership and democracy they become mere charities creating social parasites and deepening the dependency syndrome of Ghana.

For Canadian NGOs in Ghana to empower civil society, particularly the poor and the disenfranchised, they need to take cues from the key ingredient used to achieve success in the Gold Coast independence struggles. The key was Nkrumah and the CPP's effective connection with grass roots leaders and their democratic practices.

Leadership and Grass Roots Democracy in Ghana's Independence Struggles:

Ghana's independence struggles began formally with the establishment of the United Gold Coast Convention. This first political party of Ghana aimed to rely on the vanguard or the elite to organize the struggle for independence. This organizations and governance system was foreign and antithetical to indigenous governance of the various ethnic groups of Gold Coast. In these communities, governance thrived on grass roots leadership and democracy.

Kwame Nkrumah's strategy proved to be a different one. He turned to "the people", the grass roots, to facilitate a democratic mass movement. His background of poverty on the margins of the Gold Coast gave him more credibility as a populist leader than all his overseas education. The poor youth, farmers, women and wage earners of the Gold Coast were far removed in the social spectrum from the intellectuals and professionals of the colony. The grass roots were already directed against the colonial government. They were therefore natural allies to Nkrumah in his search for a wide-ranging grass roots coalition to challenge the local colonial authorities.

The democratically operated mass movement consisted of three main grass roots groups (Birmingham, 1990): the detached youth (Verandah Boys), cocoa farmers, women, and workers.

- **The Youth Movement**

The core of the youth movement was composed of school leavers and drop-outs who came to the urban centers in search of employment and slept on the back verandahs of distant relatives. When Nkrumah broke with the UGCC in 1949, it is this youth movement that was turned into the initial autonomous Convention People's Party (ibid).

- **Cocoa Farmers**

To gain a broad base of support from voters, Nkrumah connected with and motivated cocoa farmers to organize a democratically strong movement in support of the CPP's independence struggle against the Colonial government that was exploiting these farmers (ibid.).

- **Women**

The liberation movements of Africa discovered that one way of mobilizing support was to seek the approval of women. Powerful market women of Ghana were leaders who democratically organized grass roots women to facilitate Nkrumah's early organizing ventures. In the independent struggles, Gold Coast grass roots women were cheer leaders, fund-raisers, street-demonstrators, boycott organizers in support of the cause represented by Nkrumah and the grass roots in general (ibid.).

- **The Workers**

The Gold Coast wage-earners, especially the railway workers trade union movement of Takoradi, were a significant source of support for the Nkrumah-led independence struggles. The wage earners had begun to unionize in the 1920s and were capable of sustaining strikes of several weeks (ibid.).

During the final stages of the struggles it was the verandah boys, the farmers, women and workers who used their grass roots leadership and democracy to stage "positive action" to bring the colonial administration to its knees.

The grass roots leadership and democracy already existed among the youth, farmers, women and workers in pre-colonial Ghana. Nkrumah's genius lied in recognizing these grassroots and partnering with them. These grass roots were already dissatisfied with the British Colonial administration and they had already laid foundations for organizing against it. Struggling against the Colonialist was the project of the grass roots before Kwame Nkrumah came to the scene. They clicked with Nkrumah mainly because his agenda was similar to theirs---get rid of the colonialists NOW, if our desires were to be fulfilled.

After political independence in 1957, Osagefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah began to develop top-down projects. Naturally such projects did not connect with the grass roots leadership and democracy. He therefore lost touch with the grass roots which made them symbolize him as the new colonial master. They began to use their grass roots leadership and democracy against his government. They were just waiting to work with groups at the national level with emancipatory aspirations. It was not surprising therefore that when the military and the policy staged the 1966 coup; they got an overwhelming support from the grass roots.

Many NGOs in Ghana and other African countries have failed to make a significant difference in the civil societies and living condition of both the rural and urban poor/disenfranchised because they don't tap into the projects, aspirations and organizing principles of these grass roots. These NGOs hatch up their projects in Canada and send it with their personnel from Canada to go and implement them in Ghana. Those projects don't inspire the grass roots. The grass roots don't feel they own the projects and would therefore be parasitic to it. That is, they pretend to accept these projects in order to have personal financial gain from them. In contrast, the Canadian NGOs that have tapped into the grass roots leadership and democracy in Ghana are flourishing and are empowering the people to do their own development. A representative example is Kathy Knowles Children's Library.

