

African Immigrants to Canada and the United States: Some Socio-Economic and Spatial Dimensions

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The purpose of this study is to gain insight into African immigration to the Canada and the U.S. While African immigration to Canada and the U.S. is not a new phenomenon, there have been sharp increases in immigrant arrivals since the early 1980s. The increasing African presence could be attributed to a number of factors that include changes in the immigration laws of both countries and better opportunities that constituted pull factors, the deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions in Africa that have conspired to push many Africans to seek better opportunities in the West, and the increasing xenophobia in Europe, the traditional destination of choice for most African immigrants. Despite their increasing numbers, however, not many studies have been undertaken on African immigrants in Canada and the U.S. Drawing on census information and data gleaned from two surveys conducted in Canada and the U.S. by the author, this study sheds some light on certain aspects of African immigrants, including their socio-economic background and spatial distribution.

Keywords: African immigrants, U.S., Canada, Immigration Act, spatial distribution, immigrant arrival.

African immigration to the North American continent is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, for a period of over 400 years, millions of African citizens were brought to the continent during the infamous slave trade. Following the abolishing of slavery in both U.S. and Canada, however, the arrival of Africans to the continent virtually ceased. In the case of Canada, though, Africans continued to arrive, but not direct from Africa. Rather, those who arrived had escaped from slavery in the U.S. It is also significant to note that data from the 1950s show that African immigrants arriving in Canada direct out of Africa numbered only 6,000 in the 1956–1960 period, and represented less than one percent of all immigrant arrivals (The Canadian Global Almanac, 1995). For the U.S. too, only 71 immigrants from Africa arrived between 1820 and 1841, and the period from 1841 to 1960 saw the arrival of only 47,140 Africans, representing an average of 396 per annum (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997).

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Explaining why Africans arrived only in small numbers in the U.S., compared to people from the other continents, Ungar (1995) argues that Africans found it difficult to obtain immigrant visas. Indeed, except for a small number of students who had been accepted into American Institutions of higher learning, and some political exiles from South Africa, Africans were rarely issued with American visas. The second reason, according to Ungar is that the long expensive journey across the Atlantic was probably beyond the reach of most African families (Ungar, 1995). While the reasons offered by Ungar may be correct to some extent, he does not expound on the key underlying factor, which was racism. The same racism that pervaded the socio-political fabric at the time, and had turned the American citizens of African descent into third class citizens, also prevented them from opening their doors to people of color. Even in the case of Canada, which was perceived as being less racist than its southern neighbor, there were specific immigration policies that discriminated against people of color, and therefore kept Africans out of the immigration stream (Kubat, 1979).

As both Canadian and U.S. societies became less racist towards people of color in the 1960s, they began to open their doors to African immigrants. Even then, African arrivals in both countries were only a trickle. Since the 1970s, however, the U.S. and Canada have become major destination countries for African immigrants. Among the 229,300 Africa-born immigrants reported in the 1996 Canadian Census, only 2.1 percent (4,945) arrived before 1961 whilst 28 percent arrived between 1981 and 1990. The 1991–1996 periods also saw the arrival of 33 percent of all African immigrants. Overall, 61 percent of all African-born residents in Canada arrived in the 16-year period from 1981–1996—compared with 11 percent from 1961 to 1970 (Table 1) (Statistics Canada, 2001). Thus significant African immigration to Canada only occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Most noteworthy sources of these immigrants were The Republic of South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda.

In the U.S. too, African immigrant arrival, which virtually ceased in the 1800s picked up in the 1980s (Table 2). Available data indicate that whilst only 46,326 Africans immigrated to the U.S.A. in the hundred years from 1861 to 1961, the decade from 1982–1992 alone saw the arrival of 201,442 (Scroggins, 1989; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1993). Again, over 184,000 Africans were admitted to the U.S. as legal immigrants between 1995 and 1998. This represented about 6 percent of all immigrants admitted over the 4-year period. It is estimated that African immigrants in the U.S. amount to over 500,000 and represent 2–3 percent of the immigrant population.

The increasing African presence in Canada and the U.S. may be attributed to a number of factors. In the case of Canada, the 1952 Immigration Act, which ushered in a period of intensive foreign labor recruitment (Bristow and Carty, 1994) enabled people of color to immigrate into the country. But then, most of the black people recruited were Caribbean women who were needed to serve as domestic workers in Canadian homes, and very few Africans were involved. The major policy change that facilitated an increase in African immigration to Canada, however, was the liberalization of immigration laws in 1971, which removed all the race-biased policies, and enabled non-Whites to enter the country. Liberal refugee and asylum programs in

Table 1: African immigrant arrivals in Canada, 1979–2000.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Africans</i>	<i>Total immigrants</i>	<i>Africans as percent of immigrants</i>
1979/1980	11,288	342,000	3.3
1981/1982	9,402	247,420	3.8
1983/1984	7,211	180,280	4.0
1985/1986	8,315	185,000	4.5
1987/1988	17,881	313,700	5.7
1989/1990	25,625	427,000	6.0
1991/1992	35,844	484,500	7.4
1995/1996	14,218	224,881	6.3
1996/1997	13,443	193,432	6.9
1997/1998	14,403	173,210	8.2
1998/1999	16,790	205,711	8.1
1999/2000	22,750	252,088	9.0

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 2: African arrivals in the U.S., 1820–1996.

1820–1840	71	1941–1950	7,367
1841–1880	935	1951–1960	14,092
1881–1900	907	1961–1970	28,954
1901–1910	7,368	1971–1980	80,779
1911–1920	8,443	1981–1990	176,893
1921–1930	6,286	1991–1996	198,068
1931–1940	1,750	1820–1996	532,213 (Total)

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, 1997.

the 1980s also created the first major wave of African immigrants most of who claimed conventional refugee and asylee status upon arrival (Konadu-Agyemang, 1999). The arrivals in the 1990s represented the second wave, primarily made up of the spouses and children sponsored by those in the first wave.

For the U.S. also, a number of favorable immigration programs have enabled Africans to migrate to the country, or for illegal immigrants and those on temporary visas to adjust their status to permanent residents. Among other laws, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act which removed the restrictive immigration laws passed in the pre-1960 era and made family ties the primary criterion for admitting new immigrants, made it possible for Africans in the country to sponsor their spouses, children and

parents (Massey, 1995; Kanya, 1997). Secondly, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), 1986, which sought to regularize the status of all immigrants who had entered the country before 1982, or who had violated their legal status, enabled at least 39,000 Africans to regularize their stay and acquire legal status. The most significant law which has benefited Africans, however, is the State Department's Diversity Program (Visa Lottery) introduced in 1990. Since its inception, Africa's portion of the 55,000 Green Cards issued annually under this program has been consistently 42 percent. This has enabled an average of 20,000 Africans per annum to immigrate to the U.S.A. over the past 6 years. In 1998 alone, 21,000 Africans from 48 countries and their dependants were admitted to the U.S.A. under this program (Konadu-Agyemang and Takyi, 2001).

These changes and the so called favorable pieces of legislation, however, should not be construed to mean that Africans now find it easier to immigrate to the U.S. and Canada. On the contrary, many Africans who apply for immigrant visas still struggle against visa issuing authorities that often turn them down on flimsy matters. This, perhaps, explains why African immigrants are still underrepresented in both countries, compared to those from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In Canada, for instance, the 229,300 African-born residents are far less than the number of Asians who arrive over a 2-year period. To illustrate, Asian immigrant arrivals amounted to 148,000 in 1995/1996 alone and 156,550 in 1999/2000, representing 65 percent and 62 percent respectively of all immigrants arriving in the country. Indeed, India alone contributed over 20,000 per annum from 1995–2000 compared to Africa's average of 16,300 over the same period (Statistics Canada, 2001). In the U.S., African immigrant arrivals from 1820 to 1993 amounted to 418,000, compared to the 345,425 Asians who arrived in 1993 alone (Wynn, 1995). Again in the U.S., Caribbean immigrants alone constituted between 11 percent and 13 percent from 1995–1998, and Asians 33–37 percent over the same period, compared to Africa's average of 6 percent. Nonetheless, the significance of Africa's 'pitiful' numbers cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, the numbers have been increasing steadily in both U.S. and Canada in the past 20 years.

The increasing African presence, however, has not engendered any amount of scholarly research on their pre-and post migration experience, compared to say Asian, Latino and Caribbean immigrants who have been the subject of a considerable amount of research effort (Rumbaut, 1985; Alba and Logan, 1992; Zhou and Blankston, 1995 for example). Possible exceptions are narrow and selective studies on certain aspects of the African immigration experience in either country (Kanya 1997; Apraku 1991 and Konadu-Agyemang and Takyi, 2001 on Africans in the U.S., and Opoku-Dapaah, 1993; Musisi and Turrittin, 1995; Owusu, 1998 and Konadu-Agyemang 1999 on Africans in Canada). What are even more rare are studies that focus on Africans in both countries.

The purpose of this study is to help bridge the gap in our knowledge about Africans compared to the other immigrant groups in the U.S. and Canada. Among other things, this study will seek answers to the following questions: What do we know

about African immigrants in the U.S. and Canada? What are the factors behind the increasing wave in African immigration to these countries? What are their socio-economic characteristics? How are they spatially distributed? What obstacles do they face?

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on census data from Statistics Canada and the U.S. Bureau of Census. Despite the limitation in these data sources (undercount of minorities etc.), they still represent the most up to date data on the immigrant population. The study also draws on the data from two surveys conducted in Canada and the U.S. by the author. In the U.S. survey, 363 respondents were asked questions pertaining to their demographic characteristics, immigration history, family network and social support, employment history, their commitments and link to their home countries, family commitments, and religiosity. The 363 Africans were selected from across the U.S.A., but with emphasis on the Greater New York and the Washington/Baltimore Metropolitan Areas, which have very high concentration of African immigrants. All the subjects were randomly selected from telephone directories, membership lists of African organizations, churches, business directories, referrals and personal contacts. Out of the 950 potential subjects who were short-listed for study based on whether they considered themselves to be African immigrants and were born and bred in Africa, usable information was obtained from 363. Of the 363 people, 300 were interviewed face to face with the help of trained field assistants. The remaining 63 represent the only usable ones out of the 80 returns received from the 450 questionnaires mailed to Africans across the U.S.A. The questionnaires were aimed at Africans aged 18 and above who said they were born and raised in Africa, and identified themselves as immigrants. While efforts were made to reach a cross-section of nationalities from all the 54 or so African countries, the survey ended up with representatives from 27 countries who reside in 24 states and in the District of Columbia.

