

THE CALLING

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"Here am I, send me,
I will go," Isaiah, 6:8

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture Newsletter

Building Bridges

by Rev. Dr. Dale Irvin, President
New York Theological Seminary



Ti koro nko agyina —“One head does not constitute a council”— is a traditional Ghanaian proverb.

This insight is critical in a world that has become so interrelated. In fact, a copy of the proverb hangs on a wall in the United Nations Building in New York, a gift from the Republic of Ghana that reminds us of the importance of that principle on an international level today.

At New York Theological Seminary, we have long recognized the need for building partnerships and being in conversations in education for ministry. We have long said that education happens best in community. As a school, we would rather be part of a council and work with others than try to do things all on our own.

Today we are especially excited to be in a new partnership with the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture. Under the leadership of Rev. Daniel Nyante, its

Founding Executive Director, the Institute has launched a very promising program. One of its first accomplishments has been to help build some new bridges across the “African lake” that is called the Atlantic Ocean.

African Culture has long been thriving in the Americas — North, Central and South. The Caribbean offers a rich repository of African traditions, practices and beliefs. In the USA, African-Americans have for nearly 400 years retained a lively memory of the African continent and their “first homeland” as they have forged new identities in this “second homeland.”

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture has taken up the cause of bringing these various descendants of Africa together, and to the physical shores of the African continent, to provide educational experiences that are empowering for all who are involved.

(cont'd on Page 3)

Welcome to the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture

by Rev. Daniel Nyante, Executive Director

Theology can be likened to a baobab tree – it is too wide for one’s arms to wrap around. This is especially true when we look at theology from the African perspective. It is very encompassing and there is so much to learn and understand that it is important we study this perspective, in depth, to ensure that the African point-of-view is heard and understood.

One of the ways the community can be made aware of this is through education. For this reason, the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture was formed so others may further their theological education with an emphasis on the African Diaspora, African Tradition and Religion while continuing their journey of religious and spiritual enlightenment.

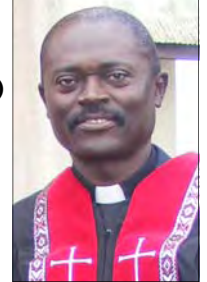
The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture was established to explore and understand if there are differences between Christianity (*Kristosom*) and the

African Worship of God (*Onyamesom*) and, if possible, to seek to make connections between them as part of a larger effort to deepen the process of inculturation of the Christian faith and to

bring to light a better understanding of God the Creator of the Universe.

Our mission is to facilitate learning through workshops, seminars and

lectures given by scholars, teachers and writers of the African Diaspora and to produce an interactive website and quarterly journal where such information will be published and shared. Our vision is to help others gain an appreciation for African culture and Christianity and to enhance the faith of all those following a path of religious and spiritual enlightenment.



Gye Nyame

“Except for God”

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture

Meet Our Professors

Professor Kofi Asare Opoku



His accomplishments are amazing and inspiring! Professor Kofi Asare Opoku is a retired professor of Religious Studies at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and the author of several books on African Traditional Religion.

He taught classes on African Culture and Christianity at The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture's Winterim 2008 program in Ghana and in March, he will be speaking at The Institute's Inaugural Activities at the New York Theological Seminary.

Professor Opoku holds degrees from the University of Ghana, the University of Bonn, West Germany, and Yale Divinity School. He has been a Visiting Professor at several universities including Lafayette College, the University of Northern Iowa and North Carolina State University.

Professor Opoku has

served as Acting Director and Deputy Director for the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana and has taught courses on World Religions, Sociology of Religions in Africa, African Traditional Religion, African Culture and Islam.

As a community leader, Professor Opoku has served on numerous boards and committees in Ghana including the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board and the School Board for the Lincoln Community School in Accra. He was Chairman of the Ghana National Planning Committee of the United Nations Decade for Cultural Development, as well as Chairman of the Scholarships Committee for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

Professor Opoku was editor of the *Research Review*, a journal of the Institute of African Studies in Legon, Ghana.

A gifted speaker, Professor Opoku has lectured in the US, Africa, India, China and Japan. He has published numerous articles on the African Diaspora, Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

Professor Opoku is also a farmer in the Akuapem Hills in the Eastern Region of Ghana, where he grows oranges, oil palms, coconuts, bananas, cinnamon and fruits and tends to a 30-acre tropical forest, as his gift to the world.

Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye



Writer, lecturer, leader among women — Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Director of the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture (IWRC) at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana, has dedicated more than 40 years to African culture and religion and her work has brought her honors from all over the world.

Professor Oduyoye lectured at The Institutes for Diasporan and African Culture's Winterim 2008 session and she will be speaking at the Inaugural Activities at the New York Theological Seminary in March.

A pioneer in African theology who has contributed greatly to the study of religion and culture, Professor Oduyoye began her ecumenical journey in 1966 and has traveled the world, from Switzerland to Nairobi, an inspiration to all she meets.

In April 2008, Professor Oduyoye was honored for her work by the New York Theological Seminary and a month later, Yale University awarded her an Honorary Doctorate Degree.

There is a published collection of essays in her honor entitled, *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye* edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar.

Professor Oduyoye says The Institute of Women in Religion and Culture has a very important relationship to the community-at-large.

IWRC is a project of Trinity Theological Seminary and is set up to provide ministerial information to four Western Churches, but is open to other churches, so the student body is mixed, Professor Oduyoye says. The usual Western-style liturgy livened up with Ghanaian rhythms happens in the chapel at regular hours.

In addition, there is Trinity United Church, which belongs to the sponsoring churches and serves the wider community of Legon with the usual western-style offerings. Beyond this, students organize charismatic prayer sessions throughout the week and at all hours for themselves and the community.

Those who live near the disused tennis court tell Professor Oduyoye that this goes at all hours of the day and night. Professor Oduyoye says many times the mid-day devotions flow into Talitha Qumi Centre that houses the IWRC where she serves as director.

Our Partner Churches

Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church

Canarsie Community Reformed Church

Church on the Edge

Presbyterian Church in Elmont



Rev. Samuel K. M. Atiemo,
Pastor, Bethel Presbyterian
Reformed Church

The Rev. Samuel Kwadwo Manukure Atiemo is Pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church in Brooklyn. He holds

Masters' degrees in Education from Manchester University in England, and in Counseling from United States International University. He holds a Master of Divinity Degree and a Masters' degree in Psychology from the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Prior to joining the Seminary in the US in 1983, he was the Africa Director for Youth for Christ International in Kenya (East Africa.) His constant support of the Institute has been invaluable.

Rev. Atiemo has been serving in ministry for close to 40 years in various capacities: Evangelist (in Ghana,) Campus Pastor (in Manchester, England,) Christian Education Director (at Kirk of the Valley Presbyterian Church in California,) Youth Minister (YFC/Ghana, and in several Youth camps in the US,) and as Pastor.

Rev. Dr. Felix Busby,
Pastor, Canarsie Community
Reformed Church

The Rev. Dr. Felix Busby, Pastor of the Canarsie Community Reformed Church in Brooklyn, brings his experience and insight to the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture.

Born in Curacao, the Netherlands, Antilles, Dr. Busby earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering and was employed at the Shell Oil Refinery until immigrating to New York in 1965.

Prior to accepting the call to Pastor the Canarsie Community Reformed Church, Dr. Busby attended the New York Theological Seminary and graduated in 1994. He continued his education in the Doctoral Program at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, graduating in 2006. He is pursuing the publication of his project, "Transformed Life in the Spirit: Solitude and Silence in the Life of the Christian Believer."



The New York Theological Seminary

Building Bridges....(cont'd from page 1)

“**N**ew York Theological Seminary is a non-denominational institution, fully accredited by New York State and ATS (the accreditation body for theological seminaries.)

The seminary began in 1900 with the founding of the Bible Teachers' College in Montclair, New Jersey, by Wilbert Webster White who believed the Bible ought to occupy the central position in the theological curriculum.

When the school changed its name to New York Theological Seminary, it embarked on a new venture in theological education for urban ministry. With offices in the Interchurch Center, and classrooms in the Riverside Church and Union Theological Seminary, NYTS is well-situated for a second century of service.”

Adapted from NYTS website.

Educating the wider community on the importance of retaining the heritage of the African identity as it flourishes and finds new expression in its various diasporan locations is no easy task, but the Institute has accepted the challenge. It is truly a project on the move!

