

Africans Americans Team Up To Build in Africa

Written by Robert ID4374
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On May 22nd, 2008, a New York Delegation of volunteers from Iona College participated in an official welcoming and opening ceremony in Ghana during a joint effort to build a school and medical facility in the impoverished village of Wadie Adwumakasie in Kumasi. Donald Y. Brown, the grandson of Ghana's First President Kwame Nkrumah, led the delegation of Iona College students from New Rochelle, NY. The ceremony marked the first phase of his extensive project to build a school and medical facility in Wadie-Adumakasie.

Local and international press turned out for the historic event, which is the beginning of an extensive good works project by Brown and Iona College. "We have African and Americans working together to create better opportunities in education and health for the Ghanaian people," says Dr. Brown. "When we all work together, we create a better world for the future."

Brown, the president and founder of The Education Group, has big shoes to fill. Kwame Nkrumah is credited with bringing independence to Ghana after decades of British rule. Inspired by his grandfather as well as his activist father, Donald Austin Brown Sr. (Kwabena Brown), Brown has found his own niche in helping to advance those in need, especially in his homeland. His tool of activism: education. Brown, a New Rochelle, New York resident, has spent more than 11 years in education as a faculty member, coordinator and academic administrator.

Born in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, Brown left in 1976, in order to receive a diagnosis and subsequent treatment for his rare blood disease, hemophilia. It would have been near impossible to get the medical attention needed in Kumasi, where most of the residents, who on average earn just \$2,200 annually, live well below the poverty line. Brown's father was the illegitimate first son of Nkrumah.

When President Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, he was forced to live in exile. Nkrumah was educated in Ghana and later studied in the United States. It was in the States that he met with influential Pan-Africanists. It was then that he became fully imbued with the spirit of Pan-Africanism and became very active with the Pan-African movement. In fact, in 1945 he established the fifth and final, Pan-African Congress, a series of meetings that addressed the issues facing Africa due to European colonization of much of the continent.

"So, in a way, my grandfather was the first link between continental Africa and Africans in the Diaspora," says Brown. In 1976, Brown, then just six years old, migrated to the United States

with his mother for medical attention. During his treatment he received numerous blood transfusions and contracted Hepatitis A, B and C, which compromised his liver. Today, Brown continues today to battle liver disease. As if this challenge wasn't enough, in 1985, Brown was involved in a severe automobile accident that subsequently required him to have three total knee replacements, a shoulder replacement and two additional surgeries. Despite the medical hardships however, Brown persevered and earned a Masters in Education, but soon Brown's life and career were going to make a drastic turn.

After 31 years, Brown, who was then suffering from a severe bout of chronic hepatitis, returned to Ghana for a one-time visit, to reunite with family. Overwhelmed by the spirit and determination of the people and simultaneously outraged at the deplorable conditions in which Wadie-Adumakasie villagers were living, Brown resolved to remain longer than was scheduled, and devise a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to benefit his native land. He realized that most effective way to do that was through education. So he set out to build an educational establishment and an international school.

"I brainstormed with my associates in education and social services and to think about how this might unfold," recalls Brown. Soon Brown had many people on board to help make his dream happen. His Godfather, Chief Nana Osei Whedie, has allocated 50 acres of village land for Brown to begin developing an international school, still in the planning stages.

The first phase included the building of a preschool and playground. In a partnership with his Alma mater, Iona College, Brown has been able to raise some funds to provide building materials and books. The village volunteered the labor and the oversight. Every step of the development of the project brings Africans closer to helping Africa become more stable," notes Brown.

On May 22, Brown returned to the village and site with the delegation of Iona students to complete the building of the preschool. Brown also aims to partner with Ghanaian churches, community leaders and government officials to expand the primary school and secondary schools and eventually build the campus of the international school.

It is a massive undertaking. The plan includes: Providing medical supplies, a full-time doctor and nurse in the village as part of the (CIP), which aims to provide employment for local residents. In subsequent phases Brown wants to provide computers and computer training as well as institute The Global Correspondence Course Program with Master-level teachers via the

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internet. A priority is to provide on campus housing for teachers, who in rural Ghana would otherwise have great distances to travel to get to work. During Phase IX Brown's plan includes the construction of a Build Wellness Center, which will offer health care, nutrition, and general advice for community residents. Brown says he'll be satisfied after he is able to build a church and ameliorate the community's existing infrastructure-from plumbing and electricity to general construction in the village.

Brown is following in the well-intentioned footsteps of his grandfather, President Nkrumah, who championed the course of the poor and the disenfranchised citizens of the world regardless of race, origin and the color of one's skin. During his life, Brown's grandfather sought the global emancipation of Africans in the Diaspora, so that they may participate in the development of the continent of Africa. Now, Brown continues this legacy by providing the vehicle for which the young children of Ghana can improve their country through education.

For more information on how you can get involved call the Education Group at 914.235.5800.