Social Inclusion
2025 • Volume 13 • Article 9033
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.9033

cogitatio

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Dual Marginalisation and the Demand for Dual Citizenship: Negotiating "At Homeness" Among Diaspora Liberians

Franka Vaughan

School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia

Correspondence: Franka Vaughan (vaughan.f@unimelb.edu.au)

Submitted: 25 July 2024 **Accepted:** 8 October 2024 **Published:** 8 January 2025

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Solidarity in Diversity: Overcoming Marginalisation in Society" edited by Matthew Mabefam (University of Melbourne), Kennedy Mbeva (University of Cambridge), and Franka Vaughan (University of Melbourne), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/si.i417

Abstract

In Liberia, identity and citizenship have long been contentious, with dual citizenship emerging as a focal point in recent decades. On 22 July 2022, former President George Weah signed an Amendment Law allowing Liberians naturalized abroad to retain citizenship and granting Liberian women the right to confer citizenship to their children, addressing a key demand from diaspora Liberians. This article, based on my doctoral thesis (Vaughan, 2022), examines diaspora Liberians' advocacy for dual citizenship within contemporary debates on citizenship as a strategic institution. Drawing on the "post-exclusive turn" in citizenship (Harpaz & Mateos, 2019), which suggests that individuals often prioritize a premium passport over strong ties to a homeland, the article explores how diaspora Liberians pursue dual citizenship to secure a "true home" in Liberia. This advocacy is fueled by their marginalization both in Liberia, where they face scrutiny over their Liberianness, and in their host countries, where they experience otherness as ethnic minorities. Dual citizenship, for these Liberians, is a strategic path back to belonging in Liberia. This article highlights the intricate interplay between identity and citizenship in Liberia, complicating the strategic citizenship framework by shedding light on the nuanced experiences of diaspora Liberians as they navigate dual marginalization and negotiate belonging. By focusing on these dynamics, the article contributes to the broader debate on citizenship in Africa, an area that remains understudied. Moreover, it reframes discussions on strategic citizenship, particularly in the context of growing inequalities and rising anti-immigrant sentiments.

Keywords

belonging; diaspora Liberians; dual citizenship; home; Liberia; marginalization; strategic citizenship

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, there has been a significant global trend toward accepting and allowing dual citizenship, a shift driven by varying factors, including increased international migration, globalization, and changing attitudes toward national identity and belonging. African states have aligned with this trend, departing from the restrictive policies of the 1960s, when most newly independent African nations strictly prohibited dual citizenship (Manby, 2016). Despite a substantial number of African states permitting dual nationality and allowing individuals to hold dual citizenship under various conditions (Manby, 2016, 2024), African countries and their citizens have remained largely understudied in the literature on dual citizenship (Whitaker, 2011). This article focuses on Liberia, which, until July 2022, enforced the automatic loss of citizenship for any Liberian acquiring foreign citizenship upon adulthood. As a post-conflict society with a history rooted in an Indigenous majority, the emigration of Black American and Afro-Caribbean settlers, and a contemporary context of immigrant communities like the longstanding Lebanese population and a significant diaspora population, Liberia presents a key case for examining the complexities of dual citizenship claims. Sierra Leone also offers a compelling case study (Hale & M'Cormack-Hale, 2018). In Liberia, however, discussions on the country's citizenship regime often center on the contentions over dual citizenship, emphasizing the policy implications for post-war reconstruction and development (Pailey, 2021; Vaughan, 2022).

In this article, I explore the motivations of diaspora Liberians in demanding dual citizenship in their homeland, focusing on their emphasis on the need for a "true home" and a place to belong. Using the framework of "strategic citizenship" (Harpaz & Mateos, 2019), I argue that diaspora Liberians locate this need for a true home within a perception of dual marginalization that they experience in both their host and home countries. I use the term "marginalization" to describe the perceived exclusion and ostracization diaspora Liberians face in both their host and home countries. This encompasses systemic barriers abroad, such as discrimination based on race, immigrant status, and cultural differences, as well as contested belonging in Liberia, where factors like not speaking local languages, lacking a local accent, or not being born in the country contribute to their sense of alienation. The context of this marginalization reflects not only their exclusion from full political and socioeconomic participation but also the complex dynamics of identity, citizenship, and belonging shaped by their transnational existence. Consequently, diaspora Liberians consider access to dual citizenship in Liberia as a *practical strategy* that provides them (and their children) a route back to their true home in Liberia.

Diaspora Liberians' pursuit of dual citizenship in Liberia complicates the strategic citizenship framework, which emphasizes the influence of global inequality on the meaning and value of citizenship over traditional notions of national identity and territorial attachment. Harpaz and Mateos (2019) argue that individuals seek dual citizenship primarily for practical benefits, such as improved mobility, opportunities, and status, rather than ties to a specific homeland. They suggest that citizenship attitudes are shaped more by a country's passport rank in the global hierarchy than by national identity. While the framework is an insightful emerging field, it overlooks the complex experiences of diasporas and their sense of belonging. Additionally, the framework's focus on naturalization in industrialized Western countries fails to address how rising anti-immigrant sentiments may influence dual citizenship claims in contexts outside this dominant narrative, particularly where citizenship is not simply a tool for elites to access premium passports. By examining dual citizenship claims in Liberia, this article contributes to the literature on strategic/dual citizenship by analyzing an understudied African context, highlighting the interplay of identity, belonging, and citizenship claims in a post-conflict society. Drawing on the motivations of diaspora Liberians, the article indicates the

need to take the exclusively host country-focused blinkers off of the theorization of strategic citizenship and consider the possibility in non-traditional cases to draw attention to a much more complex picture of citizenship and belonging.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: I outline the methods employed in the study, followed by a brief overview of dual citizenship studies to underscore the relevance of the strategic citizenship framework. In section four, I highlight key issues foundational to Liberia's longstanding debates over citizenship and belonging. I also explore the July 2022 Amendment Law and the two major dual citizenship proposals that preceded it, illustrating the trajectory toward the allowance of dual citizenship in Liberia. Section five critically examines the complexities of diaspora Liberians' perceived marginalization in both their home and host countries, which underpins their sustained advocacy for dual citizenship, while the concluding section reaffirms the article's key argument highlighting how dual citizenship reflects broader issues of identity, belonging, and exclusion within the Liberian diaspora, and situates these findings within the wider context of strategic citizenship debates and belonging.

