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Introduction

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Introduction

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Four years ago, Amy Anderson, Eddy Rojas, Jason Pierce, and I went to South Africa and Malawi in preparation for the University of Dayton Global Education Seminar (GES) Africa. There, we visited universities and historical sites. Six months later, Malcolm Daniels and Jonathan Hess joined Amy and me for an information-gathering trip to Cameroon, Ghana, and Togo. Those trips were fruitful and helped to shape the direction of GES Africa. Decisions in later meetings determined that GES would spend three years in Africa focusing on Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, and South Africa. Unfortunately, by the beginning of the implementation of the program, the nation of Cameroon was hit by civil unrest, and this resulted in the decision to ice the idea of going to that country, caution being paramount.

Begun nine years ago, GES is a faculty development initiative designed to promote global consciousness and awareness on campus. It seeks to expand faculty knowledge and interest in international affairs. It provides opportunities for site visits and encourages initiatives to forge international collaborations. The hope is that participants will serve as a reservoir of knowledge and creativity for the university to continue its development of more robust global-focused programs on campus. The program offers encouragement and assistance to faculty members in order to widen their research



horizons and “expand international exchanges and grant opportunities.”

During the past two years GES Africa focused its attention on Ghana and Togo, and the experiences were magnificent. These countries were selected for several reasons. Located in West Africa, both are a part of the ancestral home of African Americans. Both were colonized by Britain and France, and therefore provide a

window into an understanding of the impact and legacy of colonialism in contemporary Africa. Both have a mid-size population, Ghana (30 million), Togo (8.2 million), and both are representative of the cultural and religious diversity that informs an understanding of Africa. Both nations have many ethnic groups that speak different languages. The continent’s main religions of Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional are well represented in them, and both countries are also sites of rising Pentecostal denominations evident in the larger continent. As relatively new democracies, both nations are politically stable and continue to promote efforts for more political participation. The economy of both countries, though dependent on primary products, is also generally stable. Moreover, both countries play an important role in the regional economic organizations of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On a practical level, both countries are accessible from other parts of the world. For example, there are several direct flights from US cities to Accra, Ghana, and the hub of Asky Airlines, one of the region’s more reliable airlines, is Lomé. Important too is the relatively low crime rate in these countries. While the main cities in both countries are very Western in makeup and in many other respects, they also still have a traditional flair,

which makes them unique. The people of Ghana and Togo are hardworking and industrious. And they have a reputation for friendliness and kindness. Africa is endowed with a community spirit, and that too is very evident in those countries.

The articles in this volume shed light on many of these themes. Martha Henderson Hurley's "The Power of Moments: Reflecting on Travel to Ghana and Togo" discusses the impact of many of the sites, educational institutions, and events on her GES experience. The experience, she notes, was shaped by "moments," each having an immeasurable ripple effect. Whether at the slave castles, Togoville, University of Cape Coast, or just watching people in leadership positions controlling the daily activities of their lives, Martha Hurley calls our attention to the range and reach of experiences. Philip Appiah-Kubi's "A Native's Flashback into the University of Dayton Global Education Seminar," is important for its different perspective. Born and raised in Ghana, he discusses his experience through that nativist lens. Visits to the slave castles, Kakum National Park, Togo, and a detour into Benin gave him new insights on Ghana and the essence of global consciousness. Bobbi Sutherland's "A Study in Contrasts and Connections" examines the experience through vantage points. She uses the slave castles and evidence of neocolonialism to question the role of the West in Africa's continuous underdevelopment. Yet she observes that, despite those challenges, the people remain resilient and welcoming. Rochonda Nenonene's "Seeing Africa through the Eyes of an Educator" shows the impact of education in Africa's continuous development. Education, she argues, is the pathway to ongoing development. Laura Leming's "Ghana Calls to UD" challenges the US to re-examine the impact of race on the national conscience. During the trip she was deeply impacted by the slave castles, the WEB DuBois Centre, and many other events. She was amazed at the work done by the Marianist sisters and brothers at the Chaminade school in Kara. Joseph Day's, "How Can We Move Away from Social Injustices? A Catholic Marianist Perspective" is an insightful account of the power of forging an inclusive community. What he experienced in Africa was an implementation of the theoretical concept of "it takes a



village.” Like others he was deeply bothered by the slave castles, and the scarcity of equipment. Sharon Davis Gratto’s “Perspectives on West Africa: Reminiscences” is an in-depth discussion of the events, and sites visited during the GES experience. A former foreign service employee, Sharon contextualized that experience within her previous stay in other West African countries. Julius Amin’s “Africa’s Gifts to the World,” implodes notions of Africa as the “dark continent” and uses the Ghana and Togo experience to expand on Africa’s contributions to the world.