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articles published in British
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New African Jan. 2019, p32-34

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African Voice Jan. 3 2019

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GHANA'S PRESIDENT SAYS:

'COME BACK TO AFRICA'

President Nana Akufo-Addo is offering people of African and Caribbean heritage the right to live in the West African country

By Vic Motune

GHANA'S PRESIDENT Nana Akufo-Addo has launched an initiative aimed at encouraging people of African and Caribbean heritage to return to the continent in 2019 and live.

The initiative, called The Year of Return, was developed to mark 400 years since the arrival of the first slave ship in America in 1619.

During its recent launch in Washington, United States, President Akufo-Addo said he wanted people of African and Caribbean heritage to make the "birthright journey home" as part of "the global African family".

He said: "In the year 2019, we open our arms even wider to wel-

come home our brothers and sisters."

The Year of Return seeks to make Ghana the focus for millions of people in the diaspora who want to forge a closer connection with their ancestry. The West African country has long been a popular destination for returning African-Americans and Caribbean people.

LINK

Historic figures such as legendary author Maya Angelou, below left, historian W.E.B Du Bois; and writer George Padmore are among those who have lived and worked there.

London-based history consultant Kwaku who has organised a series of events aimed at people in the UK who are interested in relocating to Africa welcomed The Year of Return.

Continued on page 4



WELCOMING: President Nana Akufo-Addo is hoping more black Britons will live in Ghana

PLUS



NHS launches major blood donation centre



Writer/director Tonia Daley-Campbell is set for big things



Grenfell fundraiser launches project to help schoolkids

GHANA DECLARES 2019 THE YEAR OF RETURN



Amid an ongoing hostile environment immigration policy, an announcement by the country's President, Nana Akufo-Addo, has sparked a series of events aimed at encouraging people of African heritage to relocate there. By **Kwaku**

LAST NOVEMBER, I organised an event in London called #HostileEnvironment? Look To Africa!

In light of the Home Office's ongoing hostile environment immigration policy, it was meant to be a forum for people to explore the options of whether to stay in Britain, move to Africa or the Caribbean, or create better ties back home.

Dr Jennifer Obaseki and Jacqui McKenzie provided the legal context to immigration and resident status of those from African and Caribbean Commonwealth countries.

Dr Adotey Bing explained how co-operative business models can be used to enhance our economic base in the UK and back home. Journalist Onyekachi Wambu talked about his organisation AFFORD's engagement across Africa and the importance of remittances. Dr Evelyn Mensah spoke about providing medical skills to transfer to West Africa.

We also had video contributions from former London-based journalist and PR professional Akosua Annobil speaking on the challenges of relocating from the UK to Ghana.

And John and Safiyyah Christian, who videoblog on YouTube, spoke about the challenges of relocating one's family from the US to Ghana. A few weeks before our event, Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo had launched his country's The Year Of Return (TYOR) programme in

Washington DC, where United States Congress had passed the H.R. 1242 - 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act.

This Act established the 400 Years of African American History Commission to organise activities throughout the United States, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first documented arrival of Africans (their status as indentured or enslaved workers is still debatable, as chattel enslavement had not yet been instituted in North America) in the English colony of Virginia in 1619.

EXPERIENCE

So although TYOR stems from an African American experience - and you can bet that African-Americans will be in Ghana in force this year, judging by the *Ebony* magazine team that had come on a reconnaissance trip a few months ago, we must not forget that TYOR is also aimed at second-generation Ghanaians and all diasporic Africans.

Indeed, the 2019 year-long programme kicked off this month with TINA (This is New Africa) Festival, consisting of talks aimed at engaging the diaspora with Ghana, and with the last day climaxing in a concert featuring British-Ghanaian Afrobeat star Fuse ODG and veteran rapper Lethal Bizzle, plus a host of Ghanaian acts such as hip-life artist Sarkodie.

Reggae singer Freddie McGregor will lead a contingent of Jamaicans, who will



WELCOME: Ghana is encouraging people of African heritage to relocate to the country (photo: Nana Kofi Acquah)

launch on March 9-10 what is expected to be an annual JaGha Festival, which will promote Jamaican and Ghanaian music and art.

