National Council
for Black Studies

The Discipline and the African World 2022 Report:

An Annual Report on the State of Affairs for Africana Communities

From the National Council of Black Studies Annual Report Committee

Report Preparation Team

Editor

Dr. Serie McDougal III, California State University, Los Angeles

Associate Editor

Dr. Michael Tillotson, State University of New York, Cortland

Editorial Board

Dr. Valerie Grim, Indiana University

Dr. Maulana Karenga, California State University, Long Beach

Dr. James Stewart, Professor Emeritus, Pennsylvania State University

Production and Communications

Ms. Venus Kent

General Disclaimer: The analyses, opinions, and recommendations in this report do not represent the official positions of the National Council of Black Studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT FROM THE NCBS PRESIDENT 6
REPORT OVERVIEW 8

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS 17

THE CURRENT ECONOMIC STATE OF AFRICAN/BLACK COMMUNITIES BY BESSIE HOUSE-SOREMEKUN, PH.D. 18

THE PROMISE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKER COOPERATIVES BY STACEY SUTTON, PH.D. AND JESSICA GORDON-NEMBHARD, PH.D. 28

GENTRIFICATION AND INVOLUNTARY DISPLACEMENT IN DENVER, COLORADO: UNDERSTANDING WHY HISTORIC FIVE POINTS IS CHANGING AND THE NEED FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN REPARATIONS BY THEODORIC MANLEY JR., PH.D. 39

WHAT WE MUST DO BEFORE REPARATIONS! BY LINWOOD F. TAUHEED, PH.D. 52

REPARATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF THE ENSLAVED AS PART OF A LARGER PROCESS OF "COPING WITH THE PAST" IN THE UNITED STATES ("VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG") BY THOMAS CRAEMER, PH.D.. 61

REMATRIATION: DEFINING AN AFRIKAN-CENTERED REPARATORY JUSTICE RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE OF AFRIKAN ENSLAVEMENT BY NICOLA FRITH, PH.D., JOYCE HOPE SCOTT, ED.D., & ESTHER STANFORD-XOSEI 70

FRAMING THE STUDY OF BLACK ECONOMICS BY JUSTIN GAMMAGE, PH.D 79

"WHATEVER WE CALL OUR POLITICS—LEFTIST, FEMINIST, ANTI-RACIST—DIGNITY AND SURVIVAL ARE OUR CORE CONCERNS": ON THE "CORE CONCERNS" OF THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT BY REILAND RABAKA, PHD 86

ANTI-BLACK VIOLENCE, MEDIA, AND JUSTICE 94

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM TO A BLACK BOY? COMBATING JUVENILE RECIDIVISM THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS BY CRYSTAL S. T. RUSSELL, TAMARA T. VENICE, & KIYOMI MOORE 95

HAITI AS TRAUMA PORN: U.S. MEDIA AND NARRATIVES OF HAITI BY CHARMANE M. PERRY, PH.D. 100

MEDIA RACISM AND THE PUBLIC FRAMING OF BLACK LIVES BY MARQUITA GAMMAGE, PH.D. 105

HEALTH 112

"COLLECTIVE-SELF" CARE: OUR HEALING, HEALTH, AND WELLNESS AS PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT BY ANNA ORTEGA-WILLIAMS, PH.D., LMSW 113

THE AZIBO NOSOLOGIES AS FANTASIAS AND SOLILOQUIES: THE SOLILOQUIZER'S RESPONSE TO THE AFRICANITY DISSIMULATORS BY DAUDI AJANI YA AZIBO, PH.D. 118

THE AFRICAN MEDICAL PARADIGM: DELINEATING TRADITION FROM PATHOLOGY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC BY TARIK A. RICHARDSON, M.A. 127

EDUCATION **134**

"TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, AND EDUCATION": HEALING THE ORIGINAL SIN OF SLAVERY BY SONYA MCCOY-WILSON, ED.D. 135

WE COME FROM LOVE: POSITIONING BLACK LOVE COUNTERNARRATIVES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION BY NATALIE D. LEWIS, PH.D. 141

LEAVING NO CHILD BEHIND . . . LITTLE BLACK BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE BAHAMAS, CARIBBEAN, AND LATIN AMERICA MATTER TOO: EXPLORING A SOLUTIONS APPROACH TO COUNTER RACIAL AND GENDER DISPARITIES IN STEM EDUCATION BY PATRICE JULIET PINDER, ED.D. 149

BEYOND INSTITUTIONS: PROMOTING AFROCENTRIC EDUCATION IN AFRICAN/BLACK COMMUNITIES BY NAAJA ROGERS 158

THE STATE OF BLACK/AFRICANA STUDIES **165**

BLACK STUDIES DEPARTMENTS AND COMMUNITY RELEVANCY: AN EXPLORATORY ASSESSMENT BY MICIAH Z. YEHUDAH, PH.D. & CLYDE LEDBETTER JR., PH.D. 166

LOCATING AFRICA IN BLACK STUDIES: CULTIVATING THE BLACK STUDIES AFRICANIST BY MARIA MARTIN, PH.D. 174

CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE: AN AFRICAN DIGITAL HUMANITIES BY PETER UKPOKODU, PH.D. 182

STRIVING TO SING OUR OWN SONGS: NOTES ON THE LEFT NOT RIGHT IN AFRICANA STUDIES BY MARK CHRISTIAN, PH.D. 186

THE STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE: A SELECTIVE AND PERSONAL APPRAISAL BY MOLEFI KETE ASANTE, PH.D. 193

SANKOFA BLACK STUDIES: RETHINKING ORIGINS FOR THE FUTURE BY ABDUL ALKALIMAT, PH.D. 193

THE VOICES OF BLACK YOUTH **201**

PHYSICS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE WITH SCIENCE BY BRYCE DAVIS BOHON & TRINITY MUNSON 202

"KEEP ON KEEPING ON": BOYS FROM THE CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE SPEAK ON THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES BEFORE AND DURING THE PANDEMIC BY BRYCE DAVIS BOHON AND JAMARR HOSKINS 205

COMMENTARIES **207**

BUILDING A WORLD BEYOND BRUTALITY BY ATTORNEY BENJAMIN L. CRUMP 208

A LINE BETWEEN BLACK AND BLUE: THE STRUGGLES OF BEING A CONSCIOUS BLACK POLICE OFFICER BY ANONYMOUS BLACK POLICE OFFICER 211

CHALLENGES OF THE DYSTOPIC PRESENT: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BIPOC GRADUATE STUDENTS BY TAYLOR D. DUCKETT, SAMANTHA HORTON, ANDREW STADEKER II, MADISON CLARK, CORRYN ANDERSON, AND NYA ANTHONY 214

360 NATION: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND AFRICANA STUDIES BY GRADUATE STUDENT BRANDON STOKES 223

U2 RODEO AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: MORE THAN SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT BY DEMETRIUS W. PEARSON, ED.D 226

CONCLUSION TO THE REPORT 232

Statement from the National Council for Black Studies President

Amilcar Shabazz, Ph.D.

Academic Excellence | Social Responsibility | Cultural Grounding

Fulfilling Our Duty to Win

The National Council for Black Studies is about Unity. We emerged from a simple premise: We are stronger together. The hundreds of academic departments, scholarly programs, and research and cultural centers around the world are more effective and have greater impact when we unite and learn from each other. As Assata Shakur says in *Assata: An Autobiography*, "We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains." What is true for the struggling masses of our people is equally true for our work in the realms of scholarship and intellectual service.

The Annual Report before you does not cover every area of life of importance to our discipline, but those topics it does address have articles that open conversations, present engaged research, and introduce ideas that define the trajectory of Africana scholars in that proverbial vineyard that Perry Hall, bell hooks, Valerie Boyd, and other colleagues who recently transitioned from this life tilled and harvested so well before us. The current state of affairs of political economy and people of African descent is explored in diverse essays, but as Reiland Rabaka points out, the core concern of all our studies is to safeguard the dignity and survival of our people. His point must be underscored because problems, serious threats, continue to plague us—from COVID-19 and other pandemics to the ongoing attack of gentrification to systemic attacks in courts, newsrooms, hospitals, and schoolhouses. Some of the issues analyzed here are the outcomes of social structures that were not designed to advance our wellbeing and that still harm us under twenty-first-century reconfigurations of anti-Black racism. Our report not only identifies the problems but offers analyses on how we are fighting back and winning.

On the general status of our intellectual project, we hear from both emerging researchers and scholars looking at new trends and fields of activity, like the digital humanities, as well as senior scholars who have put in more than a half century of work defining the contours of Africana studies. The word *relevancy* that was ubiquitous in the 1960s reappears with the urgency of now. How Africana studies is and can be relevant to the liberation of African people and the disrupting of the system of racial supremacy and subordination that continues to cause so much suffering is the question that remains an imperative one for all our research, teaching, service, and community engagement. If our work is not relevant to that overarching imperative, then it is irrelevant to our mission and the vision that drives the kind of knowledge production we are about. Thus, "The Voices of Black Youth" is a most worthy section to be included in this report. Seeing what is on the mind of the upcoming generations is a necessary check-in. Research into the ways the COVID-19 pandemic and other social and environmental developments are affecting our young people and what they are feeling, saying, and doing in response to those factors informs us much about issues that are showing up in our classrooms now and in the semesters ahead. Our academic roots and the NCBS itself grew from radical listening and the constructive engagement of students, faculty, and community activists and organizers. Our annual report should build upon that tradition, refining and adapting it in relation to our current time, place, and condition. I could go on with ideas for next year's report, but for now I want to encourage you to study what is here and to see how it may apply to your research, teaching, and other work in the service of worldwide African survival and the advancement of academic excellence, social responsibility, and cultural grounding.

Shabazz

Amilcar Shabazz, President
National Council for Black Studies

Overview:

Watching the Clock and Keeping the Compass

The idea for this report is a seed, and its development and the many contributions it has received are signals that its time has come. The report represents our efforts to use our expertise to articulate the most recent challenges before the African world and to point toward solutions. Far from looking for a one-size-fits-all approach to the possibilities and challenges facing African people, we seek to bring into solidarity thinkers who are determined to produce a diversity of knowledge that can guide concrete steps toward Black liberation. Some of the thinkers are complementary, others contradictory; they do not all represent the views of the National Council of Black Studies but are all representative of the nuance in thought that typifies African people's intellectual heritage. This volume also contains analyses and projections about the current state and future of Black studies, drawing on insights from disciplinary insiders and subject experts.

The articles in this inaugural volume explore complex factors shaping developments across the Black world—including the COVID-19 pandemic, critical race theory (CRT), state- and nonstate-sanctioned anti-Black violence and terrorism, gentrification, reparations, re*m*atriation, and media framings of Black people. Given the diversity of the conditions that are discussed, each has created opportunities for African/Black people to develop lasting local, global, and culturally aligned interventions as well as preemptive steps and practices, all of which our contributors discuss. The authors who have written about Black studies examine steps that can be taken to sustain and enhance the discipline's relevance, commitment to its mission, and innovations so that its multidimensional structure can be utilized to meet the varied, distinct, and common needs of the African world.

Economics and Politics

The pandemic has had significant impacts on Black economic security. Solutions offer opportunities for economic and political solidarity on local and international levels. The economic impact of COVID-19 has disproportionately affected Black economic conditions, from the high Black youth unemployment rates in the UK to African American food security in the United States (Larson et al., 2021; Thomas, 2021). Along with a chorus of Black leaders, 2021 saw Olivia Grange—Jamaica's Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport—make a bold call for reparations for people of African ancestry affected by slavery, colonization, and ongoing anti-Black racism (Hassan, 2021). Black communities also continue to face the silent scourge of gentrification as historically Black neighborhoods across the United States experience displacement and replacement while more well-off and often non-Black residents move in (Chronopoulos, 2020). The consequences include but are not limited to Black financial stress, race-related stress, decreased Black property ownership, lack of social cohesion and sense of belonging, and overall destabilized infrastructure (Chronopoulos, 2020; NewsRX, 2020).

In this volume, Dr. Bessie House-Soremekun examines the economic state of the African/Black world and the necessity of a global Black business agenda. She describes how the impacts of colonization, enslavement, and subsequent institutionalized marginalization have resulted in disadvantages in the areas of employment, income levels, and homeownership rates. However, although these disadvantages have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, she explains the importance of taking stock of recent increases in the number of Black businesses in the United States and in Africa and the importance of continuing to draw on African people's vibrant business history and tradition while providing entrepreneurs in Black business sectors across the world with the opportunities and skills they need to be successful and to develop international and cooperative agendas.

Local-level economic pressures have stimulated creativity at the intersection of cultural values such as collectivism and entrepreneurship. In spite of the impacts of the Great Recession and the global pandemic, Black communities in the United States have experienced a resurgence of a long tradition of African American worker cooperatives. Dr. Stacey Sutton and Dr. Jessica Gordon-Nembhard describe this resurgence and the potential of Black cooperatives to enhance Black resilience and self-determination and to address Black communities' unmet demands.

The economic development challenges that worker cooperatives address are directly related to affordable housing. Dr. Theodoric Manley describes the cycle of gentrification and involuntary displacement and its effects on historically Black neighborhoods; he uses the Historical Five Points area in Denver, Colorado, as a case study. He explains the possibility of mobilizing resources to develop affordable housing and building counter-structures such as land trusts to reduce the impacts of these forces on Black communities.

Local and global economic initiatives hold promise for Black communities and interact with political mobilization and advocacy inside and outside of mainstream politics. While there has been sustained advocacy for the payment of reparations and debate over who should pay and receive it, Dr. Linwood F. Tauheed explains that for Black communities to achieve sustainable economic development, Black communities must also focus on strategic planning before receiving reparations payments. In an essay in this report, Dr. Tauheed describes a proposal for community-led community economic development that will allow Black communities to set a collective agenda to make the most of reparations.

Dr. Thomas Craemer critiques popular piecemeal approaches to reparations for people of African descent in the U.S. context. Because these approaches do not indeed constitute reparations, he proposes a plan that centers on federal-level reparations. Based on the model of reparations for the German Holocaust, he asserts that a state actor must take responsibility, apologize, and pay.

However, the meaning that African people assign to reparations must remain multidimensional enough to reflect the full humanity, needs, and concerns of African-descendant communities and not be reduced to political maneuvers alone. Dr. Nicola Frith, Dr. Joyce Hope Scott, and Esther Stanford-Xosei issue an important caveat to the Afrikan world: to be cautious of taking an approach that treats reparations as a question of money alone. Their essay in this report is a call for repair and restitution to redress the crimes of epistemic violence inflicted upon Afrikan people. This repair comes in the form of the cultural re-grounding of Afrikan-descended people's historical and spiritual restitution and the process of rematriation.

Dr. Justin Gammage situates economics as central to efforts at addressing historic and current systemic barriers to progress. Moreover, economics must be integrated into the development of future pathways to maximizing African people's human potential. He explains how a critical race analysis must be implemented because it transcends basic economic theory.

Clearly, the restitution the authors in this volume call for will require grassroots mobilization. To maintain the momentum of Black social movements, Black communities must appreciate their value beyond the ways that they are presented in mass media. Black Lives Matter (BLM), for example, in the words of Dr. Reiland Rabaka, is a movement that engages Black folk in the process of self-reclamation, decolonization, and re-Africanization. Dr. Rabaka situates BLM as a movement that is unprecedented in its inclusiveness and expansiveness, yet its core concerns remain firmly rooted in the traditions of previous Black protest movements. He calls for revolutionary Blackness and revolutionary humanism to characterize the consciousness of modern Black liberation movements.

Anti-Black Violence, Media, and Justice

African American deaths as a result of police use of force continue to occur, and increased awareness has resulted in not only more widespread political protests and larger social movements but also calls for policy reforms (Maguire & Giles, 2022). This wave is an ongoing public-policy and public-health issue and threat to people of African descent (Maguire & Giles, 2022). Excessive force and undue police violence have resulted in a great deal of physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional harm (Green & Evans, 2021).

Important calls have been made for police reform, yet there is also a need for specific reforms in the treatment of Black youth in the penal system. For example, in this volume, Crystal S. Russell, Tamara T. Venice, and Kiyomi Moore explore where race intersects with law and Black youth, particularly Black males who are overrepresented among adjudicated youth. These authors describe the importance of policy reform that would support service-learning programs to promote self-discovery, social responsibility, and confidence among adjudicated Black boys.

The year 2021 has reminded us that awareness of racist media framing is an important tool in preventing unhealthy anti-African thinking from infiltrating the consciousness of and damaging the relationships among people of African ancestry. Media stereotyping influences the criminalization of Jamaican and Surinamese people in the Netherlands, and some Canadian media outlets attempt to silence and downplay experiences of anti-Black racism (Hayes et al., 2018; Mattar, 2020). The year 2021 also involved the continuation of racist media framing of Black people, which fosters negative predispositions toward Black people and civil rights advocacy (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021).

This volume includes Dr. Charmane M. Perry's exploration of how the mainstream new media's negative discourse on Haitian people, history, and culture has influenced a range of outcomes from the treatment of Haitian migrants to foreign intervention in Haiti. Dr. Perry explains the effects that a more nuanced treatment might have.

Dr. Marquita Gammage describes how similar media racism is being used as an instrument to frame Black people as dangerous to the health, safety, and sovereignty of America. In particular, she explores how the media has continued to negatively frame the victims of police shootings, thereby shaping public perceptions of such victims and validating not only state failures to convict officers but also aggressive postures toward Black people.

Health

Even before the present moment, Black communities, professionals, and scholars have advocated for culturally aligned and relevant education as well as justice and equity in healthcare services provided to Black people. However, the combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social justice movements of the last couple of years have heightened African people's levels of exposure to and awareness of multidimensional and interrelated injustices as well as such people's desire to address the social determinants of health disparities (Simpson et al., 2022).

One of the dangers of this exposure is damage to the collective consciousness of victory among Black people. Dr. Anna Ortega-Williams urges Africana people to engage in a paradigm shift in how they appraise challenges and victories in this extraordinary time. Through the lens of the collective-self, she examines how we must take stock of pandemic-related mortality and institutionalized anti-Black racism. Yet she urges that we draw on the intergenerational wisdom and power of our ancestors to resist while maintaining joy and wellness without being too narrowly-focused on statistical disparities.

Because there must be instruments to resist and to maintain wellness, Dr. Daudi Azibo proposes the Azibo Nosologies as a tool in the hands of mental health workers so that they may engage in African-centered culturally aligned diagnoses of personality disorders among people of African descent. By using the Nosologies, Dr. Azibo proposes that mental health workers engage in diagnoses that could mitigate the guilt and sentencing upheld by current anti-Black jurisprudential psy-profession/psychiatric scrutiny.

Using a global perspective, Tarik A. Richardson discusses the importance of taking steps to decrease the African world's overreliance on Western organizations for medical support and intervention. He also espouses the significance of having more informed conversations about how to responsibly invest in and make use of traditional African healing technologies.

These authors advocate drawing upon our heritage of health-seeking wisdom, particularly in times of political turmoil.

Education

The current debates over CRT have influenced many people to question existing school structures, policies, and frameworks for teaching and learning the experiences and heritage of people of African ancestry (Appling & Robinson, 2021)—from confronting the residues of apartheid in the form of racial hierarchies in South African education (Roberts, 2021) to U.S. legal challenges to pedagogy and curriculum that oppose White privilege and racist ideologies. Under the banner of CRT, the struggle for empowerment of Black people in the arena of education is truly global.

The solution to many of the challenges related to White supremacy, as Dr. Sonya McCoy-Wilson explains, involve education and reeducation. Her essay in this volume presents the Truth, Reconciliation, and Education model as a pathway to a form of transformative justice that will change the way people think and act. On the pathway, McCoy-Wilson says, African people have found themselves confronted with deficit narratives of Black children.

According to Dr. Natalie D. Lewis, it is important that Black people avoid becoming too consumed with educational narratives of loss, lack, and despair. Instead, it is vital to counter negative narratives of Black youth in education with narratives of Black community love and support. These narratives, Dr. Lewis claims, are essential for ensuring that teachers enter classrooms with healthy perceptions of Black students; such perceptions allow teachers to identify and empathize with their Black students.

The educational challenges that African people face share commonalities and differences throughout the diaspora. To counter the ongoing underrepresentation of Black boys and girls in the Bahamas, the Caribbean, and Latin America, Dr. Patrice Juliet Pinder presents the *Solutions Approach Mechanism*. This African-centered intervention is designed to motivate, encourage, and increase Black student involvement in science, technology, reading/writing, engineering, arts, and math (STREAM) disciplines.

Naaja Rogers clarifies the legacy of Afrocentric schools and their critical roles in contributing to mental decolonization and liberation. However, given the rapid decline of Afrocentric schools, Rogers identifies several steps that local communities of people of African descent should take to promote Afrocentric education, cultural reclamation, and agency restoration in their absence.

Each of these authors presents educational actions that address but go above and beyond reacting to recent attacks on CRT and advancing Black communities.

The State of Black/Africana Studies

The issues that face the discipline of Africana studies are emerging and ongoing; addressing them appropriately will leave the discipline equipped to continue to advance Black communities into the distant future. It is important for Africana studies to have a space where there is an annual conversation about the key challenges confronting the discipline at present and in the future. An ongoing challenge is greater infusion of the African world into the discipline at all levels.

Dr. Maria Martin explores the means of building greater interest in modern and contemporary intra-Africa-focused research in Africana studies. Furthermore, she describes how creating greater space for the Black studies Africanist can expand the discipline and enhance approaches to studying Africa within it.

The responsibility to serve communities is a core principle of the discipline and its importance is an ongoing concern for scholars. Brandon Stokes explores Africana studies' waning links to the community. He describes 360 Nation, a community-based nonprofit agency that uses relationship building and social capital to promote self-determination for Black children and their families. For Stokes, 360 Nation is an agency grounded in Africana studies scholarship and aligned with its principles yet missing the broad support of Africana studies departments.

Building on the same idea, Dr. Miciah Z. Yehudah and Dr. Clyde Ledbetter Jr. carry out an assessment of Black studies' commitment to its community-centric mission. By examining departmental dissertation research, the authors make several practical recommendations for how departments can enhance their commitment to aligning scholarship with community advancement.

The growth of information technology and its integration into every aspect of human society have benefited the world tremendously; however, like other social phenomena or sectors of society, such growth and integration are subject to inequitable accessibility, availability, and quality in ways that vary by race and geography. Technology may also be used as a tool to advance the discipline. Using the University of Kansas Department of African and African-American Studies as an example, Dr. Peter Ukpokodu writes about how Black studies can take a major step in rejuvenating its epistemology by investing in African digital humanities. According to Ukpokodu, making this investment can help the discipline of Black studies prepare students to meet challenges of the 21st century and to bridge the digital divide throughout the African world.

Securing the future of this discipline will require Black studies scholars to resist the tide of Eurocentric and mainstream intellectual thought, continue to build new approaches to knowledge, and maintain fidelity to the original goal of Black liberation. In this report, Dr. Mark Christian brings light to the growing influence of Eurocentric mainstream bourgeoise epistemologies that seek to hold sway over Black studies scholarship. Yet in this time of heightened human insecurities across the African world, Dr. Christian warns that our mere possession of knowledge is not enough; if Black studies is to *sing its own song*, we must also be bold enough to critique evolving forms of Eurocentric and mainstream non-empowering scholarship and the new politics of divide and conquer.

Dr. Molefi Asante calls for the emergence of a cadre of individuals who are willing to take the methodological and conceptual lead and push the frontiers of Africological knowledge so that the discipline is not overtaken by the epistemologies of so-called "traditional" disciplines. Dr. Asante expresses concern that at present, the discipline has not quite lived up to its expectations of being distinct, assertive, and grounded in our own realities through our scholarship. He makes several practical administrative, curricular, and scholarly recommendations to enhance the discipline's alignment with its destiny.

Finally, using the principle of Sankofa, Dr. Abdul Alkalimat provides a lesson plan for the future of Black studies that is rooted in the wisdom of its past. Drawing on original dialectics, Dr. Alkalimat suggests that one of the root challenges of Black studies is that its adaptation to the norms of higher education has drawn it further and further away from its fundamental goal of Black liberation. He outlines the current challenges to the discipline and presents an action plan to generate a Black studies renaissance of relevance.

Voices from the Youth

This volume includes two messages on effective culturally aligned STEM programs, both written by Black youth. Dr. Dannielle Joy Davis, Deborah Bush-Munson, Bryce Davis Bohon, Trinity Munson, and Evelyn Washington describe culturally relevant STEM programs for underrepresented youth. The authors provide first-person testimonials of the programs' effectiveness in promoting science careers and social justice through science.

Bryce Davis Bohon and Jamarr Hoskins contribute an essay on their experiences with the Circle of Excellence program, which teaches about STEM careers and introduces mentors and teachers in the field. The writers provide first-person accounts of the successes of the program and the mentorship received through several science competitions and achievements. These programs demonstrate effective models for nurturing Black youth's passion and capacity in STEM, which are critical for ensuring that Black communities meet the demands of the future and take advantage of growing STEM opportunities.

Commentaries

The Commentaries section includes essays that add further discussion to the key issues of the report. The essays contain some original data collection and also highlight different and complementary ways of looking at the aforementioned issues. Instead of focusing on referencing other scholarship, the essays introduce emergent ideas that have implications on pertinent topics.

Within this report, there is a poignant commentary written by an anonymous Black police officer from a major U.S. city. The officer explains the unique experience of a racially conscious Black police officer who must negotiate perceptions of Black communities as well as racist cultures within police departments while simultaneously trying to protect Black communities. Although it is important to remain ever vigilant in the fight against extrajudicial killings of Black people, according to one of the foremost legal activists of this era, Black communities must use their vision and imagination to create a world beyond brutality. Attorney Benjamin Crump, who is of this tradition and has achieved many high-profile and high-impact victories, contributes a commentary that highlights the importance of Black communities' visions for a future beyond present realities.

Using an autoethnographic approach, Taylor D. Duckett, Samantha Horton, Andrew Stadeker II, Madison Clark, Corryn Anderson, and Nya Anthony describe how the COVID-19 pandemic and the secondary pandemic of a series of high-profile acts of anti-Black racism extraordinarily impacted BIPOC students. The essay explores how African American and African diaspora studies graduate students created innovative pedagogical and community-oriented practices to address some of the issues caused by the pandemic. The authors also describe practical steps for how students can be better served.

Demetrius W. Pearson highlights the U2 Rodeo Production Company, an agency that combines community engagement and family entertainment. Pearson brings attention to the cultural education U2 provides, the mentorship it affords aspiring rodeo cowboys and cowgirls, and its overall social-cultural contributions.

The articles in this report highlight the fact that people of African descent must maintain broad visions of themselves and their realities, which are informed by their own unique worldviews and do not simply respond to emergent crises. The aforementioned authors' articles can be found in the report's sections: Economics and Politics; Anti-Black Violence, Media, and Justice; Health; Education; the State of Black Studies; the Voices of Black Youth; and Commentaries.

References

Appling, B., & Robinson, S. (2021). K–12 school counselors utilizing critical race theory to support the racial identity development and academic achievement of African American males. *Professional School Counseling*, *25*(1).

Chronopoulos, T. (2020). “What’s happened to the people?” Gentrification and racial segregation in Brooklyn. *Journal of African American Studies*, *24*(4), 549–572.

Green, D. A., & Evans, A. M. (2021). Undue police violence toward African Americans: An analysis of professional counselors’ training and perceptions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *99*(4), 363–371. https://doi-org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1002/jcad.12389

Hassan, J. (2021). Jamaica set to seek compensation from Britain over slave trade. *The Washington Post*.

Hayes, R., Joosen, K. J., & Smiley, C. (2018). Black Petes & Black Crooks? Racial stereotyping and offending in the Netherlands. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *21*(1), 16–32. https://doi-org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1080/10282580.2018.1415049

Kilgo, D. K., & Mourão, R. R. (2021). Protest coverage matters: How media framing and visual communication affects support for Black civil rights protests. *Mass Communication & Society*, *24*(4), 576–596. https://doi.org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1080/15205436.2021.1884724

Larson, N., Slaughter-Acey, J., Alexander, T., Berge, J., Harnack, L., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2021). Emerging adults’ intersecting experiences of food insecurity, unsafe neighbourhoods and discrimination during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. *Public Health Nutrition*, *24*(3), 519–530. https://doi.org/10.1017/S136898002000422X

Maguire, E. R., & Giles, H. (2022). Public expressions of empathy and sympathy by U.S. criminal justice officials after controversial police killings of African-Americans. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, *41*(1), 49–75. https://doi.org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1177/0261927X211057238

Mattar, P. (2020). Canadian media’s racism problem. *Walrus*, *17*(8), 36–43.

NewsRX. (2020). Investigators from Georgia Southern University zero in on urban science (Gentrification in the U.S. new South: Evidence from two types of African American communities in Charlotte). (2020). In *Science Letter* (pp. 630–).

Roberts, J. S. (2021). Power in pedagogy: Legacies of apartheid in a South African school. *Whiteness & Education*, *6*(2), 130–146. https://doi.org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1080/23793406.2021.1917305

Simpson, T., Evans, J., Goepfert, A., & Elopre, L. (2022). Implementing a graduate medical education anti-racism workshop at an academic university in the Southern USA. *Medical*

Education Online, *27*(1), 1981803. https://doi.org.mimas.calstatela.edu/10.1080/10872981.2021.1981803

Thomas, T. (2021, April 11). Black youth unemployment rate of 40% similar to time of Brixton riots, data shows. *The Guardian*. http://mimas.calstatela.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/black-youth-unemployment-rate-40-similar-time/docview/2510769396/se-2?accountid=10352

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

The Current Economic State of African/Black Communities

by

Bessie House-Soremekun, Ph.D.
Full Professor, Political Science
Jackson State University
President, Founder, and CEO of
the International Black Business Museum

Over the past few decades, a number of academicians, political leaders, and public policy analysts have drawn increasing attention to the continuing plight and numerous challenges that have continued to plague the Black community in the U.S. and globally, both in the past and in contemporary times (House-Soremekun, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2022; Patterson, 2011; Agbor-Baiyee, 2011; Zeleza, 2008; Dorman, 2005; Walker, 2009, 1997; Marable, 2005, 2000). These challenges cover a plethora of areas such as increasing levels of poverty and despair, lack of access to adequate health care and increasing health care disparities, and unemployment and underemployment of Black workers, as well as the continuous challenges that Black entrepreneurs face in establishing and expanding their business enterprises to attain economic success and independence over the long-term. Because of the historical inequities associated with the processes of imperialism and colonialism in Africa and the subsequent institutionalization of slavery and its aftermath in the United States and other parts of the African Diaspora, which have led to the development of numerous societal barriers based on racial categorizations, Black people continue to lag behind other racial and ethnic communities in a number of important categories (House-Soremekun, 2022, 2009, 2003; Falola, 2010; Schraeder, 2004).

Data from the Pew Research Center and the Center for American Progress indicate that the median Black household income in 2016 was only $43,300 in comparison to the median white household income of $71,300. The median household wealth was only $17,600 for Black families, while the median wealth of white families was $171,000. Only 18% of Black men and 22% of Black women hold a bachelor's degree in the United States, placing them at a severe disadvantage in the job market, where high levels of education and skill sets are now at a premium. Almost 22% of all Black households currently survive either at or below the national poverty line, and a significant number of these households survive with various forms of federal assistance (Pew Research Center, 2021, 2016; Center for American Progress, 2021, 2018). Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019b) for the year 2018 indicated that the overall national unemployment rate had decreased to 3.9%. Nevertheless, Black workers made up about 13% of the national labor force at this time, their labor force participation rate was 62.3%, and the unemployment rate for Black workers was only 6.5%. It is likely that the unemployment rate for Black workers would be somewhat higher if it considered people who had ceased to look for jobs over time, in addition to the number of ex-offenders who were trying to become reintegrated into their local communities. Only 31% of Blacks held jobs in some of the higher-paying sectors of the economy, such as in the management and professional job categories, while only 31% of Blacks age 25 or older had obtained a bachelor's degree level of education or higher. The median weekly earnings of full-time Black workers in 2018 were only $694 in comparison to $680 for Hispanics, $916 for whites, and $1,095 for Asians. Home ownership rates for Blacks are also very low, as data from 2019 indicated that only 41.1% of Blacks owned their own homes in comparison to 73.3% of white, non-Hispanic Americans. Home ownership has traditionally been an important barometer of the extent to which people have been able to achieve their own version of the American Dream (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019a; Asante-Muhammad et al., 2021).

Historical inequities that are connected with low levels of economic power and wealth attainment have also had dire consequences for Blacks with regard to their access to quality health care and the distribution of the various types of diseases that they have acquired. For example, almost 15% of Blacks suffer from diabetes in comparison to only 8% of whites. Blacks also suffer from higher rates of heart disease, hypertension, and asthma than other racial and ethnic groups and experience higher levels of obesity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2021). Economics therefore also affects the life expectancy of African Americans and their ability to attain a high quality of life. Although the COVID-19 pandemic, which commenced in the first few months of 2020, did not create the complex web of multifaceted problems that have existed historically and have prevented the attainment of adequate wealth resources of the Black population in Africa and the African Diaspora, there is no doubt that it has greatly exacerbated many areas of life that deal with the economic health and wellbeing of the Black community. This fact has led to increasing levels of psychological stress and economic challenges. Although Blacks currently constitute only 14% of the American population, they have experienced the highest rates of morbidity due to COVID-19 on the national level (CDC, 2021). There are about 42 million Black Americans in the United States. As of April 2020, the national unemployment rate had risen to 14.7%, while the Black unemployment rate had increased to 16.7% (U.S. Census Data). Additionally, Hannah Knowles has pointed out that "the number of working African American business owners in the USA plummeted more than 40% as the coronavirus shut down much of the economy—a far steeper drop than other racial groups experience, according to an analysis confirming fears that the pandemic would deepen inequalities in the business world" (Knowles, 2020). Nevertheless, Michael Sasso has emphasized some good news that has been forthcoming from a recent study performed by Robert Fairlie (2020), which noted that Black businesses experienced a comeback as their numbers increased to about 1.5 million, which denotes an increase of 38% from February of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the United States (Sasso, 2021). Just as some businesses were trying to rebound economically from the impact of the virus, a surge in new variants of COVID-19 called delta and omicron occurred, which has had a deleterious effect on the economy as many retail businesses and restaurants have shortened their hours of operation while others have closed down permanently. Many hospitals again became filled to overflow capacity as people became infected with the virus, some of whom had refused to get the vaccinations made available by the American government and other countries of the world.

The path-breaking research published by Juliet E. K. Walker in her award-winning book, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*, has challenged many stereotypical images of the economic culture and business history of Black Americans in the United States and of Africans on the continent. This research has convincingly demonstrated that a strong and vibrant business history and tradition existed on the mother continent of Africa and that some aspects of this business culture have survived the trans-Atlantic slave trade and persisted in the United States, becoming stronger from the era of slavery through the contemporary time period (Walker, 1997, 2009). Compelling research over the past few decades has also confirmed that a vibrant history and culture of Black entrepreneurship exists in the United States and that these entrepreneurs have performed many important roles and functions over time (House-Soremekun, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2022). They have provided important products and services for consumers in the economic marketplace, served as important role models to their families and members of the broader community, and exhibited high levels of creativity in the design of inventions that have greatly enhanced the development of the United States. Thus, the number of Black-owned businesses has steadily grown over the past few decades. For example, in 1969, there were only 163,000 Black-owned businesses in the United States, while recent economic data confirm that in the time period immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 2.6 million Black business enterprises. Nevertheless, many still fail during their first few years in operation, and the failure rate for Black-owned businesses is still much higher than that of their white counterparts (House-Soremekun, 2003, 2009). As mentioned, many of these businesses have now closed down because of the economic stresses and loss of revenues attributable to the pandemic (Knowles, 2020).

Research performed on African entrepreneurs has indicated that they are similar in some regards to Black entrepreneurs in the United States (House-Soremekun, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2022). A large number of African entrepreneurs operate businesses in the informal economies of their respective countries, while others operate companies in the formal sector. Many of these entrepreneurs have fairly low levels of formal education, have difficulty in acquiring financial capital to start and expand their businesses, and do not have appropriate training in technology that would allow them to expand into the area of e-commercial enterprises, which are the wave of the present and future. African governments have also not been able to create enough jobs in the formal sector of their economies to accommodate the large number of young workers who are ready to enter the workforce. Consequently, the informal economy has grown enormously in many African countries, particularly in countries where involvement in entrepreneurial pursuits has been influenced by cultural value systems, historical factors, and the economic expediencies of sheer survival (Guven & Karlen, 2020; House-Soremekun, 2009, 2022). Although some large-scale and mega-businesses do exist, a large number of businesses in the informal economy are relatively small-scale enterprises, but some do have the capacity to grow and expand if given the appropriate business and technical training assistance. The micro-enterprise sector is growing, and many business owners have very few employees—in some cases, less than 5. Some entrepreneurs do not have the appropriate business training and tools for expanding their businesses to achieve economic success. They have often experienced difficulties in acquiring financial capital for their businesses, and some of them operate without the creation of formal business plans to guide the development of their business operations. Some do not have the necessary business infrastructures in place to grow and expand their levels of profitability across time and space. Some Black entrepreneurs in the United States did not receive assistance through the recent federal stimulus bill because they did not have a formal relationship with financial institutions through which some of the stimulus funds were provided, and some were not able to provide the necessary paperwork and records requested by the lenders who participated in the stimulus package disbursements (House-Soremekun, 2003, 2009, 2022).

Although numerous challenges continue to plague the Black community in the United States, in Africa, and in the broader African Diaspora, many new opportunities exist that can be harnessed for the future. We are in the midst of a changing global economy, which must readjust to many of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Now is a good time to reset our agenda to accommodate the growing economic needs for wealth creation and advancement for Black communities in the United States, Africa, and the African Diaspora. The first important step is to perform a needs assessment, identify our priorities, and determine how we can develop a national and international agenda that will be in alignment with one another. At the top of that list should be increasing the educational attainment of the Black community so that Black members of society can acquire more jobs and achieve upward mobility in both the formal and informal economies of the world. Toward that end, African governments must develop ways to better use their resources to provide for the creation of more jobs in the wage sector economies of their nation states to accommodate the larger percentage of their populations that is under the age of 30 and is looking for jobs in their local economies.

In the United States, opportunities will present for Black workers to reinvent themselves and move into a number of economic sectors that currently have vacancies because millions of workers have left their jobs during the pandemic in recent months. This is a good time for Black workers to retool their skills to take advantage of this reality.

New jobs will also be created under the umbrella of the historic $1 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act put forward by President Joe Biden and passed by Congress in 2021 (Cochrane, 2021). This bill is designed to focus attention on rebuilding the infrastructural capacity of the United States, placing emphasis on repairing the roads, bridges, and ports in cities across America while also enhancing airports, providing more high-speed internet access, improving Amtrak train and rail capacity, eradicating lead from water, dealing with issues surrounding climate change, and addressing other areas of critical need. Some parts of this bill also focus on creating avenues to help minorities acquire affordable housing and increase their home ownership rates in America (Cochrane, 2021; Lobosco & Luhby, 2021; Pramuk, 2021). According to Lobosco and Luhby (2021) of CNN, "It contains $1 billion to reconnect communities—mainly disproportionately Black neighborhoods that were divided by highways and other infrastructure, according to the White House." People of African ancestry should move forward immediately to access resources and opportunities that will be available in cities and towns across America as a result of this infrastructure bill. Some opportunities could involve creating businesses connected to the transportation sector and/or other areas of focus in the legislation or rejuvenating existing businesses that are tied to these sectors. Some cities and states have already begun to receive funds from this legislation. As technological advancements continue to occur, it will be vital for more Black citizens to acquire expertise in the STEM areas of science, technology, engineering, and math. They must also increase their college-level educational attainment and post-college training.

A second major priority of the national and global agenda involves setting goals and timetables for the creation of more Black businesses in the U.S. and globally, and to provide the appropriate business training assistance that they will need. I have worked to create several business training centers over the past several decades, which include the National Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc; the Center for the Study and Development of Minority Businesses at Kent State University; the Entrepreneurial Academy of the Cleveland Empowerment Zone; the Entrepreneurial Academy of Youngstown, Ohio, a spin-off center; and the Center for Global Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. Under the umbrella of some of these centers, business training classes have been provided to Black entrepreneurs within a strong business training curriculum. Several hundred entrepreneurs attended the training classes as numerous new businesses were created and/or expanded in Northeast Ohio. These business training curricula can be used to further expand the Black business sectors in the United States, Africa, and the African Diaspora. New partnerships can be created with African universities and governments to enhance economic development and increase entrepreneurial development and expansion. In this way, intellectual and social capital networks can thrive and expand to benefit Black people in the U.S., Africa, and globally. I have also recently created the National Center for Black Businesses (NCBB), which will provide business training classes to newly emerging and existing businesses owners using an updated business curriculum to help entrepreneurs navigate the 21st-century knowledge economy. The NCBB is a division of the International Black Business Museum, which was created in August of 2019 to celebrate the economic history and achievements of Black entrepreneurs and inventors in the United States and other countries of the world. Black entrepreneurs must create vibrant business plans that will serve as blueprints for the development of their businesses, and sources of capital must be made available to them at both the front end and back end of their business operations. Much can be done in the Diaspora to forge cooperative linkages and collaborations between people who reside in the African Diaspora and African countries. As I have previously written,

> Successful entrepreneurship never takes place in a vacuum. Numerous factors need to be in place which mutually reinforce each other. This includes the development of important business concepts or ideas and the fortitude to move forward and take risks in implementing them, even in the face of what appears to be almost insurmountable odds. Creativity and innovation are also important, as they greatly enhance the condition of the economic marketplace. Social capital networks are vital in that they help to create patterns of reciprocity and trust which enable entrepreneurs to build vibrant and expanding clienteles so that their levels of profit can be enhanced over time. Entrepreneurs must be able to acquire financial capital at both the front and the back end of their business operations in order to grow their business enterprises. Other necessities include the provision of physical infrastructures in the form of robust transportation networks, roads, and bridges to facilitate the movement of customers and products from one locale to the other and by connecting customers who want to buy products with entrepreneurs who want to sell their products. More business assistance programs can be created by state governmental agencies and members of the private and public sectors as well. Entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon, which is imbued with many layers of interaction. (2015, 2022)

A third major priority area should be the creation of a global economic development fund in which capital is raised to help Black communities in Africa and the Diaspora focus on a host of development needs. These funds could be created by citizens and philanthropists and used to provide grants and loans to individuals to buy homes and vehicles and to create sustainable communities around the world. Mechanisms would be created through which individual citizens as well as wealthy philanthropists would make contributions to the fund on an ongoing basis. Some of the funds could be allocated to providing grants to community groups and community development corporations to deal with a host of problems that continue to plague many inner-city and urban communities. Loans could also be provided at low rates of interest using flexible criteria to provide economic resources for home mortgages, the purchase of automobiles, business start-up funds, and expansion activities. In the African context, some of the funds could be used to provide clean drinking water for people who reside in rural communities, adequate housing facilities, better medical care, more health care clinics and hospitals, as well as better physical school structures and computer equipment. An international board of directors would be created to oversee this fund and to work out many of the details regarding its operation. Attached to this global economic development fund would be a think tank that would work internationally to interact with a host of leaders, citizens, scholars, and international organizations to promote the greater good of the Black community locally, nationally, and internationally. This is a good example of how Diasporians can use their knowledge and resources to reconceptualize the plight of Black populations in the world and to develop creative and realistic solutions to lead us into the future (House-Soremekun, 2015, 2022).

The idea of providing baby bonds to American families who meet specific criteria is an important idea that appears to be gaining traction in some American cities. According to Malcom Fox, the idea gained prominence during the presidential campaign mounted by Senator Cory Booker (Fox, 2021). The basic premise behind this idea, as put forward in the American Opportunity Accounts Act that was reintroduced in Congress by Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey and Representative Ayanna Pressley of Maryland in 2021, is to use the awarding of baby bonds as a viable strategy to bridge the historical wealth and inequality gap in America. This idea, which has some merit, has been the focus of debate by a number of individuals in the U.S. The Act, as reintroduced by Booker and Pressley, garnered the support of 15 senators and some members of the House of Representatives. Senator Chuck Schumer, who serves as the Senate Majority Leader, is one of the supporters of the Act. The main idea behind this potential legislation is that all families with newborn babies would be provided with a payment of $1,000 if they meet the income requirements to be considered eligible, and these families would continue to receive yearly payments of up to $2,000 per year based on their family incomes. This program would be designed to provide opportunities to deal with income inequality in America, while allowing families to receive support that could be used to give their children a better chance in life. Accounts for the babies created through this process via the eventual passing of the legislation would then be placed under the control and purview of the United States Treasury Department and would remain there until the children who had been given the funds reached the age of 18. Then, the recipients could claim their funds and use them to further their education, to purchase property, or for other purposes. The price tag of this bill would be enormous and is estimated to be in the range of around $60 billion per year. To pay for this legislation, Senator Booker proposes that the taxes paid by wealthy Americans should be increased (Kijakazi & Carther, 2020; Cory Booker, 2021). As Booker, Pressley, and other members of the Senate and the House of Representatives try to increase the level of support for these ideas, meanwhile, some areas of the country have already moved forward to implement baby bonds programs. For example, Connecticut became the first state in America to pass legislation creating baby bonds in 2021. The District of Columbia has also passed baby bond legislation as well in the latter part of 2021. The creation of the baby bonds will have a positive effect over time on the condition of poor families in America. According to a press release publicized in the media by the Office of the Treasurer of Connecticut:

> The program will create a savings account for children born into poverty, whose births are covered by HUSKY—the state's Medicaid program. The accounts will be managed by the Office of the Treasurer and upon each child's birth, funds will be set aside in a trust. When a beneficiary is between the ages of 18 and 30 and completes a financial education requirement, the funds can be used for targeted eligible purposes that are consistent with research to help close the wealth gap. . . . This program is funded through the State General Obligation Bonds, with $50 million per year authorized for the next 12 years, totaling $600 million. (State of Connecticut Treasurer, 2021)

References

Agbor-Aaiyee, B. M. (2011). Can Africa compete in a global economy? In B. House-Soremekun & T. Falola (Eds.), *Globalization and sustainable development in Africa* (pp. 43–68). University of Rochester Press.

Asante-Muhammad, D., Buell, J., & Devine, J. (2021, March 2). *60% Black home ownership: A radical goal for Black wealth development.* National Community Reinvestment Coalition. https://ncrc.org/60-black-homeownership-a-radical-goal-for-black-wealth-development/

Austermuhle, M. (2021, October 21). *Low-income D.C. kids will get up to $1000 a year under new "baby bonds" program.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/10/21/1047946734/low-income-d-c-kids-will-get-up-to-1-000-a-year-under-new-baby-bonds-program

Center for American Progress. (2018, February 21). *Systematic inequality: How American's structural racism helped create the Black-white wealth gap.* https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systematic-inequality/

Center for American Progress. (2021, July 18). *The Black-white wealth gap before and during the pandemic.* https://www.americanprogress.org/article/wealth-matters-black-white-wealth-gap-pandemic/

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. (2021, November 30). *Health equity considerations and racial and ethnic minority groups.* http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html

Cochrane, E. (2021, November 15). Senate passes 1 trillion infrastructure bill, handing Biden a bipartisan win. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/10/us/politics/infrastructure-bill-passes.html

Cory Booker. (2021, February 4). *Growing momentum for "baby bonds" as Booker, Pressley re-introduce landmark legislation to combat the growing racial wealth gap.* https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/growing-momentum-for-baby-bonds-as-booker-pressley-re-introduce-landmark-legislation-to-combat-the-growing-racial-wealth-gap

Council of the District of Columbia. (2021, October 20). *$1,000-a-year "baby bonds" created by the Council.* https://dccouncil.us/1000-a-year-baby-bonds-created-by-the-council/

Dorman, P. (2005). Globalization, the transformation of capital, and the erosion of Black and Latino living standards. In C. Conrad, J. Whitehead, P. Mason, & J. Stewart (Eds.), *African Americans in the U.S. economy* (pp. 185–192). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Fairlie, R. W. (2020). *The impact of COVID-19 on small business owners: Evidence of early-stage losses from the April 2020 current population survey* (Working Paper 27309). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Falola, T. *The African Diaspora: Slavery, modernization and globalization.* University of Rochester Press, 2010.

Fox, M. (2021, May 4). *Councilmember McDuffie unveils "baby bonds" legislation to eliminate DC's racial wealth gap* [Press release]. The DC Line. https://thedcline.org/2021/05/04/press-release-councilmember-mcduffie-unveils-baby-bonds-legislation-to-eliminate-dcs-racial-wealth-gap/

Fry, R., Bennett, J., & Barroso, A. (2021, January 12). *Racial and ethnic gaps in the U.S. persist on key demographic indicators.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/racial-and-ethnic-gaps-in-the-u-s-persist-on-key-demographic-indicators/

Guven, M., & Karlen, R. (2020, December 3). *Supporting Africa's urban informal sector: Coordinated policies with social protection at the core.* African Can End Poverty (World Bank Blogs). https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/supporting-africas-urban-informal-sector-coordinated-policies-social-protection-core

House-Soremekun, B., & Ekechi, F. K. (Eds.). (1995). *African market women and economic power: The role of women in African economic development.* Greenwood Press.

House-Soremekun, B. (2003). *Confronting the odds: African American entrepreneurship in Cleveland, Ohio* (1st ed.). Kent State University Press.

House-Soremekun, B. (2009a). *Confronting the odds: African American entrepreneurship in Cleveland, Ohio* (2nd ed.). Kent State University Press.

House-Soremekun, B. (2009b). Revisiting the micro and small enterprise sector in Kenya. *History Compass, 7*(6), 1444–1458. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00642.x

House-Soremekun, B., & Falola, T. (2011). *Globalization and sustainable development in Africa.* University of Rochester Press.

House-Soremekun, B. (2015). Rethinking the African Diaspora in the context of globalization: Building economic capacity for the 21st century and beyond. In G. Chuku (Ed.), *Ethnicities, nationalities, and cross-cultural representations in Africa and the Diaspora* (pp. 63–80). Carolina Academic Press.

House-Soremekun, B. (2022). *Yoruba creativity: Cultural practices of the modern world.* Carolina Academic Press.

Kijakazi, K., & Carther, A. (2020, January 23). *How baby bonds could help Americans start adulthood strong and narrow the wealth gap.* The Urban Wire: Wealth and Financial Well-Being (The Blog of the Urban Institute). https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-baby-bonds-could-help-americans-start-adulthood-strong-and-narrow-racial-wealth-gap

Knowles, H. (2020, March 25). Number of working Black business owners falls 40 percent, far more than other groups amid coronavirus. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/25/black-minority-business-owners-coronavirus/

Lobosco, K., & Luhby, T. (2021, November 15). *Here's what's in the bi-partisan infrastructure package.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/28/politics/infrastructure-bill-explained/index.html

Marable, M. (2000). *How capitalism underdeveloped Black America* (Updated edition). South End Press.

Marable, M. (2005). History of Black capitalism. In C. A. Conrad, J. Whitehead, P. Mason, & J. Stewart (Eds.), *African Americans in the U.S. economy.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Patterson, R. (2011). Renewable energy, migration development model and sustainability entrepreneurship. In B. House-Soremekun & T. Falola (Eds.), *Globalization and sustainable development in Africa.* University of Rochester Press.

Pew Research Center. (2016, June 27). *Demographic trends and economic well-being.* https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/

Pramuk, J. (2021, November 15). *House passes $1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill into law, unlocking funds for transportation, broadband, utilities.* CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/15/biden-signing-1-trillion-bipartisan-infrastructure-bill-into-law.html

Sasso, M. (2021, September 15). *Black business owners are up 38% in U.S. from pre-Covid levels.* Bloomberg News. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-15/black-business-owners-are-up-38-in-u-s-from-pre-covid-levels

Schraeder, P. (2004). *African politics and society: A mosaic in transformation* (2nd ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

State of Connecticut Treasurer's Office. (2021, June 30). CT makes history! Today, CT baby bonds became available for all CT children born into poverty; first state in the nation to pass baby bonds program [Press release]. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OTT/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2021/0702021CTMakesHistoryToday-Ct-Baby-Bonds-Became-Available-for-All-Ct-Children-Born-into-Poverty.pdf

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019a). *Employment growth accelerates in 2018, extending a lengthy expansion.* https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2019/article/employment-growth-accelerates-in-2018.htm

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019b). *Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2018.* https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2018/home.htm

Walker, J. E. K. (1997). Trade and markets in pre-colonial West and West Central Africa: The cultural foundations of the African American business tradition. In T. D. Boston (Ed.), *A different vision: Race and public policy* (pp. 206–252). Routledge.

Walker, J. E. K. (2009). *The history of Black business in America: Capitalism, race, entrepreneurship* (Vol. 1, to 1865; 2nd ed.). University of North Carolina Press.

Werschkul, B. (2022, February 4). *Baby bonds: States plan their own "trampoline into the middle class.* Yahoo News. https://news.yahoo.com/baby-bonds-states-enact-their-own -trampoline-into-the-middle-class-153138941.html

Zeleza, P. T. (2008). The challenges of studying the African Diaspora. *African Sociological Review, 12*(2): 4–21. https://doi.org/10.4314/asr.v12i2.49831

Zero to Three. (2021, November 18). *D. C. Council passes the Child Wealth Building Act and more.* https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/4245-dc-council-passes-the-child-wealth-building-act-and-more

The Promise of African American Worker Cooperatives

by

Stacey Sutton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Urban Planning and Policy
University of Illinois Chicago

Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Ph.D.
Political Economist and Professor of Community Justice and Social Economic Development
Department of Africana Studies, John Jay College, City University of New York

The African American cooperative movement is ascendent, although most people may be unaware of it. The 2008 financial crisis unmasked the chimera of economic security and upward mobility for the average worker in the United States. Consequently, it also fomented a swell of popular resistance to extreme inequality, capitalist exploitation, and the insidious conviction that "there is no alternative" to capitalism. The post-Great Recession economy and decade-long growth between 2009 and 2019—marked by record-low rates of unemployment, a soaring stock market, and inflated property values—catapulted some middle-class, mostly white families into economic security as they recouped wealth eroded by the financial and mortgage crisis. But the economic benefits of growth, much like the burdens of decline, were not equitably distributed. For the average Black and low-wage "essential" worker, the last decade amplified a conjuncture of crises long in the making. The incessant erosion of labor power, wage stagnation, insurmountable debt, and prolonged if not permanent detachment from the formal labor market were particularly deleterious for Black communities destabilized by "predatory inclusion" (Taylor, 2020), housing foreclosure, eviction, gentrification, and displacement. In some African American communities, even those hit hardest by the perniciousness of capitalism, heterodox models of cooperative economics, democratic governance, community control, and mutualism, such as worker-owned cooperatives, are emerging and flourishing (Bledsoe, McCreary, & Wright, 2019; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; Hudson, 2019; Sutton, 2015). In this paper, we will explain the critically important longevity of cooperative enterprises, particularly worker-owned cooperatives, for the African American community and describe contemporary examples that illustrate resurgence in cooperative economic ethos and the promise of worker cooperatives for a more equitable and sustainable future.

The Purpose of Cooperatives

Cooperative businesses[1] are value-driven, collectively owned, and democratically managed by the member-owners (who are workers or producers in worker cooperatives or consumers in consumer cooperatives). Cooperative businesses are organized based on collective values, including self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, and profit-sharing, in contrast to profit maximization, competition, and private property, pillars of capitalist business. Co-ops in the United States and internationally adopt seven principles that inform how they operate: open membership, democratic governance, members' economic participation, autonomy of the organization, continuous education, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community.[2] Cooperatives can be large and small, for-profit, or not-for-profit enterprises that are owned by consumers, workers, and/or producers. They hire people, create good jobs, and pay taxes, as well as help to provide affordable, accessible high-quality goods and services to communities. Co-ops are a strategy to organize local equity and recycle resources within communities. They help to stabilize their communities by increasing local economic activity, productivity, and skills; by instilling democratic governance within and outside of the enterprise; and by, on average, maintaining greater longevity and resilience, in good and bad times, than traditional small businesses (Borzaga & Calera, 2012; Gordon-Nembhard, 2015; Logue & Yates, 2005; Prushinskaya et al., 2021). According to a recent study, during the COVID pandemic, conventional Black-owned businesses were some of the hardest hit, but majority-Black worker cooperatives proved more resilient. In other words, worker cooperatives may have had a *mitigating protective effect* compared to comparable non-co-op Black businesses (Prushinskaya et al., 2021).

Worker co-ops develop social and human capital, encourage civic participation, and often create good jobs that reflect higher industry standards in regard to wages and benefits; provide job ladder opportunities, skill development and capacity building, job security, and general control over income and work rules; and exhibit higher productivity than traditional businesses (Artz & Younjun, 2011; Franklin, 2014; Gordon-Nembhard, 2015; Logue & Yates, 2005; Sutton, 2019).

The legal structure for incorporating cooperative businesses was established in the United States during the mid-19th century, and groups continue to use the co-op model as a bulwark against labor exploitation, worker alienation, and economic instability of industrial capitalism (Curl, 2012; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; Jones, 1984; Wright, 2014), similarly to how co-ops are used in other countries. Since the formalization of co-ops in the U.S., their peaks and troughs have been countercyclical. They have grown in number and effect, especially during periods of economic decline and/or social resistance—for example, the 1880s–90s, 1930s–40s, and 1960s–70s. They were often thwarted by corporate capitalism and its enabling institutions—legal frameworks, tax codes, regulatory environment, banking protocols, educational system, and media—that tacitly and explicitly promulgate capitalism as the only viable political economic system (Gordon-Nembhard, 2018; Sutton, 2019). “Obstructing” institutions coupled with white supremacist terrorism shuttered numerous Black cooperatives, which also arguably spurred Black resilience and self-determination (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, 2018). Black co-ops have operated throughout U.S. history, albeit sometimes inconspicuously.

---

[1] The terms "cooperative businesses," "co-ops," and "cooperatives" are used synonymously, as are worker-owned cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and worker co-ops.

[2] See the International Cooperative Alliance for a description of cooperative identity, principles, and values. https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity

The African American Cooperative Movement

During the long Black freedom struggle—from Reconstruction to Civil Rights and Black Power to the Movement for Black Lives—cooperatives and collectivism have been ubiquitous values and ownership models. In fact, many major Black organizations grew out of mutual aid societies and/or supported co-op development. Examples include Colored Farmers’ National Alliance and Cooperative Union, Ex-Slave Pension Society, United Negro Improvement Association, National Association of Colored Farmers, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Black Panther Party, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Congress of African Peoples, and Movement for Black Lives, among others. The ubiquity of cooperative economics may have diminished during 20th-century advances of neoliberal racial capitalism, but it has undergone a resurgence. It is evident in the Movement for Black Lives’ Vision for Black Lives policy platform and the work of innumerable local organizations.

The legacy of African American worker co-ops has been and remains rooted in self-determination. First and foremost, worker co-ops were established to address community needs that have remained unmet largely because of structural racism, exclusion, and exploitation. Worker cooperatives generate collective benefits—namely, joint ownership, democratic participation, community institution-building, recirculation of resources, and sustainable development. In turn, worker-owners are enriched through ongoing education and training, leadership development, meaningful work, alternative wealth creation, economic and environmental sustainability, and civic participation (Gordon-Nembhard, 2004, 2014, 2015; Novkovic & Gordon-Nembhard, 2017). In addition, cooperators develop a sense and practice of collective agency and action that proves essential for combatting structural racism and discrimination (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014).

During the late 19th and early 20th century, many Black civic leaders and scholars promoted cooperative economics as an essential means of meeting the community’s material needs and collectively uplifting the Black community. From the 1880s through the 1890s, groups like the Knights of Labor, the Cooperative Workers of America, and the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance and Cooperative Union fought for workers’ rights, women’s rights, and integrated workforces, and they organized worker cooperative mines, foundries, and mills; clothing, shoe, and soap factories; and printing and furniture production facilities, as well as credit exchanges. African American Knights of Labor members, for example, owned a cooperative cotton gin in Stewart’s Station, Alabama in the late 1880s (Curl, 2012). Coleman Manufacturing Company of Concord, North Carolina, was a Black-owned cooperative cotton mill established in 1897 (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014).

African American cooperative economics was regularly espoused in political discourses, religious services, and association meetings. The brief examples below, organized chronologically, are intended to exemplify the values and interlocking benefits of cooperatives, unrivaled by private enterprises of the same era.

“Economic Co-Operation among Negro Americans” was the theme of the 12th Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems held at Atlanta University on May 28, 1907.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1907) cautioned that the Black community stood at a crossroads, with one way leading to:

> fierce individualistic competition, where the shrewd, cunning, skilled and rich among them will prey upon the ignorance and simplicity of the mass of the race and get wealth at the expense of the general wellbeing; the other way leading to co-operation in capital and labor, the massing of small savings, the wide distribution of capital and a more general equality of wealth and comfort. (p. 4)

Du Bois documented the cooperative path that had already been adopted by many in the African American community. More importantly, the community had not yet experienced the stark wealth inequality that marked modern life. However, the imminent danger and crisis for the African American community was lurking in mainstream economic development ideology that taught “any method which leads to individual riches is the way of salvation” (Du Bois, 1907, p. 4).

In the 1930s, Cooperative Industries of DC in Washington, DC, started out as a worker co-op to provide employment to unemployed women. The worker-owners sewed, canned, and produced chairs and brooms, providing work that paid more than domestic service (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014). This cooperative earned a substantial government grant, and it grew and changed over the years of the Great Depression, consistently providing good jobs, especially for women, as well as healthy food.

The Workers’ Owned Sewing Company (WOSCO) was founded after Bertie Industries, a Black-owned sewing factory, declared bankruptcy in August 1979 in Windsor, North Carolina. Bertie Industries was part of President Nixon’s “Black Capitalism” program earlier in the 1970s. Some of the Bertie workers, Black women sewing machine operators, wanted to keep the business going and provide industrial seamstresses with steady jobs. A local farmer joined them in founding WOSCO “to prove that poor Americans, especially African-Americans, could run a profitable business” (Adams & Shirey, 1993, p. 2). The founders used Black churches and civic organizations to develop an informal recruiting network because many people did not understand the co-op structure. The U.S. Employment Security Administration red-listed WOSCO as a “communist business” (Adams & Shirey, 1993, p. 5), relegating WOSCO to a covert role as a subcontractor. By August 1983, WOSCO worker-owners started to contract for themselves and their sales almost doubled. In 1986, WOSCO joined the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and especially benefitted from the union’s health insurance. On average, WOSCO employed 43 women, 40 of whom were worker-owners (Adams & Shirey, 1993). As a co-op, WOSCO provided women full-time jobs with benefits, job security, a safe work environment, and job ladder opportunities, in addition to workplace democracy and business ownership by women—all in an industry known for low wages, high turnover, and rigid paternalistic and hierarchical management.

Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), in the South Bronx area of New York City, is the largest worker cooperative in the U.S. Founded in 1985 to deliver quality home care to clients by providing quality jobs for direct-care workers, CHCA employs about 2,000 mostly Latina and African American women as home care paraprofessionals (in three affiliated worker-owned companies).[3] As an enterprise with a social mission, in 2012, CHCA became the first home care company to earn B Corp certification. Similar to WOSCO, the CHCA worker co-op provides benefits such as full-time consistent work, paid vacations, health insurance, training, job ladder mobility, retirement plans, and union membership, which are unprecedented for the traditionally low-wage and unstable home care industry. Since 1987, CHCA's worker-owners have earned annual dividends of about 25% on their initial investment. Early on, CHCA established a not-for-profit training and development institute, Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, to control and provide the quality industry and ethical training needed by home care providers that the co-op requires all its employees to obtain. Those accepted into the training program received free tuition, and employment was guaranteed for all who passed. CHCA's job ladder opportunities allow home aides to become licensed practical nurses, assistant instructors, or job counselors; and worker owners are also encouraged to obtain middle-management positions in the co-op. In 2000, the cooperative established specialized services for the disabled. Cooperative Home Care Associates serves as an example of a company that achieves economic empowerment of low-income women of color while setting standards for wages, benefits, training, and workplace democracy in its industry. It creates a significant number of meaningful jobs in the community and generates income and wealth for its members.

Food from the 'Hood was a high school student-run cooperative in South Central Los Angeles. In the fall of 1992, students from Crenshaw High School started a school garden project and first donated fresh produce to the homeless, then started selling some of it at a farmer's market. From that success, they decided to develop a business plan to produce salad dressing made from the produce they grew in the school garden. Running it similarly to a cooperative business, they named their company, which remained managed by the students, "Food from the 'Hood." They voted to save at least 50% of the profits for scholarships to college. Over a 10-year period, they awarded over $180,000 in college scholarships to 77 graduating student managers (Dorson, 2003; Food from the 'Hood, 2005). The high school then started a college preparation program since it had students with the opportunity to afford college. This serves as an example of a youth-run cooperative that started out to address a community problem, as well as to provide experience and collective action—and an income—to a group of young Black people. Youth-owned co-ops have many benefits, including their ability to engage youth in social entrepreneurship and positive relationships with adults (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014). Through such co-ops, youth can learn to run their own company democratically, reinforcing math and communication skills and developing leadership skills and social capital. They learn a trade, along with business finance, and amass some wealth.

New Era Windows Cooperative emerged out of a crisis. In December 2008, the subprime mortgage cataclysm was wreaking havoc. Housing foreclosures and "underwater" homes upended Black families and communities, worsened by deep job loss and rising unemployment. In this tumultuous environment, the owners of Republic Windows and Doors announced that they were permanently closing their Chicago factory, with just three days' notice and no intention of paying workers severance or backpay. But the 300 workers, members of the United Electrical Workers Union (UE), were not having it. They staged a sit-in strike, occupying the factory. For six days, a quarter of the workers barricaded themselves inside the factory, intensifying coworkers' protests occurring outside. Factory occupations have been illegal in the

---

[3] Information in this section is mainly drawn from CHCA's website at https://www.chcany.org/about, as well as from Shipp (2000), Glasser and Brecher (2002), and Snyder (2009). See https://www.chcany.org/about for more information about Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA).

U.S. for decades, making the workers' decision both risky and well-calculated. Their occupation of the factory attracted the media and boosted public support; the owners capitulated. The workers won, sort of. They received a meager severance, and some were able to keep their jobs when the downsized factory was sold to another capitalist manufacturer, Serious Materials.[4]

The new owners could not make the business profitable. They announced their intention to close the factory after merely two years. This time, the workers convinced the owner to pause closure for 90 days to attract another buyer (Lavender, 2012; Mulder, 2015). Fed up with the capriciousness of capitalism and its blatant disregard for jobs and communities, the workers made a transformative decision. They agreed to purchase the business and convert it into a democratic, self-managed worker cooperative, making themselves both producers and owners.

With the help of a non-extractive financial organization, the Working World, the workers owned the means of production. In 2013, with just 17 Black and Latino worker-owners, they began manufacturing windows in their old factory as New Era Windows Cooperative. When asked how the group of worker-owners was selected, one of the original factory workers responded, "We chose people who would cooperate with each other" (Mulder, 2015, p. 72). Cooperation, even more than window-making expertise, was the essential criteria—the rationale being that it is easier to teach technical skills than social skills.

Factors That Contribute to Success

Both the internal dynamics of the worker cooperative and its enabling environment play an integral role in shaping its ability to succeed, as discussed in the following sections.

Internal Dynamics

Successful worker cooperatives invest the time necessary to establish trust among worker-owners. For co-op conversions, such as New Era Windows and WOSCO, trust and solidarity are cultivated through collective work before and during the conversion process. Throughout U.S. history, experiences with co-op business development have taught Blacks the importance of building trust and a sense of community, as well as finding alternative financing and support from existing stable institutions such as religious, fraternal, and civic organizations where people had already developed solidarity (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014). One way in which they developed trust, solidarity, and a sense of community was the formation of study groups as well as education and training programs. Many of the co-ops did not launch until the group had studied together about not only their current conditions and needs but also their joint assets and how to start cooperatives. The strongest co-ops offered or required trainings and courses in cooperative economics and management.

African Americans also learned the importance of working with and through existing organizations. The capitalist system as well as capitalist and white supremacist competitors often attacked Black co-ops with financial sabotage or terrorist violence (Gordon-Nembhard, 2018). But Blacks found that working with their communities and garnering support from existing organizations, especially regional and national organizations, kept them in business. Developing ecosystems of support and interaction with co-op supply chains, and long-term plans for interlocking co-op associations and federations connecting worker co-ops, consumer co-ops, and credit unions, also helped the co-ops to survive and thrive.

Enabling Environment

---

[4] For more detailed case studies of New Era Windows, see Lavender (2012) and Mulder (2015).

Black worker co-ops can be developed in most environments, but places where they are strongest typically have elements of a cooperative ecosystem or “enabling structures and supportive organizations” (Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017, p. 55). Though ecosystem elements vary from place to place, co-op developers; technical assistance providers; advocacy organizations; non-extractive finance, education, and training programs; public awareness; other co-ops; and measurable municipal support are common elements (Sutton, 2019). Enabling environments offer co-ops direct assistance and support—and equally important, they provide reassurance and solidarity when operating outside of the conventional logic of racial capitalism seems daunting.

The contributions and essential energy of Black women in the co-op movement, as well as the importance of incorporating youth into co-ops, cannot be overstated. Their leadership and participation has resulted in stronger and longer-lasting cooperatives. According to the 2019 Economic Census of Worker Cooperatives, nearly 60% of new worker-owners in the United States are people of color and 66% are women. Additionally, cooperative enterprises are increasingly emerging in marginalized Black and brown communities (Palmer, 2019). It is worth noting that Democracy at Work Institute’s (DAWI) 2019 Census of Individual Workers in Worker Cooperatives shows a significant disparity in the number of worker owners identified as Black or Latinx: 13% and 38%, respectively. We suspect that the number of Black worker-owners may be notably higher, but Black cooperatives, formal and informal, may not have met the criteria for inclusion in the DAWI census. DAWI surveyed more Black worker co-ops in its 2021 study of worker cooperatives and workers during COVID-19, and they have proven to be more resilient amid crisis relative to conventional Black-owned small businesses (Prushinskaya et al., 2021).

Current Trends and Future Prospects

Cooperatives have grown substantially across industry sectors. The recent rise of Black cooperatives is unprecedented but not unexpected. Between 2013 and 2018, there was a 36% net increase in the number of worker-owned enterprises (Schlachter & Prushinskaya, 2021), and they have been found to be more resilient than traditional businesses (Birchall & Hammond Ketilson, 2009; Borzaga & Calera, 2012; Logue & Yates, 2005; Slyke, 2020).

Cooperation Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi is a 21st-century example of a Black solidarity economic ecosystem. It is not a single cooperative, but rather, four interdependent institutions anchored by a network of worker-owned cooperatives and democratically self-managed enterprises, a cooperative incubator, a cooperative education and training center, and a cooperative bank or financial institution. Cooperation Jackson is not trying to build cooperatives for cooperatives’ sake, but to build foundations of anti-capitalist society (Dubb, 2021). For Cooperation Jackson, the purpose of organizing cooperatives is to inculcate ideas of Black liberation, just transition, and eco-socialism into everyday activity (Akuno & Hall, 2020).

In addition, the use of worker cooperatives as a city-wide strategy to address unemployment and low-wage work is growing in cities such as Cleveland, New York City, Buffalo, Chicago, Richmond (California), and Boston (Sutton, 2019). Organizations such as Green Worker Cooperatives help to train and incubate worker cooperatives in green industries among people of color in the South Bronx. Also, there is growing use of worker cooperatives to support previously incarcerated people as they transition back into society, as well as international efforts to develop worker co-ops in prisons (Moriarity, 2016; Gordon-Nembhard, 2020). These initiatives help to address extreme marginality and the dehumanization experienced by incarcerated and previously incarcerated people. Similar to how cooperative ownership has addressed other socioeconomic issues for people of color, women, and youth, cooperative ownership for incarcerated and/or previously incarcerated people helps address myriad challenges including unemployment and underemployment, slave labor and poverty wages, limited skill development, lack of job ladder mobility, asset stripping, and super-exploitation of labor.

ChiFresh Kitchen, a Chicago-based commercial food service contractor and worker co-op founded by formerly incarcerated Black women and a co-op developer, launched during the pandemic. After strategizing and planning for more than a year, they were catapulted into action by the pandemic in May 2020, a few months earlier than intended. ChiFresh acted quickly to address urgent issues of food insecurity on Chicago's South and West sides by preparing more than 50,000 nutrient-rich, hot, and healthy meals during the pandemic. ChiFresh demonstrates a business development model centered on food justice and sovereignty, wherein marginalized Black workers are the producers, decision-makers, and owners. In January 2021, ChiFresh worker-owners purchased a 6,000-square-foot building on the south side of Chicago that can accommodate production of 5,000 meals a day. The building is being renovated by local Black contractors with expected occupancy in June 2022. Until then, they continue to operate out of the Hatchery, a commercial kitchen and food incubator on the west side of Chicago. The worker-owners look forward to creating ownership opportunities for other formerly incarcerated Black women, 44% of whom are unemployed, compared with just 18% of formerly incarcerated white men (Abello, 2020; Kahn, 2020).

The resurgence in the cooperative movement from the Great Recession through the global pandemic is a bottom-up, grassroots, community-driven response to the perversity of racial capitalism and its enabling institutions that disregard ecological boundaries, ignore the needs of workers, families, and communities, and enable the elite to incessantly accumulate and concentrate resources and exacerbate inequalities under the guise of meritocracy, social mobility, and liberty. Cooperatives are an alternative means of provisioning and addressing their community's unmet needs that would not be addressed by the system of corporate capitalism that created the problem. Cooperatives are more equitable, sustainable, and resilient than traditional businesses—especially amid crises and economic shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, all else being equal. Based on this history and these accomplishments, we see that cooperative ownership, especially worker co-ops, is an important and necessary current and future strategy for furthering the prospects of all people and humanizing our society.

References

Abello, O. P. (2020, May 14). *Formerly incarcerated women launch worker-owned food business during COVID-19.* Next City. https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/formerly-incarcerated-women-launch-worker-owned-food-business-covid-19

Adams, F., & Shirey, R. (1993). *The Workers' Owned Sewing Company: Making the eagle fly Friday: An ICA group case study.* The ICA Group.

Akuno, K., & Hall, S. (2020). Building economic democracy to construct eco-socialism from below. In J. G. Speth & K. Courrier (Eds.), *The new systems reader: Alternatives to a failed economy* (pp. 443–440). Routledge.

Artz, G., & Younjun, K. (2011). *Business ownership by workers: Are worker cooperatives a viable option?* (Working Paper No. 11020). Iowa State University, Department of Economics. https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/handle/20.500.12876/22570

Birchall, J., & Hammond Ketilson, L. (2009). *Resilience of the co-operative business model in times of crisis.* International Labour Organization, Sustainable Enterprise Program. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/--emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_108416.pdf

Bledsoe, A., McCreary, T., & Wright, W. (2019). Theorizing diverse economies in the context of racial capitalism. *Geoforum*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.07.004

Borzaga, C., & Galera, G. (2012). *Promoting the understanding of cooperatives for a better world*. Euricse and International Cooperative Alliance. https://www.euricse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/promoting-the-understanting-of-cooperatives-for-a-better-world-full.pdf

Cooperative Home Care Associates. (2008). *Helping low-income New York City residents develop assets* [Paper presentation and mimeo]. The Annie E. Casey Foundation conference, "Expanding Asset Building Opportunities through Shared Ownership," Baltimore, MD, United States.

Corson, C. (2003). *Grounds for learning: Hope for America's derelict schoolyards.* https://www.cherylcorson.com/pdfs/groundsforlearning.pdf

Curl, J. (2012). *For all the people: Uncovering the hidden history of cooperation, cooperative movements, and communalism in America*. PM Press.

Dubb, S. (2021, October 27). Co-op leaders seek to reconnect with movement's social justice roots. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. https://nonprofitquarterly.org/co-op-leaders-seek-to-reconnect-with-movements-social-justice-roots/

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1907). *Economic co-operation among Negro Americans*. Atlanta University Press.

Food from the Hood. (2005). *About us 2004–2005.* Retrieved from http://www.foodfromthehood.com

Franklin, N. (2014). *Worker cooperatives for New York City: A vision for addressing income inequality*. Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

Glasser, R., & Brecher, J. (2002). *We are the roots: The organizational culture of a home care cooperative*. Center for Cooperatives, University of California.

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2004). Non-traditional analyses of cooperative economic impacts: Preliminary indicators and a case study. *Review of International Co-operation, 97*(1), 6–21.

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2014). *Collective courage: A history of African American thought and practice.* Pennsylvania State University Press.

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2015). Understanding and measuring the benefits and impacts of co-operatives. In L. Brown et al. (Eds). *Co-operatives for sustainable communities: Tools to measure co-operative impact and performance* (pp. 152–179). Co-operatives & Mutuals Canada and Centre for the Study of Co-operatives; Friesens.

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2018). African American cooperatives and sabotage: The case for reparations. *The Journal of African American History, 103*(1–2), 65–90. https://doi.org/10.1086/696361

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2020, May 19). How prisoner co-ops reduce recidivism: Lessons from Puerto Rico and beyond. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-“prisoner-co-ops-reduce-recidivism-lessons-from-puerto-rico-and-beyond/

Hudson, L. T. (2020). Building where we are: The solidarity-economy response to crisis. *Rethinking Marxism* (Summer).

Inserra, A, Conway, M., & Rodat, J. (2002). *Cooperative Home Care Associates: A case study of a sectoral employment development approach*. Economic Opportunities Program, the Aspen Institute. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/cooperative-home-care-associates-case-study-sectoral-employment-development-approach/

Jones, D. C. (1984). American producer cooperatives and employee-owned firms: A historical perspective. In R. Jackall & H. M. Levin (Eds.), *Worker cooperatives in America* (pp. 37–56). University of California Press.

Kahn, K. (2020, July 6). *Formerly incarcerated women launch Chicago Worker Cooperative.* Fifty by Fifty. https://www.fiftybyfifty.org/2020/07/formerly-incarcerated-women-launch-chicago-worker-cooperative/

Lavender, G. (2012). Republic Windows opens new era for coops in Chicago. *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, *19*(2), 49–50.

Logue, J., & Yates, J. (2005). *Productivity in cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises: Ownership and participation make a difference!* International Labour Office.

Moriarity, M. (2016). From bars to freedom: Prisoner co-ops boost employment, self-esteem, and support reentry into society. *Rural Cooperatives, 83*(1), 14–18, 37.

Mulder, C. P. (2015). *Transcending capitalism through cooperative practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Novkovic, S., & Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2017). Beyond the economy: The social impact of cooperatives. *The Cooperative Business Journal* (Fall), 12–22.

Palmer, T. C. (2019). *2019 worker cooperative state of the sector report.* Democracy at Work Institute.

Prushinskaya, O., Pockrandt, J., McKinley, J., & Hoover, M. (2021). When workers matter most: A study of worker cooperatives and the prioritization of workers through COVID-19. *Journal of Participation and Employee Ownership, 4*(2), 106–115. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPEO-08-2021-0009

Shipp, S. C. (2000). Worker-owned firms in inner-city neighborhoods: An empirical study. *Review of International Co-operation, 92–93* (March), 42–46.

Snyder, S. (2009, December). *Cooperative Home Care Associates* [Paper presentation following site visit presentation in October 2009]. Fair Work Conference, New York, NY, United States.

Sutton, S. (2015). The spatial politics of Black business closure in Central Brooklyn. In M. Bay & A. Fabian (Eds.), *Race and retail: Consumer culture, economic citizenship, and power*. Rutgers University Press.

Sutton, S. (2019). Cooperative cities: Municipal support for worker cooperatives in the United States. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 14*(8), 1081–1102.

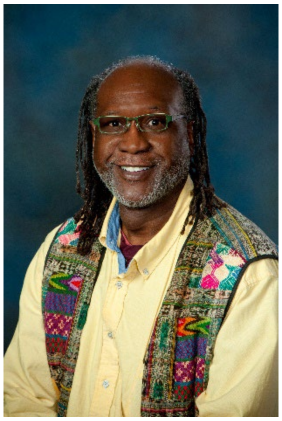
Taylor, K. Y. (2019). *Race for profit: How banks and the real estate industry undermined Black homeownership*. UNC Press Books.

Wright, C. (2014). *Worker cooperatives and revolution: History and possibilities in the United States*. BookLocker.

Gentrification and Involuntary Displacement in Denver, Colorado: Understanding Why Historic Five Points Is Changing and the Need for African American Reparations

by

Theodoric Manley Jr., Ph.D.
Department of Sociology
California State University



In the City of Denver, Colorado, the concept of gentrification currently surrounds public and private discussions on urban change, development, and growth. A report by the City of Denver's Office of Economic Development (2016) titled "Gentrification Study: Mitigating Involuntary Displacement" describes the correlates and consequences of gentrification. Gentrification is generally defined as a city's public and private investment in underdeveloped land typically located in low-income areas (Smith, 1996; Goldstein, 2017; Moskowitz, 2018; Taylor, 2019). This occurs in urbanized areas throughout the United States and the world (North, Central, and South America; Europe; Asia; and Africa).

Historically, the roots of gentrification began with the Federal Housing Administration's banking and real estate practices of the 1930s (Hirsch, 1983/2021; Massey & Denton, 1993). There were a set of interlocking linkages and practices between private and public, local, state, and federal agencies to systematically deny homeownership to African Americans and other people of color. A policy of anti-integration called redlining endorsed the rise of white suburbanization while making the Black ghetto a permanent reality of public housing confinement and entrapment for a vast majority of African Americans excluded from the private housing market. A dual housing market arose because of these federal, state, and local private and public practices—a housing market for whites wherein access to traditional homeownership loans and equity was secured, and for Blacks, a housing market of confinement to inner-city rental markets with inflated rents and no equity to allow for accumulating wealth for the next generation like their white counterparts (Hirsch, 1983/2021; Massy & Denton, 1993; Taylor, 2019).

The historical legacy of public and private federal housing, banking, and real estate discrimination relates to the pace and depth of gentrification in downtown Denver, demonstrated by the city's national rankings listed on the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP; 2021) website. Some of these rankings include best commercial real estate market in the U.S., largest increase in college-educated residents, second-best place to launch a start-up business, third-best city for small businesses, and sixth-fastest-growing metro area. In 2022, Denver is the largest city in

Colorado, with a population of 749,104 that is currently growing at a rate of 1.48%. The population of Denver has increased by 24.82% since the most recent census, up from 600,158 in 2010 (World Population Review, 2021).

The rate and pace of growth in downtown Denver is impressive. For example, the *State of Downtown Denver 2015* report by the Downtown Denver Partnership (2015b) shows the average household income in downtown Denver in 2015 was $91,961. The average household income is associated with a 164% increase in the residential population since 2000, which has resulted in 63% of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Alongside this growth is a spike in retail development and profit. Downtown Denver generated more than $38 million in sales tax revenue for the City of Denver in the first three quarters of 2014. This represents 9.7% of the city and county of Denver's total sales tax revenue (DDP, 2015). Additionally, downtown Denver has 3,328,000 square feet of retail space, with a 4.4% vacancy rate (DDP, 2015).

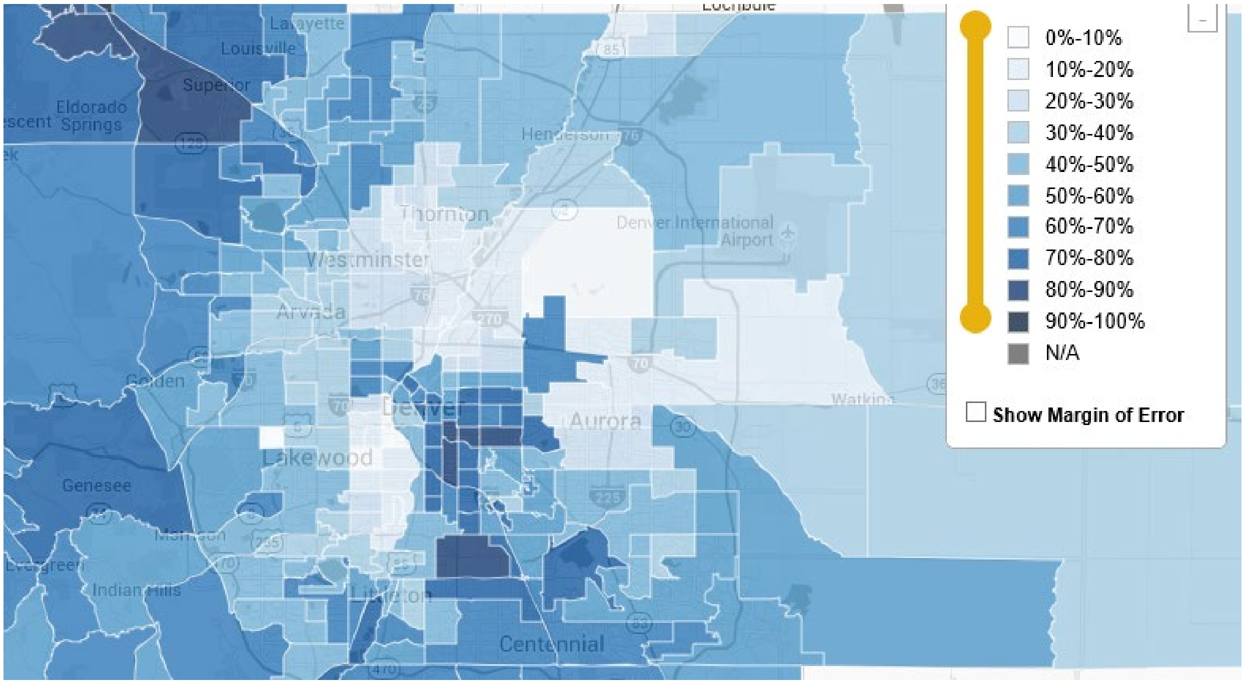
Settled in the late 19th century and continuing throughout the early- to mid-20th century, Denver's Historical Five Points area of Black settlement, adjacent to the east part of downtown, has been directly affected by these changing population and economic demographics. Five Points is no longer populated by a majority Black and brown population. Throughout the vast majority of the 20th century, Five Points has experienced "redlining" (historic disinvestment) by the Federal Housing Administration and the real estate and banking industries. This has resulted in the area's segregation and social isolation from mainstream downtown Denver.

Discussion

Figures 1 and 2 below represent a segregated pattern of residential location due to involuntary displacement. The dark-shaded blue area in Figure 1 reflects the 2014 spatial distribution of growth and development in downtown Denver by residents 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher. Data from the report *Status of Denver's Children: A Community Resource 2016* reflect a similar spatial concentration for the white population.

Figure 1

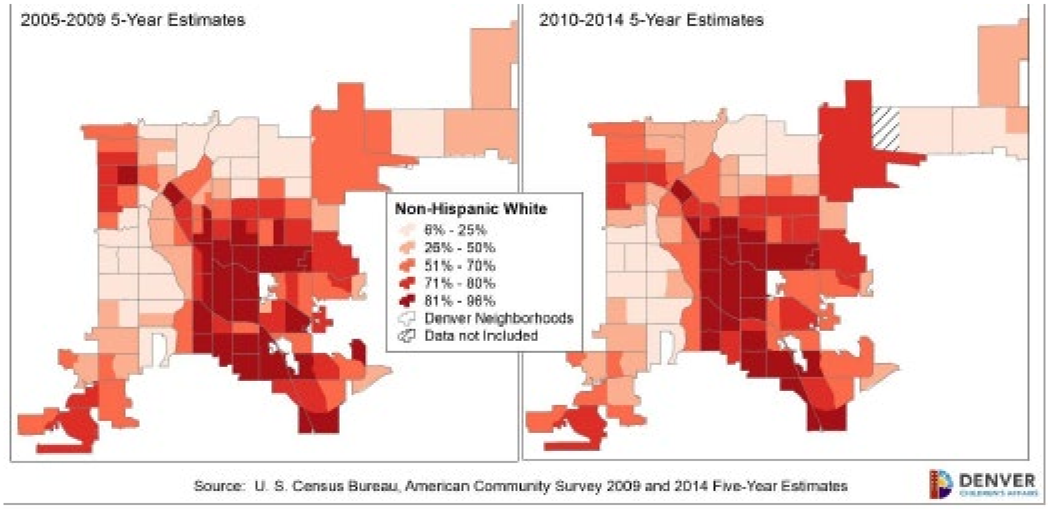
Percent of the Population in Denver 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 2014


Lafayette
Louisville
Superior
Eldorado Springs
Henderson
Thornton
Westminster
Denver International Airport
Arvada
Golden
Denver
Aurora
Watkins
Lakewood
Genesee
Morrison
Evergreen
Indian Hills
Littleton
Centennial
0%-10%
10%-20%
20%-30%
30%-40%
40%-50%
50%-60%
60%-70%
70%-80%
80%-90%
90%-100%
N/A
☐ Show Margin of Error

Source: The Piton Foundation (2016).

Figure 2

Five-Year Estimate for the Spatial Distribution of the White Population

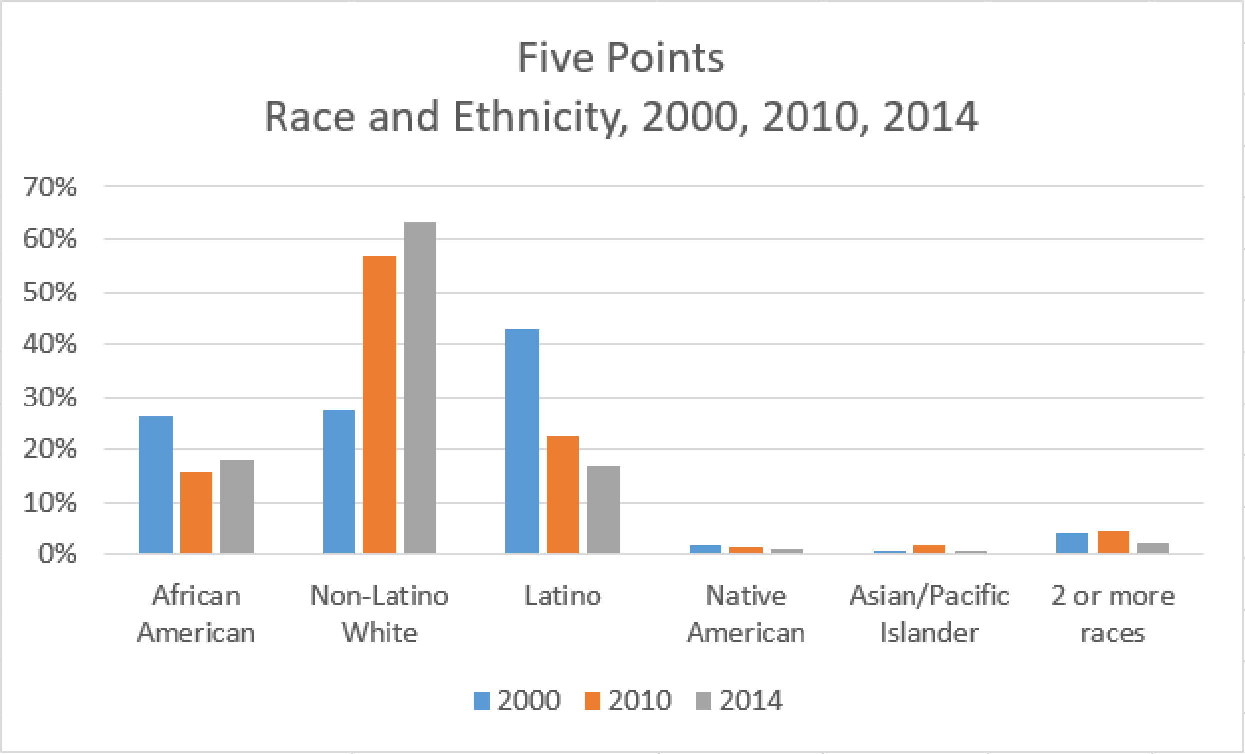

2005-2009 5-Year Estimates
2010-2014 5-Year Estimates
Non-Hispanic White
6% - 25%
26% - 50%
51% - 70%
71% - 80%
81% - 96%
Denver Neighborhoods
Data not Included
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009 and 2014 Five-Year Estimates
DENVER

Source: Denver Office of Children's Affairs.

Figure 3 below shows Five Points has experienced a phenomenal change in its racial and ethnic composition since 2000.

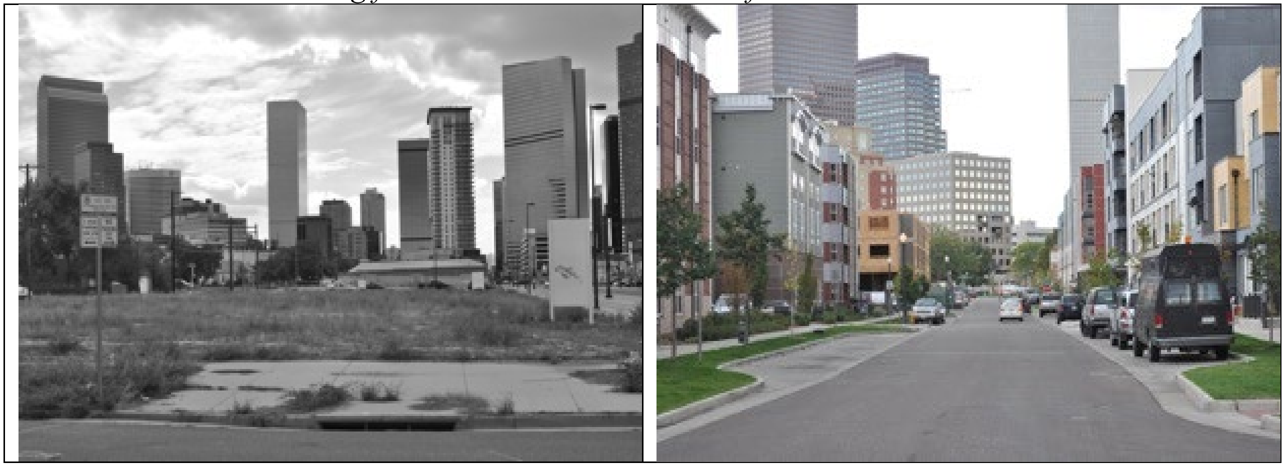
Figure 3

Racial and Ethnic Distribution of Five Points, 2000, 2010, & 2014



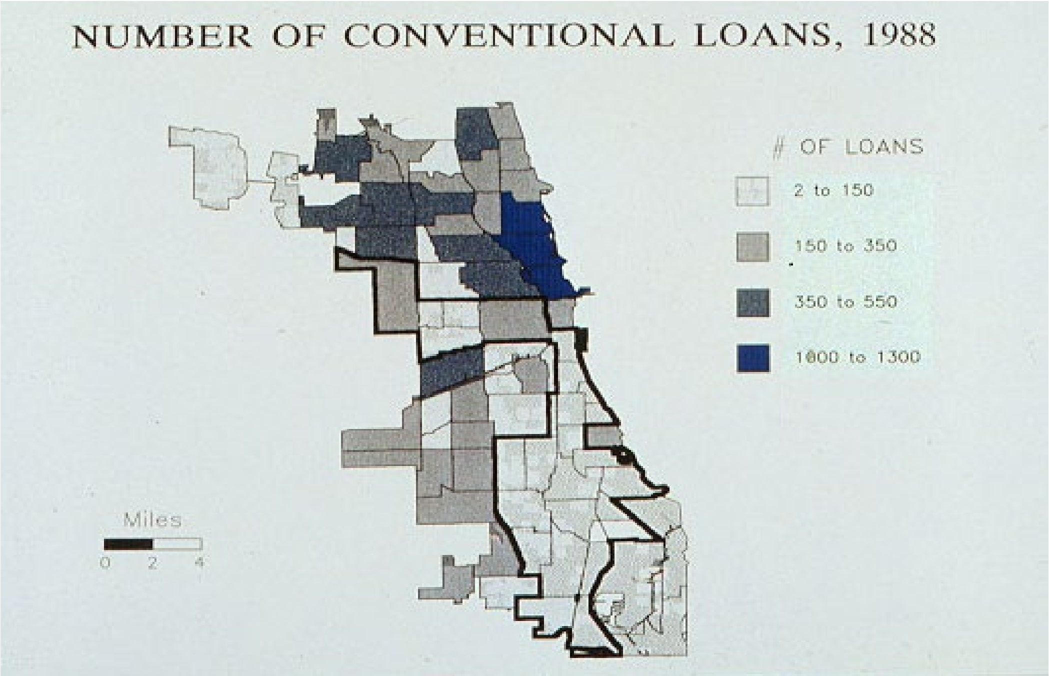
As Figure 3 demonstrates, the historic Five Points area of Black settlement that formed in the late 19th through the early to mid 20th century is no longer populated by a majority Black and brown population. Indeed, throughout most of the 20th century, the Five Points area in Denver experienced redlining (historic disinvestment) by the Federal Housing Administration along with the real estate and banking industries, resulting in the area's segregation and social isolation from mainstream downtown Denver.

Figure 4
Five Points—Transitioning from Disinvestment to Gentrification



This historic disinvestment by federal, state, and local practices of redlining during the era of the New Deal in the late 1930s through the late 1960s occurred throughout cities in the United States (Massey & Denton, 1993; Goldstein, 2017; Moskowitz, 2018; Taylor, 2019) and is still occurring despite the 1988 amendments to the Fair Housing Act to eliminate racial discrimination in the commercial loan and real estate market. Most African Americans were affected by these practices because of their confinement and concentration in cities throughout the Northeast, Midwest, Mid-Atlantic, Mountain West, and West regions of the United States. For example, in the city of Chicago, a segregated spatial pattern of commercial and conventional banking loan investments in the 1980s was characterized by the complete absence of loans in the areas outlined in black in Figure 5 below, where most African Americans lived in Chicago in 1980. Instead, most of the conventional loans in the city of Chicago in 1988 were spatially concentrated on the Northside of Chicago in areas experiencing gentrification (e.g., Near North, Lincoln Park, Lakeview) and distributed primarily to white population groups. In contrast, virtually no conventional loans were made in the areas demarked by the inverted "L" (black solid line in the map), where most African Americans resided in Chicago in 1988.

Figure 5
Number of Conventional Loans in the City of Chicago, 1988



Source: United Way of Chicago, Community Development Needs Assessment Report, 1990.

Regarding Denver, the term "historic disinvestment" is used throughout the report "Gentrification Study: Mitigating Involuntary Displacement" by the City of Denver's Office of Economic Development (2016). The report mentions historic disinvestment as one of the main reasons for the occurrence of gentrification:

> Areas vulnerable to gentrification tend to have certain characteristics, the main one being a history of disinvestment [emphasis added]. Additional characteristics include being located in an urban area, having a majority low-income population, and a high proportion of renters. Gentrification of an area is characterized by an increase in investment and a growing population with higher incomes and education levels (Freeman, 2005; Bates, 2013, p. 15).

The consequences of historic disinvestment include a higher rental market for residents who are unable to own due to redlining and a depressed housing market. Low educational attainment is another consequence, because depressed property values result in less tax revenues for schools and other city services. In addition, redlining produces a concentration of poverty and other neighborhood anomalies associated with crime, drugs, and gangs. Redlining as a historical disinvestment practice was found illegal by the United States Congress in the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

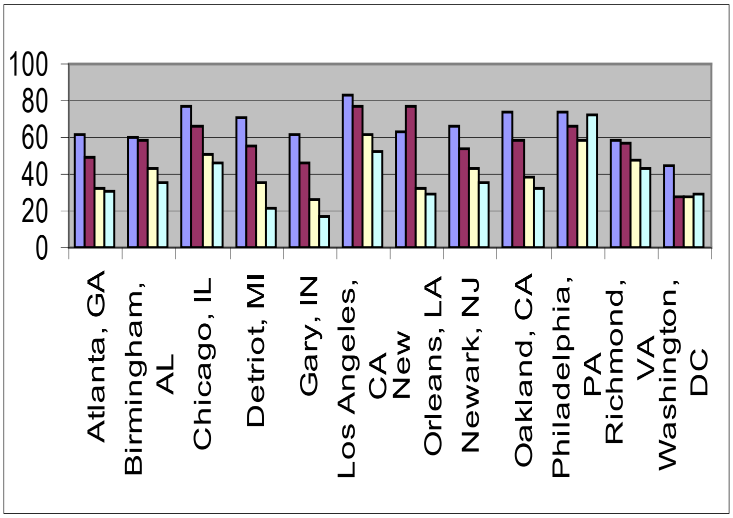
The neighborhood of Five Points in Denver is just one of multiple examples of Black neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment in cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Washington, DC. Historic disinvestment in these neighborhoods occurred when federal, state, and local private and public institutions simultaneously began investing in the development of suburbs surrounding most of these cities. The provocative serial documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion* states:

> Real estate practices and federal government regulations directed government-guaranteed loans to white homeowners and kept non-whites out, allowing those once previously considered "not quite white" to blend together and reap the advantages of whiteness, including the accumulation of equity and wealth as their homes increased in value. Those on the other side of the color line were denied the same opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility. (California Newsreel, 2003)

Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the suburbs were mostly populated by whites, resulting in the slogan "Chocolate Cities, Vanilla Suburbs" (Massey & Denton, 1993). Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the drastic white flight from 12 cities in the United States from 1960–1990 and the simultaneous increase in the non-white (Black and brown) populations.

Figure 6

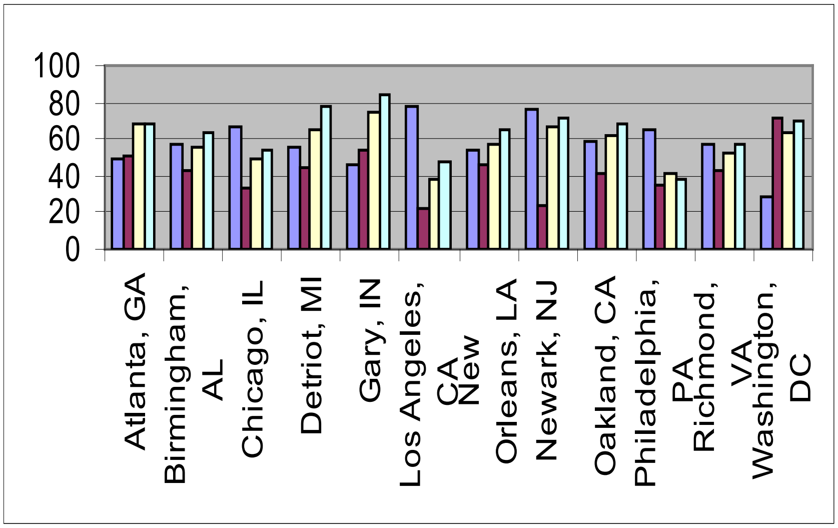
Percent of Decline in White Population in 12 U.S. Cities, 1960–1990



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 7

Percent of Increase in Black Population in 12 U.S. Cities, 1966–1990



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The demographic shifts in the white population occurred around the same time that many cities in the Northeast and Midwest were experiencing deindustrialization, which resulted in a phenomenal decline in blue-collar jobs (Wilson, 1996).

Today in Denver, a rapid reverse migration of the Millennial white population into Five Points remains ongoing. The patterns and trends in urban growth and spatial development in Denver and many of the nation's principal cities reflect uneven development. When white populations fled U.S. inner city areas, they typically were followed by capital resources, such as federal, state, and local government tax incentives and subsidies provided for their relocation and eventual community development (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2000), as *Race: The Power of an Illusion* states:

> Today, the net worth of the average Black family is about 1/8 that of the average white family. Much of that difference derives from the value of the family's residence. Houses in predominantly white areas sell for much more than those in Black, Hispanic or integrated neighborhoods, and so power, wealth, and advantage—or the lack of it—are passed down from parent to child. Wealth isn't just luxury or profit; it's the starting point for the next generation. (California Newsreel, 2003)

Future

What happens then when whites move back into inner-city neighborhood areas like Five Points? Do capital resources follow and begin to be stimulated by federal, state, and local government tax incentives and private corporate policies to promote urban growth? These are not easy questions to answer. Nor do common agreements and political clout exist to address and correct them. Politicians, policymakers, neighborhood activists, and society at large will need to understand and accept the historical roots of the problem, create and support an ongoing common vision, commit and secure federal, state, and local resources, and resolve to develop and implement practical solutions to redress the cycle of gentrification and involuntary displacement that historically began with colonization (Manley, 2021). Plans and actions are being put forth in some urban areas and implemented by such cities as Boston, Seattle, and San Francisco. As an example, these cities are using fees to create resources for affordable housing during economic upcycles. Denver will also need to find viable solutions to address this issue.

A recent announcement by the current mayor of Denver, Michael Hancock, that funds for affordable housing will be generated at the city level is facing strong opposition from the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP). The announcement introduced a proposed development fee to be used as a source of revenue for affordable housing. The DDP opposed these fees by stating that development fees would disproportionately affect real estate development and result in a rise in downtown housing and office prices along with the inability to build amenities that attract residents and workforces to downtown Denver. All of these concerns essentially mean private developers will pass the fees onto future renters, property owners, and commercial lease holders.

To move toward a more just future in Denver, efforts to mobilize indigenous land holders in gentrifying areas must adopt a progressive mindset through the establishment and institutionalization of communal land trusts. A new counter-structure needs to be built to reduce the impact of urban gentrification and involuntary displacement in major urban areas. White millennials should be encouraged to support these efforts by providing and securing financial resources to institutionalize communal land trusts in gentrifying areas, with the purpose of holding land in perpetuity for low-income and affordable housing. While the tide of urban gentrification and involuntary displacement is daunting and, perhaps, difficult to reverse, the primary material resource that fuels involuntary displacement—land—can become a vital structural tool with which to mobilize resources for restoring social justice in urban systems that are racially unjust.

The local progressive solutions suggested above for the cities of Denver and others throughout the United States are a start, but they are not enough. At the national, state, and local levels, private and public practices lasting over a half century in the United States created a historic legacy of housing discrimination that resulted in a wealth gap between white and Black populations (Shapiro, 2004; Taylor, 2019). This wealth gap is explained by the legacy of housing discrimination, where African Americans have been denied the opportunity to accumulate wealth in the housing market through homeownership and equity. Throughout most of the 20th century, a vast majority of African Americans were confined to an inner-city rental housing market where they could not gain equity and thus were unable to accumulate wealth to pass on to the next generation. The gentrification experience of white Millennials in cities throughout the United States directly relates to their parents' accumulation of wealth through homeownership, which allowed them to support their children's college education and provide a down payment on a new home (Taylor, 2019). This enormous benefit for white Americans illuminates the need for a national policy with a broader scope to address the historical and systematic legacy of African American housing discrimination.

In 1989, former U.S. Representative John Conyers Jr. introduced H.R. 40—Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. In April 2021, this bill was advanced by the House Judiciary Committee (Burke, 2021) to create a commission to study the history of slavery and racial discrimination in the United States since 1619 and develop reparation proposals for African Americans. Moreover, in the state of California, Shirley Weber, the California secretary of state, authored a law that would form the California reparations taskforce (Ho, 2022). H.R. 40 put forth the following responsibilities for the commission (H.R. 40, 2021):

> The commission shall identify (1) the role of the federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, (2) forms of discrimination in the public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and (3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society.

The idea of reparations for African Americans must begin by demonstrating the most recent forms of historical discrimination against freed slaves and descendants in the public and private housing sector. Indeed, the legacy of housing discrimination in the 20th century, and its impact on the wealth gap between white and Black Americans in the 21st century, provides an immense opportunity to highlight the "lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society." A Brookings Institute survey conducted in 2019 articulates the acute crisis created by the historical legacy of housing discrimination (Moss, McIntosh, Edelberg, & Brody, 2020). The survey reported the following:

