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Embracing the Past: Transatlantic Slave Trade in Ghana and the holocaust in Germany

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Introduction

Remembering and embracing the past through memory culture is depicted in several ways. When it comes to the holocaust in Germany, video recorded testimonies, documentaries from witnesses, fictional films and novels, and visual materials have contributed to the concept of remembrance (Stimmel, 2005; Schramm, 2005). There also exist ceremonies like the Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27th January and the Kristallnacht Remembrance Day on 9th November (Urban, 2008, p. 79) in Germany. In the case of Ghana and the slave trade, exhibitions and projects such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Slave Route, “Crossroads of People, Crossroads of Trade” in 1994 (Singleton, 1999, p. 150 & 156) exist, along with movies like the *Amistad* and *Sankofa*. In addition, the number of monuments and museums that exists in Germany and Ghana to represent the holocaust and slave trade respectively are enormous and indicates a deliberate attempt to remember these two phenomena.

The transatlantic slave trade is a form of trade, which started in the late sixteenth century, involving Africa, Europe and the Americas. It constituted a process of buying of slaves from Africa, their sale in plantations in the Americas for Sugar, tobacco, and rum amongst other products, which was later sold in Europe. This triangular form of trade was later referred to in literature as the ‘Triangular trade’ (Davidson, 1985). The complexity, operation and experience of the trade is seen in the manner in which slaves were acquired, their voyage into the America’s, their strong conviction to be free and the fact that their owners treated them inhumanely (Ilefe, 2007). The trade is regarded as one of the deadliest mass killings involving the death of some 16,000,000 million Africans (Jones, 2017). European presence on the coast and evidence of the trade in slaves is the existence of forts and castles that were built as storage for slaves, other commodities and to protect European property in general (Behrendt, 2005, p. 11). These forts and castles, and concentration camps have continued to remain the main symbols of remembrance and memory of the transatlantic slave trade, and the holocaust histories.

The holocaust on the other hand represented many centuries of hatred for Jews, who were accused of corrupting the German culture amongst others in German history. Concurrently, Germans were projected as a superior race and their culture was seen a superior one. The idea of ultimate reverence, love and duty to the state was also projected to involve all Germans in the annihilation of Jews. As a result of the decisions of a legally constituted German government under the leadership of Adolf Hitler many Jews and other minorities who lived within this period were murdered (Botwinick, 2014, p. 1) In Germany and other parts of Europe, there are multiple evidences to prove that the Jews and opponents of the Nazi regime were persecuted and killed between 1941 and 1945. The evidence of the holocaust is documented through the establishment of concentration and death camps in Germany and Europe, and the existence of memorial sites today is a representation of the torturous history of the holocaust (Botwinick, 2014, p. 1 & 16).

The transatlantic slave trade and the holocaust are similar, in that, the results were the killing of millions of a designated group of people; Africans in the transatlantic slave trade and Jews and other minorities in the holocaust. An open discussion on these two phenomena mostly creates a sense of uneasiness. Nonetheless, the various representations of the history of the holocaust and slave trade go to show how societies revere memory culture. In Europe for instance, there is the plea by people who experienced the holocaust for instance in Nazi-occupied Europe, through writing and they want their experiences and history of the holocaust to be known and remembered (Rosenfeld, 2001, p. 82). Several scholars have also argued that memory culture is important to help victims move forward and for posterity, never again to repeat mistakes of the past (Confino, 2004; Duncan, 1998; Rosenfeld, 2001). Memory culture as Marwick puts it, enable societies to ‘preserve and perpetuate’ accounts of their history through various means so as to maintain and develop some level of peace, organization and development (Marwick, 2001, p. 33). Despite several representations and literature on these two phenomena, little has been done to

compare how they are represented through monuments and museums, how they are discussed and taught in schools. Thus, what are the perspectives of students on how the slave trade and holocaust are portrayed in monuments and museums, and how did it influence their embrace of the phenomena? Are these events discussed at all and how are they taught in schools?

