Abstract

African Diaspora in the Gulf:

Historical Community, Assimilated Identity and Socio- Cultural Influence

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This presentation is about the African presence in the Arabian Gulf. The focus will be on the Historical community created by people of African origin in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is a relatively young country as the union of seven emirates established the nation in 1971. Unlike other nations, the UAE is a brave and transparent country which is evident in its quantum leap in preserving social justice by endorsing and reinforcing human rights committee as a separate yet inseparable part of its official establishments. Since the early days of the union, the leadership strived to acknowledge and strengthen ties and elements bonding people on both the social and the historical grounds. Therefore, on the social level coastal, inland groups as well as People of African Origin found ways of harmoniously co-exist which resulted in their increasing this self-belonging and loyalty vis-à-vis their positive contribution to economy and cultural aspects of day to day life.

 The presentation is an attempt to illustrate and analyze the legacy of the old days when people of African origin became an integral component of the Gulf population. Additionally, it stives to illustrate aspect Africanity and its presence in the Gulf and highlights enabling and positive environment found in UAE society enabled and eased the historical community of early Africans to integrate, assimilate and emerge into a new Gulf identity. Although the African heritage was not the focus when forging a new national UAE identity however, there are numerous examples of the African influences sustained overtime and are still alive and well in various social settings and functions.

The aim of this presentation is to explore and highlight the role People of African Origin played in historical events, economic growth, social interaction, spiritual and religious practices and in the construction of a distinctive UAE national identity in the post oil discovery period. Furthermore, it emphasizes and compares and contrasts similarities found in both cultures allowing for a special interactions between social and cultural themes, strategies and discuss how concepts of identity, historical community, local culture, and homeland were created, shifted, and reconstructed in the UAE.

In conclusion, it is evident that UAE social and cultural setting offered people of African Origin an environment through which the exemplified their mental toughness, ability to adapt, long term goals, visions, and plans. The assimilation and complete integration of the historical community of people of African origin is visible as they contributed immensely to the economic, social, and cultural growth of the Gulf region. Today, like their fellow nationals, people of African Origin share mutual pride and loyalty in a country that embrace them without division, discrimination, or prejudice. It is, indeed, a unique experience and a successful model with positive outcomes that others should learn from.