

CONCEPT NOTE ON AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-BRAZILIAN DIASPORA STUDIES<sup>1</sup>

**Bame Nsamenang**  
**Bamenda University**

*Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (2006) traces the origin of the term "diaspora" to a Greek word that literally translates as "scattering" or "dispersion", which gained popularity in English in reference to the Jewish diaspora before being more broadly applied to other diasporic communities. The phrase "African diaspora" was coined during the 1990s, and gradually entered common usage during the 2000s (Akyeampong, 2000; Manning, 2009). African Diaspora ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_diaspora)) is the term commonly used to describe the mass dispersion of peoples from Africa during the Transatlantic Slave Trades, from the 1500s to the 1800s. This Diaspora took millions of people from Western and Central Africa to different regions throughout the Americas and the Caribbean (Harris, 1993). Although the term has been historically applied in particular to the descendants of the West and Central Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas via the Atlantic Slave Trades, with their largest populations in Brazil, the United States, and Haiti (Ajayi, 1998), the concept of a diaspora cannot be confined to the peoples of African descent (Palmer, 1998). Historians are familiar with the migration of Asians that resulted in the peopling of the Americas. Sometime between ten and twenty thousand years ago, these Asian people crossed the Bering Strait and settled in North and South America and the Caribbean Islands. The Jewish Diaspora, perhaps the most widely studied, also has very ancient roots, beginning about 5000 years ago. Obviously, diasporic streams, or movements of specific peoples, could not be the same in their timing, impetus, direction, or nature (Palmer, 1998).

The concept of Diaspora has, in the past decades, become a subject of growing attention in academic milieus as well as with African Governments, Institutions, and Development Bodies. The African Union (2017) has designated the African Diaspora as a sixth development "zone", the others being West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa and North Africa[ii], hence the timeliness of African Diaspora Studies in general and the *Journal of African-Brazilian Studies* (JABS) in particular. The JABS adopts the modern African diaspora by subscribing to the definition by the African Union of the African diaspora as: "[consisting] of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are

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willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union." This definition curtails the debate about the contours and nature of the African diaspora and clarifies the subject matter of African diaspora studies. In a nutshell, the African Diaspora is found all over the world and comes from three major waves of migration: historic, related to de-colonization process, and the current diaspora motivated by socio-economic and political situation of African countries. However, should the African diaspora not begin with the study of Africa, the ancestral homeland of Africa's people? Should Africa not be central to any informed analysis and understanding of the dispersal of its peoples?

Accordingly, African Diaspora Studies explores the communities throughout the world that have resulted by descent from the movement in historic times of peoples from Africa. Thus, the *Journal of African-Brazilian Studies* (JABS), seeks to publish state of the art work exploring new meanings of diasporas, bringing fresh ideas to the concept, broadening its scope and contributing to shaping the debates of the future. The JABS, like Globalizations ([www.globalgrn.org](http://www.globalgrn.org)), is dedicated to opening the widest possible space for debates of perspectives on the African diaspora in general and Africa-Brazil diaspora in particular. The journal specifically seeks to encourage the exploration and discussion of multiple interpretations, multiple processes and multiple outcomes and trends of the African diaspora. As such, it opens to all fields of knowledge, including the natural and health sciences as well as the social sciences and humanities. While prioritizing the Africa-Brazil diaspora, JABS encourages multidisciplinary research and seeks to publish contributions from all regions of the world.

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