

What is Nation Formation?

Whether one considers the American Colonization Society (1817), Denmark Vessey's exploits (1822), President Abraham Lincoln's Chiriqui Plan (1863), or Marcus Garvey's efforts from 1916-25, there is a long line of interest in, and action toward, nation formation for Afrodescendants. Each of these efforts was designed to settle Afrodescendants outside of the United States because it appeared impossible for Blacks to achieve equality with Whites. The expectation was that Afrodescendants could produce a better quality of life for themselves by controlling and managing their own affairs. Today, political, educational, economic, and social equality between Whites and Blacks remains elusive. Is now an appropriate juncture to reconsider nation formation for Afrodescendants?

Why Nation Formation?

Although Barack Obama serves as President of the United States and a considerable proportion of Black Americans have filtered up into pseudo middle-class status, the majority of Black Americans continue to suffer from severe income and wealth inequality. We say "pseudo middle-class status" because, while some Blacks have achieved income equality with Whites, they still lag far behind on a net worth or wealth basis. The official 2011 unemployment rate for Black Americans was in the 15% range; however, the unofficial rate hovered around 30%. In certain locals, the unemployment rate for Black males over 50 years of age exceeds 50%. Given these conditions, Afrodescendants find it difficult to build satisfactory lives and experience great difficulty meeting their basic needs.

Moreover, in the 21st century with knowledge and technology growing exponentially, Afrodescendants stand on the brink of obsolescence and irrelevance. Our knowledge and circumstances cause us to rush toward extinction, as opposed to growing in excellence. Therefore, one of the most appropriate strategic moves to avoid obsolescence and extinction is to initiate a nation formation effort. In our own new nation—however defined—we will face improved prospects for building our own economy and culture that can sustain us and move us toward future excellence. Are there other reasons why you think nation formation for Afrodescendants should be the order of the day?

How and Where of Nation Formation?

The most critical question when entertaining Afrodescendant nation formation is "How should it be undertaken?" Heretofore, nation formation efforts involved relocating outside of the United States—mainly to the African continent. One reason for the failure of these efforts was the prohibitive costs associated with relocating across such a vast distance. We should not repeat this error today. Therefore, Afrodescendants should consider forming their own nation right where they are—in United States territory. The current reverse migration to the South by many Black Americans could portend the "colonization" of certain areas within the American South. Alternatively, Afrodescendants could work to form a tight virtual community in our current locations in which we create cultural, political, and economic linkages akin to that of a nation. Finally, Afrodescendants could decide to form a nation in some location in the Americas—just a short drive (Canada or Central America) or short boat ride away (the Caribbean). How and where would you like to see nation formation occur?

When Should the Nation Form?

Arguably, there is no time like the present, but current conditions do not bode well for immediate nation formation by Afrodescendants. If Black Americans seek to establish a virtual nation with cultural, social, political, and economic linkages, then movement toward nation formation could begin quite soon. However, if nationhood in a separate physical territory is to be pursued, then Afrodescendants must undertake a lengthy process of organization and planning before a nation state can be established. In any event, now may be an acceptable time to begin a dialogue to determine the how, what, where, and when of nation formation for Afrodescendants. Are you prepared to join a virtual or actual nation formation effort today?