“Stories from the Other Side”
A Study Guide
Stories from the Other Side
Lessons and Study Guide

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(with suggestions for use with Documentary “Stories From the Other Side”)

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INTRODUCTION

Faculty members and graduate students of Arizona State University’s West campus and the Phoenix Unified School District engaged in an intensive four week seminar “Stories from the Other Side” in Ghana West Africa from July 4 through August 1, 2010 sponsored by the FY 2010 Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad from the Department of Education. The purpose of the seminar was to expose the high school teachers, college and university professors, and graduate students to an interdisciplinary study of culture and its impact on the issues of social justice and human rights in historical and modern Ghana. Culture, widely defined as the multiple factors that shape daily life, including language, literature, history, economics, politics, religion, ethnicity, and arts and performance, create a powerful lens through which issues of social justice and human rights may be observed. Culture is also essential to learning. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access for education for students from all cultures.1

Ghana, long before President Barack Obama’s historic visit, featured prominently in the lives of African Americans as a place strongly identified with their African heritage. Elmina slave castle, for example, has become one of Ghana’s most recognizable tourist attractions and listed as one of 890 World Heritage Monuments. The unfortunate slave experience itself has been written about by many scholars, yet infrequently do you hear the stories of how slavery affected the families, the economies, the societies from which the slaves were taken. In this seminar, the teachers met with world renown scholars on a variety of topics including the legacies of the past and present slave experiences in Ghana; the links between Ghana and the Americas; and Pan-Africanism and the struggle for independence. They studied Twi, the most dominant language spoken in Ghana outside of English; visited arts and cultural centers in Accra and Kumasi; visited slave castles along the Ghanaian coast; interviewed historians, chiefs, community workers about their memories of the slave trade and its impact (there is a common practice for many old families to recall and recite the history of their families from over 400 years).

Arizona itself has a rich history and culture that is changing rapidly. The Phoenix metropolitan area, a growing metropolis, is rarely seen as the culturally diverse region that it has become. The U.S. Census

1 http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tl/tl-strategies/crt-principles.shtml
estimates that in 2008 the population of Maricopa County had grown to almost four million placing it as the 4th largest population of counties in the U.S. The county has experienced enormous growth with a 27.7% growth rate since 2000. The population of African Americans has grown 20.5%, American Indian 18%, Asian 45.8%, and Hispanic/Latino 37.2% since the last census in 2000. Arizona also hosts immigrants and refugees from around the world with over 3000 refugees resettling in 2008, including large numbers from Southeast Asia, Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan. This explosion of population has turned the dusty myth of Arizona into an oasis of multicultural experiences which brings with it its own set of new necessities. The state is faced with numerous issues affecting a diverse population including a variety of human rights and social justice problems.

The statewide standards for secondary education stress the need for knowledge of diverse cultures, mandating that schools provide essential ways to understand and express life experiences and develop deep understanding of past and present cultures/peoples. The state standards also instruct that students should know what to do when and what to say while doing it in the culture and use this knowledge to interact appropriately. They are expected to understand the relationships between cultural perspectives, products and practices within cultures including language instruction and its culture which add to the richness of the states’ cultural diversity. At its core the standards call for students to be able to identify, discuss and analyze products of the culture (e.g., social, economic and political institutions) and the relationships between these institutions and the perspectives of the cultures studied. Lastly, the state emphasizes historical research as a process in which students examine topics or questions related to historical studies and/or current issues.²

The aim for embracing cultural diversity is shared by Arizona State University. Remarks from President Michael Crow delivered at the 2004 Educating for a Diverse America: A Summit and Symposium, highlight this goal. “We have to learn how to communicate and teach between all ethnic and cultural perspectives. Not with a dominant cultural perspective and marginal alternative cultural perspectives, but across all of these.” As an institution, ASU is committed to these ideals and to creating an environment that promotes inclusion, respect, community, and appreciation for the full tapestry that comprises the human experience.³

² Arizona Department of Education Standards Based Teaching and Learning, adopted 9/26/05 and updated 5/22/06.
ASU faculty brings interdisciplinary interests and expertise to their culturally diverse classrooms through research, scholarship, and community embedded activities with a variety of courses on African, African American history, literature, culture, and art as well as oral history and storytelling, social systems, women’s studies, and the only program for ethnicity, race and first nation studies in the state.

In particular, ASU’s innovative new MA program in Social Justice and Human Rights (SJHR) has quickly established itself as one of the leading programs of its kind in the U.S. It currently has more than 40 students who have worked or lived in over 70 countries and speak approximately 45 different languages. Ten of the students currently work as teachers in public or charter schools almost all of them working with at-risk youth. The students are studying such issues as transitional justice, indigenous rights, economic development, social movements, human rights law, and environmental justice. Of particular interest is human trafficking with courses already being offered that focus on contemporary trafficking and historical slavery. One of the students just returned from Calcutta where she worked for The Emancipation Network counseling trafficking victims. Another student just completed an internship at the national headquarters in Washington D.C. for Free the Slaves, one of the largest anti-slavery NGOs in the world Other students have worked with trafficking victims in the Phoenix area as caseworkers. The program houses one of the first three campus chapters of Free the Slaves and has contacts with anti-trafficking experts around the world including with Dr. Kevin Bales, generally recognized as the foremost expert on contemporary trafficking.

Working collaboratively, faculty at the university, teachers in the high school, and graduate students created lessons and curriculum that serve Arizona’s diverse population introducing them to ideas, concepts, values, and experiences that will enhance the understanding and appreciation of cultures world-wide.

Please feel free to contact us for further questions and for possible opportunities for the participants and the faculty to visit at your schools to conduct workshops on the curriculum developed in these pages.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

According to the wisdom of our ancestors, “One head does not go into council with itself.” This is certainly the case in the production of this study guide accompanying the documentary “Stories from the other Side.” In fact, without the able assistance of a number of people, we would not have obtained the grant, nor made this life-changing journey to Ghana.

For the letters and good wishes and on-going support, we are grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Langland, ASU Vice President and Dean of the New College of interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, and to her staff, Barbara Sedgwick, Assistant Director New College Research Advancement, Lawrence Carlson, New College Director Fiscal Business Services, Carol Mueller, Division Director of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and William Simmons, Associate Professor and Director of MA in Social Justice and Human Rights. Bill was especially helpful in writing the grant proposal but due to illness was unable to accompany us on the trip. Barbara Sedgwick and Caroline Stutesman sat for hours helping me figure out budgets. I’m just not a numbers’ cruncher, but they made it seem easy, and so it was. Thanks also to Monica Casper, Division Director of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies, for her undiluted support and encouragement. Susan Metosky in the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance was absolutely incredible with helpful suggestions for getting all the paperwork done for IRB. What a professional support staff we have. Of course we could have not done without the amazing support of the Public Affairs staff especially Matt Crum and Stephen Des Georges who made sure we got front page exposure.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t thank my friend and co-conspirator Lena Ampadu at Towson University for sharing her successful proposal with us several years ago and her suggestion that we could even qualify for such a prestigious grant. I appreciate Dr. Zachary Munoz, Principal at Betty H. Fairfax High School for immediately recognizing this as an opportunity for his teachers, and his support along the way. Deborah Gonzalez, former Assistant Superintendent, Phoenix Union High School District was swift in her approval and facilitated support from the Superintendent. Charles St. Clair and Bill Simmons and I have always been able to rely on the wise guidance from Jean Fairfax and Robbin Coulon.

There are so many folks to thank and I am sorry if I’m forgetting anyone, but the participants in the seminar were stellar. Imagine travelling half way around the world with folks you have never known and never having an argument, a disagreement, an angry word (except for Charles and I but we’re like brother and sister, so it has to be expected). I’d travel anywhere with you people and return to brag
about it. Thanks Bettina Bennett, Paul Bork, Delores Davis, Rosie Huff, Les Irwin, Sandra Jenkins, Maria Lopez, Edward (Ted) Novak, Vinita Quinones, Charles St. Clair, Jessie Swierski, and Kevin Watson for the many hours of thoughtful conversation, questions, and these wonderful lessons. Kevin thanks for the late nights working on the documentary. Did you ever think you’d be doing something like this? Vinita, who is now in Ghana volunteering with James Kofi Annan at Challenging Heights, has helped me realize a dream.

We could not have done this without the support staff in Ghana. These are my friends for life—Kwasi Frimpong Manso, our tour guide (let’s go), Mr. Opoku our driver, Ransford Bekoe and his mother Auntie Yaa are my family away from home. What an incredible meal they prepared. The folks at all of the hotels where we stayed especially Chris and Charity Scott at Four Villages Inn in Kumasi made our lives easy. My longtime friend Nana Yaa Nson Opare opened her home and her great teaching skills to lecture about the ex-patriate experience in Ghana, and Okyeame Kwame taught us enough Twi to get us in trouble. The interviewees gave us so much to think about, and the scholars gave us so much to digest. We cannot say enough about this experience, so we hope this study guide will help fill in some of the holes.