



Geo-Africanism

Pilgrimage to Africa: a Trip to Ghana and Liberia
Gerald A. Montgomery

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What is Geo-Africanism?

“Geo” is from the Greek word γη or γαια meaning “earth,” or “ground or land.” When used as a prefix for Africanism Geo-Africanism means “a global viewpoint of African ethnicities” as opposed to a Diasporic view of black people born into nations outside the African continent. As an ideology it qualitatively defines the ethnicity of all non-continental Africans, regardless of nationality, which is particularly redemptive for the African-American. It argues the significance of ethnicity for American citizens and outlines the ramifications of the so-called Negro’s perception of Africa, which impacts African and African-American relations both here and abroad. The problem Geo-Africanism addresses is best exemplified by the African-American’s impulse to say he is not African—it seeks to explain away such a notion.

The primary objective of Geo-Africanism is to esteem the African-American by recognizing his African ethnicity, which in turn equips him with the same sense of historical, genetic, and global presence to which Americans of Irish, Italian, and German descent, among others, are privy. Ethnicity, for this purpose, is not a matter of exactness—as an individual’s ancestry may be comprised of multiple ethnicities—but rather a matter of general association. In other words African-Americans by consensus are black and therefore African descendants by association.

Geo-Africanism mitigates the birthright of the so-called Diaspora or as I like to call him, the *Prodigal Son*—a son who left his “father’s house” to live in a faraway land, only to succumb to the evils and hardship therein. At no time did the wayward son’s DNA change, his actions notwithstanding. And when he returned to his father, hoping for nothing more than a job as a servant, the father again embraced him as a son. When challenged by the eldest son about throwing an extravagant feast for a delinquent son and never so much as an appreciation dinner for him, the father reassured him that since he never left all that the father has will be his. But a son who was *dead* and now is *alive* is cause for celebration. Thus Africa belongs to the (continental) African. But *being African* belongs to all the sons of Africa, the *Omowale*, regardless of their nationality.

While the African-American’s nationality is fully American, his ethnicity is “African.” This is the essence of Geo-Africanism. America is a melting pot of ethnicities. Thus the African-American embracing his African ethnicity makes him more American, not less; a notion contrary to current social norms in which less (African) is more (American). We see with other ethnicities a direct correlation between their patriotism and their ethnicity. But for the African-American this correlation is thought to be non-existent. Geo-Africanism recognized this need for an ethnicity in America: “the Land of Immigrants.”

America is home for the African-American. It is his country and the only land he knows. He helped build it. He fought for it—bled and died for it. Thus a physical migration to Africa is not only uncalled for, it would be absurd. But embracing his African ethnicity is crucial to the progression of what Geo-Africanism calls the *American African*—much like El Hajj Malik El Shabazz’s call for (so-called) Negroes to make a mental and cultural migration to Africa.

Regardless of why the word Negro (as it relates to the Africans brought here in bondage) was instituted over a century ago, it eventually became a way to distinguish the African born in American servitude from the African flourishing across the Atlantic; a distinction still prevalent today as evident by America's critique of President Barack Obama's authenticity as an "African-American." By current application the heritage of the present-day African-American is limited to the condition of peonage from which he emerged. For this reason some African-Americans vigorously denounce being African. The African-American's sense of worth, then, is derived from slavery—a state of inferiority—reinforcing the doctrine of White Supremacy. Geo-Africanism challenges the African-American to *accept* himself as an *African who was at one time enslaved* rather than an *emancipated slave*.

The conceptual Negro, at its conception, was denied education and literacy then ridiculed as the village idiot. He was refused the dignity of marriage then, because he fulfilled the need to procreate, was portrayed as a sexual deviant. Later he was corralled in ghettos, hired exponentially to menial positions, and his children expelled from school at a much higher rate, only to be criticized for having a higher percentage of his kind on public assistance than his white counterpart—a symptom typical of oppressed people. Still, his maturation from *inferior* Negro to African-minded black man is stagnated by his indoctrinated hatred of Africa and thus by extension hatred of himself.

Africans, as with other groups, are as different as they are similar. Liberians and Nigerians are both Africans. Yet Liberians are not Nigerians. A Liberian may somewhat resemble a Nigerian but both can look very different from a Somali, who is also African. There are Liberian Africans, Nigerian Africans, and Somali Africans. Geo-Africanism argues the existence of Jamaican Africans, Brazilian Africans and American Africans as well.

I. Project Overview

“Geo-Africanism: Reclaiming a Birthright” is the title of my latest literary project (book) which expounds upon my Geo-Africanism ideology. Your sponsorship would be used to finance, in full or in part, the cost of the following:

- Round trip ticket to Ghana, then secondary transportation to Liberia.
- Supplies to chronicle the trip (e.g. audio recorder, note pads, pens, and camera)
- Lodging, meals and local transportation.
- Book promotion and self publishing.