The Canadian survey conducted in the Greater Toronto area (GTA) in 1994 was quite narrow and involved 149 respondents sampled from a cross-section of Ghanaians attending social functions, church services, and meetings of African organizations, as well as those shopping in African grocery shops. Like the New York City and Washington, DC areas, Toronto was chosen on the basis of high concentration of Africans. The purpose of the interviews was to determine their pre- and post-immigration experiences, socio-economic background, migration pattern, and other matters pertaining to their adaptation to the living environment in Canada. Since the Ghanaian community is scattered all over the GTA, this approach was deemed the most appropriate way to survey a cross-section of the population at a minimum cost. It must be acknowledged that this sample may not be truly representative of Ghanaians, and for that matter Africans, in the GTA given the fact that not every Ghanaian patronizes the Ghanaian-owned shops or attend some of the functions

from which the sample was drawn. Therefore the results may have to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the insights from this survey, provides us with a window to understanding African immigrants.

AFRICAN IMMIGRATION

The determinants of human immigration out of Africa are varied and complex. Nevertheless, it is possible to conceptualize them under the rubric of 'push and pull' forces. Although Africa has long been seen as a continent saddled with numerous problems, it was not until the 1970s that these problems became major 'push' factors that triggered large-scale migration out of the continent. Persistent economic problems that perhaps had their roots in the 1960s reached their apogee in the 1970s and resulted in a steep deterioration in the condition of the well being of a majority of Africans (Adedeji, 1990). These economic problems were manifested in declining food availability, worsening balance of payment deficits, dwindling foreign exchange revenue, sluggish or negative growth of national income, high rates of inflation, declining productivity especially in the public sector, rising budget deficits, degradation of the physical environment, rising unemployment and increasing indebtedness (Adedeji, 1990).

Added to the economic 'push' factors are socio-political problems that in many ways contributed greatly to the economic malaise of Africa. In the 1960s military coup d'états became the major vehicle for changing governments that the coup perpetrators often labeled as corrupt, inefficient and repressive. However, in most cases these often, brutal military take over of governments led to the installation of ruthless military rulers whose regimes became synonymous with the worst forms of repression, economic mismanagement, corruption and nepotism (e.g., Amin in Uganda, Mengitsu in Ethiopia, Mobutu Seseseko in Zaire, Abacha in Nigeria, Nemeiri in the Sudan, Doe in Liberia, and Rawlings in Ghana). The military brutalities often created a vicious cycle of coup d'états. Indeed, the list of African countries that experienced coup d'états from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s reads like a directory of the Organization of African Unity itself. The political instability coupled with economic mismanagement sent most African economies in a downhill spiral. Another dimension of the African socio-political problem has been civil wars, ethnic conflicts and other upheavals. Some of the world's long running conflicts are still ongoing in Africa. Conflicts and wars in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are sad reminders of Africa's plight. The infamous apartheid system in South Africa was also a major factor that pushed thousands of people out of the country, and many of them ended up in Canada and the U.S.

Compounding Africa's problems in the 1970s and 1980s were acts of God such as the massive droughts in the Sahel region. The droughts led to massive crop failure, death of livestock and widespread famine. Thousands of Africans became refugees

in their own or neighboring countries, and those who had opportunities to migrate did not hesitate. Again, an unfavorable world trading system that paid very little for primary goods hurt Africa's economy. While the world market prices for manufactured goods, which African countries consume but do not in most cases produce, have increased tremendously since the 1970s, the prices of primary products, which they produce but do not consume, have gone through crisis after crisis and plummeted to unprecedented levels. Indeed, in 1987, prices of tropical beverages like cocoa and coffee, as well as mineral resources which constitute the core of Africa's exports, dropped so low that they were estimated to be about 15 percent below that of 1932, the trough of the pre-World War II slump in commodity prices. The real commodity prices for these exports declined by 45 percent between 1980 and 1991 (Conference on Commodities, 2000). The 1980s also saw the addition of another push factor: the introduction of World Bank/IMF sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). While SAPs were intended to improve the economies of the implementing countries, the accompanying large scale retrenchment, currency devaluation, and government cutbacks on social services such as education and health, actually resulted in impoverishing more people and made living conditions very difficult in countries like Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania and Nigeria which were brought into the programs (Oxfam, 1999; Watkins, 1999; Stewart, 1995).