2. Methods

This article is based on a multi-year research project that employed a qualitative approach to explore the implications of Liberia's settler-colonial origins on efforts to construct a collective Liberian identity in the post-war era (Vaughan, 2022). I conducted in-depth semi-structured online interviews with 31 key stakeholders over seven months between 2019 and 2020. Following Mayan's (2009) sampling guidelines, participants included representatives of Liberian diaspora organizations such as the All-Liberian Conference on Dual Citizenship (ALCOD), Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), the European Federation of Liberian Associations (EFLA), and the United Liberian Association Ghana (ULAG). Of the 31 participants, nine were representatives from these diaspora groups, while the remaining 22 participants were from civil society, academia, media, and other professional sectors, both within Liberia and the diaspora, who were engaged in debates on citizenship and Liberia's post-conflict development. Together, the participants represented a diverse range of ages, genders, educational backgrounds, income levels, and migration histories. I categorized the participants primarily as either in-country or diasporic, though some participants referenced their ethnicity to emphasize their non-settler background. I also analyzed media commentaries and official documents (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017)—including policy directives, reports, speeches, and press briefings—produced by the Liberian government between 2006 and 2019 that address dual citizenship and diaspora engagement as well as documents provided by ALCOD's leadership. These official documents spanned the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (January 2006–December 2017) and the first year of President George Weah (January 2018–December 2019) and were mostly sourced from the Executive Mansion's website (https://www.emansion.gov.lr).

In this article, however, I focus mostly on how the subjective experiences of diaspora Liberians motivate their claims for dual citizenship in Liberia. In line with Moran's (1999) argument about the contribution of personal and subjective experiences to the understanding of knowledge, I emphasize diaspora participants' lived experiences over conventional cultural interpretations to provide a sense of their perceived marginalization in their host societies and their home country, Liberia. It is worth noting that the study does not treat diaspora Liberians as a monolithic group with a shared pursuit of dual citizenship. Instead, it draws on a sample of participants who viewed dual citizenship as a strategic means of formalizing their belonging

in Liberia. My positionality shaped the research process in significant ways (Vaughan, 2024). First is my outsider status due to my Ghanaian nationality and the physical distance from the field because of Covid-19 restrictions during the data collection period. Secondly, I similarly occupied an insider role as a racialized Black African living in an industrialized Western country as some of the study participants. This dual positionality significantly shaped my relationships with the study participants, facilitated access to certain groups and discussions, and my interpretation of the data (Vaughan, 2022, 2024).

3. On Strategic Citizenship: A Brief Overview

Most studies on dual citizenship have focused on immigrant naturalization in industrialized Western countries, particularly in Western Europe and North America, emphasizing two main arguments (Harpaz & Mateos, 2019). First, these studies show that acceptance of dual citizenship increases the likelihood of naturalization, with variations based on immigrants' countries of origin. Hence, immigrants from low-income countries are significantly more likely to naturalize than those from high-income countries (Bloemraad, 2004, 2006; Skulte-Ouaiss, 2013; Vink et al., 2013, 2019). Second, they examine immigrants' rootedness, suggesting that dual citizens may be less emotionally and politically attached to their new homelands compared to mono-national immigrants, despite often having better economic outcomes (Conway et al., 2008; Mazzolari, 2009; Mügge, 2012; Staton et al., 2007; Yanasmayan, 2015).

When you turn the lens on Africa, dual citizenship research remains notably sparse, with a few notable contributions (Manby, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2007; Nyarko, 2011; Siaplay, 2014; Whitaker, 2011). Significant here is Pailey's (2021) in-depth examination of Liberia's citizenship regime as it underscores dual citizenship as both an opportunity and a source of tension in Africa, particularly in post-conflict societies like Liberia, where issues of loyalty and national identity are deeply intertwined with the legacy of conflict and state (re)building. Nevertheless, the larger research on dual citizenship allowance in Africa and the more general studies focusing on immigrant naturalization in industrialized Western countries often adhere to a top-down normative approach that prioritizes statistical analyses and shifts in policy and legal frameworks. This perspective, while valuable, tends to overlook the nuanced experiences and agency of immigrants themselves, reducing their complex and varied motivations for acquiring dual citizenship to mere numbers and policy changes.

The strategic citizenship framework aims to address this lacuna. It provides a bottom-up approach that highlights individuals' proactive roles in shaping their citizenship choices and outcomes. Harpaz and Mateos (2019) posit that strategic citizenship operates at the intersection of citizenship's persistent centrality in global inequality and the proliferation of avenues for acquiring multiple citizenships. The emergence of citizenship as an asset with instrumental and strategic value means it can be acquired through wealth or other forms of capital and deployed to secure broader socio-economic opportunities and social advancement (Stevens, 2023). The commodification of citizenship (Harpaz & Mateos, 2019) and its consideration as a form of capital facilitating international mobility have contributed to the rise in dual citizenship legitimacy (Harpaz, 2019a, 2019b). The framework offers valuable theoretical and analytical insights into the complexities of acquiring dual citizenship for instrumental purposes (Harpaz, 2019b; Harpaz & Mateos, 2019; Joppke, 2019; Spiro, 2019). By shifting the focus from traditional state-centric (bounded) perspectives on citizenship, and related policy changes, to a deeper exploration of the strategic motivations of immigrants, this framework offers a more nuanced understanding of how and why individuals pursue dual citizenship.

As a regime of mobility and a site of global inequality (Stevens, 2023), strategic citizenship provides a nuanced understanding of individuals' practical value from dual citizenship and how such strategic value is created within national and global stratification systems. Dual citizenship then encompasses legal and institutional frameworks—such as visas, passports, residence permits, and naturalization processes—that regulate individuals' mobility, but it is also a strategic asset facilitating global movement and access to opportunities (Bauböck, 2005, 2019; Harpaz, 2019a, 2019b; Harpaz & Mateos, 2019; Shachar, 2009, 2021). These studies are crucial as they elucidate the context behind the increasing commodification of citizenship. As Harpaz and Mateos (2019) argue, the strategic citizenship approach helps us to better appreciate arguments that citizenship has become post-national (Soysal, 1995), de-ethnicised (Joppke, 2005), or devalued (Spiro, 1997, 2006).

Nevertheless, by centering global inequality in the meaning and value of citizenship, the strategic citizenship framework renders insignificant, or at best, sanitizes the national identity and territorial attachment inherent in traditional conceptions of citizenship. Read this way, diaspora Liberians' longing for a formalized identification in Liberia despite winning the jackpot of acquiring premium passports complicates the framework's utility. As I detail in Section 5, the case of diaspora Liberians' motivations for dual citizenship in their home country reflected in their continual construction of Liberia as their true home shows that premium passports from industrialized Western countries are sometimes insufficient on their own. Certainly, in the current era of right-wing populism and increasing anti-immigrant sentiments, strategic approaches to citizenship are often met with suspicion and hostility. Racialized immigrants' feelings of alienation and lack of belonging are often exacerbated by their treatment as second-class citizens, where social, economic, and political marginalization prevent them from fully integrating into their host societies (Bernal et al., 2022; Jones, 2012). The fact that immigrants face systemic barriers in securing stable employment, accessing quality healthcare, and participating fully in the democratic process is well documented. The very act of migration, while promising opportunities, often comes with the realization that despite legal status or years of residence, societal acceptance can remain elusive. This estrangement can manifest in casual racism, systemic discrimination, and structural inequalities that tend to uphold a hierarchy of belonging. These marginalizations are not unique to diasporic Liberians. Therefore, racialized immigrants' experiences of othering, alienation, and a lack of belonging in their host countries (Hellgren, 2019; Nawyn et al., 2012; Ocampo, 2024; Udah & Singh, 2019; Wessendorf, 2019) reveal a significant limitation of the strategic citizenship framework. In that, it fails to fully account for the enduring significance of national identity and the complex emotional and cultural ties that drive diaspora communities to pursue continual attachments to their home countries, despite possessing passports from more powerful nations.