It will also be an opportunity

in African Caribbean history.

For example, Jamaican Maroon history has a place named Accompong, people called the Coromantees, and leaders such as Queen Nana

with a Right of Abode status, which means they have an indefinite right to live and work in the country permanently, without need for visas and any other restrictions.

Additionally, the 2000 Citizenship Act allows diasporan Africans to apply for Ghanaian citizenship - the first to receive certificates of citizenship was a cohort of 34 people, mainly from the Caribbean, in 2016. So if you've ever thought of going to Ghana, this is certainly the year to do so.

The range of TYOR activities include business and history conferences, gospel music concerts, arts festivals, including the biennial Panafest (Pan African Historical Festival) and a carnival. For more details visit visitghana.com.

Kwaku is a London-based history consultant.

"If you've ever thought of going to Ghana, this is your year to do so"

for strengthening the long historical bond between Jamaica and Ghana.

Although Emperor Haile Selassie may have donated the Shashamane land in Ethiopia to African Caribbean people for re-settlement, and the *Roots* TV series may have made the Sene-Gambia area attractive for diasporan engagement, Ghana holds a special place

(Nanny), and her 'brothers' Cudjoe and Quao.

While the Ghanaian government has earmarked this year especially to attract diasporan Africans to visit Ghana, it also has laws to make the transition for those who want to settle or do business there less cumbersome.

The 2000 Immigration Act provides diasporan Africans

beach. "These private security guards are hired by the Clifton (residents), they are actually briefed to not allow black people who appear to look like they are from the townships or criminals onto the beach."

Black beachgoers 'turned away from South African beach'

PROTESTS have taken place at a South African beach after a local security firm, PPA, allegedly turned away black beachgoers.

According to reports, security guards working on Clifton beach in Cape Town allegedly told black citizens to leave the site two days before Christ-

where they slaughtered a sheep in a ritual supposed to ward off racism, while others sang and burned incense, *The Telegraph* reports.

RACISM

While many have called the treatment of the black bathers as a matter of racism.

race groups". He added that they will be looking into the claims, stating: "Looking at the public outcry around the Clifton beach issue, I feel it's appropriate for the City of Cape Town to ask PSIRA, the governing body over all private security entities in South Africa, just to give the situa-



CARIBBEAN NEWS IN BRIEF

UK-CARIBBEAN MILITARY BASES?

THE UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson could look to set up military bases in the Caribbean after Brexit. Forces Network online said that the minister was looking at opportunities to establish a UK presence "not just in the Far East but also in the Caribbean". Mr Williamson said he expected a dramatic shift in political focus after Brexit.

COME TOGETHER ON CLIMATE

THE EXECUTIVE director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency management Agency (CDEMA), Ronald Jackson, says that resilience development is not just about survival and "bouncing back" in response to climate change.

He told a conference on Climate and Security in the Caribbean: "Our future survival rests within our ability to pool our collective capacities to offer a more favourable common destiny."

BOOST FOR USVI WEBSITE

THE US Virgin Islands' administration is exploring the option of bringing all government agency websites under the sole control of its Bureau of Information Technology. The territory has been working on improving accessibility of government and privately-managed domains since the 2017 hurricane season.

GEO THERMAL PLANT FOR DOMINICA

DOMINICA'S ENERGY Minister Ian Douglas says that construction of the island's geothermal energy power plant will begin in the third quarter of this year. The project, which has US\$17m in World Bank funding, will tap into Dominica's volcanic resources to provide low-cost renewable energy.

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Although Ghana officially launched the Return to Africa project last year, the history of Africans in the diaspora returning to the Mother Continent goes back two centuries.

Kwaku examines the historical records to chart this movement.

Back to Africa movement gathers pace

With Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo having personally launched The Year of Return (TYOR) project in Washington DC last autumn, Ghana is poised to be the number one destination for African-Americans and other diaspora Africans in 2019. However, as we shall see, there's a long history of Africans returning to Ghana and other African countries.

