Right: A T-shirt for The Year of Return festival in Ghana this year. This is the latest event in a history of diaspora tourism in Ghana that dates back to the 1950s.

Left: Actors reenact a scene of slavery during Ghana’s annual PANAFEST celebrations in 2018. PANAFEST is the Pan African Historical Theater Project, and it is a cultural event for both Africans and people of African descent in the diaspora. It was started in 1992 and it is held every 2 years. The event features performances of music, poetry, and theater. The event uses the state infrastructure of diaspora tourism to promote Pan-African unity. For example, the event features tours to the “slave castles” and dungeons.
The Transatlantic Slave Trade has a long history in Ghana, but diasporic tourism has a history of its own. That history begins with transatlantic upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s.

1) African Decolonization
2) Black Civil Rights Movements
3) The Growth of Pan-Africanism
4) The Development of African History

Four Pillars of Historical Context to the Memorialization of the TAST – Note: I will circle back to Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children* after I address these four pillars.

*Remember, there were precursors to the 1960s* – W.E.B. Dubois, Martin Delaney, Eric Williams, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, Carter Woodson, C.L.R. James…
1) African decolonization

**African decolonization: A Tale of Two Maps** – These maps allow us to see all of the nations that became independent from 1950 to 1980.

Europeans claimed 10% of the continent in 1880 and 90% by 1900. Africans claimed 10% of the continent by 1950 and close to 100% by 1980.

Watch the time map of African decolonization – **Start at 5:53** and watch just the last minute.
2) Black Civil Rights Movements – Encourages people to see history as a global struggle against anti-blackness

**Left:** Protesters getting beat in Durban, South Africa, 1960, fighting against Apartheid.

**Right:** Protesters getting hosed in Birmingham, Alabama, 1964, fighting against Jim Crow.

Fights for social and political independence correspond to fights for intellectual independence.
3) The Growth of Pan-Africanism


Ghana is Building on a long history of Pan-Africanism:

American and British Colonization from 1780s to 1880s (e.g. Olaudah Equiano and Paul Cuffee to Sierra Leone, Martin Delany to Liberia)

Black Missionaries in Africa (e.g. African-American missionary William Henry Sheppard in the Congo Free State from roughly 1890 to 1910)

1897 African Association (e.g. James Johnson of Nigeria, F.E.R. Johnson of Liberia, Benito Sylvain of Haiti, Henry Sylvester Williams of Trinidad)

1920s Harlem Renaissance and UNIA (e.g. W.E.B. DuBois, Claude McKay and Langston Hughes of New York, and Marcus Garvey of Jamaica)

1930s Negritude (e.g. Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Leon Damas of French Guiana, and Aimé Cesaire of Martinique)

Pan-African Congress 1919-1945 (e.g. DuBois, Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, George Padmore of Trinidad)

Pan-African Federation of 1944 (e.g. Nkrumah of Ghana and George Padmore of Trinidad)

Ghana’s Independence Celebration in New York City in 1957

Organization of African Unity of 1963 (Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, Sekou Toure of Guinea, and Nkrumah of Ghana)


Bottom Left: Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Julius Mayfield (actor, writer, director), Alice Windom (educator and social worker), Vicki Garvin (political activist) in 1964

Bottom Right: W.E.B. DuBois and Shirley Graham DuBois with Kwame Nkrumah and Fathia Nkrumah in 1963 (Note: the DuBoises were buried in Ghana)

Top Right: Kwame Nkrumah with Martin Luther King Jr. in 1957

Middle: Richard Wright, Dorothy Padmore, and George Padmore (journalist and author) in Ghana in the 1950s
4) The Rise of African History – Africans and non-Africans are writing African History in a very new way…

The British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote in *The Rise of Christian Europe* (1965): “Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America…”

This conception that Africa had no history was shattered in the 1960s, when African History emerged as a professional discipline and scholars like John S. Mbiti (*African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969); Philip Curtin (*The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, 1969); Jan Vansina (*Kingdoms of the Savannah*, 1966); and Walter Rodney began writing and publishing major works in African History that challenged and overturned colonial and imperial ideologies.

Djeli Mamadou Kouyaté was the griot from Guinea who told the epic of Sundiata to D.T. Niane (Guinea) in the 1960s. See Niane’s introduction for this historical context.

