

**REVIEW OF A REFLECTION ON DIASPORA CROSS-
CULTURAL EVANGELISM: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

By Abeneazer Gezahegn Urga

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In 2010, Abeneazer Gezahegn Urga immigrated from Ethiopia to America to attend seminary. Though he enjoyed his studies from the beginning, he found life in the West jarringly different than in his homeland. What he observed was confusing and often disturbing. He felt the world had turned upside down and he was not sure where he fit anymore.

When feelings of dullness, depression, and purposelessness descended, Urga found solace in journaling. He poured out his observations, frustrations, struggles, and insights. He recorded stories of sorrows and victories. Step by step, God brought him out of the haze of culture shock by revealing the strategic role that he could play as a non-western cross-cultural evangelist in the West. He recorded this journey toward renewed joy and purpose in the same journal, recounting his exciting encounters in cross-cultural evangelism and his desire that other immigrants get involved. Eventually, in an effort to inspire and equip other immigrant believers in the Diaspora and those who want to help them, he compiled and edited his years of journaling into his 2015 self-published book: *A Reflection on Diaspora Cross-Cultural Evangelism: An African Perspective*.

At once incisively observant and pastorally encouraging, the book examines the real challenges facing Christian immigrants in the West while maintaining the conviction that

¹ Link to buy book: http://www.amazon.com/Reflection-Diaspora-Cross-Cultural-Evangelism-Perspective/dp/0692384685/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1428185455&sr=8-1&keywords=A+Reflection+on+Diaspora+Cross-Cultural+Evangelism%3A+An+African+Perspective.

Diaspora believers are key in any effective mission strategies for the 21st century. Believers from around the world have been brought to the West for such a time as this.

Urga laments that the great potential of Diaspora believers as evangelists—their faith, commitment to prayer, experience with persecution and boldness in witness—is often muted by culture shock and its resultant divisiveness, depression and insularity. He points the way forward for his immigrant brothers and sisters, transparently describing his journey and inviting them to join him on a path to thriving as cross-cultural witnesses who “desire a better country, that is a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:6).

Drawing upon his real-life ministry experience after graduation as a cross-cultural evangelist in a major American city, Urga warns against the distraction of divisiveness within immigrant churches, explains the importance of language acquisition for the sake of the Great Commission, and calls Diaspora Christians to reject ethnocentrism and *missiopessimism* (a term Urga coined to describe “lack of faith and joy on the front lines”).² He seeks to empower his fellow culture-crossers to realize that they can make an immense contribution to reaching the unreached wherever they find themselves, even far from home. As a final exhortation, he reminds believers that we are all immigrants—pilgrims on the way to our Heavenly Home.

A Reflection on Diaspora Cross-Cultural Evangelism would be a helpful discussion starter for Western and Diaspora churches and individuals wanting to get involved in cross-cultural evangelism. Urga's missional passion is contagious and his insights are relevant both for believing immigrants in the West as well as Westerners seeking to understand the immigrant experience.

² p. 21