

Impact of International Festivals and Cultural Exchange between the Blacks in Diaspora and Black Africa

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Abstract

The study examines the impact of festivals and cultural exchange between blacks in the Diaspora and Africa, aiming to take a deeper view of these cultural exchanges have deepened the transatlantic relations between Blacks at the two poles of the Atlantic. The study contends that though the shipment of the Blacks to the New World during the (in) famous trans-Atlantic slave trade has fostered a hybrid culture in their new settlements, this cultural exchange turned into festivals by the New World repatriates in Lagos via the Fanti Carnival. However, the cultural exchange was deepened, expanded and became a worldwide phenomenon with the formal launching of the First World Festival of Arts and Culture in Senegal, in 1966; with a follow up in Nigeria in 1977 and again in Senegal, in 2010, sparking-off other miniature cultural fiesta at later dates. The study contends that the impact of these festivals both the cultural phase of the Pan-African movement, alliance building, and a platform for concretizing the cultural affinity between Diaspora Blacks and Blacks at home, tourism, decolonization of the mindset from the vestiges of crass Europeanization, cultural self-determination and cultural diplomacy amongst the Blacks on a global scale.

Key words: Festivals, Cultural Exchange, Blacks, Diaspora, FESTAC, Cultural Affinity.

Introduction

In the context of this paper, the term Black people comprise two major groups of African people. These include, first, the Black people resident in the African continent; the second group are the Blacks whose progenitors were forcefully uprooted from the African soil through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and are scattered all over the Americas (the Caribbean Island, Cuba, Jamaica etc), resulting to the concept of Diaspora, Black/African descents, Afro/Negro in their present place of abode (Bangura, 2012). Therefore, African people shall refer to all African/Black descents notwithstanding their skin colour, period or place and circumstances of their birth or residence. The New World has become an extension of Africans by the trans-Atlantic slave trade which lasted for about four centuries. As the Blacks were uprooted into their new settlements in the far-away Caribbean, Latin and South America, they did not jettison their cultural heritage. Despite the efforts of the slave overlords to “de-Africanize them, they were still resilient to retain a substantial amount of African culture and tradition which was diffused to have Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American culture, particularly in the West Indies and Latin America. Though there have been polemic debates on the prominence of African cultural existence in the New World, the fact remains that in the Caribbean and Latin America, African culture persists despite of their slave status. In this context, there are two schools of thought on the African cultural question in the New World. On one pole is the one led by Stanley Elkins, on the other pole is led by Melville J. Herskovits. The group led by Elkins which include Glazer and Moynihan (1963), Frazer (1957), and Butcher (1957) believes that with the inhuman treatment meted out to the captured slaves during the middle passage, and in the plantation in the New World proper, African culture was brought to a zero level (Elkins, 1959). In other words, there is no substantial remnant of African culture in the New World. Debunking the above position, are Herskovits (1970) and Drimmer (1968) who see the assertion of Elkins as “vicious” and “chauvinistic”, poor work and flawed logic. Uya (1987; 1971) further pummeled the Elkins’ school as an attempt to perceive the New World Black through the lens of the American mainstream. In other words, Herskovits’ school believes in the fact that culture generally, and in particular, the Blacks in the New World is resilient, adaptive and dynamic, which explains why they retained substantial aspect of the culture of their African origin in the New World.

The continuation of African culture was very prominent in the Caribbean islands due to some factors which favoured such. Among these factors were first, the climate and topography of the region which is tropical gave the Blacks some latitude independence. The second was the demographic factor wherein the Blacks outnumbered the White population. In some cases the Blacks were about ninety percent of the population. So they could still remember and as well practice their culture. Another factor that aided the Blacks was the issue of cultural homogeneity. For instance, each of the slave settlements was dominated by a particular ethnic group such as the Akan slaves in Jamaica, Dahomey slaves in Haiti etc. More so, the mode of organization of the labour in the plantations favoured the cultural survival of Africa. Most plantations, for example were occupied by about 150 slaves living in the plantations without the overwhelming distorting influence of the Whites on their culture. Labour was organized in a way that was close to a typical age-grade system back home in Africa. Coupled with

the absentee slave owners' syndrome, the process of acculturation was slow on one hand while promoting African consciousness on the other hand (Nwosu, 2020).

The above gave the Blacks the latitude to still retain and practice African family life such as polygyny, and African traditional religion such as Santeria in Cuba, Voodoo in Haiti, Obeah in Jamaica and Shango in Trinidad. African social system affected their dance, music, folk traditions and festivals. Emphasis on kinship, naming of the child on the eighth day, giving the child African ethnic names such as Iboe-Nancy, Congo-William, indulging in elaborate funeral ceremonies, celebration of New Yam Festival alongside Christian festivals like Christmas and Easter etc. Despite attempts to suppress the fused cultural influences between Africans and their White overlords in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century via public campaigns and police action, they remained resilient and maintained their strength through contacts with their West African sources. Even in the United States where cultural diffusion was limited, African slaves were still able to imprint their idioms, concepts and values into the English language. Such legacies have come to be known as Black English. Besides Africanizing the English language, the slaves were able to influence the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil. For instance, the Brazilian Portuguese borrowed substantially from African languages such as *angu*, *bilo*, *fuba*, *valapa*, *quliombo*, *village* and *caruru* were adapted from African languages (Nwosu, 2020).