Walter Rodney and his *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*, written in 1966 for a PhD in African History at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and published with Clarendon Press in 1970. He turned it into a book while he was working at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.
“She was led toward those narrow, dank steps that guided her to the tunnel that directed her feet to the waiting ship that would bear her across the heaving, mist-shrouded Atlantic.”

Richard Wright’s *Black Power* (1954)

“We will scream and cry, murder, run through the streets in agony, if it means some soul will be moved, moved to actual understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be.”

Amiri Baraka’s *Slave Ship* (1967)

Artists in the diaspora embraced the idea of the Transatlantic Slave Trade amid the upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s.

*Note*: I could have discussed different classes of people who embraced the history and the legacies of the TAST—I have made similar slides about scholars and politicians—but I chose to discuss artists for this presentation. I wanted to provide an example of people turning to the TAST rather than be comprehensive.

Richard Wright wrote *Black Power* in 1954. It was his nonfiction report on the nationalist revolution then ongoing in the British Colony of the Gold Coast, West Africa (what is now Ghana). Wright was one of many black intellectuals in exile during the Cold War-era years of the 1950s. Others include C.L.R. James and George Padmore. Wright had traveled to Ghana in 1953 at the suggestion of Kwame Nkrumah that African-American intellectuals visit the country. Wright traveled around the entire country of Ghana, from the coast to the interior, thinking about the country’s history of precolonial and colonial exploitation and thinking about its future as an independent country. He wrote this quote as he watched Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party Campaign in the shadows of Cape Coast Castle. At the time, he was also reading Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* and thinking about the anti-colonial struggle in terms of the centuries of European exploitation toward Africa. Wrote *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945).


**Lyrics to “Slave Driver”** (1973)
Every time I hear the crack of a whip
My blood runs cold
I remember on the slave ship
How they brutalize the very souls

**Lyrics to “Redemption Song”** (1980)
Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit

Images: Top left is Richard Wright’s *Black Power* (1954), bottom left is Bob Marley’s *Catch A Fire* (1973), bottom right is Richard Wright.
Thus she had lain 
sugarcane sweet 
deserts her hair 
golden her feet 
mountains her breasts 
two Niles her tears. 
Thus she has lain 
Black through the years.

Now she is rising 
remember her pain 
remember the losses 
her screams loud and vain 
remember her riches 
her history slain 
now she is striding 
although she has lain.

Over the white seas 
rime white and cold 
brigands ungentled 
icicle bold 
took her young daughters 
sold her strong sons 
churched her with Jesus 
bled her with guns. 
Thus she has lain.

Maya Angelou’s “Africa” in Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well (1974)

African-American artists embrace the idea of the Transatlantic Slave Trade amid the upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s.

Note: I could have discussed different classes of people who embraced the history and the legacies of the TAST—I have made similar slides about scholars and politicians—but I chose to discuss artists for this presentation. I wanted to provide an example of people turning to the TAST rather than be comprehensive.

Maya Angelou was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1928. She alternated between St. Louis and her grandmother’s in Stamps, Arkansas. She moved to Oakland, California, when she was 14 and finished high school there. During the late 1940s and 1950s, she found work as a performer in New York City and San Francisco and even toured Europe. She made an album, Miss Calypso, and worked with the Harlem Writers Guild. In 1960, she became the northern coordinator of the SCLC.

Angelou moved to Cairo with the South African activist Vusumzi Make in 1961. She worked as an associate editor for The Arab Observer newspaper. In 1962, she moved to Accra, Ghana, when her son enrolled at the University of Ghana at Legon. Angelou stayed in Ghana for 3 years (from 1962 to early 1965). She worked as a feature writer for The African Review, contributor to the Ghanaian Times, broadcaster for Radio Ghana, performer for Ghana’s National Theater, and an administrative assistant at the University of Ghana. She returned to the US in 1965 to help Malcolm X build the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Though she never met Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, she was a very active member of the African-American expatriate community. These years are detailed in her fifth autobiography, All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986).