4. "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here": Liberia in Focus

Citizenship regimes are politicized globally. In Liberia, debates over dual nationality have been particularly prominent in the post-conflict era. Liberia's unique position as Africa's first Republic is closely tied to its citizenship laws, notably the automatic loss of citizenship for Liberians who naturalize elsewhere. Additionally, the "Negro clause" enshrined in the 1973 Aliens and Nationality Law and reinforced in the 1986 Constitution, imposes racial restriction on naturalization. These debates over citizenship are long-standing and contentious, tracing back to the origins of the Liberian Republic (Vaughan, 2022). Liberia originated from the coming together of the sixteen official ethnic groups and descendants of freed and formerly enslaved Black Americans, resettled along the Grain Coast—now Liberia—by the American

Colonization Society in 1822. The country's formative years, first as a settler-colonial project engineered by the American Colonization Society and continued by the Black American settlers after the declaration of independence in 1847, have continuously shaped struggles over citizenship and belonging. Before the settlers' arrival, the region's Indigenous groups had developed diverse societies and complex socio-economic systems, already integrated into the global economy through trade with European merchants and participation in the transatlantic slave trade (d'Azevedo, 1969; David, 1984; Leopold, 2006). However, the settlers and their descendants—later known as Americo-Liberians and constituting about five percent of the population—dominated Liberia's intellectual and ruling class for over a century, only granting citizenship to Indigenous Liberians in 1946 (Adebajo, 2002).

As I have argued elsewhere (Stewart & Vaughan, 2024), settler colonialism was the dominant structure that defined relations between the Indigenous majority and the Liberian state, ultimately contributing to the 1980 *coup d'état* led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, an Indigenous man. Doe's dictatorial regime further exacerbated the conditions that led to Liberia's civil wars, the first of which began on Christmas Eve 1989, when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), consisting of around 100 Libyan-trained troops, invaded Nimba County, seeking to overthrow Doe's repressive regime (Ellis, 1999). While Doe's regime triggered the civil war, its deeper causes were rooted in Liberia's political, cultural, and socioeconomic structures, designed to protect the interests and hegemony of the settler class. These structures entrenched significant inequalities—especially in economic opportunities, political power, and distributional outcomes—between rural areas, largely inhabited by Indigenous communities and urban centers. This divide, along with unequal relations between settlers and Indigenous populations, intensified ethnic and class tensions, culminating in Doe's coup and the subsequent outbreak of civil conflict (Vaughan, 2022).

Liberia's two civil wars claimed an estimated 250,000 lives out of a pre-war population of about 3 million, with approximately 1.5 million Liberians displaced either internally or as refugees in neighboring African countries and abroad, including the Americas, Europe, and Australasia (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2009). Many of these displaced individuals now form a significant part of Liberia's diaspora. As the country continues in its recovery, the transition from Sirleaf's administration to George Weah's in 2018 marked a pivotal moment in its progress toward democratic governance. However, debates over citizenship and who can claim Liberian identity have remained contentious, particularly about dual nationality. In the negotiations, diaspora Liberians have generally favored dual citizenship (Pailey, 2016, 2018, 2021). Many diaspora Liberians contend that they were forced to naturalize in their host countries during the crisis years. Aligned with the tenets of the strategic citizenship framework, their naturalization enabled them to access vital services and opportunities, and support for their families during the conflict years by accessing government jobs and other social services typically available only to citizens and permanent residents (Vaughan, 2022). However, the complexity of the strategic citizenship approach arises in understanding why diaspora Liberians, despite obtaining the supposedly prized "premium passports," from industrialized Western countries continued to advocate for dual citizenship in Liberia. In response, public and media narratives often categorized them as "greedy" elites seeking to retain the benefits of their foreign residencies and citizenships while seeking additional avenues to access the socioeconomic and political opportunities of Liberian citizenship (Vaughan, 2022). This characterization is reminiscent of debates on dual citizenship in other migrant-sending countries (Whitaker, 2011; Renshon, 2005).

Nevertheless, in the interviews, opponents of dual citizenship, or those advocating for stricter policies, often caution against a repetition of the historical injustices orchestrated by the Americo-Liberian hegemony (Vaughan, 2022). Concerns about systemic inequality have generated a deep rift between opponents and supporters as there is still fear amongst some Liberians that the country might return to a period of gross structural inequality if dual citizenship is permitted. Essentially, the settler/Indigenous dichotomy that shaped Liberia's formation until its supposed toppling in the 1980 *coup d'état* (Toe, 2017), has now morphed into an in-country/diaspora divide. Consequently, demands by diaspora Liberians are often read by some Liberians as a code for a small, powerful, and privileged group's desire to again establish their political and socioeconomic dominance (Vaughan, 2022). This concern is significant and should be taken seriously in the broader processes of post-conflict reconstruction and development. The following sub-section delves into dual citizenship claims in Liberia.

4.1. Towards the Allowance of Dual Citizenship in Liberia: From Sirleaf's 2008 Proposal to Weah's Proposition One

On 22 July 2022, the government of former President George Weah approved an Amendment Law that altered Liberia's Nationality Law in two key ways: it revoked the ban on dual citizenship and corrected a discriminatory clause that prevented Liberian women from conferring birthright citizenship to their children born abroad with foreign nationals (Goitom, 2022; Liberian Senate, 2022). This achievement marked a notable success in Weah's presidency (2018–2024), as it seemingly resolved the protracted dual citizenship debate in Liberia. At the US–Africa Forum in December 2022, Weah emphasized that the Amendment Law removed legal barriers preventing some "natural-born" Liberians from reclaiming their ancestral citizenship (Bondo, 2022; "President Weah's remarks," 2022; Government of Liberia [GoL], 2022). Thereby integrating diaspora Liberians into the nation's reconstruction and development process (Weah, 2023):

> The moral significance of restoring citizenship rights to our brothers and sisters in diaspora cannot be overemphasized. We now call on our families from the diaspora to come home and join us in the noble and patriotic task of nation-building.

The allowance of dual citizenship has long been the focus of the post-war governments. Both Weah and his predecessor, Sirleaf emphasized diaspora Liberians' crucial role in Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction and economic development ("President Weah's remarks," 2022), and so urged them to return and help rebuild a "New Liberia" (GoL, 2008; Weah, 2018a, 2018b). However, central to these appeals for diaspora Liberians to return was the question of their citizenship status, providing avenues for groups like ALCOD to push for dual citizenship legislation. ALCOD, representing various organizations such as the EFLA, the ULAA, among others, advocated on behalf of over 500,000 diaspora Liberians, including those born in Liberia and those of Liberian parentage who had lost their Liberian citizenship through naturalization elsewhere. Recognizing the crucial role of the diaspora population, both the Sirleaf and Weah administrations pursued dual citizenship policies. Sirleaf's 2008 proposal and Weah's Proposition One aimed to unify Liberia and foster a sense of belonging by including all Liberians, both in-country and abroad, and bridging identity divisions (Vaughan, 2022). However, both proposals ultimately failed.