This paper probes how some students in Germany and Ghana, have dealt with the holocaust and slave trade through schooling or education, through discussions and visits to monuments and museums that depict these two phenomena. Specifically, it explores how monuments and museums are structured to portray the history of slave trade and holocaust. It is argued that there are some similarities in how the slave trade and holocaust are embraced through monuments and memorials, teaching and discussions, although these two phenomena happened several decades ago and in different geographical settings.

The motivation to investigate this topic was derived from a visit to Germany in late 2017 on an exchange programme between Ghanaian and German faculty and students. The exchanges sought to witness and discuss monuments on colonialism in Berlin. It was observed however that, there were very few monuments dealing with colonialism, however several monuments existed to portray the holocaust and yet talking about the holocaust with the German counterparts created some uneasiness. Similarly, it was noticed that few monuments exist in discussing about the colonial past and the respondents expressed same difficulty and uneasiness when they have to talk about the slave trade.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Embracing the Past Through Memory Culture

Sankofa carries an egg in his beak, indicating the extreme fragility of the relationship between the past and present. If the egg is held too tight, it will crush; if the grip is too weak, it will fall down and also be destroyed. The necessary balance is not easy to achieve, especially when a number of stakeholders are involved in the appropriation of the past (Schramm, 2005, p. 126).

This quote above explains a very common Akan word, ‘Sankofa’, used in Ghana to denote the relevance of the past and the need to return to probe the past. Even more, the quote further explains the role of stakeholders in the preservation and cuddle of the past, an idea many ignore. In Germany too, the word “Aufarbeitung is a psychoanalytic concept of ‘working through’ that implies the past is never fully overcome unless and until the past that lives on in the present is brought under the control of conscious reflection, thereby bringing about change in the self-reflecting subject” (Herf, 1980). These words are peculiar to these two different societies and cultures, and reiterate the importance of remembering and sustaining memory culture. On the larger societal level, the idea of collective or cultural memories exists to show how societies as a whole remember their past and how they choose to remember it. Collective memory is a means of exploring how beliefs and perhaps knowledge of a common past is transferred from one generation to another. This can be through conscious and unconscious mechanisms and structures such as schools, museums, monuments, archives, commemoration, culture, language, stories, and customs (Gillis, 1994; Seixas, 2006). Thus, collective memory and cultural memory are related concepts that stress the shared representations of the past and the practice of transmitting the past as a way of life. Academic programmes like Memory Studies is concerned with and offer an opportunity to learn how memories are distributed amongst people (Rothberg, 2001), and as a result to an extent provide an understanding about how people embrace the past in schools.

Traditionally, physical artefacts in museums, memorial centers and other heritages institutions have been relied on to provide visitors an experience of authenticity of past stories. These places “trigger memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the

present” (Walvin, 2009). The primary goal of these centers is to arouse some form of consciousness of some historical events. However, the motives for remembering and representing usually do not conform to these goals (Rosenfeld, 2001). For instance, in discussing about the holocaust, many people single out Jews as the major victims. This motive of singling out the Jews as Rosenfeld (2001) argues are intentional so that it will over portray the Jews as victims of the holocaust so that they can gain the sympathy and support of the United States (US). The history of the holocaust has been distorted in several to the extent that many try to deny, depreciate, universalize and exhibit a silent experience when the topic is raised (Gerstenfeld, 2007). The story is the same in Ghana.

In Ghana, many historians have been accused of intentionally ignoring the topic of the slave trade or aspects of it as far as Africans involvement in the trade. Keren (2009) has mentioned that while some historians like Carl Christian Reindorf discussed the role that African societies and states played in the slave trade, writers like Joseph Boakye Danquah disregarded that contribution, while others rarely addressed the topic (Keren, 2009). In such situations, the story of the slave trade becomes half-told, especially when aspects of involvement are ignored. These go to portray some difficulties in embracing the past collectively and wholly.