Conclusion:

Ghana's 50th anniversary should pay homage and build a monument for grass roots leadership and democracy. This is because the dynamics of leadership and grass roots democracy determined the destinies of pre-colonial Ghanaian societies, determined the destiny of the Gold Coast independence struggles, and would determine the destinies of NGOs and governmental organizations in Ghana—for that matter, the destiny of Ghana.

Reference

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Biographical Note: *Francis Adu-Febiri was born and raised in Ghana. After completing an Honours Degree in Sociology at the University of Ghana, he went to Canada for graduate school. He did his Masters at Simon Fraser University and a Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia, specializing in the Sociology of Tourism. Since 1994 he has been teaching Sociology at Camosun College, Victoria. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Victoria, and has taught as a term faculty at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and has done a number of academic and non-academic presentations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the United States and Canada.*

Ghanaian-Canadian Woman: Contributions, Challenges & Prospects

by

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Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, today I have been asked to address the contributions, challenges and prospects of the Ghanaian-Canadian woman.

I will start with a few of the challenges facing Ghanaian-Canadian, namely social isolation, economic integration and mental well-being and domestic abuse. I will then address some of the Ghanaian-Canadian women's contributions in our society and finally end with the prospects for the future. I will endeavor to do this in 15 minutes.

Most Ghanaians who arrived in Canada before Ghana's independence and in the '60's came to further their education with the hope of going back home. Women who came during this period may not identify with some of the challenges I will be talking about today. In the 1970's, 80's and 90's however, Canada witnessed a significant influx of Ghanaian immigrants, due to the political instability back home. Some came as refugees to avoid political prosecution, while others came for better economic conditions. It is this group that I will be addressing.

Canada's immigration laws, which centered on education and skills, imposed a restriction on the entry of Ghanaian women; therefore, a large % of women arrived in Canada under the family class as dependents.

The process of migration constitutes a major life change. Typically, Ghanaian women are the primary care givers. When they arrive in Canada, it is naturally assumed that they would continue in that role. The big reality check, besides the weather, is the fact that they are required to fulfill that role single-handedly. You see, in Ghana, we have an extended family system and constant interaction. In fact, if someone keeps to him or herself or ponders for sometime, people will demand to know if they are feeling poorly. If a woman delivers a child, she can be sure that her mother or a member or members of the extended family will be there to provide assistance. Whether it's with babysitting, cooking, shopping or housekeeping. You can therefore imagine the feeling of social isolation when a Ghanaian woman arrives in Canada. When the spouse goes off to work, the woman and perhaps the children are left alone to cope.

In Ghana, we are taught in English, so most women who arrive in Canada do not expect to have language as a barrier. Indeed, some Ghanaian-Canadian women arrived in Canada with post-secondary qualifications and professional credentials. However, when they arrive in Canada, they realize that the English they took for granted is not the one spoken here. Almost every thing you say is second-guessed and you are constantly asked to repeat yourself. Did you ever want to buy petrol – no I mean gas for the car. (give other examples). So you see, the language has to be learned all over again. This intensifies the feeling of loneliness and social isolation.

Most Ghanaian-Canadian women expect to find a job effortlessly to help the family financially. When I speak about “family” in this context, I do not mean the family nucleus that you have in Canada. I mean the “extended family”. This includes your parents and grandparents, siblings and their families, Aunts, Uncles as well as your cousins etc. The extended family is relying on the woman and her spouse to support the family back home. You see, in Ghana, we do not have the employment insurance, welfare and old age pension to rely on. Our social network is the extended family, so when a woman gets the opportunity to travel, it is immediately assumed that she will be able to support the family back home. The pressure to get a job is immense.

