

January 2016

Takougang, Joseph. *Cameroonian Immigrants in the United States: Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014. 143pp.

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## Recommended Citation

Laosebikan, Olanipekun. "Takougang, Joseph. *Cameroonian Immigrants in the United States: Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014. 143pp." *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2015): 114-116.  
<https://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol2/iss1/20>

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**Takougang, Joseph. *Cameroonian Immigrants in the United States: Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014, xxi + 143 pp.**

Between the census of 2000 and 2010, the African immigrant population in the United States nearly doubled in size from 881,300 to almost 1.6 million. As recent census numbers continue to show, African immigration to the United States remains dynamic and fast changing. While East and West Africa remain dominant as points of origin for African immigrants in the United States, other regions of Africa, in particular Central Africa, are gaining ground, increasing in a very short period their presence and precipitating a need to broaden the conversation around African immigration in the United States. In *Cameroonian Immigrants in the United States*, Joseph Takougang provides an important guide to understanding the unique development of the Cameroonian Diaspora in the United States. He analyzes Cameroonian immigration and the circumstances that have shaped it as one of the most recent and fastest growing immigration waves from the African continent.

Divided into five chapters, the first chapter of this well-timed book addresses the post-colonial immigration efforts of Africans to the United States. Here Takougang acknowledges the important role of African students during the colonial and the immediate post-colonial periods as progenitors of African immigration. He also underscores the failure of African leaders in the post-independence period to live up to their promises of political and economic prosperity. In one country after another, the devastating failure after independence of the neo-colonial experiment in governance prompted many in the early 1980s and, most noticeably, in the 1990s to flee abroad to among other destinations, the United States. Cameroon, however, as Takougang shows in Chapter 2, for a short period, would prove the exception to the pattern of socio-economic and political strife and conflict that wracked the African continent. Contrary to the popular image widely publicized in the early 1980s of the failing African state, Cameroon enjoyed both political and economic stability well into the late 1980s, a fact attributable, as the author notes, to “the economic pragmatism and liberal policies of the government, the dynamism of its private class and the nation’s remarkable political stability” (17). The boons of this period, however, would be temporary, as they were influenced by a decline in export products, increasing corruption, as well as stringent reform policies mandated by Structural Adjustment Programs. Cameroonians began to look abroad, first to former colonial metropolises in Britain and France, but with the passage of restrictive immigration policies in these countries, the United States became the destination of choice.

In the last three chapters of his book, Takougang addresses the adjustment of Cameroonian immigrants in the United States, supplementing his analysis with first-hand accounts about their experiences. Many will appreciate the inclusion of these stories as the stories of Cameroonian students, who arrived in the immediate post-colonial period (up to 1990), echo the hardships suffered and sacrifices made often described in the narratives of other African students during this period. As Takougang undoubtedly intended, the further addition of the stories of Cameroonian immigrants of the post-1990 population wave allows for important comparisons between these two generations of Cameroonian immigrants. Here Takougang shows that whereas the early generation of immigrants was fairly consistently students, male, and from the English-speaking region of the country, there is more gender, regional, and ethnic diversity among the post-1990 generation. There is also less of an adjustment period for this generation due to established networks of friends and family already living and settled in the United States.

The last two chapters explore the struggles and challenges Cameroonian immigrants face in their efforts to make “home” and “community” in the United States while maintaining important ties and bonds with their homeland. Takougang documents the evolution of community organizations in helping to build community, beginning with the establishment in the 1970s of student organizations like the Cameroon Students Association (CAMSA), which would influence the establishment of future national as well as ethnic and alumni organizations, all focused on helping to preserve social, political, and economic bonds and relationships with Cameroon. These bonds are further reinforced, as Takougang shows, with the mutually dependent relationships that remittances exemplify for Cameroonians. The money sent home helps to alleviate the strain for many of a persistent struggle to access even the most basic necessities, while providing those abroad with a sense of responsibility as well as prestige and “celebrity status” that can be accessed on return visits back home.

No work is without limitations, and this work is no exception. It certainly could have benefited from a more rigorous accounting of sources, particularly the interviews utilized, and a more detailed explanation of the push factors that helped to spur the post-1990s immigration wave of Cameroonian immigrants. These few issues, however, should not at all detract from the significance of this book as one of the first comprehensive efforts to analyze Cameroonian immigrants in the United States. It will stand, I hope, as a foundational cornerstone of scholarship on both the Cameroonian and African immigrant Diasporas in the United States.

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