African Decolonization: Attended the Cairo Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in 1964, supported efforts of Kwame Nkrumah and an anti-Apartheid activist.
Civil Rights Movement: In 1963, Angelou led a march against the American Embassy in Ghana to support MLK’s March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
Pan-Africanism: Dedicated much of her life and career to exploring the African heritage behind the American experience – “Africanisms still present in the US.”
African History: Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University, despite only a high school education, engaged with many African historians in Ghana.
Examples: Played Kunta Kinte’s grandmother in Roots (1977); danced to calypso music; made Black, Blues, Black! a ten-part documentary series on African culture.

Images: Bottom left is an image of Maya Angelou in the mid-1960s; right is a screenshot from Roots (1977).
Preserving Historical Sites

The Example of Cape Coast, Ghana

In the late-1980s and the 1990s, the administration of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana started to embrace the idea of diaspora tourism, mixing economic development with apologies for slavery. Rawlings was a flight lieutenant who overthrew the president of Ghana in a coup in 1981 and then put Ghana for the next 12 years under military rule. In 1993, Rawlings took office formally as the president, and he remained until 2001. Rawlings embraced the idea of making Ghana a center for Pan-African tourism.

Ghana was well positioned to capitalize on the rise of diasporic tourism. (Note: This case study relates to your reading by the Ghanaian anthropologist Brempong Osei-Tutu, “The African American Factor in the Commodification of Ghana’s Slave Castles,” in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 2002.)

1) Large and impressive infrastructure left over from the era of the trade where slaves were really imprisoned (unlike Benin, Nigeria, and Kongo)
2) Europeans built about 80 forts and castles in Ghana from 1482 to 1872, but many now in disrepair (Cape Coast and Elmina were exceptions)
3) An English-speaking country with a long tradition of courting the African-American intellectual and middle classes (unlike Senegal and Benin)
4) Ghana is relatively safe and friendly – Ghana remains the premier destination for US study-abroad programs (i.e. Moradewun Adejunmobi at UC Davis)

1) Rawlings sends Ato Austin to the US under sponsorship of the Ministry for the Central Region to explore the idea of developing Cape Coast and Elmina as tourist sites.
2) Ghanaian playwright Efua Sutherland creates PANAFEST, a pan-African arts and culture festival in 1991. By 1992, festival is now held in Cape Coast and Elmina castles.
3) Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings makes a trip to Jamaica, where he observes Emancipation Day. Decides to organize his own Emancipation Day in Ghana (1998).
4) Jerry Rawlings hosts the first US President to visit – Bill Clinton visits in the 1990s
5) The Central Region Development Commission (CEDECOM) undertakes the restoration project with help from USAID and UNDP (1991-1996)

Basic Timeline

Overview of Diaspora Tourism in Ghana

- **1950s-1960s**: African-Americans making pilgrimages to Ghana
- **1957**: Ghana becomes first African nation to win independence
- **1960**: Kwame Nkrumah becomes the first president of Ghana
- **1980s**: Playwright Efua Sutherland advocates for diaspora event
- **1991**: Jerry Rawlings starts a national diaspora tourism campaign
- **1992**: PANAFEST holds its first bi-annual event in Accra in 1992
- **1998**: Rawlings starts Emancipation Day celebrations in Ghana
- **1999**: Gates visits sites in Ghana for *Wonders of the African World*
- **2009**: Obama visits Cape Coast Castle, memorialized with plaque
- **2019**: Ghanaian government creates “Year of Return, Ghana 2019”

**Above**: Maya Angelou on a Ghanaian commemorative stamp from March of 1998 and a basic timeline of events related to the development of diaspora tourism in Ghana
Portrait of the Ghanaian playwright Efua Sutherland (1924-1996). Sutherland was an advocate for PANAFEST since the mid-1980s. She became a close friend of Maya Angelou and helped her adjust to life in Ghana during the 1960s. Efua’s relationship with Angelou is featured in her book *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*.

**Left:** This is an image from the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Center for Pan-African Culture in Accra, Ghana. In addition to creating PANAFEST and supporting the Ghanaian national theater movement, Sutherland was instrumental in creating this memorial center to honor the legacy of DuBois in Ghana. This is now a tourist destination.
Above: Use this historical image of forts on the greater Gold Coast to talk about the leftover infrastructure from the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. There were more forts on the Gold Coast region than in any other region of Atlantic Africa in the precolonial period, by far. Compare to the few forts shown here on the Upper Guinea Coast.