The emergence of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL) and globalization have also given impetus to migration out of Africa. Africans everywhere are now exposed to a wide range of world media that enables them to see the wide socio-economic and spatial disparities between Africa and the Western world. Well-trained African workers who realize they can make more money and enjoy better living conditions outside Africa do not hesitate to emigrate, especially where there exists a hostile socio-political environment.

As a result of these and other problems, African countries have been scrambling for the bottom positions in all international statistical rankings on quality of life, socio-economic development, life expectancy, infant mortality, and illiteracy for the past 30 years since the 1970s (See UNDP, 1993; 1995; 2000; World Bank, 1990–2000). In World Bank estimates of the number of people living in poverty using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest share of people (292 million) who subsist on less than \$1/day. Currently, Africa is home to 33 of the 48 least developed and poorest nations of the world, and 30 of the 34 countries with the lowest human development index (UNDP, 2000), and the poverty and deprivation levels continue to rise. Of the 65 countries with the highest under-five mortality rates on UNICEF's list, 43 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Niger, Angola, Sierra Leone, Mali, Liberia, Malawi and Mozambique rank in the first 10, with Niger being the worst, according to the State of the World's Children Report (UNICEF, 1997). A World Bank report points out that there is an expanding human development gap between sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world.

These socio-economic and political problems have constituted 'push' forces that have compelled Africans to respond to the supposed 'pull' forces in the form of

relatively better socio-economic and political conditions in the western countries, even if their chances of prospering in their destination are merely speculative. The apparent prosperity in the western world is flaunted before impoverished Africans by not only the Western media, but more important, by returnees and visiting foreign residents who often bring home flashy trappings of Western affluence in the form of automobiles and electronic gadgets, and put up expensive houses (Owusu, 1998). In these returnees, Africans who have never ventured out of the country see the images of their own future in terms of what may be in store for them. To the African professional struggling to make ends meet, and to the unemployed or underemployed young man doing menial jobs in Accra, Lagos or Harare, the choice is clear: join the exodus to the West where at least one's chances of socio-economic prosperity are better than they are in their countries in Africa. The results from a study of immigrants to Germany from 86 African and Asian countries, confirm the importance of the economic differential between countries for migration, the existence of an inverse u-shaped relationship between development and migration, as well as the importance of the political situation in the sending countries (Rotte and Vogler, 1998).

Explaining why the U.S.A. has been an important immigrant destination country for immigrants world wide, especially since World War II, Jones (1981) asserts that besides huge economic opportunities, the country's social and political institutions have been more adept in promoting ready assimilation and social mobility, than many other immigrant-destination countries. Africans are no exception in their response to the relative attractiveness of the U.S. (Ghana Statistical Services, 1995a). Canada's reputation as one of the most livable countries (UNDP, 1999; 2000) and its people-friendly social policies have contributed in no small way to its attraction as a favored immigrant destination.

Historically, Europe has been the destination of choice for most African immigrants due to both colonial ties and close proximity, with most of them ending up in the countries that once ruled them (Killingray, 1994). For instance, available evidence shows that the UK has the highest concentration of Zimbabwean, Kenyan and Nigerian immigrants, whilst France is the destination of choice now for large numbers of Africans from Francophone Africa, especially Senegal, Ivory Coast, Algeria and Morocco (Killingray, 1994). But while Europe will continue to remain attractive to Africans due to historical ties, proximity and ease of travel (at least for the citizens of some African countries like Zimbabwe and Kenya who do not need visas to enter the UK), the U.S. and Canada represent an alternative and even more attractive destination than the European countries. In addition to the paradigm shift in U.S. and Canadian immigration policies, which also coincided with the tightening up of immigration rules in Europe in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the apparent prosperity of U.S. and Canada vis-à-vis stagnating economic conditions and increasing xenophobia in European countries have made U.S. and Canada even more attractive. Indeed, in recent times, many African immigrants have suffered assaults, and even death, in the hands of Skinheads in Europe, especially in Germany. Even 'friendly' nations like Spain,

France and Italy no longer welcome Africans with open arms, especially as their own economies begin to deteriorate (Jelloun, 1999). The emergence of the U.S.A., and to a lesser extent Canada, as world leaders in higher and technical education have made them attractive to intellectuals and other people seeking education. It is estimated that close to half of all African students who arrived as students in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s did not go back for one reason or another (Rumbaut, 1994).

MIGRATION PATTERNS

The desire of Africans to immigrate due to the cumulative strength of the 'push factors' and their eagerness to respond to the 'pull factors', do not imply that immigrant visas are theirs for the asking. Indeed, in many cases the deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions coupled with the impediments that are either advertently or inadvertently imposed by the visa issuing authorities restrictions create a 'migration pressure' which is 'an excess supply of migration-willing people relative to migration demand in immigration countries' (Straubhaar, 1993:5). The results from both the Canadian and U.S. surveys indicate that in most cases African immigrants do not fit into the conventional mode of immigrants obtaining their landed immigrant or permanent resident papers, embarking on an airplane, and disembarking at their final destination. With the exception of the few who immigrated in the correct sense of the word, many Africans either arrived on temporary visas (visitors, students etc.), or as conventional refugees, self-styled refugee and asylum seekers.