In the area of culture, the slave culture manifested in art works and crafts such as the religious figures used in the Candomble and Macumba shrines and festivals, as well as the wooden and iron figurines that were sold in places like the model market on the seashore of Salvador. More so, many colonial churches with fine interior and exterior decorations in gold, silver, stone and wood were manifest evidence of the capabilities of African art. Taking the Afro-Brazilian aesthetic for example, music and dancing were influenced by African culture and these include: the popular Samba music and dance, the Tango, the Congadas, *reisadas*, and *batuque* all bear the ambience of African origin. In the area of food culture, the slave culture influenced also influenced the diet of Brazilians. Having served as cooks, domestic servants, and nurses, the black introduced new foods into the diet and menu of their masters and mistresses. Thus, they introduced such things as the use of palm oil, hot pepper, guava, okro etc into Brazil (Boadi-Siaw, 1982).

Just as the Blacks influenced the culture of their new abode in the New World, they were also influenced by the native and White culture. Thus, the central issue in the examination of the Diaspora Blacks is a question of "a blend of African and Western influences that has produced a new world black community and culture, whose impact, symbolic or actual, has been felt throughout the new world and even beyond" (Nwosu, 2020). Ultimately, the black experience in the new world portrays an interplay of African culture and American environment which has metamorphosed into "African-American – a hybridization of the two, producing "double consciousness" of being black and an American (Du Bois, 1961). This explains why, despite resentments, anger, and bitterness among the exiles over the perceived weakness that allowed the dispersion to occur (Skinner, 1993), they still maintain the "double Consciousness" of being Black and America, which has translated into re-integration and relationship that led to the idea of festivals and effective use the festivals and cultural exchanges to cement that relationship under the banner of the global Pan-Africanism as examined in the study.

To this end, the study set to examine the concept of cultural diplomacy, section two looks at the origin of the interplay of festivals and cultural exchange between the Diaspora Blacks and home Blacks from the lens of the Fanti Carnival in Lagos; while the third section looks at the formalization of the cultural exchange through the world-wide state-sponsored World Festival of Arts and Culture; subsequent informal festivals. Section four takes a look at the impact of the festivals and cultural exchange in fostering the relationship between the Blacks in the Diaspora and Black African. It is against to this backdrop, that this paper investigated the interplay between International Cultural Festivals and transatlantic relations between Blacks in the Diaspora and blacks at home.

The Concept of Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy evolved because of the limitations of traditional diplomacy which is solely between the governments involved; hence, the country's diplomatic efforts are in the present, targeting people in what could referred to as public diplomacy (Gumbi, 2022). Cultural diplomacy is a new aspect of public diplomacy that deploys a country's culture to reach out to foreign or global audiences in an attempt to project a positive image of amongst the comity of nations. Cultural diplomacy is a means to foster a variety of cultural exchanges which include the exchange of ideas, information, art, lifestyles, value systems, traditions, beliefs and other pertinent aspects of cultures. It has an age-long existence and has become a part of recognized diplomatic practice. Cultural diplomacy could be found in diverse exchange relations in the spheres of art, sports, literature, music, science and economy. It plays a major role in the integration of nations, such as among the countries of the African Union, the League of Arab States, and the European Union, etc. It has helped in improving the international relations and securing agreements such as trade, investment, tourism, and security. In cultural diplomacy, despite the primacy

of the state in international relations, both private and public enterprises and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also involved as a means to influence government policies to actualize a cause or a cherished goal. Individuals, groups and nationalities adopt cultural diplomacy to deepen friendship, or in discussions to influence opinion about a particular subject (Odegbami, 2022). Cultural diplomacy is a part of diplomacy whose emphasis is on cultural understanding as the basis for dialogue and trust. This act seems to have become a world industry with legal foundations and a comprehensive set of conventions as enshrined in the Vienna Conventions on Consular and Diplomatic Relations. Following the Convention, many countries the adopted cultural diplomacy in their foreign policy documents. Therefore, an important aspect of foreign policy is that it is operational within the framework of its strong cultural foundation. Cultural diplomacy could also be viewed from the lens of the soft power approach which tends to have been recognized as a veritable means of resolving conflicts, and building sustainable relationship between countries (Iyorwuese, 2011).