TYOR's year-long activities include concerts, a carnival and an investment summit, as well as history, youth, cultural and Pan-Africanism programmes. Although the project aims to attract mainly diaspora Africans, including second-generation Ghanaians, from all parts of the world, the focus is heavily tilted towards African-Americans. The reason being that this year marks the 400th anniversary of the landing of the first recorded arrivals of Africans in what is now the United States.

The status of the 20 trafficked Africans who arrived on a Spanish ship at Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 is still debated. As chattel enslavement had not yet officially begun in England's North American colonies, the speculation is that the Africans were either enslaved or indentured workers, or a mixture of both.

But within fifty years, chattel enslavement had become legalised in Virginia and other states, and particularly in the southern states, chattel enslavement was to become



the key driver of the plantation economies that flourished well into the late 19th century.

The insatiable need for enslaved Africans meant millions of Africans were trafficked from Africa across the Atlantic to plantations in the Caribbean and both North and South America, which resulted in significant African diasporas in the so-called New World. Nominal emancipation of Africans in this region came over a long period.

In 1793, the Africans in Haiti became the first to be emancipated, and on 1 January 1804, they declared Haiti an enslavement-free republic, following the African-led Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804. In 1838, the Africans in the British Caribbean were emancipated. The 1833 Slavery Abolition Act only freed Africans aged up to six in 1834 (the servitude of slaves over six being abolished in two stages). The last of the Latin American countries to abolish enslavement were Cuba in 1886 and Brazil in 1888.

A ship modelled after the famous slave trading vessel *La Amistad*, which was hijacked by African slaves in 1839 in an attempt to return to the continent, entering the harbour of Havana, Cuba

Opposite: One legacy of slavery is a significant African diaspora in South America. Here, Afro-Brazilians pray to Yemanjá, the goddess of the sea from ancient Yoruba mythology, in Salvador, Bahia state

Early returnees

Brazil, which today has the largest African population outside of Africa, provided one of the earliest and largest volumes of returnees. The earliest returnees from Brazil to West Africa include some of those who took part in the January 1835 Malé revolt, also known as The Great Revolt. During the 19th century, thousands of free and enslaved Africans emigrated from Brazil to present-day Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo.

These Afro-Brazilians, known as Tabom people, integrated into their West African local societies, swapped Portuguese for the English and French lingua franca, and indigenous languages. Today, it's their surnames, such as de Souza, Peregrino or Plange, that tell of their Brazilian sojourn. My maternal lineage comes from the Ghanaian Tabom people, and at the time of writing, my daughter is back in Brazil researching the Tabom history for a documentary film.

Thanks to Steven Spielberg's 1997-directed film *Amistad*, many people know the story of the returnees from Cuba. The film tells the historical story of the enslaved Africans who took over the ship *La Amistad*, which was transporting them from Havana, Cuba to their owners' US plantations in 1839.

The Africans, who were Mende people from Sierra Leone, spared a few of the European ship's crew and ordered them to sail to Africa. To cut a long story short, the remaining crew had no intention of sailing to

Africa, and with the 53 Africans not having any nautical experience, the ship zig-zagged across the Atlantic for 63 days until it entered US waters, whereupon the US naval authorities arrested the ship on 26 August 1839.

The owners of the ship and the Spanish government asked for the return of the enslaved Africans. However, it wasn't a simple matter, on account of the US having abolished the trafficking of Africans in 1808. The US abolition campaigners who fought for the freedom of the imprisoned Africans finally triumphed in the 1841 *United States v. The Amistad* case,

where the US Supreme Court found in favour of the Africans.

With their free status established, the 35 surviving Africans returned to Sierra Leone in January 1842, along with five missionaries and teachers who formed a Christian anti-enslavement mission in the British colony.

Another significant returnee chapter involves the Africans, free and enslaved, who fought on the side of the British in the 1775–1783 US War of Independence. The latter were promised their freedom at the end of the war.