Another problem associated with museums is the role of curators on their narratives in the monuments and museums. Curators narrates the past as fixed narratives which are ‘conceived, organized and argued in a linear way (Confino, 2004). Thus, in these museums, history is presented as a story with a single conclusion, which does not give room for analysis and interpretation. Also, because majority of the people who put up these monuments did not experience these historical events themselves, their translation of the past may be based mainly on “post memory”, that is produced based on “imagination and creation” rather than recollection (Stimmel, 2005, p. 83).

Despite these difficulties expressed with remembering these phenomena, there is an abundance of monuments, museums and memorials in both Germany and Ghana to portray and preserve memories of the past. By visiting these sites one can assess how and in what way these monuments tell the history of the slave trade and the holocaust and how they assist visitors to embrace the past.

Embracing a Tragic Past and historical empathy

Despite how tragic one may assume a phenomenon to be, it is indeed a burdensome task to be discussed. On the other hand, when the past is presumed positive, it is easy for people to embrace, and often use as a means of celebrating the ‘glory and potential’ of a people (Duncan, 1998). In history education the concept of historical empathy bridges the gap in embracing the past, whether tragic or glorifying. Historical empathy has been defined as a part of historical thinking that helps historians to put themselves in the position of historical actors in specific historical contexts in order to understand the actions taken in the past (Rantala, 2011). It is an important component of historical thinking which attempts to engage students in reconstructing or forming an image of the decisions of an actor in the past taking into consideration the context of the time in which they lived (Lee & Ashby, 2001). It is an approach to teaching history where students identify with historical actors and describe their perspectives on a phenomenon (De Leur, Van Boxtel & Wischut, 2017). In the field of history education, it has been emphasized that emotional engagement and empathy evoked in a museum context may stimulate young people’s historical understanding (Spalching, 2012). Therefore, historical empathy is sometimes used in the context of studies through monument and museums to engage people in historical thinking and understanding in order to bring ‘a past world to life’ (Savenije & Bruijn, 2017).

Historical empathy is very important especially in discussing and teaching the history of the slave trade and the holocaust. This is particularly so because of the diverse ways the histories are told or conveyed, in a guilty versus innocent manner, and drawing a clear line between actors of the past and the present people. For instance, many Africans easily associate themselves with

their ancestors and claim that, ‘we Africans were treated like animals by the whites’. On the other hand, historical empathy allows for disassociating oneself from such past historical events and analyzing it without any biases. In a fair analysis in this case, the role that Africans played in transatlantic slave trade would also be analyzed, along with the factors that contributed to Africans involvement. An effort therefore is made to fully understand and appreciate the facts of the history, despite how tragic it might have been for a group of people.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative paradigm to understand underlying reasons and opinions elicited. Data was basically collected through focus group discussions and interviews with twenty (20) tertiary education students, comprising ten (10) Ghanaian and German students respectively. All the respondents were students studying history in universities in Africa and Europe. Questions were generally straight forward and open-ended to allow the interviewer to generate other questions to develop interesting areas of inquiry during the interview. The interviewees had the opportunity to express their opinions very well since they were not restricted to a particular area. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the respondents. Each interview took up to 60 minutes duration. A copy of the questions was given to the respondent some minutes prior to the actual interview. The guide was divided into three main sections; general information, background of interviewee and the main issues sections. The main issues section dealt with topics related to the research questions such as availability of centers of embracing the past; whether it (phenomena) is taught in schools and whether it is discussed. The interviews were supplemented with secondary literature that investigated memory culture in Ghana and Germany. This source of literature assisted in understanding government and stakeholder’s positions in remembering these events and how and why they are remembered and interpreted.

Findings and Discussion

Embracing the past through Monuments and Museums

In Ghana, there are several monuments and museums to commemorate the slave trade, with the well-known ones being the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles both located on the coast of the Central Region of Ghana. The Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castles are popular because of the role they played as the final point for redistribution of slaves to other parts of the world. The castles are huge edifices and give the impression of a serious and deliberate attempt to conduct business in slaves. From the Cape Coast and Elmina castles, millions of Africans were sent to the Americas and other parts of the world to be traded and used as slaves. By visiting these sites, one will notice that the transatlantic slave trade was not a ‘nine-day wonder’. Just reading materials on the phenomena or being told about it will possibly not arrive at such analysis. By visiting these slave castles, it arouses historical memory and give room for the construction of ‘multiple versions’ of the past Adjaye (2014).

After visiting the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in Ghana, one of the respondents of Ghanaian origin indicated that “... When I saw the castles, I knew that it [slave trade] was serious business; the Europeans meant business. Building these huge castles, they really meant business” (Student, 3). The great surprise at seeing the huge edifices involved in the slave trade indicates that visiting the monuments and museums can have a different, and or a greater impact than learning about it in school or merely discussing it. Additionally, it suggests that reading and learning about the slave trade might not be enough to analyze and interpret adequately. That said, the respondents agree that there is a disconnect between what they read about in books, what they learn in school, what they are told and what they see when they visit the slave trade museums and monuments. Reference was made to the smell coming from the slave dungeons and how a number of people

were put into a particular room, with no regards for ventilation. Visiting the slave castles gives a pictorial view, and differs from how it is imagined when one gets there.

“So, you will see that the stories in the book will portray or tell you that, this and this happened, but when you go there at least the pictorial view will give you a sense of, like, the harsh treatment the people went through, yes. For instance, with the scent coming from the dungeons and the structure alone, you are like, so my grandfather or mother also went through such harsh treatment. Yes, because you feel it” (Student, 2).

“... if you look at what have been presented in books is quite different. Actually if you visit these areas [slave museums] you ask yourself [sic] as to whether human beings lived here for maybe just a day, because anytime you enter the dungeon you feel like leaving there within just a minute, so if you put yourself in that [situation], you ask yourself how could somebody live here for about three months and I’m not able to live here for just a minute. So, you feel how bad the whole thing was” (Student, 5).

Whiles books and written documents may interpret historical events from the author’s perspective, monuments and museums give room for people to see and understand events the way it is presented in places where these events took place. Another interviewee criticized the accuracy of historical records and interpretation of the history of the slave trade by teachers suggesting that a visit to the site better tells the story (Student, 5). As will be seen later, many educators are guilty of presenting their own interpretations rather than exposing the facts and allowing students to come out with their own interpretations.

These sites give room to some form of reflection and, therefore, leave room for individual and diversified interpretation of the past. Student’s perspective on visiting these monuments and museums shows that the meseum visits causes one to go through a period of self-reflection. They do not just provide an oppourtunnity to learn about the past but also to reflect on how the slave trade past is relevant to the present and the future.



The Cape Coast Castle

Photo credit: Valentina Korkor Tetteh

Visit to the Cape Coast Castle by participants

Another important issue that was raised through discussions with Ghanaian students about monuments and museums on the slave trade is the way these places are presented in Ghana. According to the respondents, the way that the monuments and museums are presented suggest that they are preserved for Africans in the diaspora and not Africans on the mainland continent. There is always a call on Africans in the diaspora to come home to link up with their ancestors and

try to make a link to their families in Africa. This is one of the main ideas behind sustaining the castles and heritage sites (Student, 13). However, the impact that the slave trade has for the local people on whose lands these museums are established is rarely known. All respondents mentioned that admittance into the university was their first opportunity to visit these slave museums. For some of them the long distances from their place of stay and the inability of their primary and secondary schools to afford such trips influenced their inability to visit these historical sites. This goes to show that, a considerable number of young generation students do not have the chance to visit some of these monuments and museums in Ghana, whereas so much concentration has been given to Africans in the diaspora.

In Germany, embracing the holocaust has changed over time. In the mid twentieth century, while West Germany engaged in a public discussion of the holocaust, the same could not be said for East Germany. Also, conservatives who had witnessed the reign of Hitler sought to move forward and live the past in the past, while's liberals and social democrats were enthusiastic about discussing the issues of victims and the guilt of perpetrators (Herf, 1980, pp. 30 - 31). In contemporary times, the availability of several monuments and museums to portray the holocaust seem to have opened up the discussion to a greater extent, and influenced people's perception of the holocaust.

The museums and monuments visited include the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Oranienburg, the memorial for the murdered Jews, memorial for the murdered homosexuals and the German historical museum all in Berlin. Even though these memorials are very different in terms of the way the story of the holocaust is told and what it represents, one common feature is the use of modern infrastructure to enhance these structures and represent the holocaust. For instance, at these memorials, the use of audio-visuals and self-help devices are very common. The use of audio-visuals and self-help modern devices brought up two main reactions from respondents. One had to do with the view that these modern technologies drew the attention of visitors from really reflecting on the events, to having a fun filled tour (Student, 12). The other view argued that these initiatives rather have drawn the interest of large groups of younger people to these sites to learn about the past. Therefore, in situations where history books have provided the 'boring narrative,' these innovative technological museums provide the incentives to learn about the past (Student, 19).

All the respondents agreed that, embracing the holocaust through a visit to these memorials, monuments and museums is such a heavy burden. One of the respondents of German origin indicated that,

I cannot sum it [the experience of visiting the memorials] up because it changes by getting older and it always changes for reasons like with who I was, then in which group and who was talking to me before. I visited the concentration camp before and it was different with members of the Jewish community; a feeling I had for the first time" (Student, 7).

In totality most of the respondents expressed much difficulty in talking about how they felt when they visited the holocaust museums and monument sites. It was observed through their dispositions that, it never got easier no matter how many times these memorials were visited or with whom it was visited. The message was clear; people were murdered and the impact of that on them did not change with the frequency of visits or how technologically innovative these memorials were structured. Additionally, while some respondents agreed that the holocaust monuments and memorials were enough, as a result of viewing the holocaust as a tragedy, others felt that there should be more in order that the history would not be lost. This is similar to the mixed concern shared by respondents who were asked about the slave trade monuments and memorials.

Of concern as in the case of the slave trade was whether the holocaust monuments and

memorials help to embrace the holocaust in totality. The kind of holocaust stories being told at these memorials and the way they are told inform how the holocaust is embraced. An observation made by respondents about tour guides and their telling of the holocaust story indicated that there was an overconcentration on Jews as victims, and Germans as perpetrators. The results are that the whole story of the holocaust is not told. Other smaller groups of victims, including some Germans, black Africans amongst others have been overlooked in these representations (Student, 14). Although the number of black African victims during the holocaust was few, omitting them from these representations, suggest that no black person suffered this fate.

Respondents also complained of how some of these memorials failed to tell the story of the holocaust accurately. A typical example used was the memorial for the murdered homosexuals. This memorial is located closely to the memorial for the murdered Jews and is a small building containing a video of gay men kissing. At this memorial, respondents did not find a description of the video. Is this a film of gay men during the Nazi regime or actual gay men recorded secretly? What was the fate of these men after they had been found during the Nazi regime? These are a few of the questions that respondents of African origin asked, but with no one or no description to answer the question. One needs to read thoroughly about these memorials and monuments in books to get an understanding of why there is a memorial for murdered homosexuals before visiting the memorial to understand the reason for the memorial.



A participant at the Sachsenhausen Memorial Camp in



Teaching of the Holocaust and Slave Trade in Schools

All the respondents agreed that they received information about the Slave Trade and the Holocaust in schools. It seems that in the German schools, the students were, at early stages introduced to literature on the Holocaust. Prominent among the literature was Anne Frank's diary. This is an easy read for children and paved the way for classroom discussions which were led by teachers but Urban (2008) has argued that the author was a girl and students, especially boys, do

not feel any empathy for girls at that tender age. This approach of teachers in teaching students in the ninth grade has also been criticized as been too intellectual for the students (Urban, 2008).

In terms of the period at which students were introduced to issues on the holocaust, there seem to be varying information on the time, which was devoted to classroom discussions on the Holocaust. One respondent of German origins mentioned the Holocaust "was a big topic and the teachers spent a lot of time on this topic for pupils to understand..." another also asserts "we didn't speak about it so much. We spoke about it but not so much, I think..." These are the two broad views concerning time devoted for Holocaust discussions in schools, especially in Germany.

From discussion with the respondents it is clear that classroom discussions among young people, especially in Germany, see the Holocaust as a negative part of German history. They perceive the Holocaust as a terrible and dark side of German history, which ought not to happen again. Most of them received this part of their history with shock and dismayed by how human beings could be cruel to each other. One student mentioned that "I was very young and when I heard it, I was totally shocked...I didn't sleep for some nights, because I had never heard such words like this..." another stated that, "it's a very dark point in our history, not so far in the past. And it's very terrible to see the places where the things happened" (Student, 13)

Just like the holocaust, the school has been the main hub for discussions concerning the Slave trade, although such discussions have been going on in various homes and among peers. Discussions about the slave trade are mostly held in history classes in the senior high school in Ghana. In the Junior High Schools in Ghana, such discussions are held in social studies classes where students are introduced to the arrival of Europeans in the Gold Coast (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 6). Even more the teaching of the slave trade is not taught as a unit on its own but falls under "Colonization and National Development", and treated as one of the negative effects of colonization. All the respondents indicated the format for teaching slave trade and history was story telling. Meaning if a student did not pursue history at the Secondary or Tertiary levels, this is all that a student would ever learn about the slave trade in schools.

In most cases too, especially at the secondary levels where some students actually learn about the slave trade in depth, students do not visit slave trade sites like the museum or the castles. Thus, the schools only teach the slave trade in abstract and do not facilitate learning through visits to the museums. It is only a few privileged students who have the opportunity to visit such sites in the Senior High Schools. In some cases, the students are incapable of affording the cost, which comes with visiting such sites. According to a respondent who comes from the northern region of Ghana, "...where I attended Senior High School was a little bit far from the slave centers so we never visited such places, we just heard about it in class" (Student, 13). This submission seems to

suggest that, history educators have sidelined other forms of memorials that tell the story of the slave trade and have always visited only the slave forts and castles, forgetting that there exist inland slave markets such as Assin Manso in the Central Region and Salaga in the Northern Region of Ghana, about which students know almost next to nothing.

Data from our respondents also suggests that discussions about the slave trade in Senior High Schools are one-sided and Afrocentric; consistently reflecting sympathy for Africans while pushing the blame on Europeans for enslaving Africans. Indeed, such has been the narrative and the respondents have rightly pointed out African complicity that in most cases it was Africans who went inland to capture slaves to be Transshipped to the new world. In fact, some states such as Akwamu went as far as capturing its own citizens to be enslaved. Daaku has described such an episode as “national suicide” (Daaku, 1972, p. 241) however such cases of African complicity are seldom discussed in the Senior High Schools.

Intentions for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust and Slave Trade

Although students have a negative perception about the Holocaust, they generally agree that Holocaust is worthy of study. Just like the importance of studying any historical phenomenon, the general idea expressed was that studying the Holocaust would let students know about the atrocities which happened in the past, the conditions within which they emerged and its effects. This was not to suggest that just knowing about the Holocaust would mean the end of atrocities in the modern world but knowing about it, they acknowledged, is the first and prudent step of preventing such a thing from happening in the future. A respondent mentioned “it’s really an important topic to teach and I think it’s a big part of German history and I think you have to teach it Germany [sic]” “it’s good to talk about it-the past- so that this time (our generation) to understand...how horrible it can be and what humans can do and it’s important to discuss this” (Student, 12)

In the Ghanaian context, it is believed that the intention for teaching and learning slave trade is to enable students understand one of numerous mechanisms of the creation of black diaspora throughout the New World and Europe. A respondent mentioned,

...Our perception is when we say you are from Europe; you ought to have a light skin colour, so when we see Europeans been black it raises a lot of questions to us. So, we are curious to find out why people will come from Brazil, Jamaica and you see them being black as us. So, the History master said that it was as a result of the slave trade. So, we learn the slave trade just to know that there was one-time Africans were taken to Europe and that is why we find people in Europe being black. So, in a way, he was just trying to help us understand why we have black people in Europe (Student, 6).

Again, discussions about the slave trade is to enable students have a fair understanding of the beginning of the current state of development in Europe, Africa and the New World- a development which has been dictated by the Africa’s trade relation with Europe and the New World through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The inhumane aspect of this economic phenomenon has been condemned to show the triumph of humanistic values of freedom and liberty over economic interest (profit and capital) so that such a crime against humanity should not repeat itself.

What is the Reaction of People to Discussing the Holocaust and the Slave Trade?

A phenomenon like the Holocaust is likely to ignite different reactions among different people in different generations. The reactions of the Germans during and immediately after the event would not be the same as the reaction of Jews today. Urban has argued that people in Germany’s reaction towards the Holocaust has been, over the years, influenced by official public events by the Government (for instance the Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January) and

public discourse through media outlets (Urban, 2008, pp. 79 - 80). When our respondents from Germany was asked about how people (both Germans and non-Germans) reacted to the Holocaust, there were varying responses. Some Germans felt uncomfortable with the role of their ancestors in the Holocaust and thus showing some signs of regret. They also stated that things have changed now and that feeling of guilt is not as it was some years back. One remarked that, “it’s not too difficult and something easy. After this time there was a lot of reflection and talking about this topic and dialogue and protest between Germans and the victims-the generation of the victims- the Jews and the Germans have the responsibility to talk and remember this time [sic].”

Other German students also cited feeling of weariness as a reaction of some Germans when the Holocaust is discussed. This reaction is based on the fact that there have been too much talking and teaching about the Holocaust. One student of German origins, studying History and German Phonology mentioned that “...there will be Germans that they (sic) will say that; we don’t talk enough about it and there will be Germans that will tell you that, it should be enough now, so there are different, different levels on the topic, different views.” For non-Germans who are not Jews, such as Africans, it was said that because of the lack of knowledge on the subject, it was not important to them and thus not offensive. As expressed clearly by a respondent

“I think for many people it’s not that important. I think when you go to Africa, it is not present because it is not part of African history and that’s the reason why it is not offensive”. “...it’s very difficult ...because everything Jewish person is saying about Holocaust should be okay for me [sic]. Because I don’t have to tell people who suffer so much...” (Student, 14)

She also pointed out one reaction by Germans; equating the German Holocaust to what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians, as a sort of justification.¹ According to her, such perceptions and way of thinking are “a problem in the German society.” (Student,14)

Reaction to the Slave Trade however varies. How some Africans would react towards the slave trade would be different from how some Europeans would react to it. On the face value, African reaction to this phenomenon is one of self-pity while European general reaction is a sense of guilt and remorse for their ancestors’ role in the slave trade. It would however seem that after a series of in-depth studies on the subject, such a general view diminishes. Some African students have been able to do away with the self-pity reaction and have concluded that, It wasn’t actually the Europeans alone, although they triggered it to start, but then, Africans also did their best in selling their own people, so is like when you become an Historian or a history student you appreciate the fact of delving deeper into the issue to understand it more than the “ordinary man” who at least doesn’t have any fair knowledge or idea in History (Student, 6).

Nonetheless, the inhumane conditions and treatment meted out to slaves inevitably forms the emotional aspect of people’s reaction, be it Africans or Europeans. This is especially evident when students are taken to the dungeons of the various castles. Some cannot hold but shed some tears. Also, even Africans who still have self-pity and solely blame Europeans for the atrocities of the slave Trade have seldom resorted to violence against Europeans to retaliate the evils of the slave trade. The latter point might be an indication of how well history educators and stakeholders have handled discussions about the slave trade that it is a phenomenon, which ought not to happen again.

Conclusion

In a current dispensation where pluralist and diverse societies exist, history teaching goes beyond narrating stories to learners where it is accepted as a “master narrative”, thus a narrative of pride and pain. History should rather be taught in such a way to enable learners vigorously reflect both

¹ Urban has made the point that “the Arab-Israeli conflict has nothing in common with the Holocaust” (Urban, 2008, p. 84).

on the past by creating history and on the present in their everyday lives and their societies. The same holds true for memory culture. Indeed, the culture of memory sustenance forms an important part of the Ghanaians and Germans history, and has gradually assumed the use of different avenues to achieve it. The need to remember and embrace the past is very present through text or monuments. In Germany as well as Ghana several monuments are available to represent the holocaust and slave trade pasts. These have become necessary because historical text is not enough to appreciate the nature of historical events such as the holocaust and slave trade. As concluded by our respondents, visits to these sites gives one a feeling of what really happened.

However, museums and memorial site cannot solely provide the whole story, hence the use of text and classroom discussions to complement the story presented in monuments. Yet these texts and classroom discussions can sometimes be misleading especially when much of the history is neglected or misconstrued. An example can be the neglect of the African contribution in the slave trade by some historians. In the case of the holocaust, most texts and discussions have also over concentrated on Jews as victims of the holocaust, while neglecting others like the Noma, Sinti and black Africans. Tour guides who also, in most cases, narrate these events in a linear way and make judgments that are not needed also exacerbate this problem. Therefore a combined use of discussions and monument visits are ideal to embrace the slave trade and holocaust past.

In Ghana, one major problem illuminated by this paper is the direction of invitation to visit slave trade museums towards Africans in the diaspora and not Africans even in the local communities. This kind of publicity suggests that the slave trade museums and memorials are not relevant for the local people. However, the relevance of putting up these slave trade monuments are to show to all that the slave trade chronicles are an important part of the history of the people, and it is only in embracing it that the people can develop.

Unlike the monuments and museums in Germany, the unavailability of self-help devices in Ghanaian slave trade museums means that visitors have to rely solely on tour guides for information. Unfortunately, the narratives from tour guides do not give room for analysis due to constraint in time, amongst others. However, compared with German memorials, which have self-help devices like videos and audios, visitors have more time to think through and analyze information available and make their own conclusions. Despite the argument that, these technological innovations may reduce the seriousness of these events, the respondents indicated that these monuments, no matter how technologically advanced they are, still present the horror of the holocaust and increases interest in learning about the past.

Comparing the use of museums and memorials on the holocaust and the slave trade in Germany and Ghana respectively, responses from students largely suggested that Ghanaians schools teach the slave trade abstractly and do not encourage visiting museums. In Germany however, these museums are often visited severally from primary education to the tertiary level. Efforts towards making sure that Ghanaians are exposed to such a history especially through museum visits are important.

Different views exist to suggest on the one hand that, these monuments are too many, while on the other hand it is suggested that they are inadequate. The same can be said for student's discussing it in school. These events do not get less horrifying no matter how many times they are discussed in school. However, in Germany there are different views as to how frequently the holocaust is discussed. While some German schools and teachers discuss the holocaust frequently and in-depth others do not. In the case of Ghana, in teaching and discussing the slave trade in school, the general perception is that the curriculum needs to teach it in depth, as it is barely mentioned as part of a topic. It is suggested that, efforts must also be made to apply historical empathy when teaching these phenomena to allow for students to embrace it, as it helps to draw a clear line between historical events and the present.

That said, it is important to reiterate that embracing the slave trade and holocaust pasts are a very important part of Germans and Ghanaians. Most university students appreciate the existence

of monuments and museums, and the opportunity it offers in schools to discuss these topics. However, the way that these monuments are presented and the way these topics are discussed in schools create considerably questions when it comes to understanding these historical events and embracing them.

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