Culture shares significant links with foreign policy; hence it is one of the instruments of foreign policy (Akinboye and Basiru, 2014). Nigeria's foreign policy goes beyond Afrocentricism as the centre piece of its foreign policy. Nigeria considers the "protection of the dignity of Black peoples" (Adeniyi, 2001) as part of its national interest. The doctrine portrays the critical link between Nigeria and the destiny of the black race across the globe be they at home or in Diaspora (Ogwu, 1991). The manifest creed was in the spirit behind the hosting of the global Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, where all black peoples of the world converged in Nigeria to celebrate the black culture. The Festival of Arts and Culture was a noble concept aimed at promoting the emancipation and elevation of the Black race through the soft diplomacy that arts and culture are known for (Odegbami, 2022). Be that as it may, the Festival of Arts and Culture hosted in Nigeria in 1977 approximates a global display and celebration of the culture of the Africans and the Black race (Ojukwu and Emeka, 2020)., and is typical of cultural diplomacy.

The Fanti Carnival as a Precursor to the Global Black Festival of Arts and Culture

The Fanti Carnival though at an informal level could be said to have laid the foundation for the formal festival of arts and culture at the state level. The Fanti Carnival is a festival initiated by the repatriates from the New World. This is because, the abolition of slave trade and the subsequent emancipation of liberated slaves in Brazil in 1888 provided an opportunity for a large -scale voluntary return of the emancipados to Nigeria. The Fanti Carnival is one of the received cultures from the European who colonized America. The Europeans took their Christianized pagan festivals with them. It was this aspect of the carnival culture that Brazilian repatriates in Nigeria brought back home. This festival depicts the dancing of gay music on Easter day and watching of bull fights by the Spaniards (Mba, 1987).

The New World repatriates displayed a masquerades known as the Carreta with which they danced round the town dressed in various fanciful costumes while their leaders rode on horseback (Mabogunje, 1961). There were other popular Christian outdoor ceremonies such as "Bunba Mey Boe" that were celebrated with parades, masquerades figures, colour dance and fanciful dress which the New World repatriates imbibed during their sojourn as captives (Akaraogun, 1966). Thus, during the Yuletide the Brazilian repatriates in Lagos celebrate the feast of Nossa Senhora de Bon fin, Our Lady of Good End and this celebration marked the beginning of the Carreta carnival parades. Following the growth, spread and acceptance of the festival by the Blacks in Nigeria including the Muslim sects and worshippers of the African traditional religion in Lagos, the festival boosted tourism in the country.

The high point of the Fanti Carnival was the attraction of funds from international organizations and embassies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United States Embassy, the Brazilian Embassy and the British High Commission. These bodies promote the festival by providing funds, materials or technical advice. It is believed that through this support by international bodies, African cultural values were uplifted (Nwosu, 2020).

Formalization of the Cultural Exchange through the Worldwide State-sponsored World Festival of Arts and Culture

The formalization of cultural exchange between the Africans at home and its Diaspora elements has its background. The idea to convoke the Festival of Black Arts was first muted at the 1956 Conference of Black Writers in Paris, organized by the Paris-based Pan-African Cultural Society to discuss the resurgence of African culture. The idea came up again at the Second African Congress in Rome in 1959 (Ademuleya & Fajuyigbe, 2015). Thus, the idea of the Black Arts festivals was formally approved at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Arts, which was held in Rome from March 26 to April 1, 1959. At this conference, issues of resurgence of the Black man's culture were discussed (Babawale, 2014). It was resolved at the Congress that the festivals would be held every four years in different African countries, and it should be supported by the various African

governments. With the hosting of the World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal in 1966, the idea of staging the World Black and African Festivals of Arts and Culture was born and entrenched (Ojukwu & Enuka, 2020).

The World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal (1966)

The first World Festival of Black Arts was held in 1966 in Dakar, Senegal from April 1-24. The theme of the festival was: "Significance of Black Art in the Life of People and for the People". It was also referred to as the 1er Festival Mondial des Arts Negres (FESMAN), which is a month-long culture and arts festival that takes place every ten years in Africa. It was hosted by President Leopold Sengor and the festival enjoyed the patronage of UNESCO which funded the opening conference and the building of a new art museum (Musee Dynamique) in Dakar which exhibited art works and ceremonial objects of the participating countries (Ademuleya and Fajuyigbe, 2015). The Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor saw the festival as a means through which Africa could emphasize the importance of cultural development of newly independent African nations. The Festival's theme centered around the significance of Black artistry and its role in promoting economic, political, and infrastructural development in Africa (Murphy, 2020), as well as "a political lever and a negritude flagship, a doctrine aiming at a fierce independence towards Western countries". The event took place at a time when many African nations were still struggling to gain independence from their erstwhile colonial overlords, and brought together people of different nationalities and generations to throw more light on the struggle and persistence of Black people in the face of colonization (Ademuleya & Fajuyigbe, 2015).