Takeaway: Forts on the Gold Coast made Ghana well positioned to capitalize on the new opportunities presented by the rise of pan-Africanism and diaspora tourism.
Above: This is an historical image of Cape Coast Castle. Note that, unlike in Sierra Leone (Bence and York Island) or Senegambia (St. Louis, Goree, or James Island), the “slave castles” on the Gold Coast were not built on islands. Instead, they were built on the mainland. Why? Well, there were no ideal islands first of all. Second, forts were not originally designed to trade in slaves, but to trade in gold and other commodities. The result of this was that a sort-of feudal system developed, where villages sprouted up as castle communities. More and more people migrated from the interior to the coast, seeking out middlemen positions in the Atlantic trade and receiving defense from the forts in exchange.
Above: Here is another historical image of Cape Coast Castle from the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Notice the ships anchored off in “Cape Coast road,” and all the canoes and African canoe men (probably Fante) who are ferrying goods back and forth between the road and the mainland. Compare this with the modern image on the next slide. Slaves would have been delivered from the dungeons of Cape Coast Castle to European vessels waiting in the road this way.
Above: Here is a modern image of Cape Coast Castle. Notice the canoes, a symbol of the maritime culture that continues to characterize the communities around the castle today.

Rawlings and his Ministry of Tourism wanted to beautify the structures to make them enticing destinations for tourists. For example, they wanted to put a gift shop in the dungeon of Cape Coast Castle and a restaurant-bar in the courtyard. They wanted to scrub the walls clean of mold and dirt and then repaint them. They wanted to reconstruct the rock in places where it had fallen apart. They wanted to hang signs, install new floors, and re-do the roofing.

This led to conflicts over how the sites should be interpreted. African-American expatriates, tourists, and the diaspora community thought that the structures should look decrepit, ugly, and un-refurbished, as a vivid reminder of their ancestors’ anguish and despair. Other Ghanaians felt that these structures were much more than just symbols of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. After all, these castles had been the seat of the British government during the colonial era (those who have read Abina and the Important Men will remember that Abina’s 1876 trial was at Cape Coast Castle), and they had housed various government offices like the post office and local courts since independence. Over the course of a long history, these buildings have been trading posts, courts, schools, prisons, administrative offices, government buildings, and much more.
“Are flowers being planted in the ovens at Auschwitz where million of Jews perished? Have the Death Chambers of horror been brightly painted to somehow camouflage or silence the cries and screams of people who were brutally tortured and murdered? Think about that and then think about the Cape Coast and Elmina Castle/Dungeons on the Gold Coast of West Africa, where you can still hear and feel the presence of our African Ancestors when you enter the dark Dungeons and tunnels. But will this still be true when they finish renovating the Castles and painting inside the Dungeons?

Imahküs Njinga Okofu’s article “Is the Black Man’s History Being ‘White Washed’” in *Uhuru* (1994)

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**Bayo Holsey:** Who gets to decide the historical importance of these places? **Osei-Tutu:** Who has the power to represent these monuments? Think about the UNESCO 1971 Convention’s declaration on universal ownership of World Heritage Sites in contrast to the Ghanaian government’s claim that the monuments are national.

**Brempong Osei-Tutu:** “While Ghana’s initiative to memorialize the transatlantic slave trade is a welcome development, the restoration of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles has evoked strong criticisms from some concerned African Americans. [They] have projected the monuments solely in terms of the transatlantic slave trade…” (117).

**Imahküs Njinga Okofu** (formerly Imahküs Vienna Robinson) was born in New York and moved to Ghana in 1990 and has lived there for 25 years. She was 50 years old when she moved. She is part of an expatriate community of African-Americans who relocated to Ghana and live mostly around Accra. Okofu has been an active voice in arguing against the beautification projects of sites of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, particularly Cape Coast and Elmina. As you learned from Osei-Tutu, Okofu and her husband run a tourist company for African Americans that re-enacts a three-part narrative of enslavement.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxEG4tpKni