This leads to the second challenge when the Ghanaian-Canadian realizes that her education and experience is not recognized in Canada. There are systemic barriers confronting immigrant women in the workplace based on the needs and preferences of employers in terms of skills and qualifications. Economic integration is a major challenge. Research suggests that immigrant woman’s chances in the labor market increases considerably with Canadian educational credentials, and not skills already possessed on arrival. The Ghanaian-Canadian woman’s aspirations at finding a descent job are quashed. She is encouraged to take ESL classes, but she does not feel she needs that. There are suggestions that she retrain and acquire some Canadian experience. But there is the need to help financially. The women, especially those with children are unable financially to stay out work for the time it takes to pursue accreditation. There are problems with childcare and the long training period involved as well as the cost of retraining. Rejection after rejection, she begins to feel defeated and starts to apply for menial jobs and is content to be able help financially. (my experience) Many Nurses, teachers, and social workers have had to accept lower paying jobs and some have even ended up on welfare. Research conducted by the National Organization of immigrant and visible minority women of Canada suggests that the loss of ability to practice one’s profession can lead to social, economic and psychological problems.

Ghanaian-Canadian women live for their children. They want to give their children a greater chance at life than they did. They however, have to cope with children who assimilate into the Canadian lifestyle. There is invariably a clash of cultures. Our children do not always agree with our traditions and beliefs and think that we are old fashioned and that our reality is not their reality. Remarks such as “Its not a big deal” and “whatever” are all too predictable.

Some women have found the challenges of isolation and rejection extremely traumatizing. The Ghanaian woman has to face the challenges of day care which she did not have to worry about back home, irregular working hours, home care and most importantly, fulfilling their conjugal obligations. This puts a lot of pressure on the woman and a strain on the relationship. This leads to the third and fourth challenge of extreme depression and other mental problems and as well abuse. These conditions are not immediately apparent to the untrained person and leads to frustrations in the home, which sometimes lead to physical and psychological abuse. I am not here to conclude that all mental problems and spousal abuse stem from these challenges. I speak from some experience however, when I make these statements. Ignorance of our rights under the Canadian law and expensive legal fees mean that many Ghanaian-Canadian women accept the abuse. They stay in abusive situations for various reasons including a fear of poverty, attitudes of family and friends and general feelings of desperation.

In spite of these challenges though, Ghanaian-Canadian women have made great strides and contributed greatly to the Canadian economy. As the old adage goes, when one door closes, another door opens”. A majority of women I spoke to did go back to school to learn different skills. Today, I am proud to say that we have Ghanaian-Canadian women doctors and nurses practicing in our hospitals, we have a Ghanaian-Canadian woman pilot in the air force, lawyers, bankers, architects, teachers, Accountants, social workers and many women holding managerial positions in industry and in the public sector. Others went the entrepreneurial way. Across Canada, we have Ghanaian-Canadian women retailers, restaurateurs, caterers, hairdressers, draperists etc. We even have Ghanaian-Canadian women Olympians. Indeed, you will find Ghanaian-Canadian women in all walks of life actively participating in building the Canadian economy. Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the number of Ghanaian-Canadian women, and for that matter on Ghanaians who work in most of these fields. I think we may have to start gathering statistics in these fields.

Ghanaian women are generally hardworking and enterprising. Back home in Ghana, the Ghanaian women play a vital role in nation building – from the market women’s associations, to the 31st December women’s political movement. Ghanaian women are judges, members of parliament, and professors at universities and even represent their countries as ambassadors to different countries, for instance our very own High Commissioner here in Canada.

As we look forward, Ghanaian-Canadian women need to open their horizon and seize the opportunities that are open to us in various political, social and economic fields. At the moment, we are marginalized because we have been complacent. Our educational qualifications can be used and appreciated not only in paid positions, but also in other sectors of society (outside the job environment). In education, we need to participate and contribute in Parent-teacher associations, dry grad-planning sessions and be more involved in our children's activities. We cannot complain about outcomes if we do not involve ourselves in decision-making. Politically, we have to involve ourselves in local administration and school trusteeships etc. Socially, we can help out in non-profit organizations and other quasi-governmental organizations create awareness and an appreciation for our skills and qualifications.