The participants included 45 African, European, Caribbean, and North and South American countries. During the festival, some presentations that featured poetry, sculpture, painting, music, cinema, theatre, fashion, architecture, design, and dance from artists and performers from around the African Diaspora. The festivals were planned as Pan-African celebrations and the contents were systematically arranged to cover dancing and theatre performances (African American Registry, 2022). In specific terms, the festival featured black literature, music, theatre, visual arts, film, and dance. The key performers included historian Cheikh Anta Diop; dancers Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey (American Negro Dance Company); Mestre Pastinha, a Capoeira troupe from Bahia; Duke Ellington; Marion Williams and the Queen of Samba, Clementina de Jesus and Josephine Baker; singers such as Julie Akufo Akoussah and Bella Bellow; writers in the persons of Aime Cesaire, Langston Hughes, Wole Soyinka, Amiri Baraka, and Sarah Webster Fabio, Alioune Diop, Jean Gabus, a Swiss anthropologist and Engelbert Mveng, a Cameroonian Jesuit priest art historian. The festival created world attention as the filmmaker William Greaves made a 40-minute documentary of the event entitled 'The First World Festival of Negro Arts (1968)'. Also, Italian journalist Sergio Borelli produced *Il Festival de Dakar (1966)* a 50-minute documentary for RAI (African American Registry, 2022).

Ultimately, more than 2,000 writers, artists, and musicians from the African Diaspora including 30 independent African nations, assembled to celebrate the vast diversity within Black cultures. Renowned African American artists including as Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and Josephine Baker, performed in celebration of Africa's cultural renaissance which mirrored their own contributions to the Harlem Renaissance, the Jazz age, and Negritude (Murphy, 2020).

The Second Black Festival: FESTAC 1977

Following the success of the 1966 festival and cultural exchange, Nigeria hosted the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). The festival was originally scheduled to be held in 1970, but it was postponed due to the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria. It was again scheduled for 1975, but the requisite infrastructure that could support the successful hosting of the event was not ready, coupled with the change in government, which occurred in July 1975, it was shifted to 1977 (Oyediran, 1980) with the hope that by then all the requisite facilities to accommodate the range of expected population must have been ready. Thus, the planning was stretched for twelve years due to internal political events such as two military coups leading to the ouster of the Yakubu Gowon-led military regime that initiated the vision of the programme, and assassination of his successor, Murtala Mohammed (Bradley, 2020).

FESTAC 1977 with the theme: "Black Civilization and Education" which took place in Nigeria from January 15 to February 12, 1977 was a show of worldwide black unity and self-determination. It was a unifying moment of trans-Atlantic black pride. Besides, it was the cultural climate of the pan-African movement that witnessed the gathering of musicians, dancers, fashion designers, artists and writers representing seventy (70) countries from Africa and the African Diaspora. The event attracted more than thirty (30) Heads of States. It served as a platform for Diaspora Blacks to concretize their affinity with the Blacks on African soil. It was a four-week event across ten (10) venues. Prominent among the venues was the newly constructed 5,000-capacity National Arts Theatre Iganmu, Lagos. Apart from the National Arts Theatre, several countries also showcased their artworks at the Nigerian National Museum and some places within Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS) and its environs. About 15,000

participants were housed in 5,000-capacity high brow apartments and two luxury hotels, built in readiness for the event. Also, in preparation for the festival, networks of highways were constructed to forestall traffic congestion in Lagos (Bradley, 2020). The Blacks from the United States, they represented at FESTAC by over four hundred participants.

The performers during the event were assembled from all over the globe, and included musicians such as America's Sun Ra, Donald Byrd, Archie Shepp, and Stevie Wonder. Notable among the Brazilian stars was Gilberto Gil; representing the Trinidad were the All Stars Steel Band and Calypsonian the Mighty Sparrow; Bembeya Jazz National from Guinea, and Louis Moholo, Dudu Pukwana, Tabu Ley and Franco from the Congo, from South Africa was Miriam Makeba; while the African/Caribbean Funk band came from London and Black People of Great Britain also trilled the people during the festival.

The FESTAC colloquium which took place at the National Arts Theatre witnessed scholars from forty-one countries presenting 269 papers in ten listed sub-themes of Black Civilization, and this marked the intellectual exchange among the Black scholars. The colloquium featured opening address, public lectures, and the reports of five working groups representing 35 countries and international organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UNESCO etc. Topics revolved around five mutually reinforcing themes with focus on the relation of Black civilization, Arts and Pedagogy, African Languages, Literature, Philosophy, Religion, Historical awareness and African Systems of Government, and Science, Technology and Mass Media. As part of the opening ceremony, the libation was followed suit by the singing of the FESTAC Anthem by the FESTAC Choir (Apter, 1993).

On the whole, the performance during the festival comprised about fifty plays, one hundred and fifty concerts, eighty film screenings, forty art exhibitions and about two hundred poetry performances (Attah, 2021).

The 2010 World Festival of Black Arts in Senegal.