For example, parliamentary voting on Sirleaf's 2008 dual citizenship proposal was postponed indefinitely due to strong opposition. Pailey (2016, p. 817) notes that this opposition stemmed from views that

"naturalization abroad signifies a rejection of the fundamental tenets of 'Liberian citizenship' as bounded by a single, geographical territory." However, the political climate in Liberia at the time played a crucial role. Sirleaf aimed to reform the wartime government's workforce, reducing civil servants from 69,000 to about 30,000. Her reforms, which included dismissing hundreds of employees for illiteracy or absenteeism (ReliefWeb, 2006), were met with strong opposition and fears of reigniting the civil war (Dolo, 2006), as the government was the largest employer. Sirleaf's ties to diaspora returnees also drew harsh criticism. Therefore, the dual citizenship proposal meant to enable "qualified" diaspora Liberians to return and contribute to reconstruction, angered many Liberians, especially the "Homelanders," to use Pailey's (2021) term. The media and stakeholders, such as the Civil Service Association, leveraged public frustration over the reforms to reject Sirleaf's dual citizenship proposal.

In my interview with Ibrahim, an activist, academic, and one of the many opposers of Sirleaf's proposal, he explained the political climate and the underlying sentiments at the time:

> Nobody trusted the local capacity. Most of the civil servants removed from their position in the name of downsizing were replaced by Liberians from abroad. This was met with massive resistance from the leadership of the Civil Service Association. Beyond the dismissals, they will take you from abroad and put you in a position, and pay you $3,000 a month, while the local counterpart who has been holding a similar position over the years is paid only $200 a month. And so, once they introduced the dual citizenship debate, the narrative was, they wanted to bring people to take all the jobs.

The rejection of Sirleaf's 2008 proposal led to the emergence of two distinct campaigns for dual citizenship: natural-born diaspora Liberians and non-"Negro" minority groups within Liberia. Before Weah's 2019 Proposition One, some diaspora Liberians, particularly ALCOD, sought to distinguish their demand for dual citizenship from that of groups like the Lebanese community, who are excluded from Liberian citizenship based on their racial background. ALCOD's campaign emphasized a shift from an "open" citizenship policy to one defined by the natural-born status of diaspora Liberians. In the interviews, while most participants viewed the racial restriction as racist, they insisted their campaign was not about changing the racial clause. In my interview with Sheila, for example, she explained that some opponents of dual citizenship exploited this confusion to sway public opinion on dual citizenship allowance:

> So, with the dual citizenship conversation, it's two things being had. One is dual citizenship, and the other is non-Black citizenship. And those two are often conflated….Some people don't understand that they're different conversations, and I think some do and take advantage of confusing the masses that may not understand it.

Some of the study participants felt that conflating discussions on dual and non-Black citizenship complicated public perceptions of dual citizenship's impact on Homelanders and undermined diaspora Liberians' legitimate claim for dual citizenship. Unlike non-"Negro" migrant communities, diaspora Liberians were Liberian, aligning with President Weah's (2023) sentiment: "Once a Liberian—Always a Liberian." Consequently, Weah's Proposition One clearly defined these distinctions and included limitations on dual citizens, such as disqualification from elected and certain appointed political positions. This aimed to address Homelanders' concerns about national security, job opportunities, and issues related to corrupt dual citizens. The approval of Proposition One by both the Senate and the House of Representatives was significant, as it

removed legislative hurdles perceived by some ALCOD leaders as deliberate obstructions due to lawmakers' fear of job competition. This shift in the debate from the racial clause to the status of natural-born Liberians in the diaspora clarified President Weah's evolving stance on dual citizenship, contrasting with his earlier remarks that Liberia's long-standing racial clause was racist ("First annual message," 2018). Proposition One was presented as a fair compromise, accommodating diaspora Liberians' demands while addressing the concerns of those opposed. However, Proposition One failed to gain popular support in the December 2020 referendum (Dodoo, 2022; Nyei, 2014, 2021).

Considering the setbacks of the 2008 and 2019 proposals, the July 2022 Amendment Law, which repeals the dual citizenship ban and grants Liberian women equal rights to transmit citizenship to their children regardless of the father's nationality, marks a significant legal transformation in Liberia's citizenship regime. The amendment law signifies a pivotal step towards reconstructing a collective identity that embraces all natural-born Liberians. Nevertheless, while dual citizenship grants specific rights and privileges and can facilitate a legal sense of belonging, it does not fully address the underlying reasons why diasporas often feel they do not belong in either country. Diaspora Liberians experience alienation in their host societies due to their identities as Liberians, Africans, Blacks, and immigrants with distinct cultural backgrounds. Similarly, their transnational identity and affiliation contribute to their ostracization in Liberia. It is this dual marginalization that has driven diaspora Liberians to pursue dual citizenship as a practical strategy towards reclaiming a sense of belonging and establishing a route back to their true home in Liberia.

5. Searching (Lobbying) for a "True Home"

Before the July 2022 Amendment Law, diaspora Liberians argued for reinstating their Liberian citizenship based on their economic potential for national development, their human rights as natural-born Liberians, and their ongoing financial support and contributions to Liberia. In my interviews, however, when pushed to explain their claims for dual citizenship, diaspora participants consistently emphasized a profound need for a true home. They viewed access to dual citizenship in Liberia as integral to fulfilling this need to find a place where they and their children could truly belong. Diaspora Liberians located this need for a true home within a perception of dual marginalization that they experienced in their host countries and when they returned home to Liberia. In Liberia, they felt ostracized by the constant scrutiny of their "Liberianness" and were frustrated by the need to continually justify the "genuineness" of their Liberian identity. On the other hand, they felt "othered" in their host countries and experienced a lack of belonging due to their ethnic minority background as Liberians, Africans, Blacks, migrants, refugees, and all the different social stratifications that suggested they did not originate in their host countries.

The following sections discuss the enduring anxieties of diaspora Liberians and how their perceptions of dual marginalization shaped their claims for dual citizenship before the passing of the July 2022 Amendment Law. I argue that diaspora Liberians considered dual citizenship in Liberia as a *practical strategy* that provided them and their children a route back to their true home in Liberia.

5.1. "You Are Not Liberian Enough": Contested (Liberian) Identity In-Country

We often perceive home as a physical place, but it is also a deeply emotional concept, a feeling. Where we feel at home is a significant component of our identity. Rubenstein (2001, p. 1) describes home as not just

a geographical location but also an emotional space. Easthope (2004) expands on this idea, defining home as "the fusion of feeling 'at home,' [a] sense of comfort, belonging, with a particular place" (p. 136; see also Blunt & Varley, 2004). Thus, home encompasses both a physical place and an emotional space that shapes the identities of diaspora Liberians as individuals and as part of a community. Their sense of belonging or alienation is closely tied to where they feel at home.

