

## The Role of Africa During This HBCU Renaissance/Revolution: Prognostications for the Impact of HBCUs in Africa

In 2020 Morgan State University announced its plan to offer three degree programs (communications, journalism and entrepreneurship) through a partnership with the University of Ghana. ( HBCU Africa Homecoming, 2020) The further announce their plans to move forward with building the first HBCU satellite campus in the world (also in Ghana) (HBCU Africa Homecoming, 2020) Immediately the prognostications began as to what economic, cultural and academic impacts this decision would have on Ghanaians and American students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Ghana.

HBCUs are famous for their many unique attributes. One of the most notable features that HBCUs are famous for, is their show bands. Compared to the military and precision style of many of the PWI (Predominantly White Institutions) corp band style, the flash and glamor of HBCU marching music machines embody showmanship, extreme athleticism and popular dance and musicianship. It seems only culturally fitting that Beyonce' dropped her long awaited *Black is King* visual album a mere 5 days after Morgan State University made their monumental announcements during the HBCU Africa Homecoming Summit. Her previous project Homecoming, proudly displayed the fervor and fun that is an HBCU halftime/step show. Her artistry is reminiscent of the exhilaration and excitement of an HBCU band experience. Beyonce's visual anthology is saturated with African imagery, Zulu linguistic customs and Himba hair painting practices. She features prominent Ghanaian artists like Shotta Wale and Nigerian born rappers like Burna Boy. Rolling Stone describes the project as a Pan-African collage. (Shaffer, 2020) HBCUs

operating an international satellite campus in Ghana will benefit the surrounding community by bringing even more opportunities like this one.(Fuchs, 2012) The foundation will be established to infuse the rich Afro-beats style of music with the hip-hop/rap/R&B style of diasporic music in ways never before heard.(Shams, 2012)

Another cornerstone of the HBCU experience is BGLOs (Black Greek Letter Organizations). These entities have long established a presence on the continent of Africa and have strong ties to West Africa specifically. The Divine Nine (D9) is composed of all of the PanHellenic council member BLGOs. Those members are: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, Phi Beta sigma Fraternity Incorporated, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Incorporated. Each organization has a distinctive and specific relationship with West African nations and they all currently work to establish and advance common goals and objectives with local nationals and the diasporic community as a whole.

The Eta Beta Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha is located in Monrovia Liberia. One of their most prominent members is Sirleaf Johnson, the former president of Liberia. Miss Universe Ghana 2015 is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Inc.(Watch the Yard, 2015) These important political and social ties that bind Africa to the BLGO community will ultimately positively impact the HBCU branch campus community in West Africa. (Slaughter, 1997)

In the summer of 2019 a group of fraternity brothers from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated took a small group of young high school mentees from New Jersey

to Ghana, West Africa. The Montclair Kappa League has an annual International travel series. “The Kappas wanted to make sure that youth from the area they serve had the chance to experience The Year of Return. The trip had a powerful effect on the Kappa Leaguers. They said that walking down the same path some of our ancestors followed to their last bath (before being sold into slavery) made them feel connected,” (Watch the yard, 2019) Introducing high school students to environments that house HBCU Branch campus options will create a new diasporic demographic of students. (Stanfield, 2014)

One of the organizers of *Africa Greek Week 2019* was Maurice Cheetham who explained, “The Divine Nine was simply started to create a common bond, to have community and a sense of community service. It provides a place for young men and women to thrive. When asked why he thought it was important to have an African Greek Week event during the year of return, he said, Our purpose is to bring individuals from the Divine Nine [to Africa] and bring them home to come to Ghana and celebrate the year of return. We want them to see everything that Ghana can offer.” (Ghana Tourism, 2019) Members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated chartered a chapter in Monrovia, Liberia in 1955, Eta Chi Omega. In 2011, the chapter was reactivated in Ghana. Omegas continue to create opportunities for diasporic people throughout West Africa. An HBCU branch campus will likely increase initiatives that specifically bring together people from diverse backgrounds in Ghana and create spaces for collaboration, cooperation and partnerships. (Anthony, 2020)

In 1992 Delta Sigma Theta became the first BGLO to Partner with Habitat For Humanity International and the sorority built a Habitat village in Ghana, West Africa. Supporting potential HBCU international branch campus

students in this way fosters a sense of stability and trust. These philanthropic endeavors are indicative of the nature of the relationship that is sure to develop between BGLOs and HBCU international branch campuses. (Edelstein, 2012)

The Sigma Mu Sigma chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated chartered February 2020. In Accra, Ghana, West Africa. Having an active BGLO chapter in Accra will lead to a greater potential for undergraduate participation in Black Greek life. The organization boasts as one of its premier members the first democratically elected president of any African nation, the Honorable Bro. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Their local and international connections will consistently draw resources and contributors to HBCUs in international spaces.(Edelstein, 2012)

The Delta Iota Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta was chartered on the coast of Monrovia, Liberia in 1948, making it the first of any D9 to charter a chapter in Africa. Recently a group of Zetas collaborated to form the “Ghana Zetas” together they” foster the ideas of sisterhood, service, charity, civil and cultural endeavors, scholarship and finer womanhood within the great nation of Ghana." (Ghana Zetas Facebook page, 2020) Having fully functioning members of BGLOs operating in Ghana has facilitated the establishment of a medical clinic in Ghana, construction of water wells, pipelined a school supply distribution system, books, food and much more. The inception of an HBCU international branch campus will usher in more opportunities to directly impact scholarship initiatives, infant mortality interventions through partnerships with the March of Dimes and socio-economic advancement ventures.(Youtie, 2017)

In 2010, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated Partnered with AfriCare to provide African women (who were responsible for over 75% of the grain grown on the

continent) with grain grinders. Endeavors such as this can help to facilitate bonds and networks that transcend physical borders. These economic relationships can filter into an HBCU branch campus abroad and can enhance the populations working knowledge of agricultural advancements and micro-business opportunities. (Mitchell, 2018)

Morgan State University has announced its formal plan to build the first HBCU in Ghana. The music and arts industry will be directly impacted by the presence of an HBCU in West Africa. The BGLO will also have an opportunity to cultivate their specific brand of service and scholarship to a new and growing segment of the global community. It is with great anticipation and excitement that the entire HBCU network salutes this great undertaking by this scholarly institution. The fine arts majors, band and music enthusiasts and Black Greek Letter Organizations are poised and preparing to assist this venture with every asset that we possess.

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