This is the latest Third World Black cultural festival and a return to Dakar where it was first hosted in 1966. The 2010 World Festival of Black Arts also referred to as FESMAN III, took place from December 10–31, 2010 to celebrate the significance of pan-Africanism and Black culture in Senegal with the theme: "African Renewal, Cultural Diversity and African Unity". The curator of the event was Kwame Kwei-Armah while other participants at the opening ceremony included Youssou N'Dour, Baaba Maal, Angélique Kidjo, Toumani Diabaté, Wyclef Jean, Euzhan Palcy, Carlinhos Brown, and the Mahotella Queens. The festival featured music and cinema, art exhibitions, crafts, theatre, dance performances, fashion shows, photography, literature, conferences and other events, with the participation of artists and intellectuals from many African and African Diaspora countries, including the US, Brazil, Haiti, France, and Cuba (WIPO, 2011). The festival which cost upwards of £52m was funded by the African Union, the government of Brazil (the festival's guest of honour) and several corporate bodies (Ademuleya and Fajuyigbe, 2015).

For the three weeks that the event took place in Dakar, Senegal, about 3,200 participants, including several heads of state, as well as accomplished artists and creators from 80 countries featured. It was indeed a global celebration of African arts and culture, the wealth and diversity of African traditions, achievements. As the Festival's Artistic Director, British playwright and actor, Kwame Kwei-Armah put it, the Festival was "an exercise in asking fundamental questions about Africa's place and how it relates to the rest of the world and how it intends to move itself into the 21st and 22nd centuries" (WIPO, 2011).

At the Léopold Sédar Senghor stadium where the opening ceremony held on 11 December 2010, The opening ceremony, renowned African artists such as Manu Dibango, Toumani Diabate, Angélique Kidjo, Baaba Maal, Ismaël Lô and Youssou Ndour, performed before an audience of 50,000 people, to showcase the richness of African culture. One of the spectacular aspects of the event was the Ivorian choreographer Georges Mamboye who in a show of unity and solidarity assembled about 2,000 dancers from across the continent to portray the history of black peoples from ancient Egypt, the era of trans-Atlantic slave trade down to the independence of African nations and the current African renaissance movement (WIPO, 2011).

The Festival also offered an opportunity to reflect on the contribution of Black peoples to human progress. These include roundtable discussions on issues of major concern in which eminent intellectuals from Africa, Europe, the United States and Diaspora countries participated. The intellectual dialogue harping on different aspects of the African Renaissance addressed such issues like, the impact of the African brain drain, and the contribution of black peoples to science and technology, art and culture. Speakers comprised the Senegalese philosophers, Professor Souleymane Bachir Diagne and Mr. Mamoussé Diagne, Dr. Cheikh M'Backé Diop, Congolese historian, Mr. Théophile Obenga, Egyptian economist, Mr. Samir Amin, etc. While stating that the major challenge confronting Africa was how to release themselves from the dictates of imposed thought, the eminent Senegalese

writer, historian, politician and President of the Forum and Colloquium Commission, Professor Iba Der Thiam, also called on intellectuals to do their best to support a process of “mental decolonization” (WIPO, 2011). Senegal’s President Abdoulaye Wade remarked that the message of the Festival was not only to contemplate the Continent’s “brilliant past”, ... but to build its future and to strengthen relations within Africa and *Diaspora* countries. He ... said, “Let us refuse to remain in stagnation while our continent is rich but which ... has been impoverished” (Wade cited in WIPO, 2011).

Besides mental decolonization, the roundtables during the festival engaged African people in agenda setting for charting its future cause in such themes as: Africa’s “future restoration and construction”; forum for exchange of ideas on ways to enhance cooperation between Africa and *Diaspora* countries in the use of science and technology for sustainable development in Africa; creating opportunity for policymakers, film producers, artists, consumers and many other stakeholders to explore the link between IP protection and the promotion of the arts, culture and innovation in Africa and beyond; understanding the origin of Negro-African civilization through theatre productions (WIPO, 2011).

The FESMAN III was unique in that access to the event was made free to encourage broad participation. Thus, two purpose-built Festival villages in Ngor and Almadies offered each, 2,400 spaces for performers such as Wyclef Jean, To Face Idibia, Angélique Kidjo, Akon, Salif Keita, the great diva, Aïcha Koné, Bembeya Jazz, Lokua Kanza, and the French rapper Saïd M’Roumbaba alias Soprano to display their talent and skills. The event also spread to regions such as Saint-Louis and Ziguinchor, where artists including Alpha Blondy, Tiken Jah Fakoly, Youssou Ndour, and Urban Bush Woman performed. A performer from Mali, Victor Sangaré, for example, observed that the creation of the festival villages was a great idea, which has brought the Black people into contact with each other (WIPO, 2011). During the closing ceremony of the festival, the director of the Festival, Mr. Abdul Aziz Sow, said that the three-week extravaganza had “not only been one of singing and dancing, but of a sober reflection during plenary sessions during which intellectual discourses focused on the past and future role and contribution of black people in developing the creative art and culture sector” (WIPO, 2011). In addition, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) became an official partner of the FESMAN III.

