

The Quest for Identity among African Americans: Life History of Imahkus Nzinga

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Abstract : Identity formation remains central to diaspora populations as they are known to have multiple attachments to places, including the 'ancestral homeland.' This paper emphasizes the potency of the ancestral homeland in the imagination of diaspora populations and a 'yearning' for an eventual return. This has led to the repatriation and visits of many Diasporan Africans to Africa. What have also been highlighted are the motivations, experiences, and challenges associated with the return of African Americans to Africa, as well as some of the idealistic expectations that Diasporan Africans have regarding the ancestral homeland. When Diasporan Africans visit Africa, they are faced with different kinds of situations that are challenging. Yet, the number of visits to Africa by Diasporan Africans, particularly, African Americans, keep increasing. This paper draws on the life history of Imahkus Nzinga, an African American who repatriated to Ghana in the 1990s, as a case study of African Americans' relentless quest to pursue the ancestral homeland, despite the challenges involved. The paper argues that the quest for identity construction remains the overriding motivation for African Americans in their decision to repatriate to Africa, and discusses how in this case, Imahkus Nzinga attempts to reconcile what is called in this paper 'identity struggle.'

Keywords : African Americans, Diaspora, identity formation, identity struggle, repatriation

Conference Title : ICUAMTE 2018 : International Conference on Urban Anthropology, Methods, Techniques and Ethics

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : January 15-16, 2018