About 55 percent of all the respondents in the U.S. survey arrived on temporary visas, and 8 percent as refugees. Only 20 percent arrived with pre-processed permanent resident documents. While several factors may account for this pattern, the most obvious ones, according to our respondents, are the difficulties that are encountered in obtaining formal immigrant papers. Although obtaining student and visitor visas may not be too easy either, to most people these offer the only ways of getting into the country legally. The only opportunities for obtaining permanent resident papers prior to arrival are mostly available through family sponsorship, which can take five years or more, and the visa lottery system that came into existence in the early 1990s. Evidence from Canada suggests a similar trend (Konadu-Agyemang, 1999).

In both surveys, too, it became evident that many prospective African immigrants circumvented the obstacles often imposed by the U.S. and Canadian visa-issuing authorities by gravitating from one 'easy visa' country to another in stepwise moves towards their final destination. The stepwise immigrant finally arrives at the intended destination either with a temporary visa, or no visa at all and claim asylum or refugee status upon arrival. For instance, 76 percent of Ghanaian males who arrived in Canada between 1985 and 1990 had lived in one or more countries (for periods ranging from 6 months to 10 years) *en route* to Canada. Eighty-five percent explain their travel patterns in terms of visa acquisition problems. 68 percent of these 'stepwise migrants' claimed refugee status at the port of entry (Konadu-Agyemang, 1999). In the U.S.

survey too, it was clear that with the exception of the Diversity Visa winners and the few sponsored by relatives, many Africans now living in the U.S. could not obtain either permanent resident, student or visitor visas from the U.S. embassies in their home countries. In most cases, they ended up living in second or third countries where they pursued their visas.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

African immigrants in U.S. and Canada tend to be young. More than 65 percent are found within the 25–44 age groups, while approximately 16–18 percent are aged 45–54. As is typical of many first generation immigrant groups, the under 18 population among Africans is quite small compared to the native population. In recent times, however, due to sponsorship by parents and natural increase, the African population under 18 has been on the rise in both U.S.A. and Canada. The 60+ age group, on the other hand, remains quite small, amounting to less than 3 percent, a figure that is much lower than the proportion of senior population among the native population. Interestingly, the number of African females over 60 years of age is even much smaller. The age-sex structure of African immigrants is consistent with what has been reported for other immigrant groups in the literature (INS, 1993), except for the 60 and above age groups.

The absence of too many seniors among Africans may perhaps be explained by a number of factors. First unlike some immigrant groups like Asians who may normally sponsor their aged parents to retire with them in the U.S. and Canada, such practice is rare among Africans. Second, Africans attachment to the continent remains so strong that there is always the hope of returning 'home' at least in their old age. Consequently, there is the tendency for African immigrants to retire back in Africa leaving behind their children and younger compatriots. In the survey of 363 U.S.-based African immigrants from 27 countries, 63 percent of the respondents had already planned or intended to retire in Africa. In the Canadian survey too, 65 percent of the respondents indicated that they planned to move back to Africa upon their retirement.

African immigrants in Canada and the U.S. consist of both sexes. However, males outnumber females. Canada's African immigrant arrivals over the past 40 years have had more males than females. For those arriving between 1961 and 1970, males constituted 54 percent and females 46 percent. A similar gender composition applied throughout the 1970s (52 percent and 48 percent), and the 1980s (56 percent and 44 percent). According to the 1996 Canadian Census, the African population is now composed of 55 percent males and 45 percent females. These figures include undocumented aliens and temporary residents. In the U.S., about 66 percent is male and 34 percent female. Unlike the trend among the Filipino immigrants in the U.S.A. and Caribbean immigrants in Canada, for instance, where women are often the trailblaz-

ers in the immigration stream (Anderson and Grant, 1987), African men tend to take the lead and often travel ahead of their spouses except where their immigration status is clear prior to departure. Evidence from the two surveys conducted by the author indicates that sometimes it takes up to five years or more for women to join their husbands. The surveys' findings on the age and gender composition of African immigrants in Canada and the U.S. seem to reflect the findings in internal migration research in Africa which shows that most African rural-urban migrants are male aged between 25 and 44 (Ghana Statistical Services, 1995b).

African immigrants are distributed across U.S. and Canada. In fact, there is no single province or state without the African presence (see Figures 1 and 2). However, Africans are not uniformly distributed. Whereas some States and Provinces have heavy concentrations, there are other places where they barely exist. In Canada, 50 percent or more of all Africans live in Ontario, followed by Quebec with a distance 27.3 percent. About 21 percent live in the Western Provinces topped by British Columbia with 11.7 percent and Alberta with 7.4 percent. More than 50 percent of the 2,300 Africans in the Maritime Provinces live in Nova Scotia. In terms of metropolitan distribution, more than 30 percent live in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), 10 percent in Montreal and 3–5 percent in the Vancouver and Victoria CMAs. In the U.S., the Western, Southern and the Northeastern geographic zones account for nearly 80 percent. Within these regions, the South Atlantic and the Pacific states have nearly half of all Africans in the U.S. Broken down into States, California alone accounts for 15.4 percent, Texas 11 percent and New York 8 percent. Maryland, Virginia and Massachusetts also account for 7 percent, 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively. Within the Northeast, New York, Maryland and Virginia top the preferred location with most of them residing in the NYC/Newark and the Baltimore/Washington/Northern Virginia areas. The Metropolitan Chicago area in Illinois, and Northeastern Ohio region centered on Cleveland, also have pockets of the African population.