Other Mini Festivals

The 40th Anniversary of FESTAC

The 40th Anniversary of FESTAC was hosted by Nigeria in commemoration of the FESTAC ’77. The occasion was held at the Main Bowl of the University of Lagos Sports Complex. It commenced with a cultural dance parade by West African countries and states in Nigeria and various schools within Lagos and Enugu (Chukwuma, 2017). The event witnessed a weeklong international symposium to commemorate FESTAC ’77, forty years after in Lagos with the theme: ‘Black and African Arts and Culture and the 21st Century Imperatives’. On that occasion, prominent Nigerians from all walks of life were present to mark the event. The commemoration was more of an intellectual contribution to the festivals as prominent scholars delivered papers addressing the theme of the symposium. For instance, both past and present directors-general of the Director-General of the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), University of Benin, Benin City, Professor Union Edebiri and Sir Ferdinand Anikwe delivered both the keynote address and lead papers respectively in justification of the essence of the international cultural festivals. The chairman of the occasion was Professor Moses Okonkwo of the Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu who emphasized that for history to be complete, Black and African arts and people must be included and must be actively involved (Ukodie, 2017).

27th Annual Pan African Film & Arts Festival, Los Angeles

In February 7 to February 18, 2019, over 100 artisans and 170 films from around the world are being showcased at the 27th Annual Pan African Film & Arts Festival in Los Angeles. This was a multiday event in the largely African American neighborhood of Baldwin Hills to connect Africans to people of African descent from around the world. One of the main goals of the festival is to create dialogue and education through film and the arts (Lee, 2019).

Features of the festival include film, fine art, fashion and jewelry with Africa as inspiration. Among the Filmmakers that participated in the festival include: Stephanie Linus, Nigerian director and actress, Babu, jewelry artist Henry Baba Osageyfo Colby of Timbuktu Art Colony etc. They all expressed their satisfaction with the amazing connection between Africans in America and their ancestral lineage of art with Africa at home. Also, in the same 2019, Skepta’s Manager, Grace Ladoja, a London-born of Nigerian heritage, organised a home coming in Lagos. This was a cultural festival with an accent on music to celebrate African and African-Diaspora arts, intellectualism and ideas (Bradley, 2020).

Impact of International Festivals and Cultural Exchange

The impact of international festivals and cultural exchange are many, however, there are major effects discussed in this section. These include, eliciting the cultural phase of Pan-Africanism and alliance building amongst the Blacks; concretization of Affinity between the Diaspora Blacks and Blacks in African soil; showcasing African Black heritage; promotion of tourism; decolonization of the mind and promotion of self-determination, and cultural diplomacy.

Cultural Phase of Pan-Africanism and Alliance Building

Festivals and cultural exchange marked Africa's cultural renaissance and enhanced the appreciation and projection of Black culture and civilization. It contributed to fostering global consciousness and visibility of African culture, with renewed interest in African studies (Ojukwu and Emeka, 2020). Festival organizers of the first African cultural festival in Senegal made a significant attempt to showcase Black excellence in the international sphere by placing Black art in the company of Picasso, Modigliani, and other famous European figures. This artistic illustration of pan-Africanism to a large extent led to the emergence of global dialogue on the cultural importance of Africa, which shows that the continent, and all Black peoples, will no longer be constrained by their history of oppression and slavery (Murphy, 2020). Whereas the first festival in 1966 acquired its inspiration based on Negritude and pan-Africanism, intending to present Black culture and civilization; the second, which is the FESTAC '77 celebrated African culture and showcased to the world African music, fine art, and literature, drama, dance and religion (Ojoye, 2017).

Concretization of Affinity between the Diaspora Blacks and Blacks in African Soil

The Festival was indeed a celebration of a newfound understanding of Pan-Africanism, as different cultural performances from artists around the world showcased the collective identity of "blackness." It promoted the unity of different ethnic groups within Black communities all over the world and reinforced the global demand for racial equality (Murphy, 2020). The festival served as a great opportunity to unite Black people residing in other continents with their fellow Blacks on African soil. In attestation to the unifying factor of the festival, one of the Black American participants, Lidge Daily in the utmost excitement said; "I shared a feeling with my people. I looked into their faces and saw mine. Our smiles and laughter did not need a common language to be understood. To be appreciated, welcome brother, they said to me, welcome home" (quoted in Attah, 2021).

