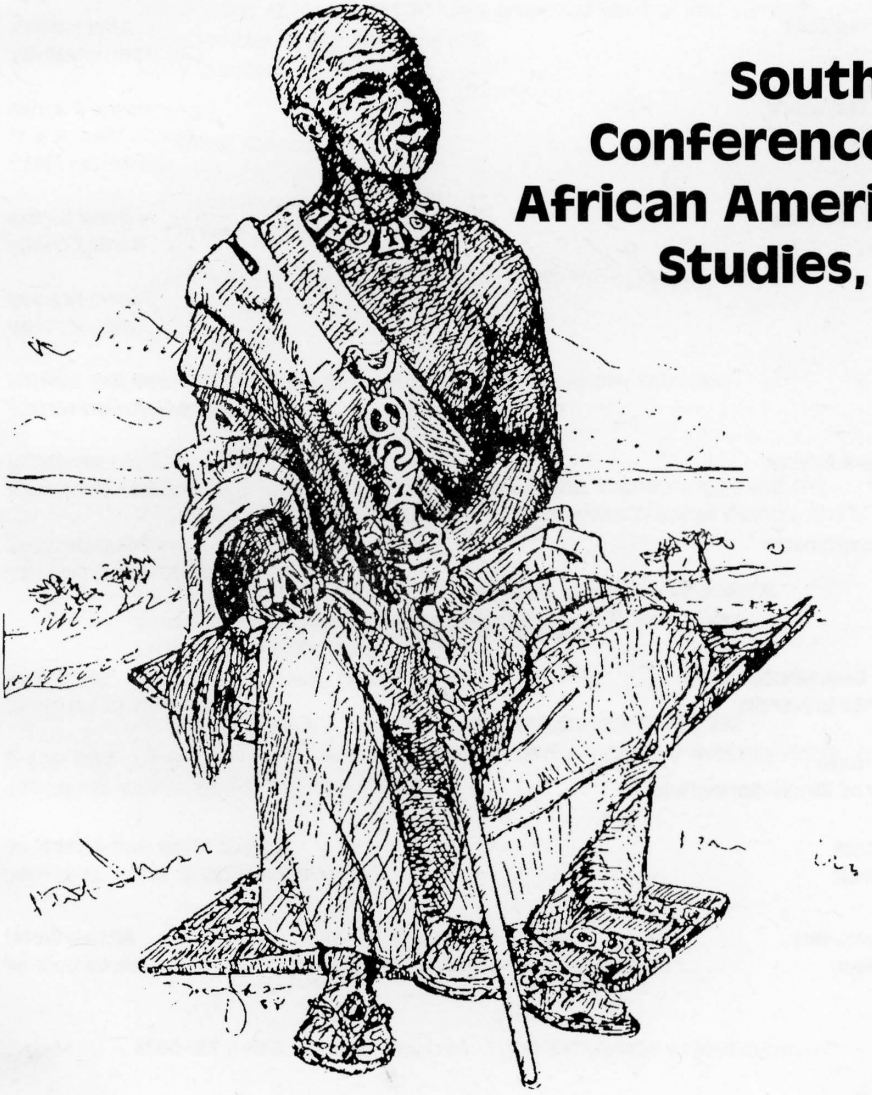
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jamie Dawn Calhoun is an Assistant Professor of English at Penn State University, Shenango Valley in Sharon, Pennsylvania.

James L. Conyers Jr. serves as Director of the African American Studies program at the University of Houston in Houston, Texas.

Keila Dumas is a graduate of Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Anthony D. Greene is an Assistant Professor of African American Studies with joint appointments with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina.

Lamar Garnes is an Assistant Professor of English at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Shi Huang is an Assistant Research Professor at the University of Miami's Center for Family Studies in Miami, Florida.

Clement Ndulute is Associate Professor of English in the Department of Languages and Literature at Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama.

Seth J. Schwartz is an Associate Research Professor at the University of Miami's Center for Family Studies in Miami, Florida.

Leonard A. Slade, Jr. is a Professor of Africana Studies at the State University of New York at Albany in Albany, New York.

Mary Stanton is a Freelance Writer.

Felicia L. Taylor is an Assistant Professor of English at Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama.

Siera Grace Bianca Toney is a Senior at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina. Her major is Interdisciplinary Studies

David Vaughn Jr. is an Instructor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Latrice Williams is a Senior at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Her major is Communications.

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IN ANCIENT AFRICA...
'GRIOT' WERE THE COUNSELORS OF KINGS, THEY CONSERVED THE CONSTITUTIONS OF KINGDOMS BY MEMORY ALONE... IT WAS FROM AMONG THE GRIOTS THAT KINGS USED TO CHOOSE THE TUTORS FOR YOUNG PRINCES... FOR WANT OF ARCHIVES (THEY) RECORDED THE CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF KINGS...

SUNDIATA, DJIBRIL T. NAINE

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Black Like Me: An Examination of Cultural & Ethnic Identity among African Americans and Caribbean Blacks

Anthony D. Greene, Seth J. Schwartz, and Shi Huang

Abstract

The present study was designed to examine the relationships of Black cultural identity indices among African Americans and U.S.-born and foreign-born Caribbean Blacks. Participants completed several measures of cultural identity: Orientation toward American and heritage cultural practices, individualism and collectivism, familism, and ethnic identity; as well as three cultural identity correlates - familial ethnic socialization, acculturative stress, and perceived ethnic discrimination. Several significant similarities and differences emerged among the subgroups in correlations between the hypothesized correlates and the cultural identity indices. For example, the numerous significant correlations with perceived discrimination, across Black subgroups, may suggest that race may be more salient than ethnicity among Blacks. For U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, findings suggested a balancing of heritage and American cultural values, perhaps reflecting a bicultural identity. Among foreign-born Caribbean Blacks, maintaining a strong connection with their native culture is strongly related to cultural identity. Implications for the study of Black identity are discussed.

The United States is among the most ethnically and culturally diverse societies in the world. The range of metaphors, spanning from the "melting pot" to the "salad bowl," suggests that the United States has blossomed into a multicultural society. Consequently, U.S. racial categories have begun to be replaced with ethnic self-identifying categories (e.g., Dominican, Jamaican, Haitian, etc.), which are in turn replaced with hyphenated identities (e.g., Haitian-American, Japanese-American, etc.). The relevance of cultural identities is not only a part of an immigrant identity but has increasingly become the formation of American born, particularly among people of color.

This paper compares cultural and ethnic identity and its relationship to three hypothesized predictors across three aggregate Black subgroups. Several scholars have conducted extensive qualitative studies that have addressed the assimilation process, or lack thereof, of Black subgroups and their subsequent cultural and social experiences. Some studies have compared African Americans to Caribbean Blacks (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008), however; few, if any, have distinguished Caribbean Black groups as US and/or foreign born and made comparisons in a single quantitative study. It could be argued that the social and cultural experiences vary among and between Caribbean Blacks who are born in the U.S. and those who are born in their country of origin and subsequently migrate to the U.S.

Like other pan-ethnic labels such as "Asian" and "Hispanic", the label "Black" applies to a group of individuals who are extremely diverse in terms of cultural, political, economic, and social experiences. The Jamaican, Haitian, Bahamian, African, and African American experiences are vastly different, yet society often lumps all Black subgroups into one monolithic category. Consequently, the Black experience is often assumed to be a monolithic experience. We can no longer assume there is one "Black" experience in America when the Black subgroups are as diverse as the Asian and Hispanic categories.

The Emerging Diversity of the U.S. Black Population

As of 2010, the Black population represents about 13% of the overall population (U.S. Census, 2010). Over the last decade the U.S. has witnessed a population boom of approximately 1.8 million foreign-born Blacks. In 2005, two-thirds of the 2.8 million foreign-born Blacks were from the Caribbean or Latin America (Kent, 2007). The vast majority of Black immigrants come from the Caribbean (e.g., Jamaica, Haiti, Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, etc.). They have settled in various part of the U.S., but the majority resides in cities such as Miami, Boston, Washington, DC, and New York. As such, the growth of the Caribbean Black population has had a boom

among the second and third generation U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Acculturation of Post-1965 Caribbean Immigrants

Black immigrant groups' 'racial' status makes them distinctly different from many other immigrant groups. Most, if not all, are considered "Black" upon arrival. Consequently, for Caribbean Blacks assimilation often means being linked with African American, and the process of 'being' African American is often equated to downward social and cultural mobility (Butcher, 1994; Kasinitz et al., 2001; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004). Despite the growing number of successful African Americans, negative images continue to reinforce the belief that acculturating into Black American society is tantamount to downward assimilation (Lacy, 2004). As a result, reinforcing one's ethnicity may in fact help Black immigrant groups remain detached from African Americans and afford them better possibilities for upward mobility (Pierre, 2004; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004). For example, the use of language (i.e., accents) as a marker to disassociate with being identified as African American potentially can improve opportunities. One's Caribbean accent can be quickly identified as a marker that "I'm not African American", even among U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity among Second-Generation Black Immigrants

Given the growing number of children of immigrants – especially immigrants of color – in the United States, biculturalism has emerged as an increasingly attractive option (Butterfield, 2004; Roberts et al., 1999). Biculturalism represents a process where contemporary immigrant groups can preserve their ethnic heritage while also accepting or rejecting certain aspects of the receiving culture (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Caribbean Blacks may in fact adopt a bicultural identity, particularly those born in the U.S., yet ascribe to some aspects of African American culture (Butcher, 1994; Kasinitz et al., 2001; Mohl, 1993: Stepick et al., 2001). Although it may be discouraged from the first generation, many second and third-generation U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks may be highly influenced by African American culture (i.e., music, styles of dress, etc.). As a result, they may be more likely to develop and maintain a bicultural identity where at home they remain an ethnic but in social environments, like school, they embrace African American culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Perceptions of Discrimination among Blacks

In schools, the labor market, and residential locations, racial and ethnic minorities continue to report feelings and accounts of discrimination (Harris, 2004; Jefferson & Caldwell, 2002). Black immigrants, although not unfamiliar with racism, are introduced to a different world of racism/discrimination in the U.S. It is usually not until their arrival in the United States that Caribbean Blacks become cognizant of how racism and discrimination affects Blacks' life opportunities. Even among U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks the lived experiences of racism and discrimination may vary some from African Americans, particularly for those who reside in areas with strong Caribbean enclaves (i.e., South Florida). Therefore, maintaining and reaffirming a cultural identity among Caribbean Blacks may, to some extent, represent a much different way of coping with discrimination than that used by many African Americans (Hall & Carter, 2006; Harris, 2004; Jackson & Cothran, 2003; Lacy, 2004).

The Present Study

The present study was designed to examine indices and correlates of cultural identity in three Black subgroups – African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, and foreign-born Caribbean Blacks. Indices of cultural identity included individualism, collectivism, independence, interdependence, familism, ethnic identity, and acculturation-enculturation. Hypothesized correlates included familial ethnic socialization, acculturative stress, and perceived ethnic discrimination (Schwartz et al., 2007). Broadly, cultural identity indices cluster into (a) those reflecting acquisition of mainstream American culture (individualism, independence, and American cultural practices) and (b) those reflecting retention of culture-of-origin values. Therefore, it might be reasonable to expect that familial ethnic socialization would relate to indices of heritage-culture retention, that acculturative stress would relate most negatively to cultural identity in the domain where the stress occurs (e.g.,

pressure against acculturation with heritage identity, and pressure to acculturate with American identity). Because of African Americans' legacy of discrimination, we hypothesized that perceived ethnic discrimination would interfere with mainstream American identity for African Americans but not for Caribbean Blacks. We also anticipated that familial ethnic socialization, as a transmitter of cultural identity, would be associated with both heritage and American cultural orientations more strongly for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks than for their foreign-born counterparts – for which familial ethnic socialization would be expected to relate to heritage cultural orientation.

We were interested in examining whether the pattern of mean differences in cultural identity processes, and of differences in the strength of correlations of cultural identity processes to the hypothesized correlates, shows any sort of linear or curvilinear "trajectory" in the transition from Caribbean immigrant to American Black. Because Caribbean immigrants are "Black upon arrival," they are acculturating to a cultural group with its own need to maintain a cultural identity separate from other parts of American culture (see Mohl, 1993). There may be few or no differences in means or correlations among the sample. This "alternative" hypothesis was also examined in the present study.

Method

Participants and Procedures

The participants in this study completed the Multi-Site University Study of Identity and Culture (MUSIC) survey (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Rodriguez, 2009). The MUSIC collaboration involves 75 investigators at 30 different sites in the United States. Various constructs of interest to the participating investigators were aggregated to create an assessment battery. This battery was completed by participants at each collaborator's home institutions using an internet-based data collection method. This approach allowed the investigators to gather a larger and more diverse sample than could be collected by a single investigator at any one site. The present sample (24% male, 76% female; mean age 20.67 years, SD 3.89, range 16-50) consisted of 884 Black students (586 African Americans, 184 U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, and 114 foreign-born Caribbean Blacks). Caribbean Blacks were from various parts of the Caribbean: Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad, the Bahamas, St. Lucia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Measures

Ethnic Identity. Ethnic Identity. Ethnic identity was assessed using the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts et al., 1999). This instrument assesses two aspects of ethnic identity: ethnic identity achievement (7 items; □ = .87), representing the extent to which the individual has considered her/his ethnicity and has decided what it means to her/him; and affirmation and belonging (5 items; □ = .90), representing the extent to which the individual identifies with and values her/his ethnic group. Given their high intercorrelation (r = .89), the two ethnic identity subscales were combined into a single variable for analysis. Cronbach's alphas for African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbeans, and foreign-born Caribbeans were .91 for each group.

Acculturation. We measured acculturation in terms of the two underlying dimensions proposed by Berry (1997) – namely receiving-culture acquisition and heritage-culture retention. Orientation toward heritage (17 items, □ = .95 for African Americans; □ = .88 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .88 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks) and American (15 items, □ = .88 for African Americans; □ = .86 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .86 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks) cultural practices were measured using the Stephenson Multi-group Acculturation Scale (Stephenson, 2000).

Individualism and Collectivism. Horizontal (relationships with others at one's social stratum) and vertical (relationships with others above oneself in the social hierarchy) individualism and collectivism were assessed using corresponding 4-item subscales developed by Triandis and Gelfand (1998). The measure from which these subscales were taken contains 16 items. Internal consistency reliability estimates for the four subscales were as follows: horizontal individualism, □ = .78 for African Americans; □ = .83 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .86 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks; vertical individualism, □ = .79 for African Americans; □ = .81 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .78 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks; horizontal collectivism, □ = .74 for African Americans; □ = .77 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .81 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks; and vertical collectivism, □ = .74 for African Americans; □ =

.71 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .79 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks. Each subscale consists of four items.

Independence and Interdependence. Independence (12 items, □ = .77 for African Americans; □ = .77 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .79 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks) and interdependence (12 items, □ = .77 for African Americans; □ = .79 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .79 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks) were assessed using the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994). Singelis (1994) has provided evidence for the internal and factorial validity of this measure.

Familism. Although familism was originally introduced as a Hispanic-specific construct, research has suggested that it is applicable to Whites and Blacks as well (Schwartz, 2007). Familism was assessed using the 18-item Attitudinal Familism Scale. The measure assesses four dimensions of familism: familial respect and obedience, familial obligations, respect for family, and subjugation of self to family. The four subscales were summed to create a total familism score. Cronbach's alphas for African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbeans, and foreign-born Caribbeans were .87, .87, and .89, respectively.

Familial Ethnic Socialization. Familial ethnic socialization was measured using the Familial Ethnic Socialization Measure (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001). This measure consists of 12 items assessing the extent to which the participant's family (a) taught her/him about their ethnic group and its values and practices and (b) exposed her/him to other people from their ethnic group. Cronbach's alphas for African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbeans, and foreign-born Caribbeans were .93 for each group.

Acculturative Stress. Acculturative stress was assessed using the Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory (Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002), adapted for use with diverse ethnic groups. We used two subscales from this measure: pressure to acculturate (7 items; □ = .85 for African Americans; □ = .82 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .86 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks); and pressure against acculturation (4 items; □ = .91 for African Americans; □ = .83 for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks; □ = .88 for Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks).

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination. Perceived ethnic discrimination was assessed using a 9 item measure developed by Phinney, Madden, & Santos (1998) where respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree on items that ask about the extent to which they have been treated unfairly (e.g., by police officers and teachers) and the extent to which participants believe that they are unwanted in

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations on Study Variables

	African Americans (N=586)	Caribbean Blacks (U.S.) (N=184)	Caribbean Blacks (Foreign) (N=114)		
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	F- Ratio	□2p
Familism	65.89(10.34	66.84(10.51)	67.56(10.92)	1.70	.003
Horizontal Collectivism	15.13(2.72)	14.58(2.83)	14.43(3.07)	3.06*	.001
Horizontal Individualism	17.04(2.77)	16.85(3.05)	16.56(3.34)	1.43	.001
Independence	45.32(6.81)	44.60(6.86)	44.52(7.30)	0.79	.008
Interdependence	42.21(7.17)	41.16(7.19)	42.24(7.32)	1.07	.029
Perceived Discrimination	3.47(0.69)	3.38(0.76)	3.11(0.71)	7.85***	.076
Pressure against Acculturation	7.72(4.20)	8.09(3.64)	8.63(4.09)	1.56	.004
Pressure to Acculturate	16.45(6.57)	17.41(5.93)	17.90(6.70)	2.63*	.017
Vertical Collectivism	15.22(3.05)	15.39(3.00)	15.60(3.14)	0.96	.061
Vertical Individualism	12.64(3.59)	12.32(3.72)	12.30(3.65)	0.55	.036
Americanism	65.97(7.76)	64.02(7.62)	60.01(9.05)	18.59***	.077
Heritage Culture	66.69(17.56)	55.06(13.77)	62.24(12.71)	22.69***	.032
Ethnic Identity	46.99(9.16)	47.34(9.17)	46.40(9.30)	0.58	.002
Familial Ethnic Socialization	44.91(10.23)	48.78(9.11)	47.12(9.07)	6.66***	.008

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

American society. Cronbach's alphas for African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbeans, and foreign-born Caribbeans were .72, .81, and .78, respctively.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all study variables, separated by Black subgroup, are presented in Table 1. Significant mean differences emerged for variables indexing perceived discrimination, horizontal collectivism, pressure to acculturate, native culture, American cultural orientation, and family ethnic socialization with African Americans scoring highest on all of the indices except for pressure acculturate and family ethnic socialization, where U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks scored highest. That African Americans reported higher levels of perceived discrimination might suggest that they are more likely to identify with circumstances of discrimination and racism compared to Caribbean Blacks. The effect of vertical collectivism suggests that African Americans may perceive more responsibility for taking care of family, even at the expense of their own self-interests. Not surprisingly, African Americans were most likely to endorse American cultural practices such as food, language, and media. **See Table 1.**

Bivariate Correlations

Next, we examined the bivariate correlations between cultural identity indices and hypothesized correlates within each of the Black subgroups. Correlations for each group are displayed in Table 2. Also, tests were run to determine if correlations were significantly different across groups (see Table 2). Examination of Table 2 indicates considerable similarities, as well as some differences, in these correlations among the Black subgroups. As expected, ethnic identity and familial ethnic socialization were closely interrelated in all three groups: (African Americans, $r = .71$, $p < .001$; U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, $r = .71$, $p < .001$; foreign-born Caribbean Blacks, $r = .67$, $p < .001$). These were the strongest correlations in the matrix. Additionally, heritage culture orientation, American cultural orientation, horizontal individualism, independence, interdependence, vertical collectivism, horizontal collectivism, and familism were also highly correlated with familial ethnic socialization among all three groups. These correlations underscore the importance of familial ethnic socialization vis-à-vis heritage culture identity among Black populations in America.

For African Americans, several other theoretically consistent correlations emerged. Significant correlations emerged between perceived discrimination and the hypothesized cultural indices of which many were negatively related to perceived discrimination. For example, independence and perceived ethnic discrimination were negatively intercorrelated (African Americans, $r = -.15$, $p < .001$). These correlations, while modest, provide some support for the contention that African Americans are more likely to associate discrimination with skin color than Caribbean Blacks. There were no significant hypothesized correlates with perceived discrimination among Caribbean Blacks.

Among both Caribbean Black groups, familial ethnic socialization was positively associated with heritage culture orientation (foreign-born Caribbean Blacks, $r = .72$, $p < .001$; U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, $r = .47$, $p < .001$). This correlation was much smaller for African Americans ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Familial ethnic socialization was positively associated with American cultural orientation for African Americans ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), and for foreign Caribbean Blacks ($r = .50$, $p < .001$). This pattern of findings suggests that acculturation, as traditionally measured, may be most closely related to familial ethnic socialization and to acculturative stress. These findings, obtained with Hispanic and Asian groups (Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006), appear to generalize to Blacks as well. **See Table 2.**

We also examined differences in the strengths of these correlations among the three Black subgroups. Again, some significant differences emerged between the groups. For example, significant differences emerged in the correlation between familial ethnic socialization and familism between the groups. The correlation for foreign-born Caribbean Blacks was higher than African Americans ($p < .01$). There were also significant differences that emerged in the correlation between familial ethnic socialization and heritage culture. The correlation for foreign-born Caribbean Blacks was higher than African American ($p < 0.01$) and U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks ($p < 0.05$) (see Table 2). Some correlation differences emerged vis-à-vis perceived discrimination. For instance, the correlation between perceived discrimination and horizontal individualism was sig-

Table 2

Correlation Matrix among Cultural Identity Indices among African Americans, Caribbean Blacks (US-and Foreign Born)

Variable	Familial Ethnic Socialization	Pressure to Acculturate	Pressure Against Acculturation	Perceived Ethnic Discrimination
Familism				
African American	.54***[a]	.18**	.06	-.05
Caribbean Black (US)	.57**	.02	-.19	-.03
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.77***[b]	.22	.17	.02
Interdependence				
African American	.27***[a]	.11+	.04	-.15*
Caribbean Black (US)	.25*[a]	-.11	.07	-.15
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.71***[b]	.11	.16	.001
Horizontal Collectivism				
African American	.37***	-.05	-.19**	.08
Caribbean Black (US)	.55***	.15	-.04	.004
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.60***	0.004	-.03	.07
Vertical Collectivism				
African American	.47***	.04	-.07	.04
Caribbean Black (US)	.61***	.21	-.04	-.17
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.62***	0.03	-.08	-.04
Independence				
African American	.45***[a]	-.01	-.08	.005
Caribbean Black (US)	.61***	-.15	-.25+	-.038
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.78***[b]	.01	.03	.042
Horizontal Individualism				
African American	.33***	-.29***[a]	.19**[a]	.005
Caribbean Black (US)	.39***	-.22+	-.05[b]	-.038
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.53***	.12[b]	.25+	.042
Vertical Individualism				
African American	.17**	.23***	.27**	-.10
Caribbean Black (US)	.14	-0.02	.15	-.19+
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.29*	0.32*	.24	.08
Ethnic Identity				
African American	.71***	.18***	-.05	.21***
Caribbean Black (US)	.71***	.09	-.27*[a]	.17
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.67***	.33*	.12[b]	.18
Heritage Culture				
African American	.39***[a]	.04	-.07	.09+
Caribbean Black (US)	.47***[a]	.03	-.10	-.07
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.72***[b]	.20	-.17	.03
Americanism				
African American	.37***	-.24***	-.31***[a]	.11*
Caribbean Black (US)	.31**	-.33**	-.14	-.09
Caribbean Black (Foreign)	.50***	-.02	.17b	.09

+p < 0.1 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Note: Different superscript letter means significant mean difference

African American N = 578
Caribbean Blacks (US born): N = 147
Caribbean Blacks (Foreign-born): N = 81

nificantly weaker for foreign-born Caribbean Blacks than for African Americans ($p < .05$). However, most of the correlations with perceived discrimination were parallel among the three Black subgroups. These findings indicate that the three Black subgroups are affected by discrimination in largely parallel ways, although African Americans may be more affected by discrimination with regard to the ways in which they relate to their peers (i.e. horizontal collectivism).

The groups also differed in the strengths of the relationships of pressures against acculturation and ethnic identity. In this case, the relationship between pressures against acculturation and ethnic identity was significantly higher among Foreign-born Caribbean Blacks than U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks ($p < 0.05$) and higher for U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks than African Americans ($p < 0.05$) (see Table 2).

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was designed to examine the relationships of cultural identity indices to hypothesized correlates in an ethnically diverse population of college-aged Blacks. Findings indicated largely similar patterns of correlates across these three different Black subgroups, but also some noteworthy correlation differences. Perhaps the most notable similarity is that, across groups, ethnic identity was strongly correlated with familial ethnic socialization. This suggests that across Black subgroups, parents' roles are critical in the development of their children's ethnic identity (Mohl, 1993; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). It appears that Black parents understand the importance of teaching their children what it means to be Black in the United States, regardless of their country of origin. Additionally, foreign-born Caribbean Blacks maintain a stronger hold onto a heritage identity likely due to having direct experiences with their home country.

African Americans and U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks were the only groups for whom acculturative stress was related to dimensions of cultural identity. Acculturative stress may have very different meanings for these two groups, however. For African Americans, a belief that one has to be better than their White counterparts is countered by pressures against developing an American identity (i.e. "acting white"). On one hand, African Americans learn that their best may not be good enough or that the worth of their endeavors may not be valued equally as those of whites for doing the same work. However, to put forth maximal effort to perform well in school means running the risk of being ostracized by one's peers, because to do so means having internalized the American ethic of success (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). Conversely, Caribbean Blacks, particularly those born in the U.S., face the daunting task of integrating into mainstream society while maintaining social alliances with more traditionally oriented family members. For both of these groups, family ties reinforce the importance of ethnic identity, whereas social ties outside of the ethnic community promote an American identity. Consequently, what U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks are acculturating to is "part" – but not all – of African American culture. Although Black groups share many physical traits, it is these cultural intricacies that separate lived experiences among African Americans and Caribbean Blacks in the United States.

Perceived Discrimination

The numerous significant correlations between perceived discrimination and cultural indices seem to suggest that race may be more salient than ethnicity among Blacks in the U.S. The three Black subgroups reported more similarities than differences in relation to their perceptions of discrimination. African Americans have a distinct lived experience in the U.S. that encompasses ideas, beliefs, perceptions, and realities about racism and discrimination. Some of these lived experiences reinforce those beliefs, and thus African Americans may be more likely to initially equate certain life circumstances with discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Because Caribbean Blacks may be perceived as Black before their island heritage is taken into account, their lived experiences of racism and discrimination may parallel the experiences of African Americans. As such, similar to African Americans, Black immigrant groups can, and most often do, experience instances of racial discrimination (Kasinitz et al., 2001).

Some Caribbean Blacks identify with racial discrimination somewhat differently than African Americans. For example, discrimination seems to have a more deleterious effect on orientations toward peers (horizontal collectivism and individualism) for African Americans than for Caribbean Blacks. One explanation for this may be that, unlike

African Americans, Caribbean Blacks do not have a long history of oppression in this country. Alternatively, being Black may have a different meaning to Caribbean Blacks, who come from countries where the majority of the population is Black. Therefore, although U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks often adopt many social, economic, and educational characteristics of African Americans, there are some important differences between Caribbean Black and African American cultural contexts.

The present findings suggest that African Americans appear to face many of the same pressures that immigrants face – although the processes does not become easier across successive generations as it may for other immigrant groups. Caribbean Blacks, to the extent they are "Black upon arrival" and may acculturate (perhaps unwillingly) to the African American community, may wind up facing similar challenges. If this is accurate, how do African Americans and Caribbean Blacks operate within their "American" and "heritage" identities? African Americans may confront the dilemmas of maintaining a Black identity while adhering to certain social norms that may reflect an American (i.e. White) identity. For many African Americans, becoming socially mobile through acquired levels of higher education, professional occupations, and the like, may begin to either reject or redefine what is considered a "Black identity." This may parallel the concept of acculturative stress in Caribbean immigrants, where individuals are pressured by their ethnic community to retain the ethnic culture while simultaneously facing assimilation pressures from members of the larger society.

The present study is one of the first to directly compare cultural processes between African Americans, U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, and foreign-born Caribbean Blacks. Despite different cultural and social contexts, many prior studies exploring Black immigrant groups tend to lump Blacks into a single category. Moreover, rarely have studies separated Caribbean Blacks by nativity. Research comparing African Americans against Caribbean immigrants is important given the expansion of Black identity to include immigrant groups as well as African Americans. We hope that the present study will inspire more work in this area, to identify what aspects of and mechanisms that underlie Black identity are specific to African Americans, and which are applicable to Blacks in the United States in general.

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Historically Black Colleges and Universities' Students' Perception of their Preparation for College English

Felicia L. Taylor

ABSTRACT

The following article presents findings of a research study completed at a Southeastern Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) in 2011. The study was designed to examine students' perceptions of their readiness for college composition, the influence of high school academic tracking on the students' preparation for college, and the students' actual performance in college. Attention to these factors is important because of the low graduation rate of African American students who earn a degree at a four-year college within six years and because of the importance of preparing students for social, economic, and political success in society after earning their degree. The study, which was conducted during a summer session, included students enrolled in a freshman composition course (English 131). A total of 104 students from different sections of English 131 completed a questionnaire (quantitative) in one phase of the study, and ten of the 104 students participated in the follow-up interviews in the second phase of the study (qualitative). The role of the high school track placement and the students' actual performance in college revealed insights into the academic achievement of students. The findings of the study also demonstrated the stratification in traditional public schools and the effects of the kind of teaching that occurs in different academic tracks. Although the study revealed some division in the placement of students in classes, it showed how the teaching practices and perceptions of the individuals in tracks have a greater influence on academic performance than tracking itself. The findings also revealed that the students who participated in the survey phase and those who were interviewed were confident in their ability to pass college composition, and their perceptions matched their actual performance.

INTRODUCTION

Various capabilities, self-esteem levels, learning habits, and perceptions of ability are found among students at all educational levels. An examination of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is particularly important because of the relatively low graduation rate of students at such universities. Students who are prepared for college earn their degrees within a four or five year period while others flounder until their grade point averages become so low that they are forced to leave college without a degree. For these reasons, a research project that could help to inform stakeholders of the importance of providing meaningful educational opportunities to all students, regardless of race or economic status, is crucial. As a result, the graduation and retention rates at universities, particularly HBCUs, would improve and more students would earn degrees in their chosen careers. This article examines students' perceptions of their learning experiences in high school, the students' perceptions of their readiness for college composition, and their actual performance in a first-year college composition course.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learning Experiences of African American Students Prior to College

Research pertinent to the academic ability of African American students exists, but few research endeavors have allowed "African American students to speak on their own behalf and to offer suggestions, as the true experts on their own experience" (Thompson, 2002, p. xx). This study is similar to one conducted by Thompson (2002) to examine students' perceptions of their elementary, middle, and high school experiences. In her study of 271 African American high school seniors in Southern California, Thompson (2002) noted the importance of listening to the stories of students. Her first phase of data collection consisted of a questionnaire, and the second phase of data collection consisted of follow-up interviews. Although Thompson collected questionnaires from 1,983 high school seniors in one school district during the 1999-2000 school year, her study focused solely on 271 African American students.

Realizing that the nation's work force will consist of students currently in school,

some researchers are placing more attention on research designed to understand and enhance the academic performance of diverse groups in America's schools. Efforts to consider the uniqueness among students in order to provide culturally relevant pedagogy are important to success in schools. Many research studies focus on the deficits of marginalized groups rather than on ways to reach all groups and provide them with meaningful learning experiences. Evidence of successful performance is ignored. As a result, researchers and practitioners have little understanding of which factors elicit academic achievement. Research compares Whites to African Americans while ignoring reasons for low academic achievement among African American students (Pollard, 1993). Pollard (1993) found that students must receive interpersonal support from outside the school setting. Research suggests that according to the students themselves, the school setting does not provide proper resources and support.

Delpit (1995) examined the learning of minority students. Focusing on the influence of students' perceptions of themselves and academic achievement, Delpit described the dismay of a mother of a 14-year-old African American female became when her child brought home a report card filled with *C's* and *D's* after being assured by all of her child's teachers that the student was "doing just fine." Confused by the parent's response, the teachers told the mother, who obviously had high expectations of her child, that she should not push the child so hard. Such a response from teachers was evidence that the teachers had minimum confidence in the learning ability of the student and no plans to challenge the 14-year-old student. In many cases, teachers underestimate the ability of students and, subsequently, lower the student's' perceptions of their own academic ability (Oakes, 2005).

Researchers and practitioners could learn more about improving the academic achievement of students if they consider discourses. Discourses are essential and should be studied because the primary discourse of many minority students differs from that of mainstream society. According to Gee (2005), literacy is the ability to engage in particular discourses, which are a combination of words, acts, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, gestures, body positions, and clothes. The primary discourse of many African American students makes using Standard American English proficiently more difficult for some African American students. On the other hand, many mainstreamed students have been immersed in the language patterns of the school (Standard English) and have practiced the style longer. Thus, mainstreamed students appear to be quicker studies (Gee, 2005).

If students and teachers do not understand each other, students may withdraw from classroom involvement and act as observers, thereby rejecting the identity of serious students. Delpit (1995) and Heath (1983) argued that as a result of the differences between the students' language patterns and patterns valued in the classroom, oftentimes teachers view the students as incapable, and the students view the teachers as uncaring. Instead of telling students what is wrong with their primary discourse, looking at what is right with students' language pattern and using that knowledge to help students to acquire Standard English can facilitate teaching and learning (Delpit, 1995).

Literacy composition theorist David Bartholomae (1985) asserted that the purpose of college English is to facilitate students' learning of the academic discourse. Thus, a primary task of the writing instructor is to "pry loose the student from the discourse community to which he or she had belonged prior to entering the university" (p. 162).

According to Patricia Bizzell (1990), another composition theorist, when students enter college, it soon becomes obvious that some of them are already comfortable with academic discourse; on the other hand, other students seem quite unfamiliar with academic discourse and are resistant to learning it. Both Bartholomae and Bizzell were influenced by the late composition theorist Mina Shaughnessy, who advocated including marginalized and disenfranchised groups in the quest for navigating academic discourse.

Students themselves take responsibility and make recommendations concerning learning. Though many would describe adolescents as being disengaged from the learning process, in a study of small and large ethnically diverse high schools in Boston, Noguera (2007) found that students' suggestions for improving schools should be analyzed and presented. Noguera (2003, 2007) found that students have some insight as to why certain practices are ineffective and

why others should be considered. If students demonstrate a desire for educators to listen to them and to incorporate their views into decision making, then students indeed have an interest in improving their education, thereby increasing the role of students in their own learning. Students in Noguera's study described characteristics of a school in terms of the excitement of the learning, the preparation of teachers, the patience of teachers, respect teachers show toward students, the way teachers expect to receive respect, and the firmness required by teachers to avoid allowing some students to get away with distracting other students as they strive to learn. Students with these views and recommendations indicate that they are concerned about a learner identity conducive to academic achievement. Such students also possess motivation and clear goals about how they will succeed in school. The students with these characteristics are more likely to enter college with the same sense of ownership and confidence.

Failure to consider the voices of students could have serious consequences. Examining their high school experiences in English classes could lead to improved performance in college classes. If tracking, placing students in groups based on their perceived ability, is practiced in a way that denies students meaningful and useful learning opportunities, then graduation rates at HBCUs will remain low. An improvement in academic achievement could lead to better retention and graduation rates.

Academic Tracking

Grouping practices lead to the reinforcement of powerful stereotypes that are so pervasive that they paint incomplete and inaccurate pictures of ethnic groups. For instance, the overestimation of Asian students' ability stems from their overrepresentation in the honor courses and their high ranking in their class (Noguera, 2003; Oakes, 2005). In many schools, a disproportionate number of minority students make up remedial classes. What is worse is that efforts to de-track classes have been stalled because of the students' desire to remain in an environment which provides them comfort and familiarity; usually this environment consists of students with whom they have formed bonds. They have become so accustomed to being in certain tracks mainly because they develop particular perceptions about their learning based on the academic track in which they choose or they are placed. Minority students are not the only ones hindered by tracking. White students are adversely affected by tracking in that they will not seek academic assistance if they view resource centers (designed to provide additional help beyond the actual class) as places that serve mostly minority students (Noguera, 2003). Too often, educators assume that African American students' selection of certain individuals with whom to socialize and certain classes to take is an indication that they are anti-intellectual. However, Noguera (2003) observed that "the vast majority of Black students I meet express a strong desire to do well in school. To the degree that such an orientation develops, it develops in school and from their seeing these patterns and racial hierarchies as permanent" (p. 27). Some evidence shows that tracking has an adverse effect on self-esteem as students in low tracked classes doubt their ability to compete in high tracked classes: spaces that students occupy in tracked classes influence their aspirations and identity formation (Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). In addition, academic tracks and vocational tracks are organized around positions of status and influence. Luttrell and Parker noted that:

> Not all course work or school activities yield the same prestige and power to those who engage in them. Nor are students from different figured words (academic v. vocational) expected to be a part of the same social groups, to be treated by teachers the same way, or to be held in the same esteem by their classmates (2001, p. 239).

Luttrell and Parker (2001) noted that "the English classroom is the focal centre of formal school literacy, and it is where students are exposed to literacy practices that are supposed to orient them to their place in society. In a regular English class, there was not room for student interpretation of literature. Rather, the teacher explained the key points they would need to know in order to answer the follow-up question in the textbook" (240). Noguera (2003) agreed, claiming

the following:

> The sorting practices that go on in schools also send important messages to students about the meaning of racial categories. For example, in many schools students in remedial classes are disproportionately Black and Brown, and students often draw conclusions about the relationship between race and academic ability based on these patterns...The racial separation we see in schools might also be considered an element of the 'hidden curriculum,' an unspoken (unwritten) set of rules teaches certain students what they can and cannot do because of who they are (p. 26).

Students' placement in a particular track shapes their prestige, status, and power. For instance, students in high tracks describe the school as a stimulating environment and have easier access to and participation in school culture. When teachers equate students' positions (low track) with students' dispositions (unmotivated), they underestimate students' abilities. When students take on others' views of them, they take on dispositions that lead to a lack of confidence in their abilities and, subsequently, poor academic performance (Delpit, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

Mixed method research involves using one method (e.g., quantitative) in one phase of research and another method (qualitative) in another phase (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Brewer and Hunter (1989) noted that "major areas of research in the social and behavioral sciences now use multiple methods..." (p. 5). In many fields "most researchers now use whatever method is appropriate for their studies, instead of relying on one method exclusively" (Tashakkur & Teddlie, 1998, p. 6). Datta (1994) cited convincing, practical reasons for the two methodologies: the longevity of both paradigms, the large number of researchers urging the usage of both paradigms, funding from agencies that support both paradigms, policy that both paradigms have influenced, and the lesson taught by both paradigms. The similarities in fundamental values of quantitative research and qualitative research are adequate for there to be a partnership between the two. Further, quantitative and qualitative methods are both interested in understanding and improving the human condition, in communicating results to influence decisions, and in the proposition that the world is complex and often difficult to understand. Mixed methodology involves using one method in one phase followed by another method in the second phase. Phase 1 of this study was on a survey on a scantron form, and the questionnaire was based on a Likert Scale. Research participants were directed to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements by shading the choice that most closely matched their feelings: *strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.* In the reporting of the results, those students who marked *strongly agree* and those who marked *agree* were combined. Likewise, the students who marked *strongly disagree* and those who marked *disagree* were combined. In analyzing participants' survey responses, I employed descriptive statistics in the form of numbers (means) and percentages. Because of the small sample size, this type of statistical analysis is appropriate. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about the students' perceptions of their ability to do work in a college composition class. Subsequently, interviews provided more in-depth information about the students' perceptions. This step was taken in order to determine if there were any contradictions in data gathered within the methods and to determine if the questionnaire data said one thing about the students' beliefs while the interviews and unobtrusive data revealed something else. The first section of the questionnaire asked students to provide information about how they felt about their 9 – 12 grade experiences in English classes and their preparation for college. The second section of the questionnaire asked students to provide information about their experiences in certain academic tracks. The third section asked students to provide information about their experiences in college English. The final section contained a demographic section. Knowledge of the gender of the students, their age (for informed consent/assent purposes), and the students' willingness to participate in the interview stage of the study was essential to making sure that the study included a representative group of students. Students of different genders, academic tracks, etc. needed to be a part of the follow-up, interview phase, also.

The following are some of the items on the questionnaire:

1. I believe that my high school (grades 9-12) English classes prepared me to make a passing grade in college English.
2. I was enrolled in an advanced /accelerated academic track in high school.
3. I am passing my college English class.

The questionnaire was given at a time in the semester when students would have an idea of their performance in their college English class based on assignments. While 138 students were listed on the English 131 rolls by the time I administered the questionnaire, 74% (n=104) completed the questionnaire. According to Babbie (1990), "a response rate of at least 50% is considered adequate for analysis and reporting...and a response rate of 70% or more is very good" (182).

In phase 2, the goal was to gain detailed information about the participants' thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about their past and present experiences and beliefs (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The following is a sample of some of the interview questions:

1. How would you describe the difficulty of the work you completed in your high school English class;
2. What would you say was your weakest area in English in high school?
3. Did your college English teacher mark your papers for errors? Explain what he/she marked the most.

In my study about HBCU students' perceptions of their readiness for college composition, 104 students responded to questionnaire statements (quantitative) about their perceptions of preparation for university work in college composition and their actual performances in the college course. Ten (10) of the students participated in the qualitative section (interviews, artifacts, etc.). Only the students who were willing to participate in a follow-up interview indicated their names on the questionnaire. The students who participated in the follow-up interviews chose their own pseudonyms. I interviewed each of the 10 students two times during the semester, and each interview (which was audiotaped) lasted approximately 45 minutes. Later, I transcribed interviews verbatim as word documents and coded them. I did not wait to transcribe all of the interviews at the end of the interview stage because I knew that students' answers during the first interview could mean a possibility of adding to, rewriting, etc. the second set of questions to explain any misunderstandings. The questionnaire, interviews, essays, quizzes, etc. helped to answer the research question. The main research question follows: What are the students' perceptions to do work in a college composition class? The sub-questions about track placement, performance in a college English class, and artifacts (i.e., graded college writing assignments) helped to answer the research questions. Sub-questions related to this study include the following: students' perceptions of their ability to do work in a freshman composition class, students' actual performance in a freshman composition class, and students' track placement in high school.

FINDINGS

Thermstrom and Thermstrom (2003) reported that only 30% of African American students enroll in advanced classes in high school compared to more than 60% of Whites. In my study, findings were slightly higher: 42% reported that they were in an advanced track. However, nearly 60% of the students were enrolled in a standard track and 10% reported that they were in a remedial track. The students' answers concerning academic track placement varied. Most (69%) of the students indicated that they chose their academic track; in 45% of the cases the students were placed in a track by the guidance counselor, and the students agreed to this placement.

The majority of the students interviewed in my study indicated that the academic track they were enrolled in prepared them for college English. Some of their perceptions of readiness and their actual performance did not match as shown in their loss of points for errors in grammar and mechanics even though most claimed to have understood revising and editing concepts as they discussed them in grades 9 – 12. Even though the other interviewees believe that the academic track helped to prepare them to pass English 131, they made suggestions for improvements: teaching more about

grammar and mechanics and encouraging students to ask more questions while in high school.

Only two of the students interviewed were uncertain of my question concerning the academic track in which they were enrolled. That, more than likely, explains why one of the students' marks on the questionnaire were contradictory: Nearly 70% of the students reported that they chose the academic track of their high school English classes; almost 60% of the students were enrolled in a standard track, 42.3% reported that they were enrolled in an advanced track, and 9.6% were enrolled in remedial English courses in high school. A contradiction in academic track placement was obvious in that 68.3% of the students believed that the learning activities in the track that they were in helped them to understand course material in their college English class (item 24: I think that the learning activities in the track that I was in have helped me to understand course material in my college English class); however, 61.5% of the students said that they do not think that the skills that they need to pass college English were covered in their particular track in grades 9 – 12. (item 25: I do not think that the skills that I need to pass college English were covered in my particular track). The students may have understood the *learning activities*, but the learning activities were not adequate enough in helping students to grasp *skills*. Most learning activities are designed to enable students to understand specific skills.

As noted before, the survey revealed that most of the students in this research study were enrolled in Standard English classes, and so were those participating in the follow-up interviews. The following interview with DeShawn explains his experiences in a high school Standard English class: Most of the research participants seemed to devalue the importance of specific grammar and mechanics in grades 9 – 12 and realized later the importance of such skills at the university level.

DeShawn was enrolled in standard English courses in high school. One of the reasons proofreading for errors and mechanics was difficult for him was the lack of opportunities to do so in high school as he explained to me:

> *Taylor*: So for the most part, most of your English teachers in grades 9 – 12 did mark, grade and return your papers to you. Maybe not the 9th grade teacher; she kept them, but she did go over them with you.
>
> *DeShawn*: No.
>
> *Taylor*: She kept them?
>
> *DeShawn*: *He* kept them.
>
> *Taylor*: He (9th grade teacher) kept them. And he didn't go over them?
>
> *DeShawn*: No. He would like maybe like take a essay and go over the common mistakes we made.

Even though DeShawn was successful in his college composition course, going over the essay with his teacher to discuss and correct some of the specific errors would have been beneficial to DeShawn at the college level.

Although the majority (87%) of the study population believed that they would pass a freshman composition class, one of the students who was placed in a lower academic track because of the grades made in grades K – 8 posited adamantly that the track she was in did not prepare her for college. The student's grade in English 131 during the summer session was an "Incomplete." Most instructors would have assigned the student a failing grade. According to the student, the professor revealed that she should have assigned the student a failing grade because of the students' overall performance. An "Incomplete" grade means that the student has to go back to the professor who assigned the "Incomplete" and complete missing assignments in order to receive a letter grade. Usually, students prefer the "Incomplete" grade for the sake of their grade point averages and the cost of repeating the entire course, but the student in this study chose to re-take the English 131 class instead of removing the "Incomplete" grade. A determined student who was realistic about her academic performance and her limitations in college composition, the student revealed that taking the course a second time would help to improve her writing proficiencies. Despite this one difference, the other students revealed on the questionnaire and during the interview that the academic track in which they were enrolled prepared them to do work in a freshman composition course. In terms of being prepared for

college material, other interview participants explained that their teachers merely referred to going to college by making statements such as, "When you get to college, your professors won't allow you to turn work in late." Still, according to one research participant, the teacher who made the comment about late work continued to allow students to submit work late without a penalty. In fact, constantly extending due dates, which may have crippled some students, is what one research participant, Amber, did not appreciate about one of her high school experiences. Amber was enrolled in an advanced track in grades 9 and 10 and a standard track in grades 11 and 12. According to Amber, changing due dates was a waste of time and it prevented students from learning additional content. If she could add anything to her high school experiences in English classes, she said that it would be that teachers require more accountability among students and more vocabulary and reading. This kind of teacher behavior is what decreases students' sense of accountability and ownership of their learning, a habit that some students continue to display in college.

Students are placed in academic tracks based on their perceived academic ability, and perceptions of their ability may be influenced by test results and grades. Of the students who completed the questionnaire, 60% were enrolled in a Standard English track. Most (69%) of student surveyed indicated that they chose their academic track. (Item # 18: I chose the academic track of my high school English class). Veronica explained that she chose the academic track that she was in during high school. The following is part of my interview with her:

> *Taylor*: Who chose the academic track that you were in during high school? How did the track that you were in help you to understand college English?
>
> *Veronica*: I did. I chose advance and it prepared me a lot because we did a lot of analysis and we had to learn about literary and all that stuff. I think it helped me a lot because it wasn't like I was learning about grammar/mechanics even though I know that I should. I mean that's a little bit right now but I learned about the different types of writing and maybe not that much of detail but I did learn about it like in general.
>
> *Taylor*: Do you believe that the skills you learned in your academic track helped you to understand college English?
>
> *Veronica*: Yes, I don't believe I would be doing as well if I had been in a standard track. I think that I was prepared well but like I said I'm kind of mad that I'm messing up on [small things like grammar/mechanics]...I'm losing more points now for grammar/mechanics than I did when I was in high school.

Veronica's description of grammar/mechanics as *small things* is an indication of how little grammar/mechanics may mean to her. In fact, most of the interviewees described errors in grammar and mechanics as "small problems." Veronica may believe that if she provides exemplary support, the errors in grammar/mechanics should not weigh in on her grade. From my professional experience with college freshmen, students argue that they do not think that they should have received a lower grade on a major writing assignment even if the writing assignment consists of gross errors in grammar/mechanics. Often, students think that proving the thesis of the paper is only area with which the instructor should be concerned. The interviewees' explained how the high school teachers graded their papers (a circle or check with no explanation). The teachers' grading practice may very well have contributed to the students' perceptions of grammar/mechanics as "small problems." Not having specific errors and marks on their writing assignments gives students the impression that it is not important to focus on such specific errors.

While some research participants revealed that they believed that what they learned in a standard track prepared them for college English, others disagreed. One student enrolled in a standard English track, Truth, explained that she experienced difficulty during her 9th grade year of high school mainly because it was her first time attending the school, but from the 10th grade onward, she was confident in her academic ability because each prior grade was effective in preparing her for the subsequent grade level. Truth's high school is located in

the Southeast, and she reported that "everything they did basically prepared us for college because I'm seeing a lot of things we do here (college), I did in high school, so I'm familiar with it, so I can breeze through it..." Truth further explained that the teachers at the high school pushed the students with the level of work that they gave them. Such motivation is likely to lead to success. Whether teachers motivate students in advanced tracks or standard tracks, when teachers "push" students, the students' sense of ability increases.

Some research participants, however, were not as pleased with their experiences in their academic tracks. Maranda, for instance, pointed out that her standard English class failed to prepare her for college work. She stated that the only time they wrote was to prepare for a State Exam. Miranda believes that her teachers could have provided more writing opportunities instead of focusing on British literature, American literature, and poems. She added, "I never failed an English class, but I think they failed me in a way 'cause like, even though I never failed, it feels like they didn't prepare me well enough for college level writing..." Maranda graduated from a southeastern high school that tested students in order to place them into a "tech track" or a "college track." She explained that she was placed in the "tech track" because of her test scores. As early as the 9th grade, Maranda knew that she wanted to major in pre-med, so I asked her if she could have opted for the "college track" despite testing into the "tech track," a track in which the teachers assumed that students would not attend college but would seek a trade. She explained that she requested a change in academic track, but a teacher told her that her grades and test scores were indications that she would do better academically in the "tech track." Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) pointed out that it is difficult for some students to move from low tracks to high tracks because of counselors and teachers, and Maranda's request to move from a lower track to a higher one is typical of the role of counselors and teachers in selecting academic tracks.

Amanda also believes that the track that she was in did not adequately prepare her.

> *Taylor*: How did the track that you were in help you to understand college English?
>
> *Amanda*: The guidance counselor put me in standard track in English in high school. It didn't really help me because when it got down to the graduation exam in the reading part, I needed more help with that and it took me forever to pass it. I took test from the 10th – 12th grades, about four tries.
>
> *Taylor*: Do you believe that the skills you learned in your academic track helped you to understand college English?
>
> *Amanda*: Sort of. High school could've focused more on grammar. I'm pretty good at providing support.

Learning how to edit for errors in grammar/mechanics is as important as learning how to support a thesis with adequate content/support. Amanda's case is representative of students who can provide support but have trouble finding and correcting errors in grammar/mechanics, mainly because grammar/mechanics within the students' papers is not emphasized enough. Still, data shows that the tracks, for the most part, played some part in helping students to pass a freshman composition class.

One of the driving forces of this study is scholarly research on the effects of academic tracking on student performance. Too often, educators view students' differences in language patterns as indications of inferiority (Delpit, 1995). This research study revealed that the academic tracks in general did not influence students' achievement in college as every standard track is not the same, every advanced track is not the same, etc. In fact, in some cases, students in standard tracks were exposed to more experiences that prepared them for college than did the students enrolled in an advanced track, unlike what some critics of tracking contend (Oakes, 2005). In essence, the teachers' methodologies and expectations accounted for the students' success or failure more so than the tracks themselves.

Most of the students (60%) of the 104 participants were enrolled in standard tracks; they believed that they were in the appropriate track during high school. The student who was in a tech track (designed specifically for students who were going to technical

school and not college) portrayed a low self-esteem and a low perception of the ability to succeed in the college class. During the interviews, she explained that the academic track in which she was enrolled ("tech") was taught in a way that assumed the students would not need skills important to succeed in college. Three of the interviewees were in advanced tracks and they made final grades of *A* and *B*; the remaining interviewees were in a standard track, and they made *B's*. In a couple of cases, the students did not perform academically as one would expect. That is, one would have expected all of the students in the advanced track to have done much better than the students in the standard track. In one case in this study, there was a contradiction: the student in the standard track depicted a greater perception of her ability and more actual ability than a student enrolled in advanced high school English. Again, the students' perceptions of themselves accounted more for the students' success or failure than the academic track itself.

Regardless of the academic track students enroll in during high school, their perceptions of themselves and their capabilities are important. Among the interviewees, most displayed evidence of a high self-esteem and ability, and their final grades matched their beliefs. The research findings indicate that enrollment in standard tracks does not, as a rule, mean that students are not challenged and encouraged to have confidence in their ability. What is more important is "how" academic tracking is practiced in the classroom. Students revealed that though they may have sat in standard tracks, the teachers taught them as though they were in advanced tracks.

However, in some cases, tracking is used to stratify learners. Among students identified as average or slow, tracking stymies progress. Instead of helping students feel more comfortable about themselves, tracking has the potential to lower self-esteem and aspirations. Often, learning activities and opportunities reflect the track of the students' class, and students observe the teachers' attitudes about the classes and the teachers' perceptions of the students' abilities. Some studies even report that tracking causes students to have negative attitudes toward school. Generally, teachers expose students in high-track English classes to topics and skills that are required for college. Teachers of low-track classes provide instruction in basic reading skills that were taught mostly through workbooks and kits. The students' tasks were characterized by memorization or low-level comprehension (e.g., Oakes, 2005; Scherff & Piazza, 2005).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research study revealed that although students may pass a specific college English course, weaknesses in their writing still exist. The students must be cognizant of the skills that they did not master because not having a firm grasp of skills (e.g., grammar and usage) will affect the students' performance in other courses taken later and, ultimately, their career upon graduation.

On the questionnaire, 88% of students reported that their secondary level teachers marked, graded, and returned their writing assignments to them. The follow-up interviews revealed that some high school teachers marked papers via a circle or check marks but did not name the error in grammar and mechanics. Students' reference to grammar and mechanics as "little" or "minor" problems may have been a result of students receiving papers from teachers with no particular error *specified and explained*, but simply *circled*. During the interview, most students revealed that they did not understand grammar and mechanics at a level that they originally believed they did, and weaknesses in some areas of grammar and mechanics caused them to lose points on their writing assignments. In fact, most of the students interviewed indicated that the points that they lost in writing assignments were because of grammar and mechanics.

Research has found that high school teachers and college instructors have varied priorities in composition (Patterson & Duer, 2006), and these differences may account for the students' performance in college composition courses. ACT, Inc., a nonprofit organization responsible for the ACT (American College Testing), provides other assessment, research, information, and program management for education and work force development. In an ACT survey, high school teachers agreed that skills in evaluating and judging texts are important, but they did not approach these skills as priorities in the classroom. In college, reading and writing processes are combined. College teachers of first-year university students lament the students' inadequate skills in reading and evaluating texts (Paterson & Duer, 2006). Reading

and evaluating texts could help students to provide adequate details and examples in their essays. Collaboration between high school and college teachers could improve connectedness of the skills covered in secondary and post- secondary settings.

College instructors could help students to improve their writing, too. Kutney (2007) pointed out the inability of first year composition courses to instruct a transferrable, universal academic discourse.

Also important is the collaboration between students and teachers (Leah, 2002). Lavelle and Zuecher's (2001) study of writing approaches of university students revealed that the self-efficacy of students influenced greatly the students' approaches to writing. In this study, it was apparent during the interviews that even when students were in standard as opposed to advanced courses in high school, the method their particular teachers used influenced the students' perceptions, efficacy, and performance in their college composition course. That is, most of the students who were interviewed passed their college composition course, but they were enrolled in Standard English courses in high school. Rote memorization is not expected in *all* standard classes; teachers play a major role in the students' expectations of themselves and the learning opportunities provided in class. Teachers who provide challenging learning activities that are normally employed only in advanced classes help to improve the students' perceptions and their academic performance. This research study revealed that the students' perceptions and the learning opportunities in the academic track, not the track itself, influence academic performance. The study also revealed that students are confident in their ability to pass a college composition course. The students' perceptions matched their actual academic performance.

Recommendations and Limitations

Additional research designed to improve the academic achievement of students at HBCUs is crucial. Examining a larger number of students would be even more enlightening. Further research about students at HBCUs should include how first-year college English classes help to prepare them for other English classes and classes in other disciplines. Still, this study provided relevant and helpful information about HBCU students' perceptions, the tracks in which they were enrolled, their learning experiences in grade schools, and their actual performance in college composition.

CONCLUSION

With the impending celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision, varied opinions about the success of this landmark case will surface, especially since traditional public schools have gone from operating under the *Plessy V. Ferguson* case (separate but equal) to the *Brown v. the Board of Education* case and then back to some of the aspects of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In other words, public schools in some districts have gone from segregation to desegregation and back to segregation. Segregation today comes in the form of academic tracking. Academic tracking should not be practiced to increase the chances of social, economic, and political disadvantage for any group. Instead, the practice should be studied from an angle of academic success for all. Likewise, listening to students' views of their learning experiences and opportunities is crucial to overall academic achievement. Students are capable of providing educators with effective, practical methods to reach them. Examining students' perceptions of their ability to pass an English composition class at the college level and the effectiveness of the type of high school course (standard, advanced, etc.) in which they are enrolled could have a major impact on the students' actual performance in courses at

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The Pursuit of Happiness: African American Resorts and Summer Communities in the Jim Crow Era

Mary Stanton

W.E.B. Dubois, reflecting on the subject of segregated recreation in 1887 declared, "I do not pretend that it is one of the more pressing of the Negro problems, but nevertheless it is destined as time goes on to become more and more so, and at all times and in all places, the manner method and extent of a people's recreation is of vast importance to their welfare".[1] Dubois understood that within the Jim Crow system racially segregated recreation was considered crucial to maintaining white privilege.

While the Civil Rights Act of 1875 guaranteed American citizens, regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude, "equal enjoyment of accommodations," eight years later the Supreme Court determined that this right was *not* protected by the Constitution. No community was more devastated by this than Washington D.C.'s Black Brahmins.

For example, in the summer of 1891 Major Charles Edmond Douglass, a member of the District's prestigious "Black 400," took his wife to dinner at Annapolis' white Bay Ridge resort. Frederick Douglass, the runaway slave who became an orator, journalist, publisher and ultimately an advisor to President Abraham Lincoln was Major Douglass' father. They'd dined comfortably at Bay Ridge many times, but this evening when the white waiter refused the Major service management did not intervene.

Highland Beach, Maryland

In 1892, a year after his humiliation at Bay Ridge, Charles Douglass purchased twenty-six acres outside Annapolis and built a private summer resort to provide his family and friends with embarassment-free recreation. Douglass subdivided the property and offered one hundred twenty nine building lots to former Reconstruction-era Congressmen, retired officers of the 54 Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Douglass's regiment), Howard University professors, lawyers, physicians and businessmen. They built summer cottages on Highland Beach and enjoyed boating, swimming, lawn tennis, crabbing and many of the same amenities that Bay Ridge afforded whites.

Highland Beach was not unique. It was only the first of many African American summer resorts.

Bay Shore Beach, Virginia

In 1898 black entrepreneur F.D. Banks established Bay Shore Beach on the Chesapeake Bay near Hampton, Virginia. He organized the Bay Shore Hotel Corporation, recruited investors and purchased several waterfront lots that adjoined the white Buckroe Beach resort. Banks wanted to take advantage of the existing public trolley transportation to and from the City of Hampton.

Buckroe Beach, constructed seven years earlier, offered its white clientele a luxurious hotel, summer boarding houses, a public bathhouse and a dance hall. Banks advertised his four-room Bay Shore Hotel as a "top notch black resort."[2] By 1930 it had seventy rooms and was a popular Mid-Atlantic vacation and honeymoon spot. The Bay Shore's facilities were also rented out for conferences, professional and fraternal conventions, family reunions and debutante balls[2].

The Buckroe and Bay Shore hotels operated side by side until August 1933 when the "King Storm" hurricane demolished both. New Deal WPA workers restored the beaches and the white Buckroe was eventually rebuilt. Because there was an outstanding loan balance on the Bay Shore property, the land was sold and the hotel was never rebuilt. This became a recurring event in the history of black resorts. A combination of limited capital, insufficient insurance protection, and building in unincorporated areas made long term success more difficult for African American enterprises.

Bay Shore and Buckroe's thirty-five year "live and let live" arrangement was hardly typical of the middle South and certainly not of the Deep South. Georgia's King's Wigwam experience was far more common.

King's Wigwam, Georgia

In 1901 architect Cornelius King, son in law of AME Bishop and former Reconstruction Senator Henry McNeal Turner, moved to Atlanta from the Oklahoma Indian Territory and established a land development business. After his wife Victoria died in childbirth King and his father-in-law remained close. The Bishop stayed politically active even after Georgia expelled all its black legislators and he introduced King to Atlanta's black movers and shakers including David Howard, a trustee of the Atlanta Savings Bank, who partnered with King on several ventures.

By 1915 King was remarried with four children and wealthy. He and Howard purchased forty-seven acres in Kennesaw, Georgia and over the next three years they built guest cabins, tennis courts, a music pavilion and an artificial lake. In 1918 they opened "King's Wigwam, the Black Country Club." Many of Bishop Turner's colleagues rented the Wigwam's facilities for conferences, baptisms, picnics, dances, weddings, fraternal events and Emancipation Day Celebrations. The Wigwam became an especially popular conference center for black political leaders from South Carolina and Georgia, a fact that did not escape the attention of Kennesaw's white community.

Business boomed until the summer of 1920 when Bertram Hamilton, an Atlanta University student and a friend of King's eldest son, was arrested after leaving the Wigwam. Charged with raping a Cherokee County white woman, Hamilton was taken to the Marietta jail. The white sheriff and several Klan investigators interrogated King and all his guests. Edgar Webster, one of Hamilton's professors, recalled the sheriff warning the young man that there were "more angry people in Marietta that night than there had been at the lynching of Leo Frank".[3] Frank, a Northern Jew, was lynched five years earlier for the alleged rape-murder of a white female teenage employee at his pencil factory. Hamilton was released, however, when the woman who'd made the complaint said that he was not the man who attacked her. But the Klan visit had dealt the Wigwam a mortal blow. Neither King's family nor his guests ever felt safe there again. He and Howard sold the land at a substantial loss.[4] This convinced many black Atlantians that the rape allegations were part of a plot to lower the property value.[5]

That summer of 1920 former slave Charles Shearer opened a commercial inn at Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard, once a haven for runaway slaves. Affluent blacks from Boston, New York and Philadelphia soon began spending their summers at the Vineyard and many ultimately built vacation homes there.

Idlewild, Michigan

In 1920 a group of speculators constructed Idlewild, a mid-western resort which became the largest, most popular post-war Jazz Age African American summer community in the nation. Located in north central Michigan, this "Black Eden," unlike Highland Beach, Ocean Bluffs, King's Wigwam or Bay Shore, was initially a white venture. E.G. and Adelbert Branch of White Cloud, Michigan and Wilbur Lemon and A. E. Wright of Chicago incorporated in 1920 to address the desire among Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Milwaukee's black middle class for summer rental cottages and vacation homes. Many were seeking a respite from the overcrowded and unhealthy city wards created when the Great Migration collided with Northern red-lined districts.

The Idlewild Resort Company purchased 2,700 acres in Yates Township, seventy miles north of Grand Rapids and advertised 25'x100' building lots in the *Chicago Defender* for $35—six dollars down and one dollar a month. Their promotional literature promised, "in Idlewild you can breathe the fresh air and note the freedom from prejudice, ostracism and hatred and feel yourself truly an American citizen".[6] Weekend site excursions were offered and black sales agents were awarded a lot for every one they sold. In 1921 a group of Idlewild residents, led by Dr. Daniel Hale Williams a Chicago heart surgeon, formed an Improvement Association and purchased the remaining lots allowing Idlewild to become a fully owned and operated black resort. By 1927 16,895 lots had been purchased by 6,000 customers.[7] In its heyday Idlewild offered a dude ranch, the Oakmere, Heartbreak, Casa Blanca and Giles Hotels and the Flamingo, Paradise, and Purple Palace Clubs which provided entertainment rivaling Harlem's Apollo Theater.

Lincoln Hills, Colorado

In 1922, taking advantage of the post-war economic upturn, two black entrepreneurs,

Robert E. Ewalt and E.C. Regnier, organized the Lincoln Hills Development Company and built a vacation resort in the Rocky Mountains. Only an hour from Denver, Lincoln Hills was accessible by railroad. They offered six hundred 25'x100' lots for between $50 and $100 each. Obrey Wendell "Winks" Hamlet bought several to construct "Winks' Panorama" which he opened in 1928. Built into the side of a mountain, the six-bedroom lodge included a wrap-around porch where guests enjoyed breakfast and dinner. Hamlet subsequently added a honeymoon cottage, several smaller lodges and a tavern. Vacation season ran from late Spring through early fall and featured hiking, fishing and first class entertainment.

Shell Island Resort & Sea Breeze, North Carolina

During World War I several representatives of Wilmington, North Carolina's black middle class—teachers, clergymen, lawyers, doctors and businessmen—petitioned the Tide Water Power Company, (owners of Wrightsville Beach, the white "Playground of the South") to set aside some land for a blacks-only pavilion and bathing beach. While Mayor P.Q. Moore had no objection, most of the City Council members did. Insisting that a black beach would destroy white property values, they tabled the issue for six years.

Then, in 1923, C.B. Parmele and Thomas H. Wright of Wilmington's (white) Home Realty Company purchased Shell Island located directly across the Queen's Inlet from Wrightsville Beach.[8] They approached Dr. Frank Avant (a signer of the original petition) with a plan for developing a "Negro Resort." Avant's job was to raise $75,000 dollars, which he did, and Parmelee and Wright built bathhouses, piers, and a large music pavilion. Shell Island Resort, accessible by a ferry across Moore's Inlet, opened on May 30, 1924. The Tide Water Power Company installed electric streetlights, and Home Realty sold building lots. Victoria Lofton Williams, an affluent member of Wilmington's black community built the Lofton Hotel which overlooked the Inlet.[9] Whites in Wrightsville and Wilmington were livid.

Despite ongoing controversy the Shell Island Resort boldly advertised as "The National Negro Playground" and vacationers, summer renters and prospective buyers flocked to the Island. In 1926, the Negro Elks held their North Carolina convention in Wilmington and their annual Ball at the Shell Island Pavilion.[10]

This limited interracial cooperation, extraordinary in its time, was deeply resented by white Wrightsville Beach residents as was the success of the black operated Shell Island Resort. Wrightsville grew increasingly uncomfortable as the number of blacks visiting the Island increased. The idea of swimming in the same waters with them, even from opposite sides of the Inlet, was abhorrent.[11] During the 1926 season fires destroyed most of Shell Island's private cottages. The Island was remote and without a security staff and when no arrests were made investors quickly cut their loses. The 1927 season ended with most of the summer residents abandoning the remaining bungalows.[12]

Five years earlier, just south of Shell Island and due north of the white Carolina Beach, black developer Roland Freeman opened the Sea Breeze Resort. His father and grandfather, successful fishermen, accumulated almost 3,000 acres on Myrtle Grove Sound. In 1924 Freeman invested some of his inheritance in the construction of Sea Breeze. Victoria Lofton built a second 25-room Lofton Hotel and Dance Hall there. Peter Simpson a black Wilmington businessman opened the Simpson Hotel in 1925. The Hotel Faison and the Daley Hotel soon followed. Rental bungalows, concession stands and a music pavilion were all added and Daley's Breezy Point Restaurant, the Edgewater Inn, the Anchor Inn, and Barbeque Sam's opened near the pier. Business increased after Shell Island was abandoned. Sea Breeze likely survived because initially it posed no threat to the white community since it was tucked away among the black settlements of Myrtle Grove. A special bus from Wilmington made the twelve-mile trip to Sea Breeze all summer, and until the late 1950's it was the only beach in southeastern North Carolina that African Americans could access.

Gulfside Assembly, Mississippi

The Deep South remained unshakable in its determination to maintain white privilege. No developer in his right mind would consider building a black resort in Mississippi, at least not until Bishop Robert E. Jones, the first African American superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, arrived on the scene. In 1920 Jones was assigned to New Orleans to serve black congregations there

and on the Gulf Coast. Despite the odds he established Gulfside Assembly, just down the road from the white resort town of Waveland, Mississippi, as, "a place of retreat for Negro Christians." With the support of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and financial aid from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Julius Rosenwald, and Gammon Theological Seminary, the Bishop raised $4,000 and purchased three hundred acres on the Gulf. Between 1923 and 1931 he constructed a twenty-five-room hotel, a chapel, auditorium, classroom building, library, theater, two dormitories and several cottages. Every summer Gulfside offered a Chautauqua-like program of music, drama, lectures and cultural events. In 1929 Bishop Jones welcomed more than 10,000 guests.[13] Metropolitan Opera star Leontyne Price, a native of Laurel, Mississippi, gave a concert at Gulfside, the only location in her home state where black audiences could hear her perform live.

Before the Gulfside Assembly none of Mississippi's Gulf Coast beaches were accessible to blacks. As it was, Gulfside's guests were compelled to walk through the woods behind the property to reach their beach because they were not permitted on the public road leading to the Gulf Shore.[14] Living in such close proximity to white resorts was not only unpleasant it was also dangerous. Cross burnings were common events, yet under the Bishop's leadership Gulfside prevailed.

How did he do it? Bishop Jones served the white Methodist Episcopal Church, South which had seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 over the issue of slavery. (ME South *supported* slavery.) After World War I, however, progressive Southern Methodists embraced the Social Gospel Movement and Jones garnered support for programs of black "religious uplift." He also served on the board of the biracial Commission on Interracial Cooperation established in Atlanta in 1919 to respond to the post war race riots. The progressive CIC advocated black economic opportunity—within a segregated society. Using the tools he had the Bishop forged ahead. Initially he proposed building only a summer camp for black youth and an adult retreat center. A skilled negotiator, Jones, like the NAACP's Walter White, had the physical appearance of a white man. Although he never admitted to passing for white in order to purchase the property it is likely that he did so. He bought one hundred acres outright, secured a long-term lease on 326 more, and an option to buy another 150. He purchased everything in his own name then transferred it to the Gulfside Association where he served as president.[15] There was clearly more than one way to skin a cat. Gulfside brought cultural opportunities, a religious retreat center, education and physical recreation to many of Mississippi's black residents and it became an outpost for activists during the 1960's civil rights movement years.

Eagle Harbor, Maryland

Further north and to the east, black real estate developer Walter Bean was negotiating with the white Woods family for some prime Prince George County, Maryland property. Truman's Point on the Pawtuxet River was a tobacco shipping center and just thirty minutes from Washington, D.C. It had a large African American population and was served by the Weems Riverboat Company. Thomas Wood and his brother John owned several large tobacco farms and both were married to black women who were intrigued by Bean's vision of a black summer resort—a place where interracial couples could also be comfortable.

In 1925 after acquiring the Woods' land Bean advertised one thousand 25'x100' building lots in the *Washington Tribune* at $50 each and opened a sales office on U Street in the affluent black D.C. Shaw community.[16] Eagle Harbor was described as "a high class summer colony for the better people" and a safe place for children. It promised bathing beaches, a hotel, boarding houses, cafes, and excursion boat cruises—but none of the nightlife that made Idlewild and Wink's Panorama so desirable.

The Town of Eagle Harbor incorporated in 1929 and gradually evolved into a year round municipality. Today it is a retirement community of sixty homes.

As the number of black resorts increased across the nation reports of sabotage, fraud, onerous tax assessments, eminent domain filings, arson and violence grew. In 1926 a firebomb destroyed the Pine Crest Inn, a failed white waterside resort near Roanoke that had been acquired, refurbished and reopened by blacks that year. It happened just months after blacks were run off a small beach they'd traditionally used at Kessler's Mill near Roanoke's white Lakeside Pleasure Resort.[17]

On the West Coast, the Pacific Beach

Club in Huntingdon Beach thirty miles south of Los Angeles met a similar fate. Black attorney E. Burton Ceruti had worked with local white attorneys to underwrite the project but even after he secured funding the Chambers of Commerce of white Huntington and Newport Beaches passed resolutions expressing strong disapproval of a black beach club. Citizens groups tried to get the property condemned and Ceruti's efforts to obtain water permits and electricity were thwarted. Nevertheless, he moved ahead with his dream of a first rate seven acre Country Club with bathhouses, dance pavilions and concessions. Two weeks before Ceruti's grand opening (scheduled for February 12, 1926), fire broke out in the Club and quickly spread to the bathhouses and dance pavilions. Due to the permit delays the water had never been connected and there was none to fight the fire. A night watchman testified that two white males jump into a car and speed off just before the fire started. While no arrests were made it is believed that local officials planned the arson attack and it was carried out by the active Huntington Beach Ku Klux Klan.[18]

Lake Ivanhoe, Chowan Beach and Fox Lake, on the other hand, offer a few examples of interracial cooperation.

Lake Ivanhoe, Wisconsin; Chowan Beach, North Carolina & Fox Lake, Indiana

Lake Ivanhoe was established for affluent Chicago blacks who'd been denied admission to the white Lake Geneva Resort in Wisconsin called the "Riviera of the West." In 1926, black Chicago entrepreneurs, Jeremiah Brumfield, Frank Anglin, and Bradford Watson, searching for a black resort site finally found an eighty-three acre farm for sale in Walworth County near Lake Geneva. They also located white Evanston real estate agent, Ivan Bell, who secured the property for them. To show their appreciation, the developers called their project "Lake Ivanhoe." By 1927 they were advertising building lots in the *Chicago Defender* starting at $87.75 to "high minded colored people—church going people of education and refinement.[19]

Another management model, rare in the South, was employed by Chowan Beach in Winton, North Carolina. This was a black resort owned and operated by a white man, J. Eli Reid, whose business ventures included distributing Wurlitzer and Rockola jukeboxes and commercial fishing. In 1926 Reid purchased four hundred acres on the Chowan River, constructed fishing piers and summer rental cottages and marketed waterside vacations to black professionals in New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.[20] Reid built two dance halls, a bathhouse and a restaurant and contracted with jazz and blues artists to provide entertainment. Chowan Beach was advertised in the black press as "a gathering place and vacation destination." Reid later added a dormitory for church and fraternal groups. Many renters returned with their families year after year to fish, swim, canoe, enjoy the entertainment, play bridge and relax in the company of other black professionals. Local blacks were also welcome to picnic, swim and buy tickets to the weekend entertainment. When Reid retired in 1967 he sold Chowan Beach to Sam Pillmon, a black entrepreneur from Ahoski, North Carolina who kept the resort running for another twenty years.[21]

Fox Lake in Angola, Indiana, the only black resort in that state, was also developed by whites and marketed to affluent blacks in Ft. Wayne, Toledo and Indianapolis. The Fox Lake Land Company purchased a farm a mile and a half outside Angola and converted the farmhouse into a hotel and the barn into a restaurant and dancehall. Soon building lots were offered and amenities like horseback riding, fishing, trap shooting and tennis were added.

Throughout the prosperous 1920's the number of black owned and operated resorts and summer colonies increased. They included Val Verde, "the Black Palm Springs" and Lake Elsinor in California; Sunset Lake in Chesapeake, Virginia; Dania Beach and Butler's Beach on Anastasia Island in Florida; and Edgewater Park, in Turner's Station Maryland, to name just a handful. Unfortunately the Jazz Age prosperity didn't last and the Great Depression of the 1930's brought financial ruin to many resorts, grand hotels, nightclubs and amusement parks both black and white. Resorts operating on a shoestring were the first to fail and there were few banks willing or able to bail them out. Many families could no longer afford vacation rentals, some gave up their cars and others sold or abandoned their summer cottages.

As a result, concession owners and their suppliers went bankrupt, workers were laid off and maintenance budgets were slashed. Some communities resorted to "insurance fires." While it was a difficult time for the industry, a few, like A. L, Lewis of Jacksonville,

Florida, prevailed.

American Beach, Florida

Abraham Lincoln Lewis was one of seven founders of Jacksonville, Florida's Afro-American Life Insurance Company. In 1901 these men contracted with each other in the study of Jacksonville's Bethel Baptist Church. By 1930 Lewis was president of what by then was one of the largest enterprises in Florida—black or white—with offices in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Texas. He'd found his niche in selling insurance to blacks—something that whites refused to do. Lewis subsequently became Florida's first black millionaire. During the height of the Depression he used his employees' pension fund to purchase land on Amelia Island, forty miles north of Jacksonville. By 1933 Afro owned twenty acres and as Lewis increased his holdings he created American Beach a two hundred acre summer resort community. Lewis sponsored picnics and outings for his employees on the company-owned land and offered them and their families summer weekend access to the beaches. His was a very different operating model—a corporate designed, financed and owned resort.[22] Lewis equipped American Beach with amenities and kept it free, clean and safe. He went so far as to contract with the Florida state police to provide safe passage to and from the Beach for his annual company picnic.[23] His money did, in fact, open many doors. Lewis offered his executives, wealthy clients and investors options to buy building lots before he opened American Beach up to the black professional community, advertising it as a place of "recreation and relaxation without humiliation".[24] American Beach thrived until Hurricane Dora hit in 1964. Many of the homes and establishments destroyed by the storm were uninsured and so never rebuilt. The desegregation of Florida's beaches that same year took another toll on American Beach. The resort declined throughout the 1970's and today only thirty families, mostly retirees, make their homes there year round.

Atlantic Beach, South Carolina

Located within the city limits of North Myrtle Beach, Atlantic Beach was the vision of black laundromat proprietor George Tyson who purchased five acres of oceanfront property from three white Horry County businessmen in 1928. He leased this property to contractors and in 1930 had a bathhouse and concession stands built for the use of local blacks, especially those who worked in Myrtle Beach's white summer resorts and were not permitted (even off-season) to use the beaches.

In 1938 Tyson sold his property to three black professionals who incorporated as the Atlantic Beach Company.[25] They leased beachfront lots for nightclubs, hotels and rental bungalows and connected black Atlantic Beach to the emerging white "Grand Strand"— sixty unbroken beachfront miles of hotels and amusements.[26] Atlantic Beach became the "Black Pearl on the White Strand," the only place where black visitors to the South Carolina coast could find overnight accommodation in comfortable hotels, motels and rooming houses. It remained a public beach, never restricting its use to property owners.[27] In its time the Black Pearl on the White Strand was the only African American owned, operated and governed oceanfront community in the United States.

World War II

During the Second World War many resorts that had survived the Depression closed due to national gasoline and food rationing. Those summer communities near military training centers often made their facilities available to enlisted men on the weekends. Fox Lake welcomed black troops from Baer Field in Ft. Wayne, Indiana and Sea Breeze hosted marine recruits from Montford Point, New River, North Carolina, a segregated training facility, and Camp Davis Air Field at Holly Ridge, North Carolina. Ironically, white soldiers stationed at Camp Lejune near Wilmington also made their way to Sea Breeze to enjoy the latest "race music." They were also welcomed.[28]

After the War, many resorts had difficulty reopening because of years of lost revenue. Those who came back however found new opportunities for success. The post war economic boom allowed working class blacks to spend more on entertainment and music, and family recreation was in high demand. As young veterans married and had children black amusement parks like Paradise Park in Marion County, Florida, Wilmer's Park in Brandywine, Maryland, Carr's and Sparrow's Beaches in Annapolis and Lincoln Park in East New Orleans thrived as did resorts like Atlantic Beach, American Beach, Azurest Beach at Sag Harbor, New York, and Idlewild in

Michigan. Once again it was all about family and the music.

Sea Breeze expanded to include Bop City featuring "jump blues" – a precursor of rhythm and blues. In its heyday more than 3,000 people—black and white—made their way to Bop City every Fourth of July and Labor Day Weekend.

In 1951 Frank and Lula Freeman Hill, relatives of Roland Freeman, built Monte Carlo By the Sea, an upscale waterside restaurant at Sea Breeze. While the economy was encouraging, waterside establishments still had to contend with nature. In 1954 Hurricane Hazel destroyed the Monte Carlo. The Hills rebuilt but suffered major damage during two more seasons. Since Sea Breeze had never been listed as a Wilmington-area beach, they were not eligible to receive federal aid. They gave up in 1962 when Hurricane Alma struck.

Black aspirations expanded after the War. Returning servicemen fought against the re-imposition of second-class citizenship. After the 1954 *Brown Decision* they and others began to explore what they were missing by being shut out of white resorts and amusement parks. Many grew tired of patronizing the same traditional facilities that although safe and friendly, offered little of the excitement of the better equipped and financed white establishments. Idlewild, for example, was slow to add amenities like air conditioning and color television and after the death of Abraham Lincoln Lewis American Beach suffered from some bad management decisions. Black entertainers found that they could command higher rates from white establishments and could finally stay in the same hotels and resorts where they performed. Ultimately mega-resorts like Disneyworld and new concepts like timesharing put a crimp in the family resort and summer cottage rental businesses. Increased competition, new technology and rising maintenance, labor, energy and insurance costs made sustaining seasonal resorts difficult for both blacks and whites. Most of the traditional black resorts folded by the end of the 1970's. While segregation had brought them into existence integration was only one factor in their demise. All had served their purpose and left a legacy of demonstrated defiance of Jim Crow as they employed strategies that ran the gamut from evasion to collaboration, isolation, deception and outright challenge. They'd confirmed W.E.B. Dubois simple yet profound observation, "the manner and extent of a people's recreation is of vast importance to their welfare."

Notes

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3. Edgar Webster, *Chums & Brothers*, (Boston: R.G. Badger Publishing, 1920), 240.

4. Webster, 240-41.

5. Stephen Birmingham, *Certain People: America's Black Elite* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977), 238.

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7. Rick Coates, "The Rise and Fall of Idlewild," Northern Express, *Northern Michigan Weekly*, June 6, 2002, www.northernexpress.com.

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11. Virginia Wolcott, "Recreation and Race in the Postwar City: Buffalo's 1956 Crystal Beach Riot," *The Journal of American History*, Volume 93, #1 (June 2006), 32.

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17. Andrew Kahrl, "The Negro Park Question: Land, Labor & Leisure in Pitt County, North Carolina 1920-30," *The Journal of Southern History*, Volume LXXXIX, (February 2013), 115-118.

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22. Russ Rymer, *American Beach: A Saga of Race, Wealth and Memory* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 177.

23. Rymer, *American Beach*, 156.

24. Rymer, 10.

25. Catherine H. Lewis, *Horry County South Carolina 1730-1993* (Columbia South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 84.

26. Elizabeth Leland, *The Vanishing Coast* (Winston-Salem: John Blair Publishers, 2007), 73.

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Keila N. Dumas

If My Hair Could Talk

I can't sing but the way you make my heart feel is wonderful
and I can't dance but the way you make my body feel is beautiful
but you can't run your hands through my hair with your fingers
I've got kinks that run down from my crown to my soul
and yo' momma said if I can't use your comb don't bring me home
and my momma said tell that lady she's just mad she ain't got her own
but momma can't make me no babies and my clock is tickin'
so I went ahead, relaxed my hair in yo' momma's kitchen

If my hair could talk, she would say:
How dare you say you've struggled do you know that I've been through more in history than any
book can tell you
I was royalty's only ticket into longevity
the only way crowns placed upon heads interlocked with each other the only reason Delilah betrayed
Sampson was because I provided the strength
the only reason you knew that you and Jesus Christ shared similarities
do you know, what I've been through?
I have been through decades and centuries of misconceptions and misunderstandings about how I lived my lifestyle
Straight or kinky
grown personal bonds with people just to get cut off after they couldn't handle the attachment
got knotted up in Nubia entangled in twisted up nature locked up with my Sistas
then my locks grew bigger and they had the nerve to commercialize my struggle call it Rastafarian connections
pick out my flaws and wear them big on their heads calling a revolution

how dare you say you know my struggle but you have no idea what I've been through?
they burned me to straighten me out
threw water on me so I could shrivel up
treated me with hot oils so I would calm down
clip my ends when I was already broke
and when placed under the heat, they cover your ears in fear of you being scarred with the truth
that you've damaged me unproperly managed me
cut off your own that I gave you to buy someone else's
but the grass ain't greener on the other side,
youíre still the same person whether Im dead or dyed neither here nor there
ìlyedî to me so I could relax when the white started to burn me
turned my land into crop circles in order to lay down tracks
raze me up when I'm down but get mad when I become in grown
made you look unprofessional if I didn't flow down your back
but if I'm not tamed you won't even hire your own
would you sell the diamonds in your uterus if it came with left-ring finger benefits?

no.
then why would sell your roots out for them?
do you know what I've been through?
I've kept you warm on many a cold nights,
I've captured tears for you, braided up your fears for you

but its funny how nobody cared to ask me how I felt but it is cool, cuz I still come back stronger, every
time, you cut me down,
And as Garvey says "do not remove the kinks out of your hair, remove the kinks out of your brain"
But just remember, if it wasn't for me,
no one would notice your crown in the first place.

Leonard Slade, Jr.

This Holiday Season

Lord, who kept me here for many years,
Though stupid I have been,
Getting weaker with time
Till you lifted me
Most powerful:
With you
O help me have
The faith of mustard seeds;
Then shall I be rooted in your spirit.

My age in thanksgiving do I give:
And still with weaknesses and failures
You keep me from falling,
That I become
Most joyful.
With you
Let me sing,
And savor your gifts
With eternal gratitude
This Holy Holiday Season.

Wednesday Morning

The quietness in the two-story
brown house the evening before
was gone when the Yellow Lab
barked in his room downstairs
to let everyone know that
he was hungry for breakfast
and thirsty for water –
his brief stint outside
to greet the 4 a.m. moon
and to water the grass
completed his ritual, as
the red rooster crowed he
fell asleep again inside his
plush pad until 12 noon
at peace with the world.

Anger

My father said to me as
We sat in the living room,
"Expect students to crucify you
When you shine professionally."

We saw students' poison pen letters
Rife with egregious grammatical errors.
My Father pulled the Bible
From the library shelf.
"Love your enemies; forgive them."

Then he quoted JFK whose head
Had been splattered in a limousine,
"Forgive your enemies; but
Do not forget their names."

So when my students met
To discuss their demands
Of the department and the university,
The number one ranking

Of the department did not matter.
Students wanted more militant
courses with six new faculty
hires and the firing of the

White secretary with a replacement
of a black one of African descent.
They remained in pain over the
Loss of their black physical lovers.

Some courses must explain their
Jealous rage and assuage their
Personal grieving over their childhood
Experiences and lack of spiritual love.

Current courses for them did not
Apply. This was for the future
They said when courses should
Politicize black people's human

Condition. One white lie after
Another was written by them to
Help compensate for their mental
Problems and their victimization.

When students finished their
Personal assaults on faculty
Who had helped other students
Become lawyer and doctors,

Entrepreneurs and professors,
They said that we could now love
One another as long as their demands
Were met. My father fell on his knees

And prayed for his son
Whose heart was heavy from
Bridges that had been destroyed.
Tears rolled like water everywhere.

My father read Henry David Thoreau,
"The day is but dawn, the sun is but
A morning star." His son would turn
To his pen for divine power.
There would be no turning back.

The Boulé

We see talented men
Envied by Green-Eyed Monsters.
No matter.
Their work speaks for them.
They have achieved greatness:
Urbane and intellectual.
Many emulate their demeanor.
Softspoken
Smooth
Suave
Cool
Sincere
They make W.E.B. Du Bois happy
Sleeping in his grave.

Black Heart

He forgot who helped him,
He had two faces,
He had terrible evaluations,
He was hen-pecked at home,
He received kickbacks from work
When he was the boss,
He bragged about being a liar,
He enjoyed preaching his rightness
And everybody else's wrongness.
He had problems with his blackness.
He was a lost soul
Trying to be happy
By making others miserable.
He was a piece of work
That could not be fixed.

How Beautiful

How beautiful
And perfect
Begins the early morning

This cool day,
When rain falls
On my tin roof,

Its music
Playing different songs.
Happily,

It is time for more sleep,
Then the holy day
Wakes me

When the rooster crows.
Yet I pray now,
Forever grateful.

How Painful

How painful
And unfair
Discrimination pervades

Ruthless institutions
When politics destroys
Objective assessment

Of all worthy awardees
Who fall victim
To smiles and appearances

Hypocrisy interfering with
The dedication of worthy
Recipients who fall victim

To the prostitution of
Systems gone wrong adversely
Affecting quality and morale.

President Robert J. Jones

He's brilliant now,

His fertile mind
Will move the university
Again –
Because he's spiritually deep –

An intellectual heavyweight

Believing in power
From Heaven
For faculty and students
To teach and learn
From the stars

There's no doubt that he's committed –

Thanks to fire
In wise persons' blood,
He'll change the world forever.

The sun shines
Bright today,
Red roses bloom
Bluejays sing from
Tree tops
Angels circle the president
With love

It seems –
On television daily
The message of another beginning
Still dreamed by all,

The community,
The institution
Engaged first
Marrying each other
For one purpose,

And every song
All speeches
And curious scholars
Will wonder how
One leader accomplished
So much and inspired so many
With sweetness and light,

A new president who has
Faith in a resurrection and
Progress of the university,
Strengthened by the power of her past,
By the beauty of the present,
And by the hope of her future,

A new president who will be guided
By a wealth of collective and
Diverse experiences and resources
In the arts and sciences and humanities,
Merging the old and new—faculty
Teaching, scholars researching,

Students learning, administrators
Guiding and managing, making hearts
Nobler and minds greater,
Thereby building a better world
For immortality.

To Roberta Hall Slade

You who loved much – unconditionally—
Yet survived crucifixion for moral principles,
Challenged thinkers in meetings, bless the –
Earned respect from the intelligentsia,

Intoleran6t of ignorance and stupidity: Roberta, listen!
O Darling, gifted musician, your music so beautiful
On the organ and piano supplemented
With your melodious singing;

The uneducated love your sounds,
The suffering you bring to art
Needs no explanation, giving birth
To compassion and joy –

Winter dies and spring come.
Tears soak all souls.

Latrice Williams

Immaculate

No one is immaculate in my eyes...not you or me!

We all go through life trying to become who we think we are supposed to be.

We usually just jump into this persona and hope that the end result will be a positive human being.

We transform our thoughts, actions, and reactions to fit stimuli from others, depending upon who they are to us.

Are they popular, do we admire them, are they attractive, do we pity them, or do we want to learn from them?

I think critically about life a lot–I think injustice, I think privilege, I think education and the lack thereof, I think true love, I think fake friends, I think pride and shame, I think loyalty.

You see we change so much that we forget what we wanted to become.

On day you admire him, another you don't. One day you say something mean, another you want to wipe that slate clean.

I change a lot—I've learned that I can't do everything and be everybody.

I can't keep up with all the gossip about Beyonce and Jay-Z,

or dance in all of my clienteles' videos like P-Diddy.

I can't become a legend overnight like Michael Jackson, Desmond TuTu, Maya Angelou, Rosa Parks, or Mahatma Gandhi.

My story is still being written and it will always continue to change.

Yours will too.

And there are a lot of reasons why this will always be true.

We are ever changing beings—we have to be. This is the only way we will discover our innate destiny.

Growing and changing was meant to hurt, help, and make us strong and weak–God knew that this was the only way to shape us into viable Homo Sapien entities.

I always wanted to have "the all seeing eye," sometimes I just want to be reassured that I am on the correct path.

There is intentionality behind us not possessing this unnecessary gateway.

Looking back I know I can't reconfigure the personality and behaviors that I have shed like a snake over the years.

I can only re-assess my values and morals and determine what choices should ensue.

Looking back- I was desperate to live life on the edge and then I realized the long-term effect; no benefit, I lose.

Looking forward, I am wiser, you are wiser too.

We help others help themselves, we learn all that we can, we save lives, we encourage equality, we share our material wealth with the less fortunate, we despise verbal abuse and violence, and we realize that being immaculate is invaluable and unfortunate.

Oh, I hope I won't be looking too forward into the future for these outcomes for our society to prosper.

To begin these needed behaviors, It's important for Homo sapiens to find their purpose and destiny, and then share their successes and failures with people who are striving to be nothing but immaculate.

Talk to them and explain that there is no such behavior or appearance that can get them to this state, teach them to believe in their subconscious and destiny. Coach them to make the choices that they will never regret.

Overtime being "Immaculate" will be something they will be happy to forget.

Siera Grace Bianca Toney

Uncle Ben

I am a very old man

Skin the color of mahogany
Face wrinkled with time
Eyes riddled with crow's feet
Tonsured head of grey
And I have never been called by my full name

Never been referred to as Mr. or Sir

I am supposedly revered as a part of the American family
Though never treated as such
Invited into their kitchens but never into their dining rooms

I have been
3rd degree burned by the American families that I cooked for
Cheated out of my fortunes
Hoodwinked by hooded night riders and given fame instead

They gave me a bowtie in exchange for my apron
Told me to pose for the camera and posted my picture everywhere

I wear a Mona Lisa smile

I am trapped in these orange Ziploc cages
In restricted bust depictions
No longer the namesake of a tribe of Judah
But the manifestation of a doubting disciple turned traitor

My hands are sore
They carry the aches of my forbears who spent centuries in the rice fields of Mississippi and Louisiana
Picking

My hands are tired
Calloused from the labor of feeding millions
Slaving over a stove in hell's kitchen
To perfect one of the most popular side dishes in the world

The Chinese might have treated me better

I have diversified the flavor of a simple grain
Taken it from the motherland to the bayou
To the Caribbean to the Silk Road
To the land Down under and brought them all back
To the land of the free and the home of the brave

I am the bowls and bags of rich flavor that have graced billions of American tongues for centuries
I am the quick fix for mothers who never learned to cook for the generations of mammies and maids and nannies that their families used for that labor
I am the same for those families whose heads work this job and that job and barely have time or money to eat
I am every grain of rice that was ever force fed to an African slave who refused to eat as a sign of rebellion

I was once a sharp and wild crop
Since watered down and artificially flavored to appeal to a majority

Sometimes they let me be myself
During fleeting marketing specials
Offering the unadulterated product for a limited time

Just long enough to fall in love

I married an old Aunt
Everybody's favorite mammy

She was just like me

Another old chef given a cook's life
Old and plump with wide smile that was missing teeth
An old face
Salted and peppered with coarse hair that was half -hidden by her chef's cap.
Big eyes and fat fingers
Good for making pancakes but better for negotiating with maple trees and extracting their sweet menstrual blood

It was mahogany like me, and sticky, and sticky, and sticky.

She too was "revered" in those American kitchens
But never heard "Miss" when she was beckoned for or "ma'am" when she was answered

Still they got to her too
And exploited her jolly nature for coonery

They slathered her in this thick, sticky, sticky, thick, sweet deception
And feathered her with lies about her worth that she for years believed
She was in deep when I met her
That's why her smile is so wide and mine so narrow
But she knew our plight was the same somehow

So she married this old man with tonsured head and crow's feet
And loved him and poured syrup on his wild oats to sweeten his smile
Old were we when we united so she bore me know chaps
But we loved
And became auntie and uncle to many nations

But despite our service
And our love
They keep this couple of lovers
This pair of old cooks
Locked up in their cabinets

Put us up high in their pantries like trophies:
Grain and sap
Brainless saps they've used for almost a century

You've abused us four centuries!

Revered us as your kitchen's most prized possessions
Endeared us with sudden nostalgic recollections
And enslaved us
Without the quietest of confessions

And so I sit
In my orange Ziploc cage
In this restricted bust depiction
Bowtie choking me almost to death

And I think to myself:
Benny, what have you lived for?

America?

Oral Pleasures: Orality as Liberation from History's Sexual Binds in Gayl Jones's Corregidora

Lamar Garnes

> "You never would suck it," he was saying. "You never would suck when I wanted you to. Oh, baby, you never would suck it. I didn't think you would do this for me."
>
> It had to be sexual, I was thinking, it had to be something sexual that Great Gram did to Corregidora.
>
> Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*

In the closing scene of Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, Ursula "Ursa" Corregidora, the protagonist, does to her ex-husband, Mutt, what she would never do for him when they were previously married; she performs oral sex. This moment is climactic not simply because Ursa performs a sexual act that signifies a change in her and because she discovers the answer to a long held family riddle, but also because it illuminates a contested sexual act and position that many black women speak of in hushed tones or not at all. This scene illustrates the often complicated relationship black women have with expressing their sexualities. Throughout the novel, Ursa is unable to fully own and express her sexuality because it is bound to orally shared and repeated histories of sexual violation and exploitation that are not her own and that only define sex as a utility. In order for Ursa to recover her sexuality, she must tell her story rather than retell her families' repeated histories and redefine sex as an act used to provide pleasure and not one used to provide or remember pain, historical and personal.

Much of the existing criticism of the novel focuses on the function of the artist's journey, blues, voice, trauma, the repetition of history, and black women's sexuality. Although these varied readings of the text have influenced how I've come to understand specific aspects of the narrative, none of them fully interrogate the significance of the novel's climax. Most critiques of this final sexual moment in the text are brief and explore it in terms of power or as Ursa's reconciliation with her history. For instance, in *Ride out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in African American Literature*, Melvin Dixon contends that the act of fellatio that Ursa performs on Mutt allows her to "avenge herself on Mutt" and "places her in control of herself and Mutt" (112). Like Dixon, Ann duCille deals with this final scene in terms of power, but she reads it as an act of submission. In "Phallus(ies) of Interpretation: Toward Engendering the Black Critical 'I,'" duCille states, "her final act of oral *sexual* reconciliation may also be an act of self-silencing—an act in which Ursa's hard voice is not simply softened but quite literally silenced by Mutt's penis" (569; emphasis in original). She also refers to it as "male sexual gratification" (569). Unlike Dixon or duCille, Ashraf Rushdy argues that the sexual act is a reenactment of her Great Gram's past, in which Ursa discovers what her Great Gram did to make Corregidora love and hate her simultaneously and how this act can function as a recovery of sexual agency, and although he focuses on sexual agency, like Dixon and duCille, he devolves into a brief discussion of power as it relates to the act. Rushdy succinctly states, "What Ursa's interpretation of the family secret does is open up for her a set of associations that ... teaches her and allows her to reveal to us how both Great Gram's and Ursa's acts are historically resonant and part of a collective endeavor of redefining the role of sexuality and desire in acts of resistance and of producing desire out of resistant activity" (280). Although each of these readings provides a lens through which one can understand this ambivalent sexual exchange, their focus on the function of power and who has it in the exchange places Ursa's sexuality back into the dichotomous historical matrix of domination that leaves her voiceless. None of these readings fully consider how this single act undoes Ursa's silencing partly because it is an act that requires her to remove pain and power from sex and recognize sex as a source of pleasure and not simply as a procreative act or source of unspoken abuses. It is through this oral sexual act that she signals that she has retrieved the orality she assumed she had lost after undergoing an emergency hysterectomy.

Jones's novel participates in a discourse that contends that the traumas experienced in slavery have persisted long after its demise. *Corregidora* specifically deals with the sexual traumas black women experience and perpetuate as a result of enslavement. As Joanne Lipson Freed states, "For the Corregidora women, the sexual exploitation of slavery is repeated and reproduced in the present through their traumatic narratives" (411). The sexual traumas experienced and repeated in the novel are emblematic of those experienced and carried by black people during and after slavery in the Americas. Prior to the abolition of slavery, black people did not control or own their bodies in most capacities as slaves; so as sexual beings, their masters controlled and used them. Sex was a utility, and love was often complicated, violent, and perverted. After slavery, although previously enslaved black people had regained some semblance of control of their bodies, much of what the institution of slavery implanted in them persisted, and in many cases, black women silenced their sexualities to avoid being sexually objectified and exploited in a collective effort to appear respectable. According to Tricia Rose, this sexual silencing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was "race work" (391). As Rose explains further, "Such racial uplift movements adopted Victorian notions of women's central role as sexual and moral guardians for the race. For black women, this meant that being sexually 'inappropriate' was not only a personal stigma, but also an act against an already embattled and despised black community" (391). Ultimately, black women were to appear chaste and strait-laced as a sign of the humanity and moral correctness of all blacks and to restrict any expression their sexual desires, pleasures, and pains as well as sexuality.

As a current counter measure to the sexual inscriptions born from slavery, black women have continued to sexually silence themselves. Black women silence their sexual identities and desires as a response to the over-sexualizing of the black female body. They remain quiet rather than verbally confronting sexual issues or take ownership of their sexuality and expressing it in the ways that serve them the most and the best because as Rose states, "Rather than risk attacks on their reputation and their self-esteem, many black women have retreated into silence" (395). As Evelynn M. Hammonds explains,

> Black women's sexuality is often described in metaphors of speechlessness, space, or vision; as a 'void' or empty space that is simultaneously ever-visible (exposed) and invisible, where black women's bodies are always already colonized. In addition, this always already colonized black female has so much sexual potential it has none at all. Historically, black women have reacted to the repressive force of the hegemonic discourses on race and sex that constructed this image with silence, secrecy, and a partially self-chosen invisibility. (94)

This kind of sexual self-silencing is very present in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, where Jones wrestles with black women's sexuality and black sexuality as a site of oppression. In the novel, Jones deals with the historical sexual objectification of black women and its perpetuation and influence in the twentieth century. She uses Ursa to complicate, contextualize, and historicize sexual silence, among black women, while also intimating that orality, giving voice to one's own history and sexual pleasure, desire, and violations, is an effective way of resisting sexual objectification and retrieving ownership of one's sexual identities.

In order to express herself orally, Ursa must wrestle with and overcome her sexual silencing, which can be attained by acknowledging that the act of sex can be a purely pleasurable one and that she can retrieve power as a sexual being by giving voice to both pleasure and pain. As Audre Lorde states in "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,"

> The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant the suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives." (53)

Here, Lorde's use of the term erotic refers to feelings and desires from which creativity, knowledge, and life are born; she contends that women have been taught to distrust the erotic because it is irrational and in many cases has been equated with perversity. There is power in the erotic and as Lorde later states, "In order to be utilized, our [women's] erotic feelings must be recognized" (58). They must be acknowledged and freely expressed. In order for Ursa to recognize her erotic feelings, she must first acknowledge and seize control of her sexuality and vocalize it.

In order for Ursa to control and voice her sexuality, she must first acknowledge and replace what is hindering her from doing so. For most of the novel, Ursa is unable to receive or fully acknowledge sexual pleasure, due largely to her familial history and how it supersedes her own story. As Ursa tells Tadpole, "'My great-grandmama told my grandmama the part she lived through that my grandmama didn't live through and my grandmama told my mama ... and my mama told me what they all lived through" (Jones 9). Much of what Ursa understands about sex is imbedded in the narratives of trauma and painful love that Great Gram and Gram have passed down orally. They imbedded in her their slave, sexual, and relationship experiences, causing her silencing and impotence, which is illuminated when she loses her uterus. Her great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother are all products of Brazilian slavery; her mother, Irene, was never a slave but was conceived in slavery. The only sexual or romantic relationships Ursa's great-grandmother and grandmother experienced were those they shared with the master, other white men, and (in secret) the mistress; they were, as described in the novel, exploitative, violent, and paternalistic relationships. These are the lessons Ursa receives about sex and love.

By placing the sexual history of the Corregidora women in Brazilian slavery, Jones emphasizes the necessity of an oral tradition because it functions as a method of preserving personal narratives during slavery; it also affords Jones the critical space to focus on sex as a commodity in a way that complicates how sexual exploitation and violation during slavery is often articulated or imagined in the United States. This refocusing re-inscribes the black body in a way that further exploits the physical labors the black body can perform. Much like other traumas suffered as a result of enslavement, the sexual inscriptions remain imprinted on the black body well after slavery as the Corregidora women demonstrate.

In Brazil as Jones paints it, the master did not only profit from what came out of the black woman's vagina, but he also profited from what went in it. Master Corregidora, the Brazilian master who enslaves Great Gram and father's both Gram and Ursa's mother, purposely separates the male and female slaves to ensure that they would not connect or have sex; those black males who somehow did make contact with the women were punished. Restricting sexual relations to white men assured that the master, Corregidora, would profit more than doubly from black women's bodies, while the black males were sold or restricted to the coffee fields. As commodities, as prostitutes, the women were not performing to get pleasure from sex. As Corregidora's whores, they collected money, performed, and gave him the money they collected. They were his property; Corregidora refers to Great Gram as "'*A gold little piece. My best. Dorita. Little gold piece*'" (Jones 10). He is referring to her genitals and not her as a person, which Jones makes clearer when she describes the process of masters purchasing female slaves.

One of the consequences of Master Corregidora's system is that it taught black women and men how to interact romantically and sexually; they mimic the relationship between the black slave woman and the master that relied on ownership, violation, and submission. It also shows that the commodification of black women's genitals continues after slavery, if the novel serves as an indication. Throughout the novel, the men talk of Ursa's genitals as if they possess ownership of them. For instance, Master Corregidora's terms are later repeated by other men in Ursa's life, such as her ex-husband, Mutt, who says in one of their remembered conversations, "'Your pussy's a little gold piece, ain't it, Urs? My little gold piece'" (Jones 60). Ursa affirms his question and comment. Much like the women have been socialized to re-experience their sexual trauma, the men mimic the only heterosexual relationships they may have witnessed on the plantation, which were those between the female slave and the master. The separation of black men from black women forces each to perpetuate the practices of the master in place of the relationships that may have been forged before this separation. Great Gram and

Gram's socialization of Ursa and her mother through repeated accounts of the Corregidora plantation stories become a part of Ursa and her mother's beings; they are taught to mimic these histories. As a result, Ursa's mother cannot connect emotionally or physically with her husband, and Ursa values herself through her ability to procreate or lack thereof.

Once slavery is abolished, though the Corregidora women have control of their bodies, these women are still entangled in the labyrinth that defined them as sexual objects because their emancipation is marked by a literal silencing. The abolition of slavery is coupled with the burning of all slavery documents. The burning of the slave documents serve as an erasure of this history and as a silencing of the Corregidora women's sexual history and traumas; these women are rendered voiceless and their wombs become wounds because as Ursa remembers, "'*We got to burn out what they put in our minds, like you burn out a wound. Except we got to keep what we need to bear witness. That scar that's left to bear witness. We got to keep it as visible as our blood*'" (Jones 72; emphasis in original). To counter the historical erasure and silencing after slavery, the Corregidora women procreate as an act of resistance. Having daughters who become physical manifestations of this history acts as a way of retrieving a voice, but they are left silenced sexually because sex's only function is to be a voice that creates and recreates a lost, destroyed, or stolen text and does not allow space to voice present-day sexual traumas or pleasures. This type of voice retrieval is problematic because it is never clear that the history goes beyond these women and their daughters nor is there any indication that bearing witness, as these women do, does anything more than perpetuate the traumas and silencing. For example, when Irene goes to Detroit to visit Ursa's father, she is treated like a prostitute by a pimp who violates her, by onlookers who see her walking down the street in torn clothes, and by Ursa's father when she arrives at his home; no one sees or hears her abuse or trauma.

Although history and her mothers' insistent voices have condemned Ursa to use her uterus to reproduce history, the loss of her uterus, which she loses after falling down the stairs during an altercation with her husband, Mutt, at the beginning of the novel, makes it impossible for her to fulfill this duty. Ursa loses her text and text-creating ability and, as a result, has to transform her understanding of sex and her body because she can no longer make generations. Throughout the novel, Ursa has to deal with the loss of her uterus and has not quite reconciled that sex can simply be pleasurable, that her vagina is not a text, a voice, and that losing her uterus does not equate to the loss of her voice. Her mother's histories and her hysterectomy have disrupted her ability to receive sexual pleasure and even to conceive of sex as a pleasurable act; they have rendered her impotent in a misdirected attempt to maintain their oral histories. At various moments in the novel, Ursa's sexual partners ask her what she feels or if she feels anything, and she hesitantly answers yes while questioning if she even feels anything, which signifies her relationship with her sexual self and her inability to speak her own bodies pleasures or pains or her story for that matter.

Although for the duration of the novel Ursa is grappling with the function of sex and the re-examination of her and her foremothers' sexual histories, she also discovers counter-narratives that may have provided her with examples of sex as a source of pleasure as she reconstructs her history. Both May Alice and Catherine "Cat" Lawson offer narratives of pleasure through their different articulations of lesbianism to Ursa as an option, as an alternate vehicle of sexual pleasure and as a way to resist victimhood and sexual oppression that is bound to sex for Ursa. As Cheryl Clarke affirms, "For a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such as that of North America, is an act of resistance. ... The lesbian has decolonized her body" (242). Clarke further defines lesbianism as "a recognition, an awakening, a reawakening of our [women's] passion for each (woman) other (woman) and for same (woman)" (242). Lesbianism, simply defined, is the love shared between women and doesn't have to be predicated upon sex; it also provides a relationship that a woman can use to reject subjugation from men, especially when it comes to sexual domination and exploitation. Lesbianism could function as a counter-narrative to the histories Ursa has been forced to consume and relive.

The presence of lesbianism in the novel and in Ursa's life should complicate how she has come to understand her sexuality. Sex between two women cannot produce a child, and therefore must serve some other pur-

pose. It becomes a physical expression of sexual desire and love between two women and makes pleasure an integral part of the sexual act. Lesbianism also acts a method of resisting the traumas and exploitation Ursa has been taught to associate with sex because it can function as a safe space where she speaks both her pleasures and pains. Ursa should be able to explore her sexual desires through these presentations of lesbianism, but she is unable to because neither version presented to her is viable for such exploration because neither seem to be effective in countering the narratives of sexual objectification and exploitation that silence Ursa.

Lesbianism, as May Alice presents it to Ursa, is purely a vehicle for sexual pleasure but proves ineffective because May Alice only suggests it after being effectively silenced herself. May Alice was Ursa's young teenaged friend who was a few years older than young Ursa. It is from her that Ursa hears narratives about sex that are not connected to trauma, exploitation, or childbirth because when the reader encounters May Alice she is often talking about having sex, going to have sex, or returning from having sex. The sexual narratives May Alice produces counter Ursa's foremothers' sexual narrative. In regards to connecting sex and pleasure, May Alice is the female character, who is most vocal about enjoying sex. Although she is vocal, May Alice does not voice any lesbian desires until after she becomes pregnant at fifteen and has to deal with the consequences of expressing her sexual desire. When May Alice admits to herself and Ursa that she is pregnant, "...she kept hugging me [Ursa] and crying, and hugging me, and saying why I couldn't have been Harold and then nothing would have happened" (Jones 141). Ursa says that she "didn't know what she was talking about then" (Jones 141). Although Ursa says she didn't understand what May Alice was referring to in this moment, it becomes clear that May Alice was suggesting that sex between two women is a viable source of sexual pleasure because sex between a woman and a man, though it can be pleasurable, involves pain and consequences, as her pregnancy and the resulting shame that leaves her voiceless prove. Ursa can't understand this idea because she doesn't completely connect pleasure to sex.

For Ursa, the alternative narrative of sexual pleasure that can be reached through the sexual practice of lesbianism is not viable because it is solely offered as a reaction to the consequences of sex between a man and a woman rather than as an actual option and because Ursa comes to associate May Alice with the Melrose woman. When Ursa is about ten, the Melrose woman is a young black woman who is left voiceless after she is found dead, from an alleged suicide, in an alley. Many of the adults speak of her in quiet tones and attribute her death to a man or pregnancy, and although the community speaks of her death, she is left voiceless, silenced, because those who are supposed to provide her with a voice, law enforcement, ignore her because she is a "nigger woman" (Jones 134). Ursa associates May Alice with the Melrose woman because May Alice is silenced and shamed in a similar manner because of her pregnancy, a physical manifestation of her sexual desire and voicing of sexual pleasure, and Ursa assists in the silencing because she does not speak for or to her. Ursa's mother forbids her from interacting with May Alice when she finds out that she is pregnant because it is a sign of her sexual inappropriateness, and her baby's father stops talking to her for the same reason; Ursa also allows her relationship with May Alice to dissolve. As a result, May Alice's counter narrative of sexual pleasure is muted, even demonized, and her call for lesbianism deemed unviable.

Much like May Alice, Catherine "Cat" Lawson offers up a counter narrative to those that have left her impotent and overshadow her voice, but Cat does not make a suggestion as May Alice does; her mere presence creates a counter narrative for Ursa. When Ursa is twenty-five, Cat is her fifty-year-old friend, who is a lesbian and has experienced sexual traumas similar to those of the Corregidora women when she worked in the home of a white family. As a result of her history, Cat straightens women's hair in her home, caring for and nurturing women. She is a mirror of sorts of Ursa who happens to be twice as old; they share similar narratives or histories of sexual trauma and control their economies as self-employed women. These parallels position Cat's lesbianism as an option, one that Ursa notices and possibly considers. While healing from her hysterectomy, Ursa stays with Cat for a short time and aurally witnesses Cat sexually threaten Jeffrene, a fourteen-year-old girl, with whom Cat maintains a sexual relationship while the girl's mother works at night. This moment in the text sends Ursa running from Cat, and Ursa quietly breaks all ties with her. This

instance influences how Ursa views Cat and her lesbianism.

For Ursa, lesbianism as it is associated with Cat is not a viable alternative because it is not presented as an interaction based in pleasure. It is violent, paternalistic, exploitative, and pedophilic. Cat's lesbian relationship with Jeffrene also mimics the intimate interactions Ursa has had with men; it is based in power and domination and only places her in the position history has placed her in. Not only is Ursa's reaction indicative of the incompatibility of this particular articulation, but the silencing of Cat is further proof of this incompatibility. When Ursa runs into Jeffrene decades later, Jeffrene, while flirting with Ursa, tells her that Cat moved to Versailles, Kentucky and began working in a factory where, as a result of a freak accident, she loses her hair and has a scarred scalp that she covers with cheap wigs that the company pays for. This loss is equivalent to Ursa's loss of her uterus because as Jeffrene states, "That kind of thing makes you don't feel like a woman" (Jones 177); Cat's violent and traumatic hair loss is also the loss of the visible manifestation of her womanhood and the part of herself that sustained her economically and emotionally as a hairdresser, and much like her aural interaction with Jeffrene, Cat's scalp functions as a sign of the unviability of Cat's performance of lesbianism because it is marred in pain and left scarred and permanently damaged.

In addition to being provided with counter-narratives that prove unviable, Ursa is living within the cultural paradigm of the blues woman, which should offer her an artistic space to fully affirm and express herself, especially sexually. As a blues singer, Ursa places herself in a position to give voice to her sexuality and to empower herself, as both Hazel Carby and Angela Davis have described in their respective works on black women blues singers. According to Carby, "The blues singers had assertive and demanding voices; they had no respect for sexual taboos or for breaking through the boundaries of respectability and convention, and we hear the 'we' when they say 'I'" (481). Additionally, as Davis states in *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, "Sexuality and love was central in both men's and women's blues" (11). Davis explains further,

> The representation of love and sexuality in women's blues often blatantly contradicted mainstream ideological assumptions regarding women and being in love. They also challenged the notion that women's 'place' was in the domestic sphere. Such notions were based on the social realities of middle class white women's lives, but were incongruously applied to all women, regardless of race or class. (11)

Ursa's performance of the blues can correct or heal her impotence, but it initially fails as a space where she can control and express her sexuality because it becomes one where she further traps herself in the impotence that her family's history has created. At the start of the novel, Ursa states, "I said I sing because it was something I had to do..." (Jones 3). This statement suggests that Ursa is asserting herself and resisting the traditional, domestic role her husband wants her to take, but as she reveals more about her singing and performance in the text, it becomes clear that she becomes entangled in men's perception of her, not in the domestic sense but in the sexual sense. For instance, Ursa states,

> When I first saw Mutt I was singing a song about a train tunnel. About this train going in the tunnel, but it didn't seem like they was no end to the tunnel, and nobody knew when the train would get out, and then all of a sudden the tunnel tightened around the train like a fist. Then I sang about this bird woman, whose eyes were deep wells. How she would take a man on a long journey, but never return him. (Jones 147)

In traditional blues, trains traveling through tunnels are often euphemisms for sexual intercourse. In Ursa's version, the tunnel is initially endless and then the tunnel tightens around the train, meaning it never exits. The imagery of the train never exiting the tunnel suggests that she never receives pleasure from sex; the train never exiting equates to Ursa never experiencing an orgasm. It also illustrates that when Ursa asserts her voice, she is unable to free herself from the competing voices of her foremothers that constantly intrude.

Ursa is also unable to control how her voice and performance are received onstage.

As in her songs, Ursa becomes unknowingly trapped in her performances. Jones writes, "He [Mutt] never liked for me to sing that song 'Open the Door, Richard' and I never would sing it after the first time because he'd said, 'When are you going to let Richard in?' No it wasn't so much he didn't like it as I felt uncomfortable singing it, or any song that had anything to do with opening up" (Jones 157). Ursa's discomfort with singing this song is emblematic of her uneasiness with her sexuality. This discomfort is further confirmed later in the text when she takes the night off from Happy's and goes dancing with Mutt at Dixieland where he proceeds to dance with her like they are in "the bedroom" (Jones 162). Although everyone else around them is dancing in the same manner as Mutt states, the sexual nature of the dancing and Mutt's public sexual touches make Ursa so uncomfortable that she refuses to dance with him; when he reaches for hand, she runs and hides in the bathroom until the song is over. In both cases, Ursa fears what the song and the dancing infer and is more focused on or consumed by how she is viewed in regards to her sexuality rather than how she can take control of it as a blues woman would; she does not use either as opportunities to fully express and embrace her sexuality or to explore or fully acknowledge the pleasures that are very much a part of sexual expression. This inability to perform is tied to how she sings songs that she writes because although she sings what she writes, she still presents herself as a victim of a history that isn't her own; she is a woman to be exploited and hurt or violated by the man she lets in or holds on to in the songs, and she cannot view herself or sexuality outside of this matrix of abuse and victimhood.

The blues and Ursa's understanding and performance of them become a place where she can control or own her sexuality and her voice, by extension, after she encounters an older male singer who emphasizes the importance of owning and affirming one's own voice. In June of 1969 while working at the Spider, Ursa encounters an older male singer, who drunkenly requests that she "put [him] in the alley" (Jones 168). Ursa concedes, which differs from how she previously responded to the suggestion that she performs her sexuality on stage; her response throughout this scene demonstrates that she has become more cognizant of how her sexuality functions. Before Ursa begins to sing, he also says, 'Next best thang to the blues is a good screw" (Jones 168). This older man's words, Ursa concession, and what follows are indicative of how Ursa is thinking about her sexuality and what she has to do to completely own it and her voice.

After Ursa finishes singing, the man begins talking about his own singing, show business, and the idea of black artistic genius. He refers to Thelonius Monk, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, and Billie Holiday and compares himself and his own songwriting to these musicians. He argues that they seemingly only have credibility when a white voice can vouch for their talent or genius and finds the use of the word "'discovered'" disheartening because it implies that this talent or genius did not exist prior to white discovery of it. Of Billie Holiday he states, "'They say she destroyed herself, but she didn't destroy herself. They destroyed her'" (Jones 170). This articulation of Holiday's troubles (heroin addiction, inability to legally perform in New York, and death) contends that Holiday's destruction is a result of her inability to value her own voice without relying on the voices of others. From this interaction, Ursa is supposed to learn that she must value her own voice, and it extends to her sexuality because as the old man says more than once that he knows she "got good pussy" (Jones 171), which is a self-serving and sexually objectifying statement but also one that functions as an affirmation of value and opposes how she has come to understand her sexuality as a result of her mothers' histories and losing her uterus.

It is not until the final scene that it becomes clear that Ursa recognizes her voice and her value. Her ability to perform oral sex on her ex-husband is recognition of the realization. In order to perform sexually as she does for Mutt, she has to understand that sex should not be disconnected from pleasure or voicing those pleasures, or pains for that matter. Also, oral sex cannot produce a child, and it is an act that can either be pleasurable or painful, both of which she as performer controls. The act is not about taking power over another nor is it an act of submission; it is more about owning one's voice, which makes the act that much more significant in this instance. Ursa literally gives oral pleasure to figuratively give herself oral pleasure, to revisit and revise her history and those of the three generations before her to recover her voice. This recovery of voice through the voicing of pleasure is further confirmed by the duet that follows the sexu-

al act because both she and Mutt revise how their relationship has been defined; they remove the hurt, and through a final act of violence, replace it with an embrace.

Corregidora ends with a final duet between Ursa and Mutt in which she is forced to revise how she understands love. Although pleasure and pain are omnipresent, Ursa has to extract the pain and understand that she should not want it to be a painful experience; it should be pleasurable and such pleasure should be readily vocalized. She can only arrive at this place because she has given herself the space to voice both her pain and pleasure as they concern her sexuality. Though this verbalizing of a complete sexual self is specific to the novel, it extends to the historical period in which Jones is writing and to the present. The novel offers black women a viable source to both resist sexual objectification and own their sexuality; they must give themselves the space and permission to own their pleasure and speak their pain as it relates to their sexuality and break the fetters that bind them to histories that do not serve them.

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Percival Everett's Erasure and (Black) American Selfhood

Jamie Calhoun

In his 1990 notes for a talk at Columbia University Ralph Ellison recounts coming across a young black man on the streets of New York. As the two figures walk toward each other, Ellison notes the younger man's confident stride, understanding the "Harlem strut" as "symbolic communication" ("Notes" 843). But as the two draw nearer, Ellison notices something that leaves him "flabbergasted:" the young man "was wearing a gray cap which bore the insignia of the Confederate Army" (843). Ellison recounts that "It was as though the most tragic incident in American history had leaped from a New York sidewalk to confound me with a transformation of the color symbolism which had ignited the Civil War" (843). Ellison in his bewilderment manages to say to the young man, "So you've joined the Confederacy." The young man only continues on, seemingly confused himself. But when Ellison turns around for one last look at the incongruous scene, he sees the young man doubled over, his hands on his knees, his capped head thrown back, laughing hysterically. Ellison recounts: "I joined in his laughter as I continued my walk, but frankly my head was spinning" (843). What did it mean, he wondered, "what was comic put-on, what desperate threat?"; he recalls his laughter was accented with "a somber tone" (844). The scene creates an epiphany of sorts: "I was startled when my alter-ego whispered, 'Ellison, the Confederates were also *Americans* and so, God help him, is he!'" (844).

Just as this strutting man tropes on and plays with the making of Black selfhood in America, Percival Everett's 2001 novel *Erasure* exploits the persistent condition of literature as a marker of humanity for the black writer. This essay considers the models of black selfhood represented in *Erasure* and its oft-alluded to texts, Wright's *Native Son*, and Ellison's *Invisible Man*. *Erasure's* work is to exploit the absurdity of the choices African Americans seem to have within popular culture through signifying on those selves that Wright and Ellison present and on the protest debate that erupted among Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin. The Confederate cap *is* a part of the young, strutting man's self-making: Henry Louis Gates defined signifyin' as a singularly black art, which, through its progressions of allusions, arguments, and reversals proves that the making of blackness itself is always in process, persistently aware of history as both ally and warning, and rooted in the promises of justice and democracy.

Erasure is the story of Thelonious Monk Ellison, known simply as Monk. Monk's musings on blackness begin on the first page of the novel: "I have dark brown skin, curly hair, a broad nose, some of my ancestors were slaves, and I have been detained by pasty white policemen... and so the society in which I live tells me I am black; that is my race" (1). He refuses this label and all the dominant assumptions that follow but recognizes that his body betrays this intention: "I don't believe in race. I believe there are people who will shoot me or hang me or cheat me and try to stop me because they do believe in race, because of my brown skin, curly hair and slave ancestors. But that's just the way it is" (2). Monk feels captive in his marked body and recognizes no way of resisting such a visible self; his energies must be spent in refusing it by embracing another – that of his upper-middle class upbringing and his intellectual life as a Harvard-educated novelist and professor.

When Monk's photo ends up on the jacket of his first book, he is forced to reckon with expectations from publishers: "The line is, you're not black enough" says his agent (43). One reviewer of Monk's recent novel writes: "The novel is finely crafted, with fully developed characters, rich language and subtle play with the plot, but one is lost to understand what this reworking of Aeschylus' *The Persians* has to do with the African American experience" (2). Monk's refusal to answer to dominant culture's hail is the main conflict of *Erasure* and sets up Monk's realization that there may be effective resistance outside the false choice of opposition or assimilation. Monk reconsiders his writerly work as resistance: "I find myself sadly a stereotype of the radical, railing out against something. ...It is the case, however, that not all radicalism is

forward looking, and maybe I have misunderstood my experiments all along" (16).

Monk is furious about the reception of Juanita Mae Jenkins's book *We's Lives in da Ghetto*: "One can actually hear the voices of her people... [The protagonist] lives the typical black life... [T]he real strength of the work is its haunting verisimilitude" (39), writes one reviewer. Everett himself has dealt with the reading and publishing world's insistent attention to his race as integral to his work as a writer. Everett responded to one reviewer:

> [S]everal people have drawn my attention to the review of my novel "American Desert" written by Sven Birkerts (May 9). One of those people remarked on the amazing restraint exhibited by Birkerts as he waited until the "second" sentence of his piece to mention that I am African-American. I feel confident in stating that the color of my skin has little to do with that novel. I also feel confident in stating that I am sure that Birkerts in previous reviews has not found it necessary to identify other authors as European-American or white. [...] To tell the truth, I simply am tired of people connected with publishing and art in this culture being so amazed that anyone not white can create a work that race is all they can see. (*New York Times Book Review*, June 2004)

Monk's struggle with publication, indeed Everett's own struggles, mirrors that of Charles Chesnutt one hundred years earlier. After Chesnutt's reputation was made by the derived nostalgia of Uncle Julius, he wanted to veer away from "the old Negro ... and ... drop him in future stories, as well as much of the dialect" (qtd in Brodhead 13). But his publishers weren't as convinced by stories like "The Wife of His Youth" and convinced him that his conjure stories were the only ones that would have any real success. One hundred years later, Doubleday, the same publishing house that put forth Chesnutt's conjure tales, offered to make *Erasure* – Everett's first book dealing explicitly with race – its first publication of Harlem Moon: a small imprint devoted to African American writers. But Everett, who has often criticized Borders bookstores for having an African American section, refused that offer.

His anger at Jenkins' success, at not being able to get rid of Uncle Julius, can be heard in Monk's rant at Jenkins' million dollar movie deal:[1]

> The pain started in my feet and coursed through my legs ... and I remembered passages of *Native Son* and *The Color Purple* and *Amos and Andy* and my hands began to shake... people in the street shouting *dint, ax, fo, screet*, and *fahvre!* and I was screaming inside, complaining that I didn't sound like that, that my mother didn't sound like that, that my father didn't sound like that... I put a page in my father's old manual typewriter. (61-62)

Thus follows *My Pafology* under the pen name Stagg R. Leigh, an obvious re-write of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Monk's scathing parody is apparent with chapter titles *won, too, free, fo*; protagonist Van Go Jenkins has "fo babies" and little concern for himself or anyone else. Monk takes the notion of authenticity that these previous books (allegedly) peddle to the extreme, exaggerating the "truth" that main stream audiences want to hear. He refuses to label the book as parody; he tells his publisher, "Send it straight. If they can't tell it's a parody, fuck them" (132). Turns out they can't tell, even with the book's new title *Fuck*, and it becomes a critical success.

While the similarities to *Native Son* are important, the differences also alert us to the meaning of the narrative.[2] Van Go, an exaggerated version of Bigger Thomas, does not elicit too many tugs on the readers' heartstrings while Bigger can arguably be understood as a more sympathetic character. Van is extremely violent: he rapes two women, shoots and kills a Korean shop owner, and kills his own father. Our modest sympathy for Bigger is due perhaps to Wright's desire to paint him as a (not completely innocent) product of his environment.[3] Monk's voice is more indifferent and indicting. In the context of *Native Son*, Van Go works as an indictment of naturalism as a resistant literary mode. Van Go is not a symbol of white oppression, but a figure that represents the erasure of the complexity of black experience and the community's – and individual's – agency to define itself. *Fuck* is written in the

first person, placing the responsibility of consciousness on Van Go, not an omniscient narrator. There is also no Max in *Fuck* to argue the full force of dominant culture's oppression of Van Go as he does for Bigger in *Native Son*. Critics of *Native Son* condemned the figure of Bigger Thomas as a symbol, not a complex and multi-faceted human; *Fuck* supports and exaggerates this indictment.

Further contextualizing the narrative as a critique of the fixed definition of blackness within American culture, the initial title of *Fuck, My Pafology*, along with its narrative of a violent black male from a matriarchal, broken home, is a bitter allusion to the Moynihan Report of 1965 (officially titled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action"). This research commissioned by the Department of Labor and led by the sociologist-senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan indicted the Black family structure as pathological and as a reaction to and product of white oppression, leaving little room in its narrative for black agency and community consciousness. Chapter IV of the Report, "The Tangle of Pathology" concludes "in essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male" (par. 3). Such rhetoric – that a male figure is necessary for a healthy familial structure – continues to this day, and allows "experts" to deride the increasingly common matriarchal structure as pathological. Monk's reason for writing *My Pafology* is his anger at what he sees as the proliferation of *only these* images of black Americans by white publishing houses and the black writers who write for them. *Fuck* is created from Monk's desire to expose the gap between what is seen and what is "real," between the normative effects of interpellation and its failure to encompass the complexity of the bodies it constitutes. Monk has for so long railed against the mark of subjectivation by dominant white patriarchal culture; Van Go Jenkins represents the excess of Monk's marked body.

With the success of *Fuck* – it becomes a candidate for the National Book Award – Monk is forced to "play Stagg." "I might in fact become a Rhinehart [*sic*]," he says, clearly signifyin' on the character Rinehart of *Invisible Man*; "I would let Mr. Leigh continue his reclusive, just-out-of-the-big-house ways. He would talk to the editor ... then disappear, like down a hole" (162). He begins to wonder, "Had I by annihilating my own presence actually asserted the individuality of Stagg Leigh?... What would happen if I tired of holding my breath, if I had to come up for air?" (248). But despite Monk's desire to subsume this Other, he finds pleasure and resistant possibility in inhabiting the stereotypical subjects of Van Go and Stagg R. Leigh. Through his exploration of these figures Monk discovers possibility by paradoxically *accepting* his own humanity as complex and contradictory. Despite the pain of the performance, Monk eventually admits, "The game was becoming fun" (212).

Through these modes of signifyin', *Erasure* invokes the issues and questions of the protest fiction debate that in many ways has defined African American criticism since 1940 (the publication date of *Native Son*). Like Everett, James Baldwin in "Everybody's Protest Novel" shared his ire that African American literature is used to prove black humanity: "our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only to do what is infinitely more difficult – that is, accept it" (18). Everett's novel offers a painful route to that acceptance. Monk's performance of stereotypes that he detests initiates Everett's ironic and paradoxical strategy: through embodying the selves he has for so long railed against, Monk finally begins to let go of needing to prove himself.

The Protest Debate

In his essay "How 'Bigger' Was Born" Richard Wright reveals that Bigger Thomas is a compendium of five individuals from his childhood.[4] These Bigger Thomases "consistently violated the Jim Crow laws... and got away with it" (437). Wright reveals that he longed to be like these singular men: powerful, bold, and (despite cell walls) free. It is key, when considering Bigger's construction, to also remember Wright's Naturalist (and Marxist) loyalties: he makes it clear that none of the Biggers he knew were "essentially or organically bad," but that a particular environment determined their selfhoods and their choices (437). What underlies Wright's creation of Bigger is a firm belief in his authenticity: "And would not whites misread Bigger and, doubting his authenticity, say: 'This man is preaching hate against the whole race'?... [M]y task, as I felt it, was to free myself of this burden of impressions and feelings, recast them into the image of Bigger and make him *true*" (448-49, emphasis

original).

And yet it is the representation of Bigger as "true" that limits the possibilities of *Native Son* according to its detractors. James Baldwin wonders why "we are so loath to make a further journey than that made by Mrs. Stowe" ("Everybody's Protest Novel" 12). Baldwin critiques *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its moralistic simplicity, its evasion of the real complexity of the "Negro problem" and of human beings: "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended" (18). "Bigger's tragedy," argues Baldwin, "is not that he is cold or black or hungry, not even that he is American, black;" rather, it is that he accepts a narrow version of his humanity (18). What Baldwin desires in (black) American writing is "a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment, freedom which cannot be legislated, fulfillment which cannot be charted .... It is not to be confused with a devotion to Humanity, which is too easily equated with a devotion to a Cause. ... [The human] is... something more than that, something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable" (13). If we devote ourselves to a fixed notion of humanity, we squash the possibility Baldwin sees in the human being. Wright's America according to Baldwin is "devoted to the death of paradox" and so resistance is limited to either blind assimilation or dumb opposition (17).

"Through the instrument of fear," cries Max in *Native Son* during his courtroom plea for Bigger's life, "we determined the mode and quality of his consciousness" (402). Max in fact labels Bigger's crimes as the one free act of his life: "an act of *creation*" (400, emphasis original). Bigger resists through total opposition to the laws of this country: "He accepted [his crime] because it made him free, gave him the possibility of choice, of action, the opportunity to act and to feel that his actions carried weight" (396). And yet, as Max argues, he proves his inability to be liable to "our" laws and "our" justice because Bigger is outside the nation's discourse, unable to make himself an agent, a subject, except through violent opposition. Max's definition of justice hinges on a notion of humanity and equality that assumes blacks must reach *up* to the level of whites: "Let us banish from our minds the thought that this is an unfortunate victim of injustice. The very concept of injustice rests upon a premise of equal claims... Rather, I plead with you to see a mode of *life* in our midst, a mode of life stunted and distorted, but possessing its own laws and claims" (388).

Interestingly, there is an ironic reverence for the nation's language of rights: the "forefathers" are mentioned at least three times in Max's speech (388, 393, 398), our "democratic lands" are mentioned (385) and he quotes the Declaration of Independence (398). All of this is, to use Baldwin's words, to shame the court and the reader for not bestowing hospitality to an outsider, for the tragedy of Bigger is "not injustice, but oppression" (391). In other words, Max is not able to consider Bigger's humanity alongside his construction within an environment of fear. Bigger cannot act and be oppressed at the same time; his actions are a direct result of white oppression. Wright's resistant model in *Native Son* is to insist upon Bigger's access to humanity *in spite* of pernicious social forces attempting to take that humanity away.

The definition of humanity and justice in *Native Son* has a long history and the invocation of the language of the forefathers is no accident; we find similar definitions at work in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Jefferson's infamous response to Phyllis Wheatley's 18th century book of poetry determined that her writings were *mere* mimicry or parroting and thus "below the dignity of criticism" (Jefferson 140). Jefferson in *Notes* writes that Africans in America had no exposure to learning except for "the conversation of their masters" (quoted in M. Wright 56). Jefferson's critique assumes that self-determination, memory, imagination, and the will to be a democratic citizen, belong only to some and can be merely *mimicked* by Others. While Wright's political motivations included shaming white America for maintaining racism and systemic oppression, the novel still defines humanity as a fixed point – in *Native Son* Bigger strives for it and misses. To his detractors, Wright's version of protest maintains the notion that humanity must be proven – and assumes that humanity has already been defined by white America.

The very terms of the protest fiction debate – the desire to portray consciousness, complexity, ambiguity, the tragic and the comic – serve to question the traditional notion of resistance. In *Erasure* Monk first desires to erase what he sees as the persistent Bigger Thomas in African American litera-

ture. Monk attempts to resist Bigger by embracing his intellectual, upper-class writerly self; he quickly realizes, however, that "railing against" Bigger is ineffective, serving only to repeat the pain of being made into a type. Monk's pen name Stagg R. Leigh signifies on a figure of resistance in Black America, the murderer and pimp-turned-folk-hero, Stagger Lee (or Staggolee). The choice of Stagger Lee is a reply to those publishers looking for "the hard, gritty truth" of "black" life. Stagger Lee is the subject position one would inhabit in order to perform an outlaw charisma and power. Bigger, like Stagger Lee, is part of the complexity and paradox that Baldwin and Ellison affirm is the burden and hope of the American individual. "In overlooking, denying, evading his complexity," writes Baldwin, " – which is nothing more than the disquieting complexity of ourselves – we are diminished and we perish; only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, danger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves" (13). Such parodic resistance is the kind wholly rejected by Monk, but in the performance of Stagg R. Leigh he discovers – as the invisible man discovers in the hipster zoot-suiters and Rineharts before him – possibility.

Tragedy and Comedy

In *My Pafology*, Van Go has a dream where he is made to "run laps" by "this big white man" (124). "You runnin the wrong way, nigger" he yells and finally directs Van Go to "Try running backwards." This scene alludes to the repeated theme in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* that begins in a dream of his grandfather. In the dream, the narrator receives a letter that reads, "Keep this Nigger-Boy Running" while his grandfather laughs (33). Van Go is not only based on Bigger Thomas, then, but also on the "bad" subjects of Ellison's text: ambivalent subjects like Grandfather, Rinehart, and Tod Clifton offer possibilities that *Erasure* explores. While the invisible man is skeptical of these ambivalent characters, Monk's attitude changes from the desire to destroy the other through which publishers and readers see him – like Van Go and Stagg R. Leigh – to a glimpse of the power of ambivalence and tension. These "bad" subjects refuse the dialectical logic of synthesis and thus refuse to be easily resolved.

Most of the allusions to *Invisible Man* are within the primary text itself: the protagonist's name is Thelonious Monk Ellison, an allusion not only to Ralph Ellison, but also to jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, pointing to a key theme of *Invisible Man*: the structure and meaning of jazz and the blues and their relation to the art of writing. The great thing about the blues, wrote Ellison, is that it brings together the near-comic and the near-tragic "with its refusal to offer solutions" ("Richard Wright's Blues" 144). *Erasure*'s signifyin' on *Invisible Man* attempts to answer the question posed in Ellison's epilogue: "what do *I* really want... Certainly not the freedom of a Rinehart or the power of a Jack, nor simply the freedom not to run. No, but the next step I couldn't make..." (575).

Since *Erasure* attempts to take off where Ellison's narrative leaves off, it is useful to examine the problems of conformity and protest developed in *Invisible Man*. Monk's performance of Stagg R. Leigh is linked to *Invisible Man*'s narrator being (wrongly) interpellated as Rinehart, the Harlem renaissance man who is pusher, preacher and pimp. The narrator of *Invisible Man* is first called out as he walks the Harlem streets at night: "Rinehart, baby, is that you?" a woman cries (483). The narrator becomes intrigued with the several misidentifications that follow and begins to see the possibilities in this performance of the kind of man the Brotherhood (the communist group for which he is working) was against: "There is a magic in it. It hides me right in front of their eyes" (485). He recognizes the power of the identity and remarks, "Certainly something was working on me, and profoundly" (486). The narrator of *Invisible Man* recognizes that Rinehart means possibility, yet he interprets this freedom as chaos. While the novel emphasizes two modes of resistance that he discovers are ineffective – opposition and assimilation – Rinehart offers a third method, one that the narrator is unable to fully grasp. Rinehart's strategy creates no real meaning for the narrator, but is only unbridled "freedom" – the chaos of being outside of history. *Erasure*'s use of *Invisible Man* alerts us not only to the difficulty of finding effective resistance but also to the strategy of dense, coded allusion – signifyin': the commingling of a past that clings and a present that confounds and its resistant possibilities in a postmodern context.

Invisible Man is rich with a secret world of citation that rewards the careful reader with a clear sense of Ellison's purpose. The novel signifies on not only the rich African

American tradition before him, but also the white canon that, as Ellison claims, defined America through structural blindness. Alan Nadel argues in *Invisible Criticism* that *Invisible Man* is an assault against the construction of an American canon that effectively works to erase the role of the black American in constructing the notions of freedom, independence, and subjectivity that define American identity. Nadel concludes "that a cultural violence – a mandated invisibility – caused by residual Southern practices, in effect erased the role of the black in American literature at the same time that the American canon was being formed" (4). Perhaps the most scathing of Ellison's assaults is on Lewis Mumford's 1926 *The Golden Day*, a nostalgic and despairing look at the state of American letters since the Civil War. In Mumford's literary and cultural history, America from 1830 to 1860 experienced a time of an "imaginative New World" that was "the climax of American experience" (Mumford quoted in Nadel 87). But as Ellison sees it, literary histories like *The Golden Day* erase not only the horrific facts of ante-bellum America but also the efforts of writers like Herman Melville to recognize the humanity of the black American and his role in the creation of a democratic America.

Perhaps the most fascinating treatment of "the Negro [as] a vital issue in the American consciousness" is Melville's 1856 "Benito Cereno," from which Ellison takes an epigraph for *Invisible Man*: "'You are saved,' cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; 'you are saved: what has cast such a shadow upon you?'" Ellison omits Cereno's response: "The Negro." Melville's story reveals the deep fear at the heart of ante-bellum America and Ellison's great hope for America: that freedom and humanity might very well wear a (black) mask. That is, not only can black Americans be tricksters, *masked* as obliging servants, but more profoundly, the state of American freedom is indeed represented by the state of the black American. In "Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," Ellison writes that "Mark Twain knew that in *his* America humanity masked its face with blackness" (99). The work of texts like *The Golden Day* that ignored blackness set limits on humanity and left democracy's promise untried.

The tavern in *Invisible Man* named the Golden Day exposes the blindness that secures Mumford's revisionist canon. *Invisible Man*'s narrator contemplates the asylum patients who visit the Golden Day who had been "doctors, lawyers, teachers, Civil Service workers": "Whenever I saw them I felt uncomfortable... It appeared as though they played some vast and complicated game with me and the rest of the school folk, a game whose goal was laughter and whose rules and subtleties I could never grasp" (74). In this scene at the Golden Day, one man "took Mr. Norton's head between his hands, tilting it at arm's length and then, pinching the chin gently like a barber about to apply a razor, gave a sharp, swift movement" (79). This image correlates directly to "Benito Cereno" where the slave shaves Cereno's beard while the mutinied Captain shakes, and the naïve Captain Delano suspects no trouble from the slaves (Nadel 104-108).

By signifying on Melville's acknowledgement of black humanity, and doing so in a riotous scene, Ellison highlights the notion that resistance to the erasure of Black humanity in American culture must embrace laughter and pain, the tragic and the comic, perhaps even the ambivalence of a Rinehart or a Tod Clifton. But the young narrator of Ellison's novel cannot laugh at the antics of the Golden Day. He is only ashamed that they offer a competing version of black America to the trustee, who was meant to see only the "good Negroes" of the college. Part of the young narrator's shame and naïveté comes from his confusion toward his Grandfather's legacy. His grandfather "had been a quiet old man who never made any trouble, yet on his deathbed called himself a traitor and a spy, and he had spoken of meekness as a dangerous activity:"

> Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open. (16).

The sudden shift in his grandfather from quiet to resistant causes the narrator to hope *his* meekness was not somehow causing him to do "something that was really against the wishes of white folks" (17). The

grandfather brings us to one of the richest sources for Ellison's novel – the competing philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Indeed, one of the earliest and most powerful scenes of the novel encapsulates the question of which direction African Americans must take. When the narrator is given a scholarship to the "state college for Negroes" he is so "overjoyed" despite his bloody and battered face that he "even felt safe from his grandfather" (32). During his speech his mouth fills up "with blood from the cut" he receives in the "battle royal," and he is forced to gulp it all down (30). His nausea makes his speech troublesome, and when he's asked to repeat the troublesome phrase "social responsibility" several times he finally misses the mark: "I made a mistake and yelled a phrase I had often seen denounced in newspaper editorials, heard debated in private" – "social equality" (31). The white folks agree that his "mistake" was honest and they award him the briefcase with the scholarship inside.

He feels "triumphant" over his grandfather in this scene because he did what they wanted of him without any hint of subversion. But Ellison brings attention to his young subject's accidental utterance of "social equality." The repetition of the phrase "social responsibility" and its eventual slippage into difference is perhaps what his grandfather had promoted: keep yes-ing until the yeses make them choke. This scene is signifying on Booker T. Washington's emphasis on social responsibility and contrasts it with DuBois's NAACP activism (and later Marcus Gravey's pan-African movement in the character of Ras) that demanded immediate social equality without having to prove one's civics proficiency. DuBois saw equality as the prerequisite to responsibility, not an eventual prize for being "a good boy" as the trustees refer to our young narrator. Grandfather's advice was a send-up of Washington's methods of gaining humanity – indeed, grandfather insists that one's humanity must be shoved down the throats of those who deny it.

Booker T. Washington is again ridiculed by the character of Bledsoe – the "founder" of the college. Bledsoe is a self-serving, dominant man who twists the advice of those like grandfather and instead of being "a spy in the enemy's country" becomes an enemy to black empowerment. Washington's entire philosophy is ridiculed as the college the narrator attends – obviously Tuskegee (Ellison's own school for a few years) – is described as just a slight turn on the winding road to the mental institution. The buildings of the college are white – "whiter still in the moonlight" – and the statue of the founder, described exactly like the real statue of Booker T. Washington on Tuskegee's campus, is bedecked with bird poop. Whiteness nearly suffocates the campus in Ellison's description. The narrator does not know if the founder is depicted in the statue as lifting the veil from the slave prostrate at the founder's knees – or if he is indeed putting the veil more firmly in place. This narrative of the school that brought Washington's philosophy into fruition dramatizes it as a place where black Americans were taught to be subservient and follow the rules of white society. Indeed, they were taught to be blind to the real issues of race in their world. The young, naïve narrator whose goal is to be the founder's assistant, wishes to let the founder and the white trustee know "that far from being like any of the [black] people we had seen, I *hated* them, that I believed in the principles of the Founder with all my heart and soul, and that I believed in his own goodness and kindness in extending the hand of his benevolence to help us poor, ignorant people out of the mire and darkness. I would do his bidding and teach others to rise up as he wished them to, teach them to be thrifty, decent, upright citizens" (99). To become the good citizen, to prove his humanity to the white trustees of the college and of his future, the narrator must hate his own race and recognize his own humanity as a thing to be worked for and proven. *Invisible Man* is in part a journey to embrace the "trouble" his grandfather's strategy promotes and to find hope and humor in the bitter advice. To discover that hope and humor, the narrator finds, is to take part in an American identity that embraces "the principle [and not the men] on which the country was built" (574). Not only America's founders, but Tuskegee's founder – and indeed, Washington's entire philosophy of racial uplift – must be pushed aside to discover and assert his selfhood.

The conflict in America between black and white and between "authenticity" and stereotype "should not be misunderstood," argues Ellison, as a negative. As he considers, "despite the impact of the American idea upon the world, the 'American' himself has not (fortunately for the United States, its minorities, and perhaps the world) been finally defined" ("Twentieth Century" 83). In fact, the conflict is necessary: "this struggle between Americans as to what the American

is to be is part of that democratic process through which the nation works to achieve itself" ("Twentieth Century" 83). Ellison's writings are filled with his musings on democracy and the rift between its promise of justice and the lack of lived justice. John F. Callahan in his introduction to Ellison's *Collected Essays* highlights this subject: "The territory he explores as an essayist becomes a slowly settled, open country of imagination through which he pursues the meaning and mystery, the promise and betrayals, and above all the complex past, present and future possibilities of an American democracy" (xvii).

Ellison's other exploration of justice and democracy, *Invisible Man*, awakens us to the possibilities of a subjectivity in tension with its racist representations. Instead of running from trouble, perhaps the narrator learns what possibilities occur when he embraces the trouble of Rinehart, the figure that Monk in *Erasure* feels he may become as he embodies "that bad nigger" Stagg R. Leigh. Ellison himself makes the connection between Rinehart, the narrator's grandfather, and resistance: "Rinehart's role in the formal structure of the narrative is to suggest ... a means of applying, in yet another form, his grandfather's cryptic advice to his own situation" ("Change the Joke" 110). As the narrator of *Invisible Man* discovers the many selves attributed to Rinehart, he begins to find power in his own appropriation of another identity: "All boundaries down, freedom was not only recognition of necessity, it was the recognition of possibility....I caught a brief glimpse of the possibilities posed by Rinehart's multiple personalities" (499). Fluidity and the breaking down of boundaries, while chaotic and risky, are central to discovering a mode of resistance that does not reinstate blind assimilation or ineffectual opposition.

But *Invisible Man* does not fulfill its possibilities; it ends with a question mark, a question of "what next?" (576). The novel affirms Baldwin's concern that the human must be drawn in all its complexity, paradox, and ambiguity: the human "is something more... something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable" (150). Through the method of signifyin', Ellison creates a space from which to speak even within the language of the narratives that have attempted to erase his humanity. And he does so in order, he realizes, to *affirm*. Ellison argued that the tragic and the comic must co-exist; the promise of democracy must dwell beside its complete failure if literature is to offer any real possibility for liberation. His ambivalence toward Rinehart subverts the dialectical impulse to overcome what is different to ourselves and in doing so, presages the possibility that Monk discovers in *Erasure*.

Pleasure and Pain: Tod Clifton and Van Go Jenkins

Tod Clifton is another ambivalent character for the narrator of *Invisible Man*. First, he is the object of adoration, highly respected in Harlem as one of the younger members of the Brotherhood. At one point, Clifton muses out loud to the narrator that "sometimes a man has to plunge outside history," "turn his back" (377) a thought that plagues the narrator for the rest of the novel. Clifton unexpectedly turns away from the Brotherhood: he "disappears" and is not found again until the narrator discovers him selling paper Sambo dolls on the streets in Harlem. The disgusted narrator wanders away with perplexing thoughts of why Clifton chose to fall outside the materialist sensibilities of the Brotherhood – as Clifton himself put it earlier, "to plunge outside history" (377). "Why should a man deliberately plunge outside of history," he asks; "Why should he choose to disarm himself, give up his voice and leave the only organization offering him a chance to 'define' himself... Why *had* he turned away?" (438).

Clifton's death leaves the invisible man devastated and bewildered. His heartbreak is accompanied by a deep sense of confusion and regret: much of the reason for the narrator's despair is that Clifton – his turning away from the Brotherhood, his selling of Sambo dolls and his subsequent death – can't be interpreted, deciphered, or resolved into a clear answer. As he ponders Clifton's death, the narrator observes some Zoot Suiters on the subway. They too, are "outside of historical time" because "they didn't believe in Brotherhood" (440). He has a sudden and painful thought:

> But who knew (and now I began to tremble so violently I had to lean against a refuse can) – who knew but that they were the true leaders, the bearers of something precious? The stewards of something uncomfortable, burdensome, which they hated, because living outside of the realm of history,

there was no one to applaud their value and they themselves failed to understand it. (441)

Perhaps Clifton carried a difficult burden that if only the narrator could decipher would be a precious secret that could save him from the Brotherhood. This burden is uncomfortable because it dwells in tension and paradox. These boys "speak a jived-up transitional language... think transitional thoughts, though perhaps they dream the same old ancient dreams" – the founders' dreams (441). The boys were outside, "in the dark with Sambo... taking it on the lambo with my fallen brother, Tod Clifton (Tod, Tod), running and dodging the forces of history instead of making a dominant stand."

These zoot suiters are Ellison's Stagger Lee: "the language and culture of zoot suiters emphasized ethnic identity and rejected subservience [in contrast] to Sambo. ... [T]hey opposed racist oppression through public displays of masculinity" (Kelley 87). Zoot suiters took pleasure in riding the buses and trains, striking fear into white passengers as their dress and speech "put on outrageous displays of resistance" (Kelley 87). But like Stagger Lee, they were not always admired by the black Americans whose working class lives depended upon even a forged sense of peace. But in the age of Jim Crow, politics and resistance could not be removed from the every day lived experience of black Americans: "It was the many battles to roll back constraints, to exercise power over, or create space within, the institutional and social relationships that dominated their lives" (Kelley 78). Like the young man wearing a Confederate Cap, zoot suiters were part of a culture of everyday resistance; although these figures also remind us "that the creation of an alternative culture can simultaneously challenge and reinforce existing power relations" (Kelley 88), they, like Clifton, are neither oppositional or assimilationist, but an exciting, fearful potential in between. Perhaps being on the outside of history – as Stagger Lee, Tod and the zoot suiters are – was the most satisfying way to combat history's oppressive legacy.

But such a notion of the self frightens the invisible man, for it is a centerless self, one that isn't "defined" by his devotion to the Brotherhood and its dialectical materialism; this self is seemingly in the dark – *invisible*. As Robert Genter notes, " Ellison recognized the dangers of detaching subjectivity from its transcendental foundations. To place the self within the flux of experience is to risk the collapse of all positive significations of identity. The character of Rinehart represents this very problem" (208). As the invisible man himself concedes, "Somewhere between Rinehart and invisibility there were great potentialities" (510). Clifton is the puppet master of a tragicomedy, where laughter and heartbreak come together and the agency of comedy amidst pain can be found.

As an unlikely peddler of racist paraphernalia, Clifton seems to realize "the paradox of subjectivation:" that the very discourse that regulates is that through which one may resist (Butler, *Bodies* 15). His route to agency comes about through the disciplinary work of the character and narrative of Sambo. Clifton takes the worst of American racist imagery and in an ironic turn makes it a subversive tool. Just as Grandfather's resistance might be hidden behind his grins and yeses, mimicry is an ambivalent and parodic repetition that creates difference through its slips, its exaggerations, its incongruities. Through performative citation an onlooker may recognize that identity itself is constructed by disciplinary means. But lies proliferate too: how can the strategic use of signification, citation and repetition become a resistant act? *Erasure* emphasizes the pain of this strategy, but we also get a taste of its liberatory pleasure.

A major theme of *Erasure* is Monk's sense of being "different" from other black people: Monk's family, friends, and neighbors all define him as "different. In his writing life, then, he attempts to sidestep the "difference" the reading public expects of him. Monk's goal in his writing is partly to refuse "complicity in the marginalization of 'black' writers" (212). But in doing so he "ended up on the very distant and very 'other' side of a line that is imaginary at best. I didn't write as an act of testimony or social indignation... and I did not write out of a so-called family tradition of oral storytelling. I never tried to set anybody free, never tried to paint the next real and true picture of the life of *my* people" (212). He goes on to consider, "Perhaps if I had written in the time immediately following Reconstruction, I would have written to elevate the station of my fellow oppressed." Much of what Monk and Everett are contemplating is the difficulty of trying to reconcile resistance and agency in a postmodern context that questions the stability and integrity of the human.

Monk's reference to Reconstruction signifies on Ellison's contention that the black American – and his part in the making of the American – was erased from the literary imagination after Reconstruction. Historian David Blight argues that the obscuring of the real issues of the Civil War led to "the attempted erasure of emancipation from the national narrative of what the war had been about" (quoted in Foner, xi). Following this logic of erasure, Eric Foner contends that recovering "the historical memory of Reconstruction has been part of the larger movement for racial equality" (xix). In other words, Reconstruction was the era that tested – and its popular memory still tests – the national narrative of democracy and equality. The myth of Reconstruction is that black Americans were unprepared to handle democracy – they were not yet *equal* to America's democratic citizens. White Americans tried to ignore the humanity of blacks so that the struggle for equality amounted to a simplistic effort of charity. Resistance before the abolition of slavery was more clear: abolish slavery; gain legal citizenship rights. For Monk, as for Ellison's narrator, resistance must go beyond the burden of proving his own humanity to truly grapple with the meaning of America, democracy, and justice – to (re)write these narratives and define the human in one's own terms, not the terms of the dominant.

At first read, *Erasure* might strike some readers as a novel that reinforces the Humanist strain of resistance: that is, Thelonious Monk Ellison serves as a representative of an educated, upper-class intellectual, a character whose function it seems is to disabuse us of any notion of the dominant stereotype of black men. For some readers Monk may be downright unlikable: he is at best condescending and oppositional to his colleagues. At the *Nouveau Roman Society* conference, Monk presents a parody of Roland Barthe's *S/Z* titled "F/V: Placing the Experimental Novel" (14 – 17). Like *Fuck*, the paper is reprinted in its entirety. It makes fun of interpretation and offends many of Monk's colleagues, particularly Davis Gimbel, a stereotypical academic. He shows up at Monk's hotel and cries out, "*A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now*" – the first line of the quintessentially postmodern *Gravity's Rainbow* (36). Monk is amused and asks Gimbel to explain himself, to which Gimbel answers, "I have unsettled readers. I have made them uncomfortable. I have unsettled their historical, cultural and psychological assumptions..." and so on (37). Again, Monk's response is to make fun of their notion of being "avant-garde." His suspicion of Gimbel's sense of higher purpose is justified, however, when he sees the review for *We's Lives in Da Ghetto* praising its "verisimilitude." Monk, along with these reviewers, assume that Jenkins did not set out to "unsettle" her readers. This juxtaposition of white writers' goals and the expected function of African American texts serves to highlight the paradoxical position of being black and "postmodern." In *Erasure* the publishing world sees African American writing as an opportunity to become "a credit to your race." Monk has perhaps attempted to "unsettle" readers with his parodies, but his blackness blurs readers' and publishers' views of his work.

Erasure asks the question, how can literature offer effective resistance against dominant discourses that erase the complexity of (black) humanity? *Erasure* must take up the problem of *The Golden Day* – the problem of dominant erasures of difference, possibility, and (black) humanity – quite differently in the context of the postmodern. Ralph Ellison resists Mumford's erasure of the black component of America through allusion to canonical texts that grappled with (black) humanity. Alan Nadel writes that Ellison's "engagement with tradition" came out of historical, social, and critical events that "effected the erasure of the black's role in crucial parts of American history and of literary history" (xii). In *Erasure* Everett attempts this same critique of erasure but does so within the tradition of African American literature. While Ellison could draw upon "the contradictions of segregated democracy" (On Being the Target" 826), Everett and his contemporaries draw upon the contradictions of identity. Monk's first desire is to erase the "bad" symbols of black identity like Bigger Thomas by exposing their inauthenticity through parody, but he learns that to truly resist the ironic erasures of American democracy he must embrace difference, paradox, and unknowing.

Monk's attempt to appropriate the stereotypical black man, in writing and in the flesh, becomes quite painful, splitting his sense of self. He feels that his performance of Stagg was "annihilating" his own "presence": "What would happen if I tired of holding my breath, if I had to come up for air?"

(248). When, to Monk's great consternation, *Fuck* is given the National Book Award he realizes that at the awards ceremony he would be "exposed." A choice must be made: either Stagg R. Leigh annihilates Monk, or Monk annihilates Stagg – or something *else*. "I considered my motivation in creating Stagg in the first place, felt again my anger and dissatisfaction with my world and my choice became clear to me" (262). His choice is made on the night of the awards when, as Stagg R. Leigh's name is announced as the recipient of the award, Monk rises to the podium.[5]

This final scene alludes to one of the last scenes of *Invisible Man*. Monk stands up to begin his walk to the podium, "*But somehow the floor had now turned to sand...*" (264, italics original). As the invisible man in Ellison's novel rages in the cellar into which he has fallen along with the many papers that have "kept him running," he has a dream: "*But somehow the floor had now turned to sand*" (IM 569, italics original). The dream scene in Ellison's novel is a confrontation with Jack, Bledsoe, and all the others who "had run me." The invisible man is "through running," however, and asserts, "*I'll free myself.*" He is castrated by Jack and as he watches his "generations wasting," Jack asks, "*How does it feel to be free of one's illusions?*" (569). The invisible man answers, "*Painful and empty.*" He then points to his castrated member, and laughs, "*Because at a price I now see that which I couldn't see*" (570). His laughter is what frees him, for in the face of annihilation, he recognizes the ultimate, ironic, painful truth: "*That there hang not only my generations... But your sun... your moon... Your world*" (570). What he realizes in the midst of his self breaking apart is that he already *is* the American individual, not a man needing to be made by the likes of Bledsoe or the Brotherhood, not by Booker T.'s promises, nor, indeed, by Richard Wright's promise of a Communist answer. Amidst his laughter at the great irony of it all, he is freed. But the invisible man can only wonder then what the "next phase" is.

In *Erasure*, Monk moves in the same dream sand, is also surrounded by the faces that have wanted something from him, "faces of my life, of my past," and yet he *steps up* to the call of Stagg R. Leigh (his own Rinehart) not down, as the invisible man does when he ends the novel living underground. Monk imagines "a small boy" holding a mirror "so that I could see my face and it was the face of Stagg Leigh" (264). Stagg in the mirror asks Monk, "How does it feel to be free of one's illusions?" Monk makes his way to the podium, amidst confusion from those who are expecting the bad boy Stagg, and he turns to the announcer to answer, "Painful and empty" (265). Monk is about to expose himself, and on the podium, he is seen as Thelonious Monk Ellison and he sees himself in the mirror as Stagg; he is the "Seen Unseen," as Rinehart is described in *Invisible Man*. Monk looks into the TV cameras, and begins with the final line of the novel: "Egads, I'm on television." This line is an allusion to the final line of *Fuck*: Van Go, being arrested, yells to the cameras, "Hey, Baby Girl. Look at me. I on TV" (131). The final, allusive line evokes laughter, irony, and uncertainty. We feel as if things are unfinished, unresolved – and yet there is also laughter and pleasure at the boundary-pushing allusions to Van Go, to Rinehart, and to Monk's earlier, more rigid self.

In this final scene, Monk is in a liminal state. The choice he has made is to de-privilege any false solution. Van Go, the subject Monk wished he could destroy, becomes a source of pleasure and laughter, and he discovers agency in comedy. Monk in this final moment is the human Baldwin wished for and Ellison discovered but could not wholly affirm: "something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable." Monk, for a moment at least, embraces the trouble of blackness, of Americanness, of humanity.[6] *Erasure*, then, offers a different kind of resistance outside opposition and assimilation, a method of resistance more apt within the context of the postmodern.

Frederic Jameson has claimed that postmodernity is the end of unique expression and resistance, for there is "no longer a self" to do these things. Jameson's argument suggests that the modern, liberal subject can locate the centers of power and oppression, and so defend against these centers (x); but the centers have shifted in our global culture. Any kind of definition of the human that might fix it, inevitably leaves some out of its scope. Jameson's concern still remains: how do we fight for equality and insist on democracy when the very ends of this fight – justice and human dignity – have grown ambiguous?

Part of the answer is to debunk the notion of a teleological end for resistance: *Erasure*'s use of allusion and insistence on maintaining tension is a move that questions the teleological, dialectical aims of resistance and problematizes the fixed human of narra-

tives of oppression. Traditional oppositional resistance is problematic because oppression assumes a violation of a specific human essence that may not fit all. The tension of signifyin' belies the false hope for a resolution. By maintaining the tension of (at least) two presents, the work of signifyin' subverts the dialectical fallacy by de-privileging a (false) solution: the cited text is thrown into a critical space and new interpretations are made possible. To cite is itself a critical act, as one reiterates with a difference, skewing the norms laid out before. Iterations make the old anew, threatening any fixed definition of black, American. What if one did not refuse dominant codes, but re-used them, as Monk does with Van Go? To resist then, one might use the same laws, the same codes of dominant structure – but with the critical difference that arises through signifyin'.

Justice arises from the persistent work of revision; justice cannot be calculated, made finite, determined as our founding fathers affirmed it and the country has since solidified in the establishing of a constitution that remains fixed. The young man wearing the Confederate cap in Ellison's story flaunts the difference of identity; signifyin' is a method that maintains identity as creation through difference. And from this method, perhaps "the very nature of humanity... emerges, not as an assertion of will nor as an evocation of freedom, but as an enigmatic questioning" (Bhabha 60). While this method has its dangers, its potential lies in questioning traditional liberatory methods and the subjects those methods assume. As Monk steps up to the podium he is different to himself – embracing the fluidity and tension of justice and democracy.

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[1] The character of Juanita Mae Jenkins may be a send-up of Sapphire, whose dialect-ridden Push (1996) was made into an Oscar nominated film in 2009.

[2] Van Go Jenkins of Monk's novel *Fuck* lives with his mother and sister in a small room in the projects. Van Go hangs out with his buddies Tito and Yellow (the name Bigger gives Gus in Native Son) at the pool hall where they talk about planning a robbery. His mother finds him a job as a driver with an upper-class black family, the Daltons. Penelope, the liberally sensitive daughter of this family, orders Van to "Take us to the hood and we can shoot some hoops and then maybe score some weed and eat some chicken" (102). When Penelope gets drunk, Van helps her to her room, where he then rapes her. The remainder of the novel veers quite a bit from Native Son, and follows Van as he runs from the law, eventually confronted on a trashy daytime talk show and arrested.

[3] It should be noted that Wright, too, had issues with his publishers, who demanded that he omit certain parts of the text that were too risqué, namely Bigger masturbating in the theater.

[4] Bigger 1 was a schoolyard bully; Bigger 2 felt the world owed him and refused to pay rent; Bigger 3 was known to everyone as "that bad nigger" (the fusion of which became the inspiration for Bigger's name); number 4 disregarded Jim Crow and spent much of his life in an insane asylum; while Bigger 5 audaciously sat in the "whites only" section of a streetcar.

[5] Ironically, Everett himself won the Hurston/Wright foundation award in 2002 for Erasure.

[6] Or for much more than a moment: the novel's last line forces the reader to contend and grapple with Monk's identity. Indeed, it echoes the question that ends *Invisible Man*, asking the reader to face an uncertainty that lingers.

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Book Reviews

Colley, Zoe A. *Ain't Scared of Your Jail: Arrest, Imprisonment, and the Civil Rights Movement.* Gainesville, Fl.: University Press of Florida, 2012.
Reviewer: David Vaughn, Jr.

Zoe A. Colley's *Ain't Scared of Your Jail: Arrest, Imprisonment, and the Civil Rights Movement* does a masterful job providing insight to the role that the criminal justice system played in maintaining Jim Crow in the American South during the middle twentieth century. Colley, a lecturer in American history at the University of Dundee (Scotland), covers traditional civil rights issues, such as white Southerners' efforts to maintain segregation, but she also introduces new topics and activists. Her work further legitimizes the idea that achieving universal equality in the modern era has been a long and tedious task undertaken by scores of individuals, both known and unknown, and not a small cadre of popular figures.

Chapter one, titled "An American Negro Gandhi," explores African Americans such as Jay Holmes Smith. He and his associates in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) searched for a black civil rights leader with the demeanor of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who headed a non-violent protest against India's caste system. Smith and other FOR members began their search as early as 1941, but they did not find anyone who shared Gandhi's appreciation of non-violent direct action until the 1950s, Colley writes. Those who embraced Gandhi's model included Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mary Fair Burks, all of whom participated in Montgomery, Alabama's bus boycott of 1955-1956.

According to Colley, unsung heroes such as Burks, a member of the city's Women's Political Council, organized black female Montgomerians. In so doing, she and her female comrades generated much-needed support for the boycott. Moreover, challenging Montgomery's segregation laws meant certain arrest, possible imprisonment, and could be extremely dangerous. Boycotters faced physical harm as well other types of retribution. Colley notes the stigma attached to being arrested or labeled a troublemaker made it particularly difficult for a member of the African-American middle class to entertain the possibility of facing a stint behind bars. Many in this community of blacks, Colley explains, frowned on those who spent time in jail. The act, she notes, was considered disrespectful and embarrassing.

Colley titles chapter two of her study "Jail-No-Bail!" In the chapter, she confirms how committed many civil rights workers were to freedom, justice, and equality. Black college students take center stage in this section of the book. Members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) protested segregation through sit-ins at Woolworth's lunch counters in North Carolina. By 1960, these freedom fighters transformed what had been deemed a negative experience—namely, going to jail—into a positive one as they marched into the lockup en masse to highlight injustice in the state. Doing so rather than accepting bail, Colley points out, afforded SNCC and kindred spirits an opportunity to put Gandhi's non-violent direct action philosophy into practice. King, who led the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), advocated this course of action, but other civil rights leaders and organizations disapproved of it. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was known to provide legal and financial assistance to incarcerated activists, was foremost among detractors.

Many scholars have described the NAACP's ideological differences with King, SCLC, the Congress of Racial Equality, and similar grassroots organizers and organizations relative to direct action. Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall, and other key NAACP officials believed the court system was the best avenue to attack Jim Crow. For many activists, jail was the first stop. Eventually, Colley avers, being incarcerated for taking a stand against racial wrongdoing became a badge of honor, even though wearing it could result in death. Civil rights leaders such as James Lawson, Colley shows, encouraged students who were jailed to demonstrate their commitment to full equality by not accepting bail money. But not every movement leader shared this belief. Julian Bond, for example, disagreed with Lawson's approach until Bond himself faced imprisonment. Thereafter, his commitment to civil rights strengthened, though he still refused to go to jail. By contrasting the forgoing schemes and events, Colley reemphasizes the fact that the modern civil rights movement was not a monolithic campaign. Quite the opposite, it was engineered and carried out by individuals with diverse backgrounds and assorted opinions.

Chapter three, titled "From Sit-ins to Jail-ins," places demonstrations and incarcerations within a larger strategy to achieve complete equality in the United States. The 1961 Freedom Rides constitute

a major focus of this chapter. By Colley's judgment, the South's legal system did everything in its power to break riders' collective spirit. Among other things, officials arrested and placed activists in one of the most dangerous penal facilities in the country, Parchman Prison. There, they were exposed to the same living conditions as were Parchman's general-population inmates. The riders' jailhouse plight served as a microcosm for others unjustly imprisoned because they dared to fight for their rights. This aspect of the freedom struggle is an often untold legacy of the civil rights movement.

In "The Middle of the Iceberg," chapter four of *Ain't Scared of Your Jail,* Colley gives a bird's eye view of how the movement's southern leadership shifted its attention from what she refers to as a "jail–no-bail" policy to a more nuanced voter registration and economic empowerment effort. Despite the leaders' continual attempts to keep their followers free, many African Americans wound up doing time, if only briefly. Consider Bob Moses and Charles Sherrod. They led registration drives in places like McComb, Mississippi, and were imprisoned for doing so. In Albany, Georgia, Slater King's wife was detained in a home rather than in a regular jail because she was pregnant. Regardless of significant obstacles to success, civil rights pioneers in Mississippi, Georgia, and elsewhere in the South persevered.

Chapter five, titled "This Lousy Hole," presents distinct images of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. Colley revisits the noble activities and the tragic deaths of James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. The three traveled to Longdale, a rural town in infamous Neshoba County (located about sixty miles from Meridian), to investigate a church burning. They were falsely imprisoned, intentionally released, and then brutally executed by enforcement officials and other white terrorists whom Colley describes as "guardians of the Jim Crow South." An equally as noted civil rights leader in Mississippi, Fannie Lou Hamer, was permanently maimed whilst in jail. To Colley, Hamer's tragic injury and numerous others like it elucidated the need to improve police-community relations, reform the penal system, and broaden black voting. Chapter six of Colley's volume, "You Can't Jail the Revolution," looks at initially peaceful activists' decision to achieve complete equality through "any means necessary," to quote Malcolm X, when Gandhi and King's principal model (nonviolence) proved ineffectual.

Zoe A. Colley's book, *Ain't Scare of Your Jail*, accurately portrays the post-World War II phase of the civil rights movement in the United States of America. The author does an especially good job contextualizing ordinary activists who helped transform arrest and imprisonment from sources of shame to sources of liberation. Colley's slim volume—the main text is only 121 pages—is ideal for general readers, for undergraduate students, or for civil rights scholars and buffs who want a quick read about one of the most transformative periods in American history.

Duru, N. Jeremi. *Advancing the Ball: Race, Reformation, and the Quest for Equal Coaching Opportunity in the NFL*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
Reviewer: James L. Conyers, Jr.

American University professor of law N. Jeremi Duru has fixed a scholarly study that examines issues related to social inequality, disparate treatment, racialism, racism, discrimination, prejudice, and workplace equity in the National Football League (NFL). Duru is immensely qualified to discuss these matters. In addition to being an academic, he has worked closely with African-American coaches in the NFL. He therefore brings a scholarly and a practical, or inside, point of view to the subject matter. His body of research is organized into the following categories: narrative history, Africana Studies, politics, and the sociology of race and sport. Each topic is described and evaluated from a structural functionalist perspective. Special attention is given to Fredrick (Fritz) Pollard and to John Wooten, blacks who played crucial roles in advancing diversity in the NFL.

Pollard became one of the first African Americans to play professional football in the United States when he signed on with the Akron Pros in 1920. One year later, he was named the team's head coach. This occurrence made him the first person of African ancestry to hold the position in the American Professional Football Association, which later became the NFL. Wooten is a former NFL player, agent, and administrator. The Cleveland Browns made him a fifth-round draft pick in 1959. He remained with the Browns organization until 1967, when he joined the Washington Redskins for a season. From 1975 through 2002, Wooten worked in player personnel for several NFL teams. Duru calls him "the Godfather" on account of his character and his activism. For almost a half century by the time *Advancing the Ball* was released in 2010, Wooten had organized coalitions to advance fairness in the NFL.

The famed African-American football coach Tony Dungy penned the foreword to the book under review. His background was perfect for this duty. In 2007, he and Lovie Smith, another black coach, led their respective teams to the Super Bowl. Never before had two coaches of African descent faced off in the NFL's championship game. Dungy retired from coaching a year later, but he did not leave the field. Instead, he became a professional broadcaster for major networks and authored several books.

In the foreword to *Advancing the Ball*, Dungy tells his own grid-iron story. It began during childhood. He developed a love for the game which continued through his college and pro years. After this touching recollection, to which numerous professional athletes can relate, Dungy introduces readers to the work of the Fritz Pollard Alliance, particularly its effort to enforce the 2003 Rooney Rule. Named after team owner and diversity champion Dan Rooney, the rule requires each franchise that has a coaching or a senior-administration vacancy to interview at least one social minority for the position. Although the mandate does not set a racial quota or an ethnic mandate, the alliance has pressed for African-American hires, Dungy explains. Wooten has been at the forefront of this advocacy. He initially worked with attorneys such as Johnnie Cochran Jr. to achieve the organization's principal goal, inclusiveness in the NFL. Wooten now chairs the alliance.

Taking up where Dungy leaves off, Duru combines historical method, ethnography, secondary analysis, and oral history to present an interdisciplinary overture of meta-theory. As with Dungy, the Rooney Rule and Wooten are two of Duru's main focuses. Duru, however, spends a great amount of time on Cochran and Mehri, two civil rights litigators who at some point represented the Fritz Pollard Alliance. (Cochran, of course, passed away in 2005.) According to Duru, the lawyering duo's activism could be attributed to each man's personal interest in the NFL and his professional reputation. Both Cochran and Mehri won major settlements against leading Fortune 500 companies. Together, they used their clout to help the alliance address the disparate treatment of black coaches, as made plain by the coaches' evaluations and other performance reports. Attorneys Cochran and Mehri also fought for social-minority advancement in the NFL and, by implication, a collective consciousness among minority groups in professional athletics.

Duru has produced a solidly conceptualized, researched, organized, and written study that examines business, ethics, and ethnicity in the NFL. As he makes plain, the presence of coaches from diverse ancestry groups is important to the league's entire enterprise. After all, coaches do more than simply bark out offensive and defensive schemes; they lead men from myriad backgrounds. In Duru's opinion, those who coach and make administrative decisions affecting these players' lives and livelihoods should be as diverse as the players themselves. This reviewer highly recommends this book for sports enthusiasts as well as for students and scholars of African-American history, Africana Studies, and allied disciplines.

Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G., ed. *The Harlem Renaissance REVISITED: Politics, Arts, and Letters*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010.
Reviewer: Clement Ndulute

Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar's edited volume, *The Harlem Renaissance REVISITED*, explores the subject in a way which most works have not done. Ogbar and his co-contributors do not "revisit" this historic movement in order to reinterpret its major texts or to offer polemics on any specific discourse. Instead, they provide energetic answers to existing scholarship, which has focused largely on artifacts produced. Very rarely has it dealt with the unique lives or the circumstances that produced the great works frequently evoked. The volume under review undertakes this important task. Consequently, Ogbar's study fills a gap which academicians know to exist but choose to play down and live with. Prime examples of this type selectivity include writers and performers' friendships and rivalries; the politics of fame; and invisible, yet real and often complex, labyrinths of interrelationships between the arts and artists.

The introduction, the fourteen essays, and the afterword which make up *Harlem* analyze many aspects of the 1920s and 1930s Renaissance period, formerly known as the era of the New Negro Movement. Most figures in the essays are familiar. They include Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Yolanda Du Bois, Zola Neal Hurston, Duke Ellington, and James Weldon Johnson. However, the essayists also focus on Jackson Johnson and Paul Robeson, two great figures from sports and cinema whom scholars rarely discuss alongside the individuals mentioned above. *Harlem* shows how Johnson, a flamboyant ring master, and Robeson, an erudite performer and world traveler, helped raise black consciousness during the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson uplifted black masculinity through his conduct in the ring. Roberson achieved the same goal via his on-screen exploits.

Harlem is not only about literature and music, as most visiting and revisiting tomes on the period are. Many of the essays in Ogbar's volume deal with the actual lives of artists and activists—for example, the struggles they waged not only against the outer, racially divisive world but also amongst themselves and between one art form and another. Simply put, the essays in Ogbar's groundbreaking collection suggest there "was no racial unity in this Capital of the black race." Within the purveyors of change, as well as the black metropolis itself, factors such as skin tone, sexual orientation, class, gender, and generational conflict were rampant. One or more of these items frequently defined one's place in a supposedly united front in the war against white supremacy. For instance, ethnic segregation was practiced in theaters and nightclubs in Harlem and on Broadway, even though the plays were written by black authors and performed by black people. Added to this irony was the seemingly perennial distrust, nay animosity, between African Americans and black people from the Caribbean Islands, many of whom became an integral part of the Harlem Renaissance. At the center of this particular conflict was the issue of bread and butter: too many black folks chasing too few jobs. By going beyond what appeared in the great poems, stories, and music of the period, *Harlem* unsettles the dirt beneath the glitter of the movement, the private acts behind the public acts. Based on new research, this book indeed is a unique and welcome addition to scholarship on the Harlem Renaissance.

Ogbar, associate dean of humanities in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Studies and professor of history at the University of Connecticut, outlines the main purpose of his study in its introduction. According to him, the volume is intended to bring together fresh perspectives with which to view the Harlem Renaissance by trying "to explore what the Harlem Renaissance was really about, especially in terms of its major figures and its art." This statement is overly ambitious by my judgment. *Harlem*, I think, is unlikely to change many minds about the general character or primary goals of the Renaissance. Nor does *Harlem* force its readers to reevaluate their initial interpretations of major Renaissance works. But Ogbar and his associates do succeed in adding to the existing body of knowledge about matters on which the canon is silent.

Consider Richard Wright. That he misunderstood Zola Neal Hurston's objectives and disliked her use of black dialect might be a revelation people whose only interest in the Renaissance has been its major texts; here, then, Harlem, highlights the sociology of artistic production. Even so, this possible contribution to scholarly disclosure will hardly alter one's opinion of Wright or of Hurston. Likewise, notions regarding Cullen's marriage to Yolanda Du Bois being short, pathetic, and uneventful on account of class differences and certain personal attributes on the part of Cullen will move one's perspective on his poetry only slightly, if at all. Nevertheless, the forgoing ideas and occurrences do bolster one's understanding of Cullen, the poet, as well as W. E. B. Du Bois's overshadowing influence on his daughter—a daughter, readers are told, who deserves her own place in the annals of African-American literary history.

The topics of the fourteen essays in *Harlem* range from the legacy of the minstrel performances on the erstwhile New Negro movement to the role of music in the "New Negro Consciousness" to the inerasable presence of southern traditions to the diasporic travels of the participants to, as alluded above, questions of color, class, sexuality and the international character of the New Consciousness. The last-named phenomenon includes the Harlem Renaissance leaders' brief but intense infatuation with Joseph Stalin's Russia following the overthrow of the country's czar. Reportedly, many prominent Renaissance figures saw Russian serfs' struggles against feudalism as similar to African Americans' struggles against Jim Crow in the United States. In Stalin, Harlem activists saw an ally and flocked to Moscow in hordes during and following the Russian Revolution. Some even agreed to jointly produce a film against American racism. However, their affair with communist Russia was abruptly stopped for reasons of incompatibility and betrayal. All the same, the detailed analysis of this experiment in revolutionary internationalism makes for instructive reading.

Ogbar divides the fourteen essays into five parts: "Aesthetics and the New Negro," "Class and Place in Harlem," "Literary Icons Reconsidered," "Gender Constructions and Politics," and "The New Negro." Paul Robeson and Jack Johnson are discussed in "Gender Constructions and Politics." It is especially fascinating to see how their masculinity and athleticism added impetus and power to the muscle and spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. One essayist writes: "Paul Robeson sought to reclaim the black male body from primitivism, jungle imagery, and the perception that the black male body remained impotent and inferior, representations of blackness favored by white during the Renaissance." Relative to Johnson, the same essayist argues boxing gave him an avenue to create a distinct public persona. Johnson's boxing career and his successful bouts with white heavyweights represented the fight between white hegemony and the ascension of black power.

As regards organization, Ogbar refrains from making any sustained introduction on the fourteen individual essays or their emerging collective landscape. Instead, he provides a historical context, incisively placing the Harlem Renaissance in national and international milieus. He only perfunctorily mentions specific essays in his introduction and afterword. The essays' diversity would be easier for the "reader in a hurry" to handle if the five sections were dealt with in more detail in the introduction to show their thematic unity. But this stylistic choice undoubtedly was made on purpose, as *Harlem* is a book for those already familiar with the literati and artists of the movement. Novices, such as undergraduate students and laypersons, should choose a more general work before tackling Ogbar's volume, which is a great resource for graduate, professional researchers, and professors. The bounteous references appending each essay are very helpful. The sources serve as an additional testament to the valiant effort each contributor put into the preparation of his or her piece.

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