After many years without a dream, I now envision being a nationally recognized philosopher, author, poet, and activist. I currently write a monthly column for the online [AIM Magazine](#) and Blog, [AtlanticDivide](#), with relative success. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, I perform Spoken Word both as a participant in *Open Mic* venues or as the Featured Artist. I've given lectures on various topics; most recently the topic of Geo-Africanism. Adding a chapter to this book where in I convey a pilgrimage to Africa could potentially catapult my dream of becoming a nationally recognized writer!

I believe the so-called African-American community, *my* community, desperately needs a concept like Geo-Africanism. President and First Lady Barrack and Michelle Obama has done wonders for the psyche and esteem of many African-Americans, however there are still some in disbelief of this achievement. So now is the perfect time to reinforce our new found self-worth as “*American Africans*” by reclaiming our ethnicity. And I am convinced we as African-Americans cannot fully recovered the level of humanity and self-respect a people need to vanquish oppression and self-loathing without a mental return to our *original person*; to know and accept ourselves [in terms of ethnicity] as Africans!

We cannot do it as “descendants of Slaves,” “American Negroes,” or “African-Americans.” (Certain *individuals* may have been motivated by any of these rationalizations, but history has shown neither has benefited to *the whole*. If they were, we would not be... *here*; in our present condition.) None of these identities work for the group because they all define us as Black people detached from our African roots. To have no roots, no identity anchor, is in and of itself oppressive! We [African-Americans] can no longer separate the disdain we feel towards Africa (thus Africans) from the self-hate of which we pretend to be oblivious; because they are one in the same! We must also repair African and African-American relations, another key focal point of my work.

Geo-Africanism is about process *and* product; the path African-Americans must take to eventually see our nationality as “American,” our ethnicity as “African,” and our race as “human.” No hyphens and no hybrids!

II. Project Merit

The Pilgrimage to Africa's direct impact would be its inspiration of a chapter and poem for the book. Beyond the immediate would be the set of new "paints" it will bequeath to me as an artist hence forth; seeing new places, people, cultures, and traditions in action will expand my artistic eye, as if giving a painter a set of new colors with which to create. I certainly could interview the Africans I know personally that live here to get details about their homeland. But how would this help African-Americans see Africa in a more tangible light? Nothing can replace the eye-witness testimony of an explorer, which is the capacity this pilgrimage would allow me to serve in.

Because I have the gift of writing and illustration, I am able to take a personal pilgrimage and convey it to many who may otherwise never know of Africa's true beauty firsthand. So in essence it's like sending hundreds of thousands on the trip with me. Receiving sponsorship to help finance this project would certainly make things take place sooner rather than later.

I am determined to complete this project, and thus paramount that I make this pilgrimage. However it might be 3 or 4 years from now instead of 12 or 18 months. It would be extremely special, monumental even, if I were to stand in the *Door of no Return* on December 12, 2012 (12/12/12; the last Palindrome of this century). So, in that sense, not receiving your donation would greatly impact the potential of this project.

III. Ability

The manuscript is nearly 80% complete. I'm still proofing and tweaking the content, but for the most part one chapter remains. That chapter is *the Pilgrimage* and an inspired poem to cap off the book. I of course would adjust any information in the other chapters as necessary based on this trip. With that say, completing the project on time, that is to say within a 6 to 8 months after the 10 to 12-day pilgrimage, is a most doable goal.

The budget is modest at best. The round trip flight to Ghana alone will be anywhere from \$1,500 to \$1,800 and the secondary trip to Liberia from Ghana about \$400 to \$500. Transportation in Ghana and Liberia (i.e. taxi or rental car for multiple days) would be about \$150 to \$200. Lodging and meals for both places I estimate as much as \$400 to \$500. Equipment to chronicle the trip, i.e. digital camera, digital audio recorder, pens and pads, etc., I'm budgeting \$575 to \$600. Finally, promotion and self-publishing (e.g. with Lulu or 1st Books) would be between \$1,000 and \$1,200.

While in Ghana I will visit the "Door of no Return"; a departure point in Ghana for millions of African slaves during the Slave Trade. I will take photos, write a synopsis of the monument, and take notes of the panorama to be included in my poem depicting the pilgrimage. I'll visit and comment about W.E.B. Du Bois' gravesite. I'll interview Ghanaians to get their perspective on America and African-Americans – report about life in that city.

I will also visit Liberia, the homeland of my wife Nyemady, to site see, view the well dug by the former slave settlers, and interview residents. Liberia has a history intertwined with African-American history because former slaves migrated to Liberia and developed the country. Hence I plan to write about this paradox of Africans with African-American ancestry.

IV. Story & Voice

As a writer, speaking as an individual, I should be no more or no less fortunate than any other inspiring author/poet. My perspective, though unique in many ways to the experiences which shaped it, is just one of many diversely wonderful viewpoints. But this Geo-African message is one of great importance. So important that if I don't tell the tale, someone else will! So I believe I carry a generational message, thus my voice must be heard at this time.

My story isn't terribly unique, but might serve as a road map for many like me; a way to break the cycle of generational poverty. I truly came for the humblest of beginnings; statistically expected to be dead or in prison by the age of 25, based solely on the neighborhood I grew up in. I have survived great setbacks, escaped countless snares just to get "here." And for that, my story must have an opportunity to be heard by all who would listen!