As we participate in some of these social and political settings, we will begin to get more recognition in terms of our talents and contributions. When it comes to planning and decision-making, we will be a force to reckon with, and will be consulted and involved, thereby effecting change in the way other people look at us.

Ghanaians are always thinking of going back home and therefore have not put firm roots in our new home Canada. We raise our children here but continue to look back. We have been given an opportunity to start afresh in Canada: a country which promotes multiculturalism.

We need to embrace this opportunity and access the resources that have been made available through agencies and non profit organizations dedicated to helping immigrant women integrate into the Canadian mosaic, such as "status of Women" which provides job skills for immigrant women and Service Canada (formerly HRDC) which provides Job search and retraining programs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada which has information for newcomers, the Maytree Foundation and other such organizations.

While we secure a place for ourselves here in Canada, you know, and I know that we will always be thinking of home. Ghanaian-Canadians women should consider setting up businesses or supporting existing businesses back home for sustainability of the extended family and for the Ghanaian economy at large. We in the Diaspora cannot perpetuate our family's dependence on us. We have to work at providing tools to help them fend for themselves to ensure that the people of Ghana are able to build their own sustainable and prosperous future.

I hope that in the limited time that I have to talk on the subject, I have been able to create an awareness of some to the challenges, contributions and prospects of the Ghanaian-Canadian woman. The future is great for today's Ghanaian-Canadian women.

Thank you.

Biographical Data: *Theresa was born and educated in Ghana. She is the last of three children from a Ghanaian Mother and a St Lucian father. After completing her 'A' levels in Ghana she left Ghana to further her education in Scotland, where she received a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.*

In 1979 she accepted a job with a subsidiary of the John Holt group of companies, and went to work in Apapa, Nigeria for three years as an Assistant Sales Manager. In 1983, she came to Vancouver, to join her fiancé Kofi Ohene-Asante. They got married and have two sons aged 23 and 21 years. She also has two grand-children from her step-daughter, Augusta. While in Canada, Theresa decided to pursue a career in Management Accounting, while raising her children and obtained the CMA designation in 2000.

Theresa has worked with the federal government in several capacities since 1988 and is currently an Auditor in the International Division at the Canada Revenue Agency. She is an active member of the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of B, thus holding several positions on its executive over the years. Notwithstanding, Theresa is also a proud founding member of the Ghanaian Women's Group – The Unique sisters, a member of the Entrepreneurial Assistance Society of Vancouver's board as a vice-president and is also a member of the Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation's finance committee.

Happy Birthday, Ghana!

by

Richard Le Bars, M.A.

Deputy Director for West Africa in the West and Central Africa Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada

Excellencies, members of Parliament, members of the Ghanaian community in Canada, ladies, gentleman and friends of Ghana;

It is a great privilege for me to be here in Surrey and speaking at an event that marks not only a momentous occasion in Ghana's history, but also an important moment in Africa's history;

It was Ghana's Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first Prime Minister and one of Africa's great post-colonial leaders, who aptly stated that "the best way to be an independent, sovereign state is to be an independent sovereign state";

As we commemorate a half century of Ghanaian independence, Ghana is demonstrating to the world the truth in Prime Minister Nkrumah's words;

Today, in Ghana, democracy has firmly taken root;

Today, Ghana is taking the lead in the New African Partnership for African Development and is serving as an example of good governance to its African neighbors;

Today, President John Agyekum Kufuor is serving as the Chairman of the African Union and another Ghanaian, Dr. Mohamad Ibn Chambas, is the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States;

And, today, Ghana is contributing to African and global security as the sixth largest contributor to UN peace operations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Canada has shared close relations with Ghana since its independence and even before;

In fact, 2006 marked a landmark – the 100th anniversary of the first major Canadian presence on Ghanaian territory. In 1906, Canadian missionaries from Quebec, *Les Pères Blancs*, established a church at Navrongo, in what is now Upper East Region. Since then, Ghana has attracted the interest of thousands of Canadians who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the development of modern Ghana.

This occasion was marked by the visit to Ghana last year of Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean, the Governor General of Canada, during which she reaffirmed Canada's commitment to partnership with Ghana in development, security and commerce and highlighted a special bilateral relationship.

