Since the Herskovits-Frazier debate of the 1940s, African diasporic research in the Americas has been marked not only by an uninterrupted focus on West Africa but also by an equally incessant neglect of the Akan. Accounting for 10 percent of the total number of African captives who embarked for the Americas, the Akan diaspora not only shaped and brought into sharp relief the diasporic themes of maroonage, resistance, and freedom but also complicated these themes in that the displaced Akan created their own social orders based on foundational cultural understandings. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Akan never constituted a majority among other Africans in the Americas, yet their leadership skills in warfare and political organization, medicinal knowledge of plant use and spiritual practice, and composite culture as archived in the musical traditions, language, and patterns of African diasporic life far surpassed what their actual numbers would suggest. The book argues that a composite culture calibrated between the Gold Coast (Ghana) littoral and the forest fringe made the contributions of the Akan diaspora possible. That argument calls attention to the historic formation of Akan culture in West Africa and its reach into the Americas, where the Akan experience in the former British, Danish, and Dutch colonies is explored. There, those early experiences foreground the contemporary movement of diasporic Africans and the Akan people between Ghana and North America. Indeed, the Akan experience provides for a better understanding of how the diasporic quilt came to be and is still becoming.
This chapter looks thematically at cultural and diasporic issues in the Akan experience in North America and at the uneven dialogue between diasporic Africans and Akan people from Ghana. The claims to which both diasporic Africans and Akan people make to culture and diaspora constitute the crux of that internal dialogue. Diasporic Africans such as Nana Yao Dinizulu and Nana Kwabena Brown have adopted and preserved elements of Akan spiritual practices since the 1960s, showing the endurance of an Akan spiritual culture and the role to which diasporic Africans may play in its furtherance. They have claimed a culture worth preserving and have rooted their cultural identity and praxis in it. Diasporic Africans have also problematized the “slave castles” of Ghana, whose dungeons have become contested sites at a crossroads in which diasporic Africans are adopting Akan cultural and spiritual practices and seeking an home, while Akan persons in Ghana are increasingly undergoing Christianization and are leaving for North America and parts of Europe. These phenomena associated with the Akan diaspora suggest that the study of a composite African diaspora must be one of ongoing movement in specific and shared dialogue among Africa-based and African-descended communities.

Cicero and Seneca
Miriam T. Griffin

This chapter sets out the salient features of Seneca's chosen topic by comparing, in broad terms, Seneca's essay with Cicero's De officiis, a work which was written a century earlier under different political circumstances, but with which Seneca's has obvious affinities. A comparison of Cicero's treatment of beneficence with Seneca's will throw into high relief the key characteristics of De beneficiis, as it relates to the earlier philosophical tradition inherited by Cicero and Seneca; to the Roman social practices of Seneca's time; and to the author's particular
experience and place in Roman society. These three aspects of the comparison between the two authors are sketched in turn.