This project has a direct impact on African-American, and thus American culture; the way a people see themselves greatly influences their socio-economic performance. Geo-Africanism directly contributes to the on-going Civil Rights dilemma in America and benchmarks a new precedent for future generations regarding race-relations; to see one another, not as *the same* (to justify getting along), but different, while at the same time challenging the authority any group has to rank other groups (i.e. superior versus inferior). Most importantly I believe this ideology puts a name to the process of bridging the gap between Africans and African-Americans.

The greatest benefit your contribution provides is its support of the arts while allowing the artist to regain sole ownership of his/her creation. To find another sponsorship program with as few strings attached (in this case virtually no strings) is nearly impossible. You provide an opportunity for artists to further their work, and you do so without laying claim ownership of that work. And for that I am extremely grateful!

A Gift for Your Sponsorship: Any amount would be greatly appreciated. As a condition of your sponsorship of \$50 or more, you will receive a copy of my current book, *MEMS, Rips of Rhapsody*, and your name would be added to the exclusive list our sponsors chronicled in my book. VIP Sponsors who contribute \$150 or more would also receive a souvenir from my travels and an autographed copy of *Geo-Africanism: Reclaiming a Birthright* (upon release date).

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BIO

Name: Gerald A. Montgomery

Age: Born May 1970

Birth Place: Columbus Ohio, resident of Minnesota since October 1998

Education: DeVry, Bachelors of Science, Electrical Engineering Technology, 1991

Marital Status: Married (September 2002) with children; wife is from Liberia, Africa

Military Service: U.S. Marines, 1992-1997 (Enlisted, Non-Commission Officer).

- 22nd MEU (1993), the first official response to “Black Hawk Down” in Somalia.

Countries I visited: Spain, France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, Norway and Japan

Website: www.memsrripsofrhapsody.net

G-Spot Columnist and Author of *MEMS, Rips of Rhapsody*

G-Spot is a column in *AIM Magazine* (Africans In Motion), an online magazine based out of Minneapolis Minnesota, where in I discuss aspects of love, marriage, and dating from an African-American perspective. (Since October 2009)

www.issuu.com/aimminnesota

Co-Blogger for the *AtlanticDivide* forum. (Since December 2010) www.atlanticrock.com

Other Accomplishments: I have written a collection of poetry (not published), a book about the rules of one-on-one communication (self published) and my current projects; books entitled “Mapping the Dream: the Routes and Milestones of reaching Dr. King’s Dream,” and “Geo-Africanism: Reclaiming a Birthright.”

I was commissioned at various stages of my life to produce art.

I’ve been requested to speak at a half-dozen book releases and graduations.

I’ve also recorded, produced and performed Hip Hop music having demo songs played on Ohio, Canadian and New Jersey radio stations. I co-hosted an Open Mic with local Spoken Word artist IBé (pronounced “E-Bay”) twice a month at Salem Coffee Shop in Minneapolis, providing comedic relief between performances.

I’m currently laying the blueprint for B.M.O.D.E., an African-American [non-Greek, non-collegiate] Fraternity.

Passions: The institution of the Black Family; rebuilding its infrastructure by restoring the black man as father and husband. “My current battle cries are: “*Please recycle, be a father to your child*”, “*A Cast for the Past*” and “**S.T.A.N.D!**” (Solution Talks and No Distractions!)

PRELIMINARY BUDGET: \$4,085.00 to \$4,830.00

Round Trip Flight to Ghana	\$1,500.00 to \$1,800.00
Round Trip from Ghana to Liberia	\$400.00 to \$500.00
10 days- Transportation (i.e. Taxi or Rental)	\$150.00 to \$200.00
10 days- Lodging (in both Ghana and Liberia)	\$300.00 to \$350.00
10 days- Meals	\$160.00 to \$180.00
Digital Camera, Digital Audio Recorder	\$575.00 to \$600.00
Book Promotion and Self-Publishing	\$1,000.00 to \$1,200.00

Timeline (Schedule)

Day 1

- Arrive in Ghana

Afternoon of Day 2

- Make contact with Ghana host family
- Take candid photos around town
- Seek out a minimal of two impromptu interviews
- Visit nearby U.S. Embassy (if possible)

Evening of Day 2

- Seek out a more extensive interview and interact with a host family

Morning of Day 3

- Visit “Door of no Return”

Afternoon of Day 3

- Review notes and images to begin work on poem and pilgrimage chapter

Morning of Day 4

- Travel to Liberia (preferably Monrovia)
- Make contact with Liberia host family
- Take candid photo around town.
- Seek out a minimal of two impromptu interviews

Day 5 & Day 6

- Visit well dug for the former slaves who founded Liberia
- Visit nearby U.S. Embassy if possible
- Seek out a more extensive interview and interact with Liberia host family

Afternoon of Day 7

- Return to Ghana
- Review notes and images from Liberia to add to write-ups

Day 8

- Visit W.E.B. Du Bois’ Gravesite
- Reconnect with Ghana host family

Day 9

- Work on poem and Pilgrimage chapter

Day 10

- Return Home