The festival of arts and culture promoted international friendship in Africa. It has been a unique universal assembly that brought all Black and African artists, artistes, scholars, and intellectuals together. On average 59 countries participated in the festival and some came with as many as 600 delegates (Attah, 2021). During the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of FESTAC '77 in Lagos, the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed said "FESTAC '77 was an unusual forum that brought together a hitherto unimagined dimension, the entire Black and African countries and communities in a rare show of solidarity and cultural display" (Mohammed cited in Anokwuru and Braide, 2017). In a similar vein, a former Nigerian State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo posited that "FESTAC was ... a period to provide a forum for the recovery of ties, which binds us together ... show the world the commonality of what Black and African people have, the unity that we have ... (Obasanjo cited in Anokwuru and Braide, 2017). Besides, FESTAC was a medium through which Africans in the Diaspora and Africans at home came together to "rediscover their roots and establish ties with Motherland Africa" (Duke, 2012).

The festivals of arts and culture promoted international friendship amongst the Blacks across continents. It was a unique universal assembly that brought all Black and African artists, artistes, scholars, and intellectuals together. The FESTAC has been described as a "self-styled Black United Nations" which had "the widest reaches of the black world" (Apter, 1993)

Showcasing African Black Heritage

The festivals and cultural exchange, as posited by the Director-General, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), Sir Ferdinand Anikwe, have provided the enabling platform for the Black race to pronounce its rich cultural heritage through cultural displays. Furthermore, it has brought to the fore the intellectual and cultural contributions of Black and African peoples to the domain of universal knowledge (Ukodie, 2017). The festivals rejuvenated the values and practices of the Blacks thereby defining their uniqueness that was fast fading away. Festivals, especially FESTAC '77 have contributed to placing Africa and the Black race on the global consciousness while correcting the erroneous Eurocentric belief that Africa had no meaningful culture before its contact with Europeans. In so doing, Black and African issues have become very prominent in international discourses, and the views on Africa and African culture are now treated with fewer rebuttals and contestations by the West (Ojukwu & Enuka, 2020).

Thus, many Black people grappling with crises of identity and sense of belonging were able to define their identity during the festival as they virtually felt at home. They obtained the much-needed reassurance that really being a Black is an identity with pride and not of dismay. For hosting the FESTAC '77, Nigeria gained international applause for its contributions to the revival, resurgence, propagation, and protection of Black and African cultural values and civilization (Attah, 2021). The displays of unity, enriched culture and fascinating entertainments within the five-week festival earned Nigeria the title of 'a crucial nexus for Pan-African alliance building' (Attah, 2021). The two countries (Senegal and Nigeria) were able to use the medium of festivals and cultural exchange to showcase the beauty and pride of Africa and the entire Black world despite of the battered image and much denigration of the Blacks.

Promotion of Tourism

During the event, the Diaspora Blacks used the opportunity to visit tourist sites within Nigeria. It was a moment of discovery to them that there are beautiful in Black Africa and that Nigeria could erect such an ecstatic National Arts Theatre and luxury hotels. It follows that many of the over 17,000 participants from 59 countries that flooded Nigeria during the festival visited tourist centres, patronized Nigerian art works, purchased goods and services and lodged in hotels etc. Thus, Black festivals boosted the hospitality industry and tourist potentials. Little wonder Anikwe cited in Ojoye (2017) averred that "the collective expression of culture, tourism and all other forms of arts is referred to as creative economy and creative economy holds the promise for Africa in the nearest future, because we can get a lot of things from our national endowments".

FESTAC was able to show that Nigeria placed a premium on cultural traditions, which it financed, "reproduced" on stage, and sold to tourists. In this context, a new class of "culture-brokers emerged who were engaged in selling the arts images, icons and ideas depicting "traditional" Africa to a visitors and participants alike during the festival. For example, the FESTAC '77 trademark of a sixteenth-century royal Benin mask became a commodity for sale during the festival. This particular image was mass-produced and sold to visitors in dollars but purchases were to be made through the International Festival Committee (Apter, 1993).

Decolonization of the Mind and Promotion of Self-Determination

The hosting of the Black festivals and cultural displays, especially the FESTAC '77 was used to 'debunk the erroneous' prejudices canvassed by the European scholars that the Blackman has no organized culture and in effect, has no meaningful contributions to the world's civilization (Ukodie, 2017). Thus, the formal programmes of festivals of art and culture are a bold statement by the Black race to correct the Eurocentric derogation of African heritage. Black festivals of global nature are enough inspiration for bravery and freedom. It served as great motivation for the Black people to return to the countries of their abode and spread the message of bravery and freedom as contained in the second verse of the festival anthem, which says 'Let a second generation of //Full of courage issue forth //Let a people loving freedom// Come to growth". The festival was in fact, a catalyst for spreading Pan-African ideology (Attah, 2021).

It has been argued that the consistent and unabashed copying of other cultures by the Blacks, Black festivals have become much more necessary to enable the black man to realize and re-establish his identity so that they could "see, hear and appreciate" the achievements of their forefathers as well those of the present generation of black men in the realm of culture, science, history, literature, etc. (Oyediran, 1980, p.182). It follows that the preservation of Africa's cultural heritage and values, FESTAC in particular marked Africa's cultural renaissance since the festival was hosted in collective response to degrading cultural imperialism, which seemed to have replaced the erstwhile direct political dominance that only receded with the attainment of political or flag independence. Thus, the planning and success of the festival rekindled the sovereign determination of the continental Africans and the Blacks in Diaspora as they united to take a common stand on issues affecting them (Ojukwu, 2020).

Though Raphael Lemkin in 1944 coined the word 'Ethnocide' in 1944, which was used to describe the destruction of the culture and identity of a people, with particular reference to the atrocities committed against the Jewish people in Nazi Germany, this could also be used to describe the effect of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade on the global Black community. Hence, the First World Black Festival of Arts in Senegal set out to repair the damage that was already done to the Black race. The Festival was largely influenced by the political context of post-independence Africa, thus serving as a symbol for the decolonization of the mind that should go along with the political decolonization happening on the continent. The First World Black Festival of Arts and Culture was a success, however, the Second Festival, FESTAC '77 turned out to be the largest assembly of Black people from every continent in which they reside, and in one place at a time for the first time in the history of the Black race. At this time, over fifty erstwhile colonized African countries had gained their independence and the celebration was used to amplify Black pride in the face of adversity. It also coincided with the period the Black

people in Europe and the Americas succeeding were in their fight against racist oppression and segregation, therefore, they were enthusiastic to attend the FESTAC '77 in Nigeria to celebrate the talent and identity of their fellow Black race (Attah, 2021).

Cultural Diplomacy

Recall that the Fanti Carnival though informally organized by the New World repatriates, attracted international sponsorships and promotion via such bodies as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United States Embassy, Brazilian Embassy and the British High Commission. It is true that Nigeria signed its first cultural agreement there has been remarkable increase in such agreements since after the hosting of the FESTAC in 1977. More than fifty of such agreements exist and prominent in each of the agreements is the issue of Afrocentricism and in Diaspora (Asobele, 2002; Chibundu, 2009). As part of cultural diplomacy, when Stevie Wonder noticed that the mainstream media in the world did not pay attention to FESTAC or give it the requisite media coverage, he decided to stay back Lagos and organized a satellite link to receive his 'four Grammy awards for fulfillingness' First finale live from Lagos. He did this in order to bring FESTAC to the international attention whose mainstream media largely ignored (Bradely, 2020).

Through the Black arts and culture festivals, Senegal and Nigeria activated cultural diplomacy. These countries used the hosting of the festivals to show that African countries and the entire Black race have come of age to chart their own course in defining who they are by themselves and not what others say they are. Nigeria for instance, used the FESTAC '77 to show that it is capable of leading the Black world into the much-needed cultural renaissance. Acknowledging this obvious fact, President Leopold Sedar Senghor, 'the Prime poet of Negritude' stressed that 'Nigeria is to Africa what Greece was and still to the history of Europe' (Attah, 2021).

FESTAC '77 promoted cultural dialogue which has facilitated mutual understanding among Blacks across the globe. Thus, understanding the existing diverse cultural heritage among the Blacks has the potential to prevent or on average minimize prejudices and hatred that was foisted on the Black race through erroneous dissents. The festival has also promoted cultural exchange as well as enriched new forms of artistic expression, which in turn has provided fresh insights that has broadened the horizon of the Black people across continents of the world (Moses, 2018).

Since its maiden edition in 1966, the Festivals of Culture have facilitated continental African and the Diaspora interactions. The CBAAC innovative yearly conference in collaboration with some research groups and governments, and the annual celebration of Black History Day etc. have succeeded in building bridges and raising black consciousness around the globe (Ademuleya & Fajuyigbe, 2015).

Conclusion

The paper examined the impact of international festivals and cultural exchange between the Blacks in the Diaspora and Black Africa. Adopting a qualitative approach to data collection and content analysis, the paper traced the origin of cultural exchange to the trans-Atlantic slave trade when the African slaves were not only forcefully uprooted to the New World but the circumstances they found themselves culminated to transfer of their cultural practices to their new abode, but imbibed some of the cultural practices of their host countries. However, the current form of the trans-Atlantic cultural exchange began in earnest with New World repatriates after the abolition of the slave trade in Lagos following the initiation of the Fanti Carnival in Lagos by these returnees. The Fanti Carnival preceded the formal launching of FESMAN I in 1966 in Senegal, followed by the FESTAC '77 and the FESMAN III in 2010. The paper observed other mini-cultural festivals following the formalization of Black cultural festivals by state actors. The paper revealed the impact of these cultural festivals, eliciting the cultural phase of Pan-Africanism and alliance building amongst the Blacks; concretization of Affinity between the Diaspora Blacks and Blacks in African soil; showcasing African Black heritage; promotion of tourism; decolonization of the mind and promotion of self-determination, and cultural diplomacy. On the whole, African cultural festival contributed in deepening the cultural exchange as well as political angles of Pan-Africanism between the Blacks in Diaspora and Blacks on the African soil.

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