Known as the Black Loyalists,

thousands of them were initially decamped in Nova Scotia, Canada, whilst others were sent to England, many of whom, along with other Africans living in London, became known as the Black Poor. From 1787, when the Sierra Leone resettlement programme started, thousands of Black Loyalists from Nova Scotia and the Black Poor from London were resettled in Sierra Leone. They are the ancestors of today's Creole people of Sierra Leone. In December 1815, Paul Cuffee (he adopted his father's first name Kofi as his surname), a free-born African Massachusetts-based merchant, ship owner and captain,

Brazil provided one of the earliest and largest volumes of returnees. In the 19th century, thousands of Africans emigrated from Brazil to present-day Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo.





set sail with the first batch of free Africans to emigrate to Sierra Leone from the US. However, it was to Liberia that the majority of Africans from the US, and some from the Caribbean, returned throughout the 19th century.

This back to Africa movement was led by organisations such as the American Colonisation Society, which helped relocate thousands of free African-Americans in Liberia, partly as a means of countering the chattel enslavement and overt racism in the US.

Since the publication of Alex Haley's book *Roots* in 1976, which was followed by the television series of the same name, African-Americans and African-Caribbeans have had an affinity with the Senegambia area. Indeed, quite a few African-Caribbean people have relocated to Gambia, whilst many more either attend the biennial International Roots Festival (formerly Homecoming), support or build community projects, such as schools.

Interestingly, in 1948, 50 years before TYOR was launched, Emperor Haile Selassie donated land in Shashamane, Ethiopia to members of the then newly developing Rastafari movement in Jamaica, and all African-Caribbean people, for them to return to.

On his tour of the Caribbean

Top: John and Safiyyah Christian with their five children, also known as the Native Borne Family. Returnees to Ghana from the US, they produce YouTube travelogues that provide advice on living in Ghana

Above inset: Rastafarians play music, sing and pray in Shashamane, Ethiopia



in 1966 – he visited Barbados, Trinidad, Haiti, and Jamaica – the Emperor reiterated his call for repatriation to Ethiopia. That visit helped accelerate the resettlement programme, with a few thousand Africans, mostly Jamaicans, relocating to Shashamane.

Transatlantic links

On 6 March 1957, when Ghana became independent, Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah declared: "Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa." In true Pan-African style, Nkrumah brought Trinidadian-born political activist, George Padmore to Ghana, where he was given oversight of the African Affairs bureau. Although he died in London, where he went for medical treatment, Padmore's ashes were buried in Accra on 4 October 1959. The grand old Pan-Africanist, W.E.B. Du Bois also relocated to Ghana and died

in Accra on 27 August 1963 as a Ghanaian citizen.

Last November I organised an event in London called *#HostileEnvironment? Look To Africa!* It was a forum for exploring options, including either investing in, or relocating to Africa at a time when there is a hostile immigration policy in Britain, which was exposed by last year's Commonwealth/ Windrush scandal.

There were contributions from a London-born woman of Ghanaian parentage who had recently relocated to Ghana, and an African-American family who had done the same. The latter, known as the Native Borne Family, produce travelogues on Youtube which provide practical advice on living in Ghana for visitors and returnees.

As we can see, there is a long history of diaspora returnees relocating to Ghana, where laws have been enacted to assist the process. The 2000 Immigration Act provides diaspora Africans with a Right of Abode status, which means they have an indefinite right to live and work in the country permanently, without facing the need for visas or any other restrictions.

Additionally, the 2000 Citizenship Act allows diaspora Africans to apply for Ghanaian citizenship. A cohort of 34 people, mainly from the Caribbean, was the first to receive citizenship certificates, in 2016.

Finally, in 2007, at a time when Britain was commemorating the bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, I met an African-Caribbean woman in London. She said she'd never describe herself as African, because no one came from Africa to the Caribbean to look for her ancestors and take them back after enslavement was abolished. One could however argue that in light of those who had come before her, she could have also come back. Certainly in 2019, the doors are open in Ghana and elsewhere for such trips.

Kwaku is a London, UK-based history consultant.

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Ghana Calls On African Diaspora To Return In 2019

By africanvoice - January 3, 2019

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By Kwaku – This year, Ghana is inviting the global African diaspora to visit. And it has a varied, year-long The Year Of Return (TYOR) programme to attract returnees. This includes business and history conferences, music concerts, paragliding, visits to heritage sites, arts festivals, including the biennial Panafest (Pan African Historical Festival), and a carnival.





2017 African Diaspora Homecoming Conference

The idea for TYOR came about as a consequence of the United States Congress having passed the H.R. 1242 – 400 Years Of African-American Experience Act. This Act established the 400 Years Of African-American History Commission to organise activities throughout the United States to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first documented arrival of Africans in present day United States.

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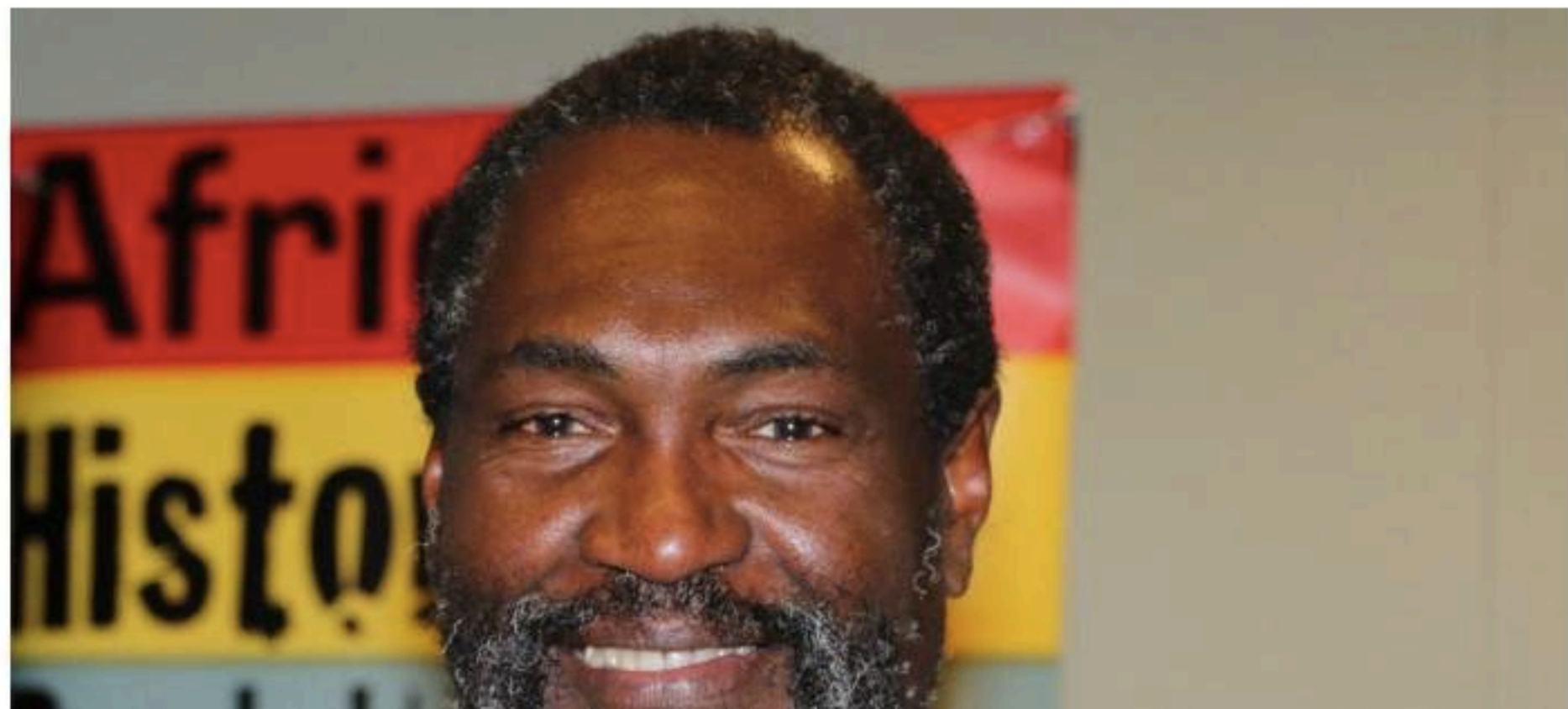
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It must be noted that the status of the handful of Africans who landed in the English colony

It must be noted that the status of the handful of Africans who landed in the English colony of Virginia in 1619 is still being debated as to whether they were indentured or enslaved workers. Because at the time chattel enslavement had not yet been instituted in north America.





Kwaku

Anyway, the importance of the Act giving some legal backing to the 400th anniversary of the first Africans in the United States, was reason enough for Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo to launch TYOR in Washington DC, last autumn.

Within a few weeks an Ebony magazine retinue visited Ghana on a reconnaissance mission. Although the focus is overwhelmingly on the African-American market, TYOR is also meant to attract second generation Ghanaians and diasporan Africans. That message was brought to those in Britain at the #HostileEnvironment? Look To Africa! event held in London.



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The event was organised by voluntary group BTWSC/African Histories Revisited in light of Britain's on-going hostile environment immigration policy, and was a forum to explore the options of whether to stay in Britain, move to Africa or the Caribbean, or create better ties with back home.

Dr Jennifer Obaseki and Jacqui McKenzie provided legal information on immigration and resident status of people from African and Caribbean Commonwealth countries. Dr Adotey Bing explained how credit unions and co-operative business models could be used to enhance our economic base in the UK and back home. Onyekachi Wambu talked about AFFORD's engagement across Africa and the importance of remittances. Dr Evelyn Mensah spoke about providing medical skills transfer in Ghana.

Akwasi Agyemang, CEO of Ghana Tourism Authority, the Ghanaian agency overseeing TYOR, provided some publicity literature. There were also video contributions from former London-based journalist and PR professional Akosua Annobil speaking on the challenges of relocating from the UK to Ghana. John and Safiyyah Christian, who videoblog on Youtube as the Native Borne Family, spoke about the challenges of relocating one's family from the US to Ghana.

It's important that TYOR organisers focus some attention on Britain, as it has a huge second-generation Ghanaian community. Indeed London-based Afrobeats star Fuse ODG opened TYOR with the TINA (This Is New Africa) Festival of talks and a concert. Also, among the African diaspora here is a sizeable number with Caribbean heritage, of which particularly those who follow Rastafarianism and pan-Africanism would find TYOR a good enough reason to visit Ghana.



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As one of the aims of TYOR is to strengthen the bonds between Ghana and the African diaspora, Ghana's special place within African-Caribbean revolutionary history could be highlighted.

Thankfully we have the Akan names, even if some have been corrupted, to remind us that some of the key revolutionary leaders during the chattel enslavement period in the Caribbean and South America came from present day Ghana.

Maroonage history abounds with Ghanaian people of Akan heritage who led several rebellions across the so-called New World. Such as the Coromantees and Akwamus. The latter were the leaders of the 1733/34 rebellions on what's known today as St John in the United States Virgin Islands.

Jamaican Maroon leaders included the likes of Queen Nana (Nanny), and her 'brothers' Kojo (Cudjoe) and Kwaw (Quao). Akua (Cubah), also known as 'Queen Of Kingston' was both a healer and a leader. And Tackie (Tacky), planned what became known as the 1760 Tacky's War, with comrades including Kwaw (Quaw) and Kwarteng (Quantee). Also, within the heartland of Jamaican Maroon territories were place names such as Cudjoe's Town and Accompong, where various degrees of autonomy existed.

In Antigua, the leader of a supposed conspiracy to revolt in 1736, Kwaku Takyi better known as Prince Klaas, was killed along with dozens of his alleged co-conspirators. In the south American territory now known as Guyana, Kofi (Cuffy) led the rebellion of 1763, whilst Kwamena (Quamina) and his son, er, Jack Gladstone, led the 1823 rebellion.



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Finally, nice as it is for Ghana to extend an invitation, it's worth noting that diasporan Africans have been returning to Africa for centuries, particularly since the mid-19th century. For example, there were the Africans who took over the Amistad ship off the coast of Cuba, and returned to Sierra Leone after a protracted court case that was ultimately decided in 1841 by the US Supreme Court. And there was a steady flow of African returnees from Brazil to west Africa after the Malê Revolt of 1835. Their descendants form the Tabom people now spread across Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

Kwaku is a London-based history consultant.

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