

“Are you sure you want to study in Africa?” The apprehensive words of my father rang in my head as the plane touched down in Accra; the capital city of Ghana. Ghana is such an intriguing African nation. They have maintained a stable democracy for the past twenty years and is a poster-child for successful economic development according to the standards of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It is a nation full of promise with many amenities and hardships common to home. When I walk to school, the roads are lined with palm trees and the streets are paved. Mango trees peak out over neighboring fences and the front lawns reveal the handiwork of skilled landscapers. If you go downtown to central Accra, you see a different side of Ghana. There the buildings are mostly vacant and street vendors flood the streets. Here, you are immersed in the culture of Accra. At the central market, the women yell out prices for anything from bananas to toilet paper. Whole fish lie on makeshift tables frying in the sun and women sell satchels of water from big mixing bowls they balance on their heads. On the streets, rusty minivans (known as ‘trotros’) serve as public transportation and sputter past overfilled with as many as 16 people. The drivers mate, (like a boat) collects the fare and yells out destinations like an auctioneer.

On the street people stare and call me “Obruni” or white person. Children run alongside me and giggle while adults greet me and ask me where I am from or whether I will buy their goods. There is a comforting sense of empathy present in Accra; where people ask you how you are to hear the answer. No one is too busy to say hello and everyone is curious as to why you are in Ghana. They welcome questions about daily life and are quick to lend a hand if you need help.

At Ashesi University I take classes that would be equivalent to the courses I take in

the United States. They challenge my preconceptions about political science and Africa as a whole. I am encouraged to question the standard conception my societal norms foster and participate in the many political, philosophical, and economic discussions. Students work hard to be the best in their field and they are required to take classes that promote community building and inner leadership so we can work together to build a better Ghana.

Overall, Ghana has shown me that the continent of Africa has many faces and this nation is only one of 53. It may be considered economically weaker than the United States, but their culture is rich in tradition and love. A sense of community is present everywhere and I know that when I return home I will have many stories to tell. Not only about life in the city of a developing country, but about the caliber of intelligence and humanity present at Ashesi and society as a whole.