



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Ghana Gateways **Name:** Xylecia Genesis Taylor

Other Team Members:

Program:

Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Ghana

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: My project was designed for travel to Agogo, Ghana. The goal and intent was to participate in harvesting bio-diesel fuel and to provide voluntary English instruction. As I have growing interests in environmental protection and conservation, I decided to travel to the Youth Institute of Science and Technology (YIST) in Agogo. This school was founded in 2006 to combat illiteracy rates among Ghanaian women. At present, it is a coeducational institute. I was inspired to go to Ghana because of its rich culture and history. After selecting Ghana as my research destination, I was pleased to learn that it was to be a stopping point for President Obama's tour in July. This further impressed upon me the global and international significance of Ghana as a leading African nation. Furthermore, I was inspired to observe how the school founders and faculty foster academic excellence among its students through a science, math, and technology based curriculum. I was eager to learn how Ghanaians sustain their lives, education, and economy, despite impoverished conditions. I learned that the students progress at rapid rates, despite disparaging conditions, such as continued loss of electrical power during the school day and lack of technological resources. Teachers are overwhelmingly committed to student achievement, despite receiving marginal compensation. I observed student teacher relationships within and outside of the classroom. I found that discipline and character education are integral components of the curriculum. I was inspired by the strong discipline of the teachers and the immediate responsiveness and diligence of the students. While a small population of the students had limited skills in English communications, a larger percentage of my students spoke and wrote with great effectiveness and English proficiency. Because the students were more skilled in English than what I had previously expected, I was able to provide a more critical approach to English usage. Therefore, I spent most of my time facilitating classes that prompted students to use their English to develop critical journals and learning reflections. School co-founder, Akosua Boateng, developed my work assignments which included conducting teacher observations, coaching and mentoring YIST staff, facilitating classes on journal writing, preparing students for parent programs, and assisting in supervision of student activities.

Career Impact: This experience has helped me to become more sensitive and grateful about the resources and supplies that I have to support my instruction. However, it has challenged me to become more adept and conscientious in my use of these supplies. Nonetheless, I am in awe of how the Ghanaians seemingly have less resources and materials, but the growth patterns, cognitive development, and academic pursuits of the students at YIST are sure to prepare them for competition and ownership in global and domestic markets. As I hiked through the rainforests at Kakum National Park in Cape Coast, I gained a deeper understanding of Ghana's efforts to utilize and protect earth with vigilance and integrity. Furthermore, this experience has increased my personal and professional vigilance for sustaining life by employing strategies and processes that do not denigrate our earth, but rather yield to earth's call for protection. I am more adamant about improving my personal living habits, and inspiring my students to consider their individual habits in order that we may embark upon our own Go Green initiative at our local school site, as well as in our homes and communities.

Classroom/Community Impact: Presently, I have a bulletin board which highlights my fellowship experiences. This board is accessible to students and staff members of my school site. My students recently read, Dear Ghana, which is a leveled text in my district's reading series. I used my photographs and fellowship experiences to make this lesson more engaging and authentic. Furthermore, I will be serving on a site based committee of teachers who will facilitate a deeper understanding of environmental protection and conservationism throughout the school. Inspired by my fellowship, I have begun to compose and perform instructional music that mainstreams issues of human sensitivity and responsiveness to our social and physical world. I have begun to use this music to enhance social studies and science lessons for my third grade students. A recent conversation about my Ghana fellowship, revealed that a site colleague, and former employee for NASA, is interested in collaborations that would extend my fellowship as a service project for students in our school. Moreover, my school benefits from my direct link to engineers and teachers, domestic and abroad, involved in bio-diesel educational initiatives.

Open Response: I have invited a Ghanaian bio-diesel fuel engineer to visit my school site in December. I am eager to develop a partnership with the Bio-Diesel Racing Alliance, as well as have members to visit our school to provide support and insights for helping us to become improved stewards of our natural resources. I am planning to take a group of students to the Atlanta Motor Speedway to observe bio-diesel fuel racing. My fellowship experiences has generated much conversation within my school, as it was

featured on the home page of the Atlanta Public Schools website. Parents of all third graders were informed of my travels and research objectives via newsletter. My goal, is that parents become active participants in our goal to live more energy-efficient and environmentally healthy lives. In November, my students will develop and implement strategies for reducing excessive electrical, water, and gas consumption in their homes. They will learn to read and interpret utility bills, as well as discuss the implications of excessive use of natural and sustainable resources. My students will also be able to develop pen pal relationships with students from YIST.

Quote: After about two days, my consumption with any perceived lacks was replaced with awe and appreciation for the students' fascinating academic capacities, their sensitivities to the world around them, and their vigilant pursuits for excellence.

Photos:

Xylecia holding cocoa nut in front of Kakum National Park

Xylecia, Alecia, and Emani explore the African rainforest.

Xylecia, daughter Alecia, and YIST students at the school site in Agogo

Xylecia teaches and English course for grade two at YIST.

Xylecia with fellow YIST instructors

Xylecia and a PTA parent member for YIST in Garden City, Kenyase

Xylecia prepares to enter the slave dungeons at Cape Coast Castle.

Xylecia teaches English to a 2nd grade class at YIST.