Diaspora Liberians often experience a sense of alienation in their homeland, facing constant scrutiny of their identity upon their return. In the interviews, they expressed frustration at having to constantly prove their Liberian identity, particularly due to perceptions that their connection to Liberia has somewhat weakened because of their diaspora status and retention of foreign citizenships. In workplaces and social settings, returnees frequently encounter questions about their knowledge and understanding of Liberian culture. As Sheila, one of the participants, explained:

> You have to prove your Liberian aspect. [They]'re very quick to be like, "no, you're not Liberian." Or "you're not Liberian enough." We want you to prove that you're Liberian. Do you know this food, do you know that food?

Sheila, who grew up in the United States but returned to Liberia following the civil war to work in the public sector, recounted a challenging conversation with her mother before her return to Liberia. They discussed concerns about how she might be treated due to her American accent and other visible markers that might subject her to scrutiny:

> So, moving back to Liberia as an adult working with of course an American accent because I had spent a considerable amount of time in America....I knew my accent would be an issue, but I didn't expect to have to prove that I was Liberian practically all the time. [I would say to my colleagues]: "You know my mother; you know I'm a Liberian. This is not up for debate, yet you're still quizzing me [on my Liberianness]."

It is important to note that speaking English in everyday situations in Liberia readily marks one as well-educated while speaking English with a foreign accent further amplifies this distinction, signaling both elite status and a "foreign" identity. For example, a young economist I interviewed explained:

> From my own experience, people classify others based on their level of education, exposure, travel, and how they live their lives. So, it's like if someone is very educated and conducts themselves with good ethics; they're going to blame you as someone who is an Americo-Liberian, a Congo person, as they refer to it. My parents are from the Bassa ethnic group, [but] they classify me as Congo because of my level of education and how I conduct myself. But I'm Indigenous Liberian.

The scrutiny of one's Liberianness is both political and strategic (Vaughan, 2022). In the interviews, many opponents emphasized the distinction between holding citizenship and truly "being Liberian." While citizenship grants legal status, Liberianness goes beyond that because it signifies a deeper sense of belonging to the nation. As a result, legal recognition alone is insufficient for true belonging; it requires a broader social and cultural acceptance (Rosaldo, 1994). As one of the manuscript's reviewers pointed out, to avoid envy and rejection, Liberian returnees—particularly those who grew up in the country—often adopt a Liberian accent when speaking English, or better yet, switch to Liberian Kreyol to blend in more effectively.

Nevertheless, diaspora Liberians perceived the persistent questioning of their Liberian identity as a strategy used by Homelanders to assert their superior connection to Liberia, claim ownership of the country's resources, and highlight diaspora Liberians' perceived lack of belonging. Despite facing contempt and condescension, diaspora Liberians steadfastly regard Liberia as their true home. In the interviews, diaspora participants consistently referred to Liberia as "back home," underscoring their deep emotional and cultural ties to their country of origin. As Ahmed explains:

> We work and save for back home. We live in America for 20 or 30 years, but because of the need for the Liberian identity, we plan for back home. To fulfil that need, they plan for back home more than they plan for their retirement in America, more than they plan for their children's education in America.

Ahmed, a leader in the diaspora community, switches between personal reflections and representing the broader diaspora community in our interviews. As exemplified in the quote above, he articulates concerns shared within the diaspora community that resonate with his own experiences. Diaspora participants assert that their deep connection to Liberia—its land, people, and culture—validates their sense of Liberian identity. Persistent doubts about their identity and belonging in Liberia have intensified their frustrations because, in their host countries, their Liberian heritage is a central aspect of their identities, and it forms the basis of their "otherness." However, there remains uncertainty about whether this Liberian identity will be fully acknowledged and accepted in their homeland.

5.2. "Liberia Will Always Be My True Home": Lack of Belongingness in Host Countries

Diaspora Liberians consider Liberia their true home and believe that access to dual citizenship will provide them with a formal recognition of their Liberian identity. This formalization is crucial due to the constant scrutiny of their Liberianness. Diaspora Liberians describe home as a place they yearn to return to, a source of freedom, familiarity, and where they have family, friends, and community. Hence, feeling at home signified happiness, security, comfort, and acceptance, and it represented the limitless potential to achieve their aspirations. Their descriptions of home are comparable to how Easthope (2004) defines the concept of home (see also Blunt & Varley, 2004). In my interview with Alfred, he described home as comfort and identified Liberia as the place to where he is emotionally and psychologically committed:

> For as long as I've lived in the United States, I've never felt so comfortable until I went back [to Liberia] six years ago. When I got home to where my family lives, I felt relief that I could do many things without looking over my shoulder to see who would arrest me for just doing some of the dumbest things. That's a comfort level for me….My ex-wife hated hearing me talk about Liberia because she felt we needed to forget about the country and re-establish ourselves here [the US]…but I'm always emotionally and psychologically committed to Liberia. I just have not disconnected myself. I don't know how to do it.

Alfred spoke extensively about his experiences as a child in pre-war Liberia and his return to Liberia following the end of the civil war to help rebuild his home country. He highlighted the sense of community and worth he experienced working in government and volunteering to teach employable skills to young Liberians. He contrasted his childhood in Liberia with his children's experiences in America, emphasizing the lack of communal relations in the latter:

> When my kids come home from school in the United States, they can't even leave the house unless I say let's go to the park….While when I was back home, as a kid, I didn't have such supervision. I returned from school and I was out there somewhere, but everybody in the community knew to watch over the kids. In the US, unfortunately, you cannot do that.

Alfred expressed a deep longing and nostalgia for his homeland, where he found safety, freedom, and community. His desire for his children to experience a similarly unrestricted childhood to his own highlights the profound value he places on the social fabric and cultural norms of his homeland. His yearning for freedom and communal relationships in Liberia underscores a broader critique of the highly regulated lifestyles prevalent in America. Alfred's reflections on Liberia compared to America, resonate with scholarly critiques of migrants' construction of home, often linked to feelings of alienation and estrangement in the diaspora (Parutis, 2006). Nevertheless, Tsagarousianou (2017, p. 57), challenges such simplistic nostalgic portrayals, noting that home, for diasporas, is intricate and can be precarious. Indeed, Alfred's contrast between the communal ethos of his childhood in Liberia and the individualized experience of his children in America encapsulates the broader challenges diaspora communities face in reconciling their past identities with their present realities.

Imma, who had lived in the diaspora for most of his life but had returned to Liberia during our interview also constructed Liberia as his true home:

> Home is where you feel most secure, protected, happy, and can do whatever you want. Home is freedom. Liberia is home….I've spent several years abroad; I've never felt so free, happy, or safe like I am in Liberia.

Ibrahim also emphasized belonging in his construction of Liberia as home:

> Home is where…I feel perpetual ownership of a place. So even if I bought a house in the UK, I still wouldn't consider the UK home. I don't feel [it is] because it's not where I think I belong.