How do we account for the distribution of Africans in Canada and the U.S.? The fact that most Africans in the U.S.A. and Canada are found in the major metropolitan areas is no coincidence. Their distribution reflects the general trend in urban living among North Americans, which is largely determined by the job market and other considerations. The distribution of African population may also be explained by the presence or absence of minorities, especially people of color. The large concentration of Africans in Ontario and Quebec, specifically in Toronto and Montreal, is partly determined by the cosmopolitan nature and cultural diversity that exist in these areas. Indeed, 62 percent of the 573,680 black people in Canada live in Ontario and 23 percent in Quebec. In the U.S., three of the five states with large numbers of African immigrants (California, New York and Texas) also have a sizable proportion of the foreign-born and African American population. The pattern is interesting and conforms in some ways to what has been observed in the literature. However, the spatial distribution of Africans cannot be fully accounted for by the presence of blacks and other minorities in the province or state as the case may be. More important,

Figure 1: Distribution of African immigrants in Canada, 1996.

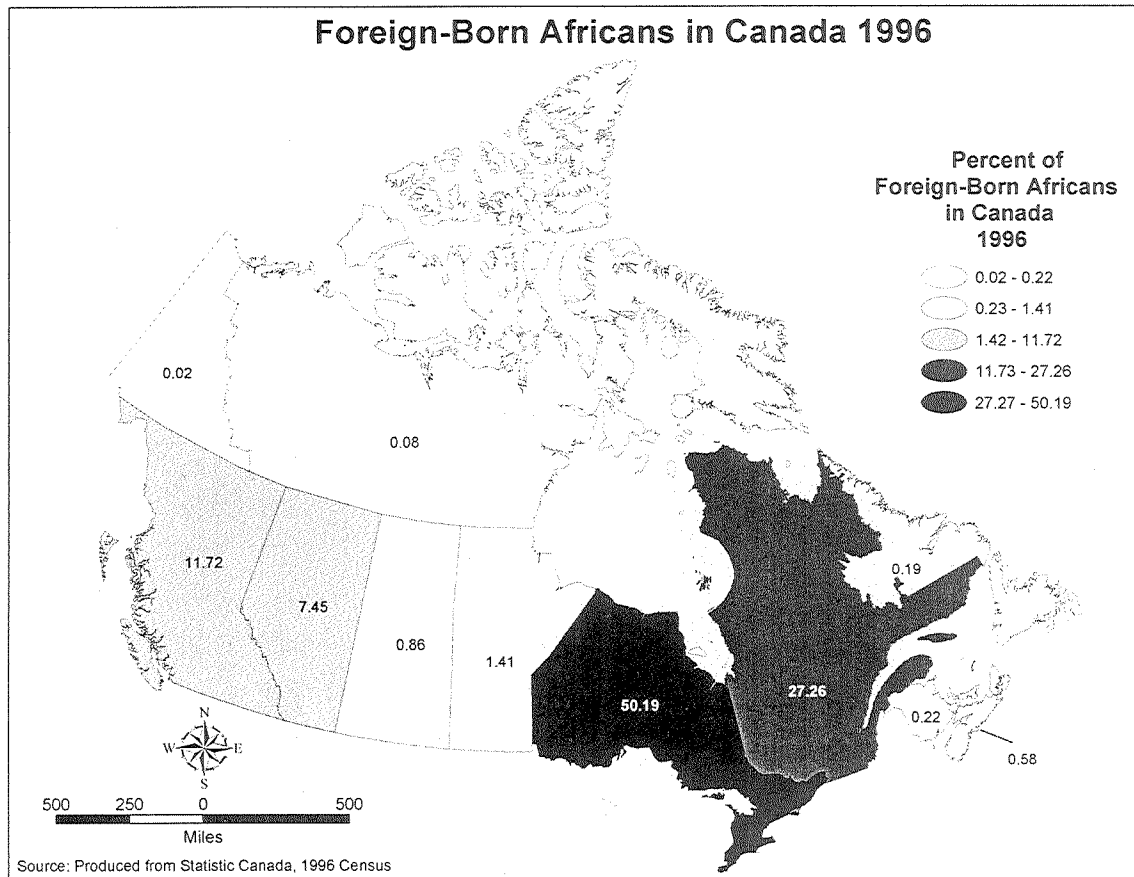
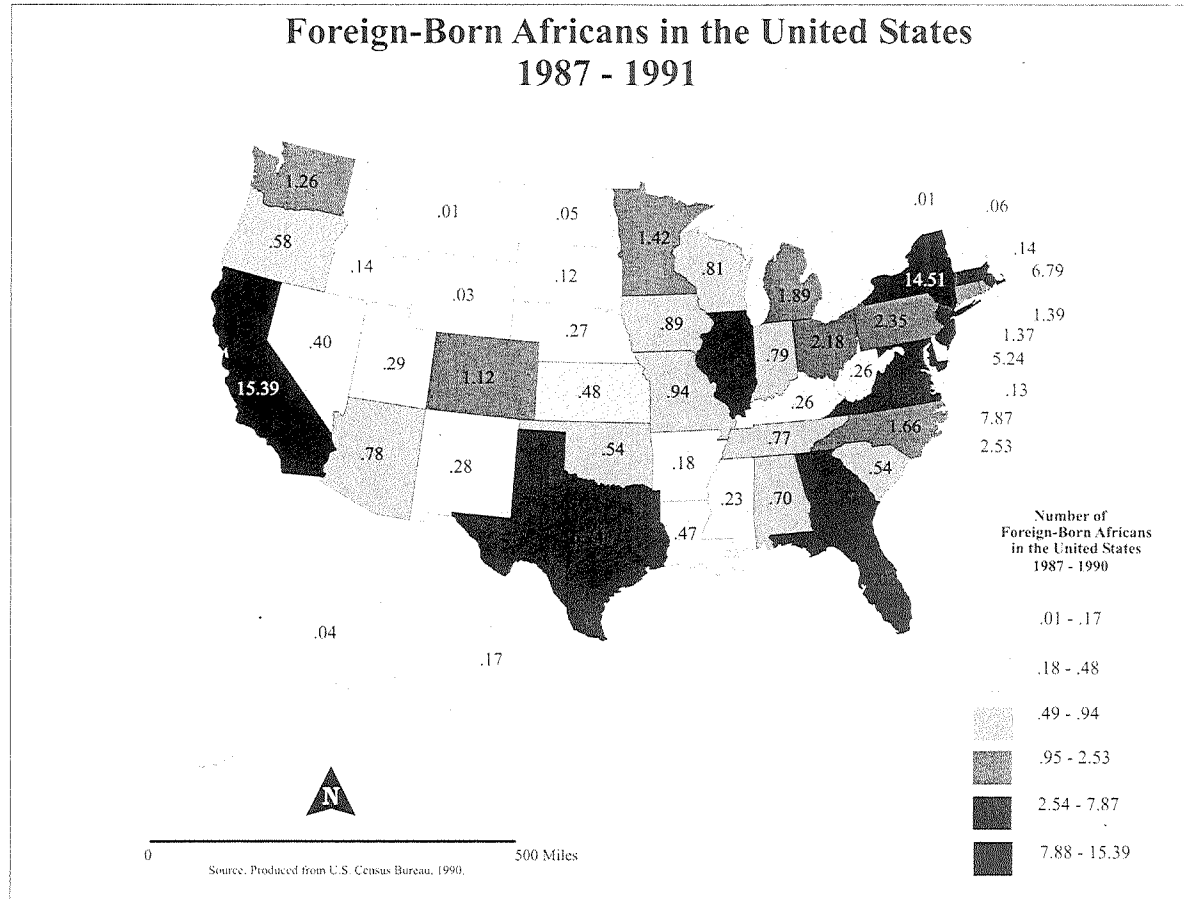