Ghana's leadership in West Africa and its peacekeeping expertise have made it an important regional interlocutor and partner for Canada.

Conversely, Ghana sees Canada as a major partner in Africa. Bilateral relations reflect five decades of cooperation in development, the UN and the Commonwealth and more recently within la Francophonie. An increasing number of Ghanaians (more than 17,000) have studied in and immigrated to Canada. In recent years, ties have broadened to include trade and investment, election observation and peacekeeping.

Canada recognizes Ghana as a model for Africa: a country with strong economic growth, a stable democracy, with regular, free elections; a country that protects the freedom of speech (including a vibrant press), and one that promotes a dynamic civil society and private sector;

As partners, Ghana and Canada continue to promote these values in multi-lateral forums such as the UN, the Francophonie and the Commonwealth;

And Canada is committed to building upon its long- standing good relations with Ghana in the years ahead;

Ghana is the longest running CIDA program in sub- Saharan Africa (since 1957) and one of 25 countries of concentration selected for increased aid. Canadian assistance to Ghana has risen by 500 per cent over the last few years, from \$12.5 million in 2002-03 to \$62.5 million in 2005-06. Since independence, Canadian aid to Ghana has come to \$1 billion.

Canadian aid focuses on three main areas: water security (from 1973 to 2004, Canada allocated more than \$165 million to 18 water projects. More than 1.3 million Ghanaians in the north have potable water because of these efforts);

Food security (Canada is the largest bilateral donor to Ghana's agriculture, giving more than \$100 million over five years to projects and budgetary support); and also on issues of governance.

This last area seeks to improve the capacity of central and local governments to support the country's development process. Canada, along with other donor partners, provides direct budgetary support to Ghana's Ministry of Finance. The environment, HIV/AIDS and gender equality are cross-cutting themes of the cooperation program.

In 2001 Canada declared a moratorium on Ghana's bilateral debt payments to Canada. The Kufuor administration subsequently decided to join the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. In July 2004, the IMF's Board of Directors approved debt relief of USD\$3.5 billion. In the context of this announcement, in 2004 Canada cancelled Ghana's bilateral debt, totaling \$19.1 million.

On the peace and security front, Canada, through the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, is cooperating with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre to develop courses to build the capacity of West African peacekeepers and to allow them to take ownership of the security of their region;

The goal is to contribute to the establishment of the KAIPTC as a regional centre of excellence for the operational aspects of peace support operations that will complement the tactical and strategic focus of other training centers in the region.

This partnership will further enhance greater prospects for joint actions between the two countries and advance issues and themes of common interest in various multilateral fora.

Moreover, the relationship extends to academia as well. The *Canada-Ghana Science & Research Council* was formally launched in Accra on February 2005. The Research Council, the first of its kind sponsored by Canada in Africa, seeks to promote scientific exchange between Canada and Ghana, and the benefits of scientific research within Ghana. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to a shift in scientific relations with developing countries from "brain drain" to "brain exchange."

Ghana is Canada's third largest market in sub-Saharan Africa for merchandise exports. A strong growth rate, declining inflation and improving infrastructure add to the country's commercial attractiveness.

In 2006 two way trade totaled \$163.3 million a 32.5 per cent increase overall over 2005 (exports were \$109.5 million compared to \$94.3 million in 2005 and imports from Ghana were \$53.5 million compared to \$29 million in 2005). Although wheat was the largest single item of Canadian export (\$37.2 million), other areas included machinery, textiles, and clothing and vehicles. It is noteworthy that once much of the Canadian wheat shipped to Ghana was under the aid program; Canadian wheat is now imported commercially by the major private millers. Canadian exports to Ghana increased 16 per cent over 2005 and 62 per cent over 2004 levels, confirming the widely held perception that there is potential for Canada and Ghana to further develop their commercial ties, notably through the Ghanaian Diaspora here in Canada.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of President Kufuor has a vision of turning Ghana into a middle-income country by 2015;

As Ghana enters its 51st year of independence, it is a vision which the Ghanaian people are firmly on the road to realizing;

And it is a vision that Canada is proud to be a partner of and to look to the future of strengthening the Canada- Ghana friendship.