Our congratulations to Rev. Nyante, who has been working so tirelessly for this project. Under his leadership, the Institute is building new bridges of understanding among individuals and groups on all sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Its educational efforts are opening up creative insights into the life and experience of diverse peoples of African descent. He does it all with a strong spiritual base and a clear Christian commitment.

The first Christian council that we learned of took place in the book of Acts as the first followers of Jesus

gathered to contemplate whether Gentiles could be Christians without adhering fully to Jewish law. What emerged from this decision was a church that was enriched by the diverse cultures and traditions of the world that were brought into it.

The deciding moment in Acts 15 seems to have been in verse 12, which states, “The whole assembly kept silent, and listened to Barnabus and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.” I take the formation of the Institute to be one of the signs that God is lifting up to help bring about a new reformation in churches throughout the world today.

May we all rejoice in this new event which God is planning!



ONYANKOPON ADOM NTI BIRIBIARA
BEYE YIE

"By God's grace, all will be well"

The Institute's Collaboration with the New York Theological Seminary

Institute Itinerary and Schedule 2008-2009

On Sunday, October 26, 2008, students in the Multi-Faith Track, Doctor of Ministry program gathered at the New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) in New York City for a week of seminars in Critical Interpretation, Culture Leadership and Identity, Mentoring and Research Development, and several Multi-Faith workshop.



The Rev. Dr. Wanda Lundy

The students participated in the following:

Sun: NYTS President Dr. Dale Irvin's Mentoring and Research Development Seminar.

Mon: Dr. Irvin's

Mentoring and Research Development Seminar; Critical Interpretation with Dr. Lucinda Mosher and Culture Leadership and Identity with the Rev. Dr. Wanda Lundy.

Tues: Dr. Irvin's Mentoring and Research Development, Critical Interpretation with Dr. Mosher and Culture Leadership and Identity with Dr. Wanda Lundy.

Wed: Multi-Faith Seminar with Rabbi Justus Baird of the Auburn Theological Seminary.

Thurs: Seminar with Dr. Irvin, Dr. Mosher class was held at the Museum of Biblical Art, and Seminar with Dr. Lundy and Dr. Humberto Alfaro's New Leadership lecture.

Fri: Lecture seminars by Dr. Lundy and Dr. Mosher.

It had been planned that students in the Multi-Faith Track, Doctor of Ministry program in Akropong, Ghana would have a simulcast of the lectures, but technical difficulties prevented that from happening.

December 2008

- 12/18: Leave New York for Ghana
- 12/19: Arrive in Ghana
- 12/20: Funeral Service, Commission of Team Members
- 12/21: The Asafosa Peace Ritual, Mamfe, Ghana
- 12/22: Visit to Akonnedi
- 12/23: Lecture: Culture, Leadership and Identity
- 12/24: Christmas Eve Church Service at Akropong Christ Church
- 12/25: Christmas Church Service at various churches
- 12/26: Ohum Durbar Mamfe, Ghana
- 12/27: Wedding, Church Service, Legon, Accra, Ghana Reception at La Palm Hotel
- 12/28: Ghana Elections, No Activity
- 12/29: Visit to Aburi Botanical Gardens
- 12/30: 70th Birthday Celebrations, Tema, Ghana
- 12/31 Church Watch Night Service Grace Presbyterian Church, Akropong

January 2009

- 1/1: Holy Communion, Christ Church, Akropong,
- 1/1: Birthday Party, Akropong
- 1/2: Lecture Series Wrap-up
- 1/5: Morning Reflection
- 1/6: Depart Accra for New York

March 2009

- 3/20-3/22: Inauguration of The Institute at the New York Theological Seminary
- 3/21: Healing/Prayer Service, Bethel Church, Brooklyn
- 3/22: Thanksgiving Service, Canarsie Community Reformed Church
- 3/24: Faculty Departure to Ghana
- 3/25- 4/2: One-week Intensive Lecture Series in Akropong
- 4/3: Faculty Depart for New York
- 4/4- 4/13: Easter Revival, Grace Church, Akropong

June 29—July 10, 2009

Summer Program in Ghana

The Institute's Mission

by Rev. Daniel Nyante

To be in ministry in today's world, one must become an ecumenist striving for unity and harmony among all denominations. Globalization has now traversed the world. As ministers we must be knowledgeable and have a healthy appreciation of other denominational, cultural and religious traditions.

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture was founded to educate everyone about African culture and to foster the understanding that it is possible for Christianity and other religions to co-exist.

We welcome your contributions!

Akuapem Odwira Durbar

Address by Okuapehene Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III



The Parade of Chiefs.

Akropong is home to many celebrations and one that is especially important to local residents is the Akuapem Odwira Festival, where members of the community do a little soul-searching and make themselves accountable for any wrongdoings they may have done this past year. The festival also honors Akropong's fore-fathers and the sacrifices they made for the community.

The 183rd annual Akuapem Odwira Festival was held from Oct. 13-17, 2008, and was presided over by the Okuapehene Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III. His Excellency started his speech with a prayer of thanks to God "for His protection and blessing during the past year," and "for His continued guidance and mercy in our endeavors in the ensuing years."

Then, the Okuapehene welcomed everyone with the following speech:

"On behalf of the chiefs and people of the Akuapem Traditional Area and on my own behalf, I welcome you all to Akropong and particularly to this Durbar which is the climax of the Odwira festival," the Chief said.

He then explained the definition of Odwira and what the festival represents to the people of Akropong.

"Odwira simply means purification," Okuapehene said. "It is the period where we take stock of and appraise our activities over the past year and cleanse ourselves of our misdeeds and resolve to act positively at all times. It is also the occasion that invokes our memories of the brave deeds and the sacrifices made by our fore-fathers."

Okuapehene said festival-goers should enjoy the

festival, socialize and have fun, but they should also give thanks to God for providing growth and prosperity during the previous year. He spoke of the festival's significance as a means of appraising the community's fight against "illiteracy, poor sanitation, malnutrition, unemployment (and) tribal and ethnic disputes." And he praised God for the improvement of the quality of life in Akropong.

"The tribal wars fought by our fore-fathers must now belong to history," Okuapehene said. "A peaceful environment is a fulcrum for growth and development."

Okuapehene emphasized the importance of education to the people of Akropong and his dedication to improve and expand educational opportunities in the community.

"The flame of education in

Akuapem is still spreading," Okuapehene said. "Since 1843, when the first public school was established in Akropong by the Basel Missionaries, education in the country has undergone many transformations to make the educated Ghanaian sufficiently equipped to meet global challenges."

The upcoming elections were also topics that the Chief addressed.

"We appeal to the various Political Parties and all the aspirants and their respective supporters to keep peace as their catch-word in their activities before, during and after the elections."

At the close of his welcome address, Okuapehene thanked the invited guests and offered this prayer, "May the Lord grant you all His traveling mercies on your journeys back home. Thank you."



Okuapehene Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III shakes hands with Rev. Daniel Nyante at Okuapehene's palace in Akropong.

2008 Kuronti Odwira Festival

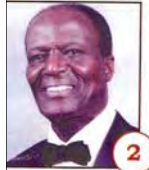
Honorees

Prominent Sons and Daughters of Akropong

HONOREES



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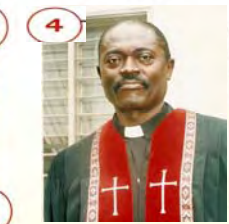
- Prominent Sons and Daughters of Akropong**
1. Evang. Atta Aboah-Offei
 2. Dr. Owusu Akuffo
 3. Rev. George Opere Kwapong
 4. Rev. Daniel K. Nyante
 5. Rev. Charles Ansah Owusu
 6. Eric Bekoe - (Asante Kotoko F.C.)
 7. Dr Reynolds Owusu Akyeampong
 8. Dr Albert Owusu Barnafo
 9. Mrs Victoria Akotoa Donkor
 10. Mr Adupre Awuku



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Celebrating national heritage was the theme of the 2008 Kuronti Odwira Festival, which was held from October 20-26, 2008, at the forecourt of Kuronti Palace in Akuapem, Ghana. The annual festival is a community celebration that enhances and strengthens Ghanaians' deep respect for social values. Its aim is to bring greater unity and team spirit to the community and especially to support the "chieftancy" institution in its quest to withstand and

overcome the challenges of our time.

One of the festival's honorees was Rev. Daniel Nyante, Executive Director of The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture. Rev. Nyante was born and raised in Akropong before emigrating to the US where he is currently a candidate in the Doctoral program at the New York Theological Seminary.

Rev. Daniel Nyante was honored with other prominent sons and daughters of Akropong, including: Evang. Atta Aboah-Offei, Dr. Owusu Akuffo, Rev. George Opere Kwapong, Rev. Charles Ansah Owusu, Eric Bekoe (Asante Kotoko F.C.), Dr. Reynolds Owusu Akyeampong, Dr. Albert Owusu Barnafo, Mrs. Victoria Akotoa Donkor and Mr. Adupre Awuku.



Nyame Dua – "Tree of Life"

Krontihene of Akuapem Gives His Annual Message

In his address to festival-participants, Osahene Ofei Kwasi Agyemang IV, the Senior Divisional Chief and Krontihene of Akuapem emphasized his support for development projects that are improving the community's electricity, health, sanitation and water supply. But it was education that was on the forefront of his mind.

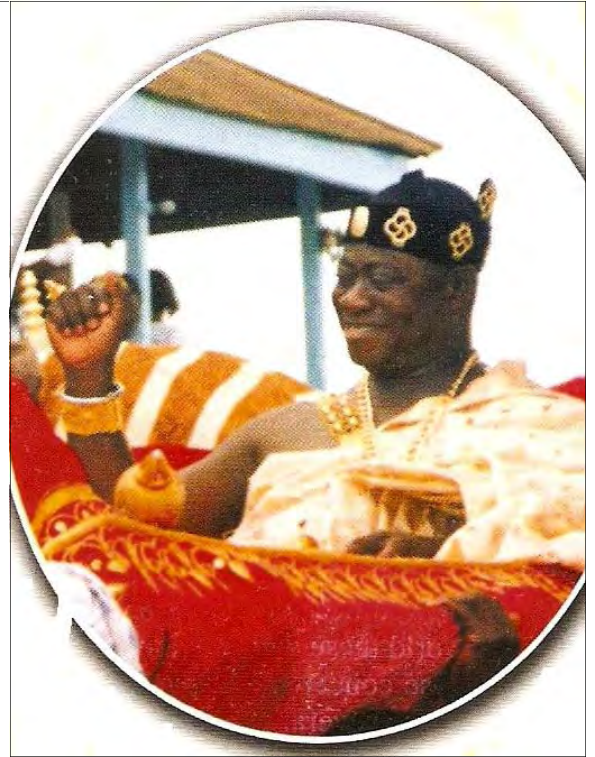
"Education continues to occupy our attention," Krontihene

said. "Not only does it form a crucial component of the Akuapem heritage, but it represents the sure way of shaping the minds of the citizenry to provide the key to every good thing that happens in society."

Krontihene thanked Austrian benefactors for their scholarships to students and mentioned that he has continued his assistance to aid schools with computers and furniture donated by sponsors and partners. He also

thanked the Rotary Club, the Kwakwaduam sons and daughters of Akropong in New York and the MP and District Assembly for participating in the Ademi Water Project for the Akropong Township. Krontihene closed his message with a prayer for continued unity.

"In the name of the Almighty let us, for a change, consider the several good things that unite us and forsake the few that divide us," Krontihene stressed. "God bless the people of Akuapem. God bless Ghana." 6



Krontihene Osahene Ofei Kwasi Agyemang IV, Senior Divisional Chief of Akuapem.

Finding A Reason for My Being

by Rev. Daniel Kwaku Takyi Nyante

Reverend Nyante was born and raised in Akropong, Ghana. He attended Presbyterian Primary and Local Authority Middle School. Due to unforeseen circumstances, he could not attend Koforidua Government Secondary Technical School and later attended Accra Workers College instead.

As a child, he received his early inspiration from Italian engineers who worked construction in the city of Accra. This motivated him to attend the Accra Technical Training Center where he studied Building Design and Construction.

His first career position was as a Quantity Surveying Assistant Trainee with the State Construction Corpo-



Rev. Nyante at 14, (front) with friends a week after their Confirmation at the Presbyterian Church in Akropong. This is the first time they are wearing Kente cloth.

ration at the head office in Accra. He later transferred to Trunk Road Construction Unit #3 in the Western Region where he assisted the Project Team in the construction of Trunk Roads. He was later employed by G.A. Takyi and Partners – Chartered Quantity Surveyors — as a Quantity Surveying Assistant and that was the position he held when he emigrated to the US in August 1978.

In the US, Rev. Nyante studied Engineering and Architecture at the New York City Technical College (NYCTC) and Pratt Institute. (Later, at the New York Institute of Technology, he studied Energy Management but ended his studies to start his own business.) While studying at NYCTC he worked as a messenger for George Langer Consulting Engineering Company in New York and rose through the ranks to become a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning System (HVAC) Designer.

He worked as a HVAC Designer at Lockwood Greene Engineers and PA Colling Consulting Engineers and was Project Engineer at Butler Engineering Consulting Group. He was also Project Manager at Blakel Construction Company. In February 1991, Rev. Nyante started his own Design, Construction and Mechanical Contracting Company. Through God's grace, the company has designed, constructed and completed installation work

in Residential, Institutional and Commercial locations in both public and privately owned properties in the New York Metropolitan Area. One such public agency is the New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA) where his company has done numerous jobs as Mechanical Contractor.

Rev. Nyante's company was part of a team that won three awards from McGraw Hill Construction in the category of NYCTA Subway Work: The Best of 2008 Award for the Myrtle-Wyckoff Subway Station Complex; New York; The Best of 2004 Award for the 1/9 Vent Plant at the World Trade Center "Ground Zero," Station, New York; and The Best of 2003 Award for the Rehabilitation of Whitehall Street Station Fan Plant, New York.

As an immigrant in America, Rev. Nyante has often reflected on his childhood and the impact his culture had on him during his years growing up.

"There were twelve of us — my parents, my five sisters, four brothers and myself," Rev. Nyante says. "We did not have pipe-borne water at home and, instead, walked to town for water to use in the house and to perform other chores. This meant I had to wake up very early and queue up for water at the town reservoir while still having to arrive at school by 8 am. The experience gave me a better understanding of life at an early age."

Rev. Nyante will tell you



Rev. Daniel Nyante and his wife, Gladys Nyante.

he has a wonderful family — he is married and has five sons — and has carved out a successful business, but a few years back Rev. Nyante felt something was missing in his life. With advice from the pastors and elders from his church and also by listening to the promptings of God, he enrolled at the New York Theological Seminary to study theology. He obtained his Master's of Divinity Degree in May 2007 and at present, he is a Doctoral candidate in Ministry.

In October 2008, Rev. Nyante founded the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture to help others who are on their own religious and spiritual journeys and searching for their reasons for being.



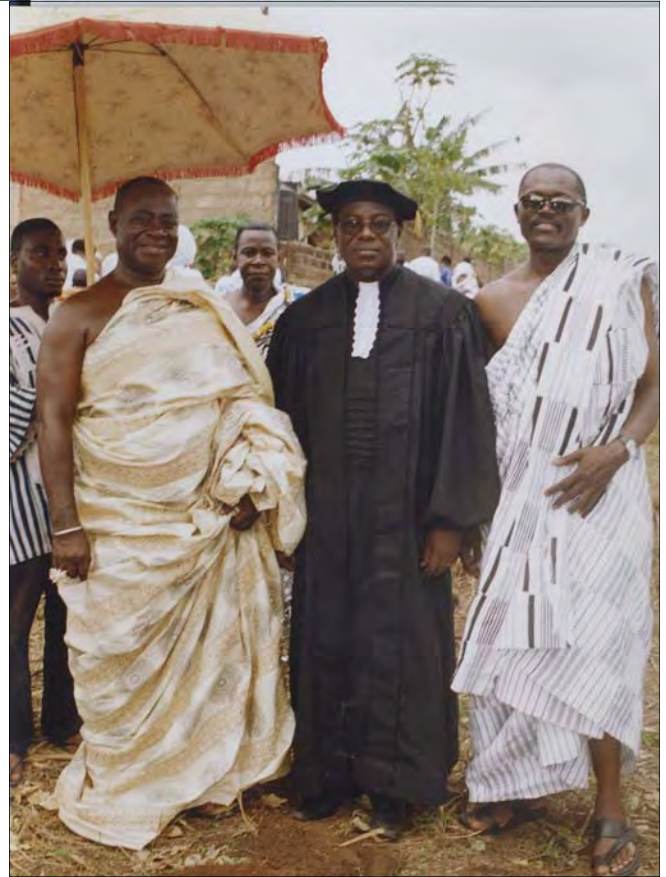
NEA ONNIM NO SUA A,
OHU

"He who does not know can know from learning."

Friends and Colleagues of The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture



Krontihene Osahene Ofei Kwasi Agyeman, IV, and Evangelist Aboah Offei at the New York Theological Seminary's Summer Lecture Series.



Chairman of Akuapem Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rev. J.O.Y. Mante with Krontihene and the Rev. Nyante during the Dedication Ceremony for the building of the University Housing Complex.



Evangelist Aboah Offei lecturing at the New York Theological Seminary's Summer Lecture Series.



Professor Kirk Lyons giving a lecture on the History of African Americans and the Slave Trade at the Winterim 2008 Lecture Series.



Professor Kofi Asare Opoku lectures students from Beeson Divinity School in Alabama on African Proverbs and Symbols during the Winterim 2008 Lecture Series.

Winterim 2008

In January 2008, the New York Theological Seminary, Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church and Canarsie Community Reformed Church sponsored a two-week Winterim session in Akropong, Akuapem, in the Eastern Region of Ghana, for the study of African Traditional Religion and Christianity.

The program was led by Professor Kofi Asare Opoku and Rev. Daniel Nyante, Executive Director of the newly established Institute for Diasporan and African Culture.



Professor Opoku lectures on Adinkra symbols.



Rev. Nyante, Nana Asa Sasraku and the Krontihene discuss issues .



Students at Tetteh Quarshie's Farm.



Students attend a lecture.

For two weeks, students immersed themselves in African culture both inside and outside the classroom. They studied African Philosophy, Islam and African Culture, Christianity in Contemporary Ghana and the History, Evolution and Roots of African-American Religion.

Students also took to the city of Accra and the neighboring towns to participate in the local culture and customs. They visited Tetteh Quarshie's Cocoa Farm and the Aburi Botanical Gardens and Carvers' Shops. They also toured the City of Accra, the Cape Coast Castles and Elmina Forts.

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture

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NSROMMA
"Child of the
Heavens"

Youth Matters

How Winterim 2008 Changed My Perception

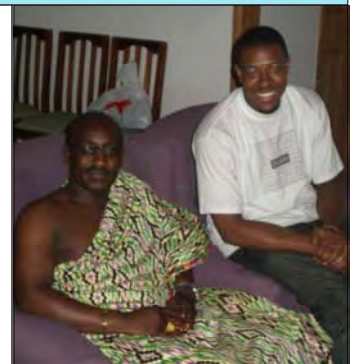
by Henry Shaw Smith

I was born in the US to Ghanaian parents and even though I stayed in Ghana for 2-1/2 years (from 1998-2001,) it wasn't until I came back to the US that I began to appreciate my motherland, Ghana.

We react to our environment on different levels. My perception of Ghana and African Traditional Religion changed dramatically over the week-long Winterim 2008 intensive. I experienced a wide-variety of emotions as I embraced the information and knowledge being passed on. I was also privileged to meet real royalty, Nana Asa Sasraku and Chief Krontihene.

I learned many things that are still resonating with me. I learned that the idea of a "Supreme Being" originated in Africa and that long before scientists discovered that our heart and all vital functions stop during a sneeze, our ancestors said "Nkwa" or "life," which is asking the spiritual world to save that person.

Our history has been all but abandoned because of modernization and the ways of the west. Frequently, many eastern cultures have looked to the west for guidance and



Nana Asa Sasraku and Henry Shaw Smith.

have glorified their history when ours stretches far beyond their own. We have a glorious and rich past that we should acknowledge and be proud of, but most of all, we must not forget it.

I also learned that Christianity, Islam and other religions owe many of their origins to African proverbs and folklore. That Africans were praising God long before any European stepped onto the continent. And that we must not take on the pro-American style of looking at things as being superior vs. inferior, state of the art vs. obsolete. No, we must look at things through our own perspectives and come to our own conclusions. It's just like the African proverb Professor Opoku shared in one of his lectures: "Until the lions tell their tale, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." What is your perception of this?