Figure 2: Distribution of African population by state in the U.S., 1991.



Africans who arrive in the U.S. almost invariably tend to settle in areas where other Africans have already settled. In the U.S. survey of 363 African immigrants in the U.S., those interviewed explained their choice of residence in terms of proximity to friends and family members who hosted them upon arrival, a pattern that is also reflected among Africans in Canada (Konadu-Agyemang, 1999). Indeed, 78 percent of the people surveyed stayed with friends and relatives upon arrival for periods ranging from one month to 18 months, and 44 percent still live within 60-mile radius (i.e., one-hour drive) from the friends/relatives they initially stayed with. This pattern is not surprising due primarily to the chain migration that characterizes both African rural-urban migration and international migration as well. It is almost expected, and often demanded, that Africans who have made it to the U.S. and other western countries should assist siblings, other family members and friends to immigrate. Even when they are not in a position to sponsor, they may provide assistance in the form information, and airfares, and hosting them upon their arrival. It is therefore not surprising that 90 percent of the people interviewed said they had friends and/or relatives in the U.S., and 92 percent were assisted or influenced by them.

African immigrants to the U.S. and Canada tend to be better educated, and often arrive with a more advanced educational preparation than that of the general population. In the U.S. survey of 363 Africans referred to in the previous section, close to 87 percent of the respondents in the sample had attained at least high school education or its equivalent prior to their arrival. Again, 40 percent of all Africans in the U.S. have completed university/college and 30 percent have graduate school education. This high level of achievement is impressive considering the fact that only 20.3 percent of U.S. population had college/university or more education in the 1990s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). Among the African population in Canada too, at least 62 percent have completed secondary or post secondary education. Almost invariably, all the respondents received their basic education in Africa. However, 70 percent of the respondents have attended college or graduate school, or undertaken some courses/ since their arrival in North America.