The perspectives shared by Alfred, Imma, and Ibrahim demonstrate that the construction of home can be both a geographical place and an emotional space. Whether the realization of our true home derives from feelings of alienation in another place, as suggested by Parutis (2006), our connection to a home provides us with happiness, comfort, and a sense of belonging. How we construct this place, or space significantly impacts our identity, whether as individuals or as members of a group or country. As Sara Ahmed puts it, the true home is "the very space from which one imagines oneself to have originated, and in which one projects the self as both homely and original" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 320). For example, Alfred spoke of his life in the United States as a transitional phase: "I feel that we are still living the life of a refugee. That I'm going to go home someday, even if I don't." Despite living in America for over 20 years and frequently visiting Liberia, Alfred expressed a deep longing to go back to Liberia permanently: "I will finally be at peace and say, yes, I'm home!" Although most of Alfred's immediate family resides in the United States and he has the necessary documentation to remain there, he still feels like a refugee because he lacks a sense of belonging in America. He also feels a sense of grief about not fully belonging in Liberia, despite finding the most comfort there.

Some of the participants consider their home to be both Liberia and their host country. Often, those who expressed this dual affiliation were either born in the diaspora or left Liberia at a very young age but have been socialized to consider Liberia as their true home. In my interview with Sheila for example, she explained the importance her mother placed on maintaining a connection to Liberia: "My mother has always made it apparent that although I was living and growing up in another country, Liberia was our first home, our first love." According to Sheila, her mother emphasized the importance of preserving their cultural identity: "You don't lose your culture and identity when you cross an ocean or land. And that's what you give your children because that's all you have."

Lazarus is another such participant:

> I came to the US when I was three years old…but I was raised to never forget about where I was from. So, I constantly read about Liberia, and I was constantly told stories about Liberia. I was constantly in tune with the politics that was going on back home as if I was there….So, to me, America is home because this is where I grew up. I fought for this country; I've been to combat in Iraq [and] Afghanistan. But Liberia will always be my true home because of my lineage, my parents are both Liberian, and that's where I was born too. That's always going to be home.

Lazarus spoke of the perks of being a veteran and the fact that his military service and other accomplishments provided him with greater social standing among other ethnic minorities in America. Despite this, he maintains that he is constantly aware of his immigrant status and laments how much it bothers him that he is still discriminated against and must endure racism because of his different sociocultural background: "The whole immigration conversation hits me hard because not only I'm an immigrant, but I'm a veteran."

As highlighted in the narratives above, diaspora Liberians view their racial and ethnic backgrounds as central to their identities and sense of belonging, no matter where they live. While they strive to belong and build new lives in their host countries, they still feel othered due to their Liberianness—evident in how they speak, their preferences for food and music, and their frequent references to "back home." They long for themselves and their children to experience the "freedom" that comes with feeling truly at home in Liberia.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Diaspora Liberians' search for a true home underscores the significance of the emotional and psychological dimensions of home. Their attachment to Liberia transcends physical return, reflecting a profound need for belonging and identity validation, which is often contested in both their host and home countries. Further, their precarious attachment to Liberia as their true home echoes Brah's (1996, p. 194) conceptualization of home as "intrinsically linked with the processes of inclusion or exclusion and subjectively experienced under given circumstances." Consequently, while access to Australian, American, or European passports provides diaspora Liberians with premium mobility and other benefits valued within the strategic citizenship framework, those premium passports do not offer the thing they most desire—a place to belong and call their true home, where they and their children can claim rootedness. Ultimately, diaspora Liberians' demand for dual citizenship is informed by their racialized experiences in their host countries (due to their racial background as ethnic minorities) and lack of belongingness in Liberia (because of their diaspora status, which underlines the scrutiny

of their Liberianness). They perceive these experiences as dual marginalization, thus motivating their claims for dual citizenship in Liberia—a formalized status that provides them and their children the route to potentially access the "freedom" linked with at-homeness in Liberia. This desire for belonging influenced their advocacy for dual citizenship, not just for practical benefits like mobility, but to assert their right to belong in Liberia.

Diaspora Liberians' consideration of dual citizenship as a practical strategy that provides them with a route back to their true home relates to what Antonsich (2010) calls "place-belongingness," which is the personal dimension of belonging. As seen in the narratives of study participants such as Alfred, Sheila, Imma, and Ibrahim, personalized belonging highlights peoples' attachment to place, be it specific to geography or social and cultural spaces (Anthias, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011). While these narratives emphasize "the feeling of being at home in a place" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644), diaspora Liberians' feelings of marginalization in both their home and host societies show that personalized construction of belonging is constantly negotiated with the collective. The case of diaspora Liberians' claims for dual citizenship in their home country presents a unique dynamic in the strategic citizenship framework. It departs from the predominant focus on dual citizenship claims in the Global North to consider such demands in a developing, post-conflict country. Their experiences of racism and discrimination in host societies are deeply intertwined with their sense of not belonging, which shapes their agency in continuously constructing Liberia as their true home, despite having acquired the premium passports of industrialized Western countries. As strategic social actors, these experiences play a critical role in their pursuit of dual citizenship in Liberia, recognizing that while dual citizenship may provide legal belonging, it does not necessarily resolve the deeper emotional and social exclusions they face. Nevertheless, the pursuit of dual citizenship is not merely about securing legal rights, but also about reclaiming a symbolic connection to Liberia—a place where they can anchor their identity and sense of belonging in a world where they often feel marginalized.

Still, the strategic citizenship approach offers a framework through which to understand how diaspora Liberians strategically navigated the value of their differing citizenship status across their host and home countries. The framework involves leveraging legal and symbolic resources to maximize benefits and mitigate disadvantages in different national contexts. Diaspora Liberians consider their racial-ethnic background as key to their identities and sense of belonging. They are Liberian wherever they live in the Global North, which contributes to their otherness there because their Liberianness is evident in how they speak and dress, the type of food and music they prefer, or their constant reference to Liberia as "back home." Yet, this Liberianness is not a given as they must continually justify its authenticity to Homelanders who deliberately question their Liberianness to demonstrate their lack of belongingness in Liberia.

Thus, the experience of diaspora Liberians highlights a paradox where strategic citizenship provides them with mobility and certain socioeconomic advantages but fails to fulfill their intrinsic need for a sense of belonging. This tension reveals that citizenship, whether acquired through naturalization or descent, is not just a legal status but an emotional and symbolic construct deeply tied to identity and belonging. As diaspora Liberians navigate their identities within the framework of strategic citizenship, they continuously confront and negotiate their place in both their host and home countries. This dynamic underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of citizenship that encompasses the emotional and psychological dimensions of belonging, recognizing that the ultimate aspiration for many is not merely to possess a passport but to find a true home where they are accepted and rooted.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the study participants for their time, trust, and openness in sharing their experiences, insights, and expertise with me. Thank you also to the editorial team and especially the three anonymous reviewers for their generous and constructive engagements with the article. I am grateful to my partner, John Snow, who knows nothing, and yet provided *expert* proofreading services as a native speaker.

Funding

The study referred to in this article was approved by the Faculty of Arts Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG-1852996.1) and funded by the Melbourne Research Scholarship (2018–2022) at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests. In this article, editorial decisions were undertaken by Ulf R. Hedetoft (University of Copenhagen, Denmark).

References

Adebajo, A. (2002). *Building peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Ahmed, S. (1999). Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *2*(3), 329–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303

Anthias, F. (2013). *Identity and belonging: Conceptualisations and political framings* (Working Paper No. 8). KLA.

Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging—An analytical framework. *Geography Compass*, *4*(6), 644–659. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x

Bauböck, R. (2005). Expansive citizenship: Voting beyond territory and membership. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *38*(4), 683–687.

Bauböck, R. (2019). Genuine links and useful passports: Evaluating strategic uses of citizenship. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(6), 1015–1026. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440495

Bernal, D. R., Misiaszek, K. H., Ayala, J., & Kenley, N. (2022). Second-class citizens? Subjective social status, acculturative stress, and immigrant well-being. *SN Social Sciences*, *2*(7), Article 96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00371-2

Bloemraad, I. (2004). Who claims dual citizenship? The limits of postnationalism, the possibilities of transnationalism, and the persistence of traditional citizenship. *International Migration Review*, *38*(2), 389–426. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00203.x

Bloemraad, I. (2006). Becoming a citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured mobilization and immigrant political incorporation. *Social Forces*, *85*(2), 667–695. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2007.0002

Blunt, A., & Varley, A. (2004). Geographies of home. *Cultural Geographies*, *11*(1), 3–6. https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474004eu289xx

Bondo, D. (2022, July 27). All you need to know about Liberia's new dual citizenship law. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/7/27/all-you-need-to-know-about-liberias-new-dual-citizenship-law

Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. Routledge.

Conway, D., Potter, R. B., & St. Bernard, G. (2008). Dual citizenship or dual identity? Does 'transnationalism' supplant 'nationalism' among returning Trinidadians? *Global Networks*, *8*(4), 373–397. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2008.00230.x

d'Azevedo, W. L. (1969). A tribal reaction to nationalism—Part one. *Liberian Studies Journal*, *1*(2), 1–21.

David, M. S. (1984). The love of liberty brought us here (an analysis of the development of the settler state in 19th century Liberia). *Review of African Political Economy*, *11*(31), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056248408703600

Dodoo, L. (2022, February 14). Liberia: Pres. Weah to officially launch bicentennial celebrations today as Pres. Biden sends delegation. *Frontpage Africa*. https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-pres-weah-to-officially-launch-bicentennial-celebrations-today-as-pres-biden-sends-delegation

Dolo, E. (2006, June 2). The involuntary public sector downsizing policy: Could it reignite the conflict? *The Perspective*. https://www.theperspective.org/articles/0602200602.html

Easthope, H. (2004). A place called home. *Housing, Theory and Society*, *21*(3), 128–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/14036090410021360

Ellis, S. (1999). *The mask of anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*. New York University Press.

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, *7*(3), 93–99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2017.08.001

First annual message: Pres. Weah opens pandora box on economy, citizenship. (2018, January 30). *Frontpage Africa*. http://frontpageafricaonline.com/politics/first-annual-message-pres-weah-opens-pandora-box-on-economy-citizenship

Goitom, H. (2022, October 13). Liberia: Law Authorizing dual citizenship and allowing women to pass citizenship to their children enacted. *Library of Congress*. https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2022-10-12/liberia-law-authorizing-dual-citizenship-and-allowing-women-to-pass-citizenship-to-their-children-enacted

Government of Liberia. (2022). *President Weah speaks at US–Africa Forum, calls on diaspora young Africans to strive for excellence*. https://www.weah.emansion.gov.lr/media/press-release/president-weah-speaks-us-africa-forum-calls-diaspora-young-africans-strive

Government of Liberia. (2008). *Lift Liberia—Poverty reduction strategy*. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08219.pdf

Hale, A., & M'Cormack-Hale, F. (2018). Statelessness, nationality, and citizenship in Sierra Leone. *Journal of Global South Studies*, *35*(2), 311–345.

Harpaz, Y. (2019a). *Citizenship 2.0: Dual nationality as a global asset*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691194066.001.0001

Harpaz, Y. (2019b). Compensatory citizenship: Dual nationality as a strategy of global upward mobility. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(6), 897–916. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440486

Harpaz, Y., & Mateos, P. (2019). Strategic citizenship: Negotiating membership in the age of dual nationality. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(6), 843–857. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440482

Hellgren, Z. (2019). Class, race, and place: Immigrants' self-perceptions on inclusion, belonging and opportunities in Stockholm and Barcelona. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *42*(12), 2084–2102. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1532095

Jones, J. A. (2012). Blacks may be second class, but they can't make them leave: Mexican racial formation and immigrant status in Winston-Salem. *Latino Studies*, *10*(1), 60–80. https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2012.7

Joppke, C. (2005). *Selecting by origin: Ethnic migration in the liberal state*. Harvard University Press.

Joppke, C. (2019). The instrumental turn of citizenship. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(6), 858–878. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440484

Leopold, R. (2006). A brief history of the Loma people. *Liberian Studies Journal*, *31*(2), 5–30.

Liberian Senate. (2022). *An act to amend or nullify certain provisions of the aliens and nationality law relating to citizenship and restoring the citizenship rights lost as a consequence of those provisions*. https://citizenshiprightsafrica.org/liberia-an-act-to-amend-or-nullify-certain-provisions-of-the-aliens-and-nationality-law-2022

Manby, B. (2016). *Citizenship law in Africa: A comparative study* (3rd ed.). Open Society Foundations. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/citizenship-law-africa

Manby, B. (2024). *Dual citizenship in Africa: Liberia in comparative context*. Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative. https://citizenshiprightsafrica.org/dual-citizenship-in-africa-liberia-in-comparative-context

Mayan, M. J. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Taylor & Francis Group. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unimelb/detail.action?docID=4692156

Mazzolari, F. (2009). Dual citizenship rights: Do they make more and richer citizens? *Demography*, *46*(1), 169–191. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0038

Moran, D. (1999). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203196632

Mügge, L. (2012). Dual nationality and transnational politics. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *38*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.640003

Nawyn, S. J., Gjokaj, L., Agbényiga, D. L., & Grace, B. (2012). Linguistic isolation, social capital, and immigrant belonging. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *41*(3), 255–282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241611433623

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2007). From bounded to flexible citizenship: Lessons from Africa. *Citizenship Studies*, *11*(1), 73–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020601099880

Nyarko, Y. (2011). *The returns to the brain drain and brain circulation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some computations using data from Ghana* (Working Paper No. 16813). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w16813

Nyei, I. A. (2014, June 17). 'Not Liberian enough'? Deconstructing citizenship and constitutional reform in Liberia. *ConstitutionNet*. http://constitutionnet.org/news/not-liberian-enough-deconstructing-citizenship-and-constitutional-reform-liberia

Nyei, I. A. (2021, April 22). Why Liberians shunned the 2020 referendum—And what's the future for constitutional change? *ConstitutionNet*. https://constitutionnet.org/news/why-liberians-shunned-2020-referendum-and-whats-future-constitutional-change

Ocampo, A. X. (2024). Truly at home? Perceived belonging and immigrant incorporation. *Social Forces*, *103*(2), 633–654. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae094

Pailey, R. N. (2016). Birthplace, bloodline and beyond: How 'Liberian citizenship' is currently constructed in Liberia and abroad. *Citizenship Studies*, 20(6/7), 811–829. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2016.1204269

Pailey, R. N. (2018). Between rootedness and rootlessness: How sedentarist and nomadic metaphysics simultaneously challenge and reinforce (dual) citizenship claims for Liberia. *Migration Studies*, *6*(3), 400–419. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx056

Pailey, R. N. (2021). *Development, (dual) citizenship and its discontents in Africa: The political economy of belonging to Liberia*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108873871

Parutis, V. (2006). *Construction of home by Polish and Lithuanian migrants in the UK*. UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. https://ideas.repec.org/p/see/wpaper/64.html

President Weah's remarks at African and diaspora young leaders forum, U.S.–Africa Leaders' Summit. (2022, December 13). *GNNLiberia*. https://gnnliberia.com/president-weahs-remarks-at-the-african-and-diaspora-young-leaders-forum-us-africa-leaders-summit

ReliefWeb. (2006). *Liberia: "Bloated" war-time government workforce gets peace-time axe*. https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/liberia-bloated-war-time-government-workforce-gets-peace-time-axe

Renshon, S. A. (2005). *The 50% American: Immigration and national identity in an age of terror*. Georgetown University Press. http://archive.org/details/50americanimmigr0000rens

Rosaldo, R. (1994). Cultural citizenship and educational democracy. *Cultural Anthropology*, *9*(3), 402–411.

Rubenstein, R. (2001). Home matters: Longing and belonging. In R. Rubenstein (Ed.), *Home matters: Longing and belonging, nostalgia and mourning in women's fiction* (pp. 1–9). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780312299750_1

Shachar, A. (2009). *The birthright lottery: Citizenship and global inequality*. Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjhzr8r

Shachar, A. (2021). Unequal access: Wealth as barrier and accelerator to citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*, *25*(4), 543–563. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2021.1926076

Siaplay, M. (2014). Do countries that recognize dual citizenship have healthier economies? Evidence from the economic community of West African states. *Migration and Development*, *3*(2), 254–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2014.898388

Skulte-Ouaiss, J. (2013). Home is where the heart is; citizenship is where it is safe: Dual citizenship and Europe. *Identities*, *20*(2), 133–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2012.763166

Soysal, Y. N. (1995). *Limits of citizenship: Migrants and postnational membership in Europe*. University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/L/bo3683837.html

Spiro, P. J. (1997). Dual nationality and the meaning of citizenship. *Emory Law Journal*, *46*, 1411–1485.

Spiro, P. J. (2006). *Dual citizenship—A postnational view*. SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.901754

Spiro, P. J. (2019). *Citizenship: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press.

Staton, J. K., Jackson, R. A., & Canache, D. (2007). Dual nationality among Latinos: What are the implications for political connectedness? *Journal of Politics*, *69*(2), 470–482. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00544.x

Stevens, C. (2023). Hukou, socio-spatial class, and the strategic citizenship practices of Chinese labour migrants in Australia. *Citizenship Studies*, *27*(4), 446–464. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2023.2181943

Stewart, C., & Vaughan, F. (2024). Race, sovereignty, and White settler colonial studies: Placing settlers at the cultural interface. *Settler Colonial Studies*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2024.2408145

The Advocates for Human Rights. (2009). *A house with two rooms: Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia Diaspora Project*. DRI Press Saint Paul. https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/final_report

Toe, S. G. (2017). On the 'colonial' in Liberian history and politics: A reappraisal. *Liberian Studies Journal*, *42*(1/2), 12–44.

Tsagarousianou, R. (2017). Rethinking the concept of diaspora: Mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, *1*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.203

Udah, H., & Singh, P. (2019). Identity, othering and belonging: Toward an understanding of difference and the experiences of African immigrants to Australia. *Social Identities*, *25*(6), 843–859. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2018.1564268

Vaughan, F. (2024). 'But why is a Ghanaian studying Liberia?' Leveraging positionality for online data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Possibility Studies & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699241248850

Vaughan, F. K. (2022). *Who is a Liberian anyway? The claim for formalised identity by diaspora Liberians* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. The University of Melbourne.

Vink, M. P., Schakel, A. H., Reichel, D., Luk, N. C., & de Groot, G.-R. (2019). The international diffusion of expatriate dual citizenship. *Migration Studies*, *7*(3), 362–383. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz011

Vink, M., Prokic-Breuer, T., & Dronkers, J. (2013). Immigrant naturalization in the context of institutional diversity: Policy matters, but to whom? *International Migration*, *51*(5), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12106

Weah, G. (2018a). *Annual message by H.E President George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia to the 54th National Legislature* [Speech transcript]. Executive Mansion. https://www.weah.emansion.gov.lr/sites/default/files/documents/ANNUAL%20MESSAGE%20BY%20HIS%20EXCELLENCY%2C%20PRESIDENT%20GEORGE%20MANNEH%20WEAH%2C%20PRESIDENT%20OF%20THE%20REPUBLIC%20OF%20LIBERIA.pdf

Weah, G. (2018b). *Inaugural speech by H.E. President George Manneh Weah of the Republic of Liberia.* [Speech transcript]. Executive Mansion. https://www.weah.emansion.gov.lr/sites/default/files/documents/Inaugural%20Speech%20By%20H.E.%20President%20George%20Manneh%20Weah.pdf

Weah, G. (2023, January 30). Liberia: Full speech—President Weah's 6th State of the Nation Address. *Liberian Observer*. https://allafrica.com/stories/202301310063.html

Wessendorf, S. (2019). Migrant belonging, social location and the neighbourhood: Recent migrants in East London and Birmingham. *Urban Studies*, *56*(1), 131–146. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017730300

Whitaker, B. E. (2011). The politics of home: Dual citizenship and the African diaspora. *International Migration Review*, *45*(4), 755–783. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2011.00867.x

Yanasmayan, Z. (2015). Citizenship on paper or at heart? A closer look into the dual citizenship debate in Europe. *Citizenship Studies*, 19(6/7), 785–801. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2015.1053793

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. SAGE.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *40*(3), 197–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331

About the Author

Franka Vaughan is a lecturer for the Development Studies program at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne. She is also a research fellow for a multi-university antiracism project in community sport. Her research focuses on race and settler colonialism, migration and diasporas, and antiracism praxis in research and curriculum.