

Gone to Ghana - How the West is winning Ghana

Written by Cordie Aziz

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When I lived in America, Africa was everywhere I went. Many of my friends were second generation African, so it was not unusual to see them wearing bright color fabrics in modern styles. The homes I visited, often had some sort of African statue or art, reminding the owner that, although they may be in America now, their roots were from the Motherland. And someone was always taking a trip to Africa or talking about how wonderful it would be to visit the continent one day.

However, now since I am in Africa, Ghana in particular, I often feel like I am in America. Ghana is known as the “Gateway to Africa”. However, it is apparent that this gate has two way traffic. Each day, I am amazed about how American the life in Accra is. Now, I must admit, the further you go out of Accra the better it gets. But in the capital city, it is very easy for one to forget that they are in Ghana- minus the open gutters and super aggressive street vendors.

Women in Ghana have abandoned their traditional style clothing for modern day suits and dresses, some made of fabrics that aren’t even conducive for the weather. These same women have also abandoned their traditional head wraps, for a head full of weave. Yaki is flying off the shelf left and right here and is also debuting in multiple colors. A few times, I have been tempted to take pictures to send to hotghettomess.com, but then I feel bad. After all, these women have looked in some Western hair magazine and are convinced this is what Western women are doing. In fact, many of them think I am crazy for wearing an Afro. “Sista,” they often say, “are you going to do something to your hair.” Of course, I just smile and shake my head no.

The men have also been equally hypnotized by the West. The younger generation has picked up on skinny jeans in bright, vibrant colors with the shoes to match. And they have also learned the art of the sag, also known as showing your behind to the rest of the world. To this day, it still escapes me how grown men are comfortable with their bottoms being worn out for the world to see. They even seem to identify with the words of artists like Rick Ross and Lil Wayne, though many of them have never even been close to setting foot on American soil.

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Then recently, the first fast food chain in Accra popped up, KFC. Since its opening, the characters mentioned above have made it their Mecca. They excitedly fill their bodies with excessive amounts of grease in hopes of feeling more Western. After all, it has to be good, Americans and Europeans have been enjoying it for years. The worst part of it all, this KFC doesn't even have buttermilk biscuits, so people don't even know what they are really missing. I am sure that is my own personal lament though, considering our UK counterparts have a different definition of biscuits.

In the end, I must say sometimes I am disheartened by the local people's lack of ability to identify, embrace and love their own culture. I often feel that many of them are missing the sense of self pride that drives true success. They spend so much time trying to escape their lives and get to the West that they often forget the opportunity that surrounds them in their own country. But then again, maybe this is all part of the plan of how the West is winning Ghana.