These impressive statistics on educational attainment among Africans in North America is collaborated by an article in *The Economist* magazine, which reported that 88 percent of all adult African immigrants to the U.S. have at least high school education, 75 percent have some college experience and one in four has an advanced degree (*The Economist*, May 11, 1996). These levels far exceed those of other immigrant groups and the native-born population. For instance, only 77 percent of the native-born population has high school or higher educational attainment. The comparative figures for Asian and Central American immigrants are 76 percent and 46 percent.

The selective nature of current immigration policies of both U.S. and Canada has created this situation, which has in turn resulted in brain drain out of Africa. Indeed, a sizable portion of the current African population in the U.S. is made up of lottery winners who have to satisfy higher levels of educational attainment as a pre-condition for visa issuance. Others also entered the country either as undergraduate or graduate

students, and got their status regularized. But more important, the deterioration of living conditions in Africa vis-à-vis other world regions has spawned brain drain out of Africa to the west in search of better opportunities (Logan, 1995; 1999). Thus the arguments about current immigrants possessing fewer qualifications do not apply to African immigrants.

The higher educational attainments, notwithstanding, many Africans are employed in what would be considered as menial jobs whose requirements may be well below their training, skills and expertise. It is estimated that up to 90 percent of African professionals in Toronto cannot find work in their chosen fields. Most of the people surveyed are employed in processing, home care, hospitality, transportation and other areas where their skills are hardly used. Many of the university graduate immigrants with non-U.S. and Canadian degrees are working as taxi drivers, car park attendants, bus boys, and home care aids.

Even in a number of cases, respondents who have upgraded their education by taking courses in U.S. and Canadian institutions are working in positions that may not be related to their training and experience. As a result many Africans find themselves in jobs that do not enable them to use their human capital. Where they get access to jobs within their chosen fields, some are placed in lower positions, often working under people with lower qualifications.

The inability of Africans to find jobs that are commensurate with their training and experience has resulted in significant levels of job dissatisfaction. Nearly 50 percent of all the respondents said they are not satisfied with their current positions, citing reasons such as 'job is for the uneducated', 'no future growth potential', 'low wages' and 'job not challenging' as their reasons. The dissatisfaction often leads to frequent job changes that in turn affect their promotion and benefits. Eighty percent of all the respondents had changed jobs up to 5 times within the last five years.

MAINTAINING TIES WITH AFRICA

As indicated elsewhere in this study, Africans abroad barely lose touch with their home countries. No matter where they go, and no matter how comfortable they are in their new countries, most Africans never transplant themselves fully into a new milieu. Those who do not return home may still be taken home for burial. Due to their plans to return home in their old age, and more important the cultural traditions that require Africans to be generous to, and take care of their kith and kin, African immigrants in the U.S. and Canada, almost without exception, provide financial support to parents, spouses, children, siblings, relatives and friends back home in Africa. More than 50 percent of the respondents remit home on a regular basis, 25 percent quarterly, and 15 percent annually. On the whole, the respondents remit an average of \$1,200 per annum, while 16 percent remit \$5,000–10,000 annually. While these remittances seriously erode the ability of Africans to accumulate capital in their host countries, they play significant roles in buoying up the flagging African

economies. Remittances from residents abroad constituted as much as 31 percent of total foreign exchange earnings of Egypt, 51 percent for Cape Verde Islands, and 5.3 percent for Nigeria in the early 1990s (United Nations Dept. of Economic and Social Information, 1996). It is estimated that Ghanaians abroad remit home approximately \$400–500 million per annum, an amount which is greater than the earnings from Ghana's chief export, cocoa.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was, among other things, to throw a search light on African immigrants in the U.S. and Canada and thereby enable us to elucidate and understand the factors behind the increasing wave in African immigration to these countries, their socio-economic characteristics, spatial distribution and some of the problems they face as they adapt to their new milieu. In order to achieve the set objectives, the study highlighted trends in African immigration to the U.S. and Canada, especially since the 1970s, based on census information and data collected through surveys. It has argued that while Africans were kept out of both countries due primarily to race-biased immigration laws, favorable laws enacted in the 1970s and 1980s have facilitated African immigration to both countries. Moreover, the deteriorating living conditions in Africa, due to a combination of social, political and economic problems have constituted 'push factors' that have forced Africans to seek better opportunities in the Western World. While European countries used to be the destination of choice due primarily to close proximity and historical ties, U.S. and Canada have emerged as significant destinations for African immigrants. African immigrants to the U.S. and Canada are generally young and well educated. In spite of their higher educational attainments, however, Africans tend to be employed in menial jobs that do not commensurate with their education and skills. They are spatially well distributed in all Provinces and States, although Ontario, New York, California and Texas have higher concentrations. Africans in the U.S. and Canada also maintain links with their roots in Africa, and contribute to the continent's development through remittances to their families and friends.

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