Diaspora/Homeland Relations in a Comparative Context

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Birthright Israel
Slavery/Heritage Tourism in Ghana
How is Taglit different from the growing field of diasporic homeland tourism?
“Birthright Israel is becoming normative—a rite of passage for Diaspora young adults.”
Leonard Saxe

Accessed May 11, 2012
Can the field of diasporic homeland tourism provide some important framing for this new Jewish ritual?
Contemporary touristic travels provide grounding for populations who see themselves as American outsiders
Tourists simplify homelands in order to understand and shape domestic identities—but are we comfortable with some of these outcomes?
Assumed psychological need for the adopted child to return to where he or she ‘really’ belongs” (Yngvesson 2005:26).

Cut off from their ancestral past (Zerubavel 2011)
As a proud mother of four adopted children and three biological children, the only question that offends me is when people ask, “Which are your real children?” My standard reply is, “Which child looks imaginary to you?” Alana Sisk

“culture bites”
(Anagnost 2000:413)
"I couldn't help but think about the stark contrast between this kind of life and the life Allie is living with us in the US. Not that one is better than the other -- I'm sure there's peace and simplicity to that rural lifestyle -- but that she just didn't look like she belonged. Even though she's Chinese, she's so American." Karen
“I grew up in the South Bronx, the only thing we knew about black people is that we were niggers. Shut up nigger; sit down nigger, that’s all we knew. If we were to be informed about black people they were always the indigenous people, no brassiere, half dressed, looking ashy, so we thought that to be true. That’s all we saw, we were none the wiser…I didn’t have any expectations about Africa, I didn’t know what to expect as far as my Motherland. I am just overwhelmed, I personally was lied to… I am leaving here with a pride that I have never known before.”

Jennifer
A lot of the things we saw in African society made a lot of sense. What is a spoon other than your hand cupped together? What is a fork besides your fingers that are separated to bring things up? There are certain things you say oh that’s so backwards, no it’s so simple. Life doesn’t have to be as complicated as you make it. Anita
For once in my life I don’t feel like a minority. I feel like I fit in and belong here. Where I grew up there...were a lot of people who were prejudiced against us and for the first time I feel I can be proud and admit I am a Jew. Jackie
We know what it’s like to be the only kid eating matzo during Passover, or the only kid who is not looking forward to Santa Claus

- Jacob
[Birthright] instills more of a Jewish duty, it makes you feel obligated to Israel. Because Israel is a sanctuary in case you are ever persecuted so it’s good to keep it open for all nations of Jews. I think it gives you more of a sense of duty than instilling pride. Michael
It really is so important for the Jewish people considering our history and the security blanket that we need. What really impacted me or mesmerized me about Israel is that its there, it’s always there, and you don't need to use it if you don't want to…it IS always there. And I love that about it… that’s why fighting for Israel as an entity and a land [is important]. Its sort of sad how only a few countries see it this way and the majority of people and political leaders and liberals are completely opposed to this view. 

Amy
I think it exists to get the word out about Israel, give people the opportunity to see it first hand and not just hear about it or read about it. It is important since there are so few Jews in the world. Ross
“The world is very much against Israel and I love how Israel reacts to that”
- Amy
Diaspora and Tourism
What can be done with the existing framework of Taglit to foster a celebration of the beauty of contemporary Jewish variegation and international and historic Jewish contributions?