**Those like Okofu and Afrikadzata Deku criticized:**

1. **Commodification:** For example, plans to charge admission and to install a restaurant-bar in the courtyard and a gift shop in the dungeon of Cape Coast Castle
2. **Designation:** For example, naming the monuments slave “castles” was a mockery; it made no sense because no African royalty had ever resided there as home
3. **Beatification:** For example, repainting, refurbishing, restoring, redecorating, preserving, conserving, digging out the dirt, scrubbing away the mold, etcetera…
4. **Other Histories & Uses:** For example, curators wanted to emphasize other chapters of Ghana’s history in museum exhibits and hold other public events there
   1. **Example:** To Asante, CCC is important because Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh was imprisoned there by the British in 1896 before his exile to Seychelles
This image of Elmina Castle on the Central Coast of modern-day Ghana gives us a picture for what this castle looks like in the context of its surroundings. The boatyard in the foreground gives us a sense for how these castles are very much located within active communities, even though as Bayo Holsey tells us, most residents do not associate them with slavery. It is also interesting that Elmina Castle still stands despite being the oldest European fort constructed in Sub-Saharan Africa—over five hundred years old. The video is 1 minute and 30 seconds. It also does a great job of showing the active town that surrounds Elmina Castle today.

Note: In this video, the tour guide mentions that the impetus for embracing the castles as tourist sites is about apologizing for slavery, but there is also an economic aspect as well. These sites make a lot of money for Ghana, particularly from tens of thousands of white-Americans and African-Americans who visit every year.
Pan-African Connection: The plaque is one of the most-recent testaments to this pan-African connection between the United States and Ghana, going back at least to the 1950s when Kwame Nkrumah invited African-American intellectuals to come and visit Ghana. The plaque shows us the eagerness of Ghana to commemorate Obama’s visit.

Barack Obama took several trips to visit the slave factories of the West African coast while he was president of the United States. He went to Cape Coast Castle in 2009, and the House of the Slaves at Gorée in 2013. The video link shows his speech at Cape Coast, and it is three minutes and 33 seconds. In it, Obama talks about the presence of the Anglican chapel in the church where chaplains such as Philip Quaque would preach to residents of the castle while slaves were imprisoned in the chambers below.

Note: Obama was not the first US President to visit. Bill and Hilary Clinton went to Gorée in 1998. George W. Bush visited Gorée in 2003. Richard Nixon may have visited.

Like Okofu, Obama makes Holocaust comparison: Compares visit to Cape Coast to visiting a Nazi and Soviet concentration camp in Buchenwald, Germany, in 2009.

Above: Barack Obama took several trips to visit the slave factories of the West African coast while he was president of the United States. He went to Cape Coast Castle in 2009, and the House of the Slaves at Gorée in 2013. The video link shows his speech at Cape Coast, and it is three minutes and 33 seconds. In it, Obama talks about the presence of the Anglican chapel in the church where chaplains such as Philip Quaque would preach to residents of the castle while slaves were imprisoned in the chambers below.

Like Okofu, Obama makes Holocaust comparison: Compares visit to Cape Coast to visiting a Nazi and Soviet concentration camp in Buchenwald, Germany, in 2009.

**Right:** Image of the anthropologist and historian Bayo Holsey, now an Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University.

**Methods:** Holsey spent twelve months in Cape Coast and Elmina in 2001, and she made four trips after that of periods ranging from one to two months. Her book is based off of an eight year period of research engagement with Ghana (1999-2001). During this time, she “attended community events, sat in on history classes at local schools, observed numerous tours at the castles, and observed PANAFEST and Emancipation Day celebrations in 1991, 2001, and 2005. In addition, she interviewed local residents, students, tour guides, tourism officials, teachers, education officials, and both Ghanaian and international tourists.” (page 21).

**Lecture summary:** Today we talked about how African-Americans in the diaspora have shaped the development of diaspora tourism in Ghana, as well as how major figures in Ghana, such as Jerry Rawlings and Efua Sutherland, have tried to speak to the diaspora in the development of their nation’s tourist industry around the slave trade. On Thursday, we are going to talk about how Ghanaian citizens have responded to the development of this tourist industry within their country. The context for our discussion is chapter seven from Bayo Holsey’s *Routes of Remembrance* (pages 196-232). In this chapter, Holsey discusses “the reactions of Ghanaians who have been exposed to diaspora tourism to both the slave trade and to the notion of a transnational black community.” She concludes that “Many of the Ghanaians who have participated in diaspora tourism continue to view the commemoration of the slave trade as a dangerous road to go down. They often contest both the centering of the slave trade and the imagined geography of diaspora and homeland that it produces.”