Thank you.

Biographical Data: *Richard Le Bars is the Deputy Director for West Africa in the West and Central Africa Division at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade since August 2006. He joined the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1999 and occupied posts in the geographic desk within the Africa Bureau as well as within the Human Rights, Humanitarian and International Women's Equality Division, a post he held prior to his present responsibilities he was posed between 2002 and 2006 as the Political, Economic Relations and Public Affairs Manager at the Canadian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He holds a Masters in International Development from the University Institute for Development Studies based in Geneva Switzerland, and a Bachelor's degree in Social Science.*

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana and Africa's Global Destiny

by

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Almost a century ago, in the small village of Nkroful in the Western region of Ghana, a child was born. The event passed, as in the case of many children, as an ordinary event. And, as in many African families, the parents of this child did not even take note of the date on which he was born.

In his autobiography, he was to state that it was with some difficulty that he could pinpoint his birth day; September 21, 1909. Kwame Nkrumah, the visionary Pan-Africanist, who dreamt of a united, prosperous Africa, was a man of foresight. He had a noble vision for Africa and the Black race. He saw the metropolises of Africa becoming the headquarters of science, technology, and medicine. He saw in Africa a giant hypnotized, made dormant by years of foreign tutelage and exploitation, and he sought to awaken this giant. But time and his contemporaries were not on his side. He seems to have been born ahead of his time and his contemporaries. As the celebrated British historian, Basil Davidson put it: Nkrumah lived far ahead of his time. It is in the year 2060, that people would read about his works and wonder to themselves why such a man should have lived at such a time. Finally, Nkrumah, was not a paragon of political virtues. He committed mistakes, including his allowing bootlickers and sycophants in his Convention People's Party to make a tin god out of him and to tear him away from the ordinary people.

Born into a humble smith's family in Nkroful in the western region of the then-British colony of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) nearly a century ago on September 21, 1909, Nkrumah was to become one of the most illustrious makers of modern Africa and perhaps the most ardent and consistent advocate of the unity of the Black race after Marcus Garvey. His single-minded desire to make Africa the proud home of all peoples of African descent dispersed around the world brought him to work with many leaders and architects of the Pan-Africanist movement, including W.E.B Du Bois of the United States, George Padmore of Trinidad, and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria. He was one of the organizers of the historic 5th Pan-Africanist Congress in Manchester, England, more than half a century ago, a congress which proved decisive in the struggle against foreign rule in Africa and against racial oppression in the West and which demonstrated a remarkable unity between continental Africans and Africans in the Diaspora.

Not only did he bring Pan-Africanism to its natural home when he returned to the Gold Coast after his sojourn in America and England to lead the independence movement, he also established and sustained until the end of his regime a link between the continent and the Diaspora. He borrowed many brilliant ideas from his inspirer and admirer Marcus Garvey, including the Black Star as a national symbol (displayed in the center of Ghana's flag as well as taken as the names of the country's shipping line and soccer team). He made Padmore his adviser and invited the grand old man of Pan-Africanism, Du Bois to live out his last days in Ghana.

In Africa, Nkrumah attempted to form the kernel of his pet dream—the United States of Africa with-Sekou Toure of Guinea, Modibo Kieta of Mali, and Patrice Lumumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Without doubt, Nkrumah ranks among the greatest political figures of the 20th century. An indefatigable champion of world peace, advocate and spokesman of the Non-Aligned Movement, it was ironic that his government was overthrown in a violent CIA-masterminded coup while he was on his way to Hanoi to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the US war in Vietnam.

His courageous and tactical leadership (Gandhian passive non-resistance or what he termed “positive action” leadership led to the wresting of the political independence of his country from Britain, the first such achievement in sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana's independence not only became the power-keg that ignited a continental revolution against European imperialism, Nkrumah also consciously made his newly liberated country the powerhouse of the African revolution.

Nkrumah's revolutionary and pan-Africanist ideas swept across the entire continent—from Casablanca to Cape Town. Consistent with his independence-day declaration that the independence of Ghana was meaningless unless it was linked with the total liberation of the entire African continent, Nkrumah trained African liberation fighters, financed their movements, and encouraged them to dislodge colonial rule from their territories.

It was no wonder that in less than a decade after Ghana's independence in 1957, over 90 per cent of African countries had attained their own independence.

All of Nkrumah's adult life was devoted to one and only one passion—the liberation and unity of the African “race.” He lived, dreamed, and died for this ideal. His passion and quest for a continental union government prompted his enemies to brand him dreamer, a megalomaniac, an African Don Quixote. But judging from the parlous state of the continent's desperate, dispirited, non-viable 53 countries today, Nkrumah's call for the formation of a United States of Africa government was a wise one, if brazen at the time. The largely ineffective Organization of African Unity, now African Union is a testimony to Nkrumah's warning that only a continental government of political and economic unity could save the continent from the encircling gloom spawned by enraging internecine wars, famine and disease.

Nkrumah argued forcefully that only a federal state of Africa based on a common market, a common currency, a unified army (a African High Command), and a common foreign policy could provide the launching pad for not only a massive reconstruction and modernization of the continent, but also could optimize Africa's efforts to find its rightful place in the international arena and so effectively checkmate internal conflicts, fend off superpower interference, and predatory and imperialistic wars.

But Nkrumah's tragedy was probably that he came to power at the wrong time, in the “heat” of the Cold War, a period when the bi-polar East-West ideological confrontation made leaders like Nkrumah sacrificial lambs on the alter of superpower chauvinism. Cold War politics brooked no homegrown nationalists and patriots; it did not forgive leaders who refused to worship the gods of Soviet communism or American capitalism. Would Nkrumah's ideas have been more welcome in this post-cold war, uni-polar, “de-ideologized,” globalized world? It is difficult to say. So far, Hugos Chavez of Venezuela and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe have managed to hold on, in spite of frenetic attempts to overthrow their regimes by the same Western forces who overthrew Nkrumah's government in 1966.

To many, the idea of a union government of Africa remains a utopia. True, the enormity of the tasks of ironing out political and ideological differences and of overcoming the vestiges of colonial divisions and neo-colonial machinations are enormous. But the inherent impossibility to archive an actual utopia should not push Africans into resignation or inaction. After all, history has amply demonstrated that all great ventures of human civilisation were conceived, as it were, in the womb of utopianism. What is more, Africans should remind themselves that any programme, no matter how poorly conceived, if imaginatively executed, is better than complete inaction.

A continental union government might not have been a magic bullet or a panacea for all of the continent's seemingly intractable problems, but one can say without fear of contradiction that the continent would be better today if Nkrumah's dream had been achieved, for such a union would have made it possible for the marshalling and pooling of the continent's rich resources for the collective benefit of the citizens of Africa. Advantages of economies of scale, the avoidance of duplicity, the presentation of the a united voice in world affairs, and a collective bargaining position in international trade (instead of Africans competing among themselves for the lowest commodity prices at the international bargaining table) are but a few of the fruits that might have been by a continental union government, and that may still yet be reaped.

Examples on both sides of the Atlantic, where the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement have united countries of disparate cultures, languages, and political and even ideological orientations, coupled with the surging globalization of the world economy, point to the breadth of Nkrumah's vision.

The ongoing civil wars in various parts of Africa today stem partly from the inability of regimes in Africa to meet the basic needs of the people as leaders compete in cynical popularity contests parading as "saviors", "redeemers," and "liberators" of their countries. Some of those "countries" have national airlines with a single aircraft, and have their only source of foreign currency earning a perishable and dispensable crop. In fact, the only trappings of "nations" these political units can boast of a rickety national army's national flags and national anthems. How can such "flag and anthem" countries become viable in a lop-sided global economy that is so much skewed against small and weak nations?

Africans have themselves to blame if they continue to plough their narrow furrows instead pooling their efforts, human and material resources in order to create a cross-continental garden equipped to compete in the globalized 21st century. If Africans fail to take up the challenge of continental unity now, the continent will inevitably be gobbled up by the colossus of capitalist globalism this century, just as in the last century it was enslaved, Balkanized, and exploited of its human and natural resources through the trilogy of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism.