

Courtney Dawkins
ENEX101
Anne Meyer
3/2/08

Ghana Have an Education

The media plays a significant role in our perceptions of other nations. Various countries believe that Americans are not that intelligent, Indians are fairly smart and Asians are known as the most intelligent of them all. You can go through all the countries and there is a stereotype for each one. What typecasts come to mind when you hear the word Africa?

Yellow eyes, charcoal black skin, large bellies on small babies with tiny arms, a low birth rate with a high death rate, disease, and malnutrition, these are the first traits I usually think of when I hear the word Africa. Out of all the stereotypes, I feel sure that there isn't anything said about their edification. In Africa to go to school is like participating in a chronic scholarship where competition remains rigid for the duration of your educational career.

A young man stands in front of an older image of himself. On the take off strip, a father speaks to his son about control, discipline, and respect. Accepting the wisdom and guidance from his father the young man hugs him tightly and boards a plane to America. Carrying his luggage and his father's expectations upon his shoulders, the young man gazes across the uneven ground of his homeland. Silently, he prays that in America he will be met with success and that his education will take him higher than the mountain peaks of Kilimanjaro.

Courtney Dawkins
ENEX101
Anne Meyer
3/2/08

On average one out of six American students drop out of school each month. On average one out of three students skip school each day. On average only about forty percent of the United States population decides to go to college. So can you imagine that while we sit at our desks with our paper and pencil, in West Africa, there are kids just like us whom are fighting for their education?

Born in the great city of Ghana, Kofi Abaido (A-bay-do), a junior student attending the University of Montana sits in front of me. He waits expectantly with his unkempt hair, designer baggy blue jeans, and broken English accent. Sitting in an upright chair, he leans far away from the back; his words are unhurried, his mien is relaxed, and his sentences completely contradict his body language. "Every person in Ghana is trying to be something; if you slack off a little you get left behind. Basically it's like survival of the fittest."

Gazing around his room I see that the floors look like they had been recently mopped. His shoes were in racks, his clothes were on hangers, and a comfortable looking couch was set against the wall facing his lofted bed. All in all, Kofi seemed to be a simple and fairly organized person. I suspected though that his coming to America was anything but simple and certainly not so tidy.

In earlier years he had visited the states in his high school career, and decided after his return home that America was the place to go to college. "Dollas" or money as he says is not something that is plentiful in Ghana. "Money is not a very easy thing to come up with, because for every U.S. dollar that is \$10,000 of my currency," Kofi explains. Coming from a middle class family allows him to study in the states. Though scholarships help with his education it is his father who is the hero at the end of the day,

Courtney Dawkins

ENEX101

Anne Meyer

3/2/08

paying two-thirds of Kofi's education. His father doesn't see it as a burden but as an investment in his son, for what he sees in the future. If Kofi can graduate from college with a degree, it was a good investment.

Being the social butterfly that he is, Kofi naturally partook in extracurricular activities participating in every international club, including being an ASUM senator on the Student Government. If you go online you would see his internet blog on the UM website homepage. He put good use to his vocal chords and joined the choir at the Lutheran Church and Methodist Church in Missoula.

While summer vacation is a time for leisure, jobs, and the beach for most American students, such is not the case in Kofi's place of birth. "We don't have a Taco Bell or Shopko and say I'm going to work. The only legitimate work is when you graduate from college and get a degree. You have to set yourself apart from others to get the kind of job you want." It takes twenty-one days to break a habit, but studying is more than just a routine, it has become a way of life for Kofi.

Kofi points out that the education system here in the United States is less intense than in his competitive country. "Here you can pretty much live off of Burger King and still have a life. If you don't have a degree in Ghana you are screwed." I don't believe that it is our education system that has helped Kofi come to this heinous conclusion. I believe that it is how students, no matter the work load will always find time for themselves and their friends.

There are parallels in parenting from across the world: They will pressure you and stay on you about your studies, and when they call they hope that you're still studying. Students come from different places all around the world, but it doesn't matter the

Courtney Dawkins

ENEX101

Anne Meyer

3/2/08

address or populace, there is a common denominator of parents innately wanting their

children to accomplish more than what they had achieved in their own lives.