Written by Cordie Aziz
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Cordie Aziz is a former congressional staffer who moved to Ghana after losing her job last year. Follow her daily adventures at goneiighana.blogspot.com

On March 6th, Ghana celebrated 55 years of independence. Considering the youth of the country, I was confident that Independence Day would bring streets filled with festivals and decorative items, plenty of backyard barbeques, and a level of excitement that would put the United States to shame. After all, we have been celebrating for hundreds of years, and each Fourth of July you would swear we had just won the Revolutionary War. So imagine my disappointment when I realized Independence Day in Ghana was eerily similar to every other day.

People were still hard at work on Independence Day. I found it all too easy to pick plantain chips from shops that had decided it was too costly to take an entire day off. Vendors pulled their items out of storage and placed them for display at the junctions of busy roads, hoping to entertain a few interested buyers, despite the holiday, and there were no brass brands that incited enthusiasm in gathered crowds. People didn't even ride around the city with flags tied to the cars and wildly honking their horns, as they do for soccer games and political rallies.

In the morning, the only reminder of the festivities was a few people jubilantly blowing vuvuzelas; the loud horn, which gained popularity during the World Cup in South Africa. I am assuming they were on their way to the parade, one of the few national reminders that March 6th was, in fact, a historic day in the country. And, of course, like most important holidays and events, the President gave a speech. However, many people noted that it was shorter compared to previous years.

Even the pre- Independence celebrations were disappointing. I attempted to attend a reggae charity concert at the Stadium, which boasted names such as Anthony B and Jah Mason. But like most concerts in Ghana, the main act never appeared. There were a few opening acts and then the crowd was entertained by a DJ and a few of the promoters dancing on stage. Around 3 am I called it quits. I actually attempted to leave the Stadium an hour before, but poor crowd control made that impossible. Every gate was blocked by a security man trying to keep the

outside crowd under control, despite there being no more than 200 people inside the stadium. If I had to pick a highlight over the past few days, it was a stadium vendor who had “no business, no wife” written on the side of his food carrier; sad, but true.

In the end, I felt bad that Ghana doesn’t celebrate their independence with the same fervor as the United States. Instead of independence evoking a sense of pride in Ghanaians, it seems to spark a conversation about how community leaders and politicians continue to disappoint the ones they serve. It brings back memories of how great Nkrumah really was and how there appears to be no such leader on the horizon. Even more disappointing, is that instead of celebrating the accomplishments of the country and having hope for the future, many Ghanaians are hit with the bitter reality that life , for many of them, is harder today than it was 10 years ago. So I guess in the end, independence is still a bittersweet moment for many Ghanaians and I can definitely empathize with them. After all how can you celebrate what you once were if you are disappointed in where you are now.