

JAMESTOWN TO JAMESTOWN 2019: THE YEAR OF RETURN COMMEMORATING 400 YEARS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA EXPERIENCE



History commonly and most often points to late August in the year 1619 when some “20 and odd Negroes” originating from Angola arrived in the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia as the first documented enslaved Africans to land in what is now The United States of America. Fast forward to 2019 through the continued metamorphosis of the African American, we mark the 400th anniversary of their arrival as men and women still fighting for equal rights, justice and freedom.

The “Year of Return, Ghana 2019” was a major landmark spiritual and birth-right journey inviting the Global African family, home and abroad, to mark this anniversary. As an official event of the Year of Return, Jamestown to Jamestown was a spiritual, historical and reconciliatory journey in commemoration of the 400 year anniversary. I was privileged to be a part of this once in a lifetime event.

The tour began with a word of prayer and candle light ceremony on August 18, 2019, in Virginia, where the English ship, White Lion, "brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes" as indicated by John Rolfe, the plantation owner and official overseeing the colony. There our band of travelers collected water in small viles to take to Africa, symbolizing the return of our enslaved ancestors going home. The next day, all 250!! Of us flocked to the Smithsonian Museum of African-American history before going to Ghana on a South African Airways flight. Upon arrival, we were received with a royal “durbar” (lavish reception) in Ghana where we were joined by Ghana’s President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the chiefs and people of Jamestown in Accra - lots of dancing and singing welcoming us HOME!!!



A two-day African-American Business Summit and a black-tie gala later followed as part of the activities. Other places and events we visited in Ghana included the Akwasidae festival in Ejisu, the Kumasi craft villages in Ahiwaa, Ntonso Craft Village, Bonwire Kente Weaving Village, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, W.E.B. DuBois Centre in Accra and the Accra Arts Center.

The pinnacle of my journey, however, was our tour and assembly at Cape Coast Castle. Over 70 families discovered their ancestry during the African Ancestry DNA disclosure. Cape Coast Castle is one of nearly 40 slave castles built in the “Gold Coast”, now Ghana. AfricanAncestry, the only global company notable for tracing maternal and paternal lineages of African descent to re-connect with the roots of their family traced our family trees to specific present-day African countries and ethnic groups dating back over 500 years. My test revealed that my origins are in Ginea-Bissau and I am from the Balanta people. Balanta means “those who resist”.

Co-facilitated by Sunseekers Tours and the Ghana Tourism Authority, this landmark journey was the childhood dream of D.C. native Diallo Sumbry, founder and president of The Adinkra Group also curator of the historic Jamestown to Jamestown trip in partnership with the NAACP. His company is planning many more tours to Ghana in the coming year. I told Diallo all about CTTT and invited him to RVA.



"To touch the water on both sides of the globe where the ships landed and from where they left 400+ years ago helps to sustain the paradigm shift we feel of Africans throughout the diaspora longing to return", Diallo mused.

I added, "As Americans, we have reached a place in our evolution where we are all trying to return to something - something pure and compassionate, accepting and embracing. Something that feels like home". Without a doubt, I have truly touched that shore.

To learn more about Ghana 2019 The Year of Return and the Jamestown to Jamestown Tour, visit <https://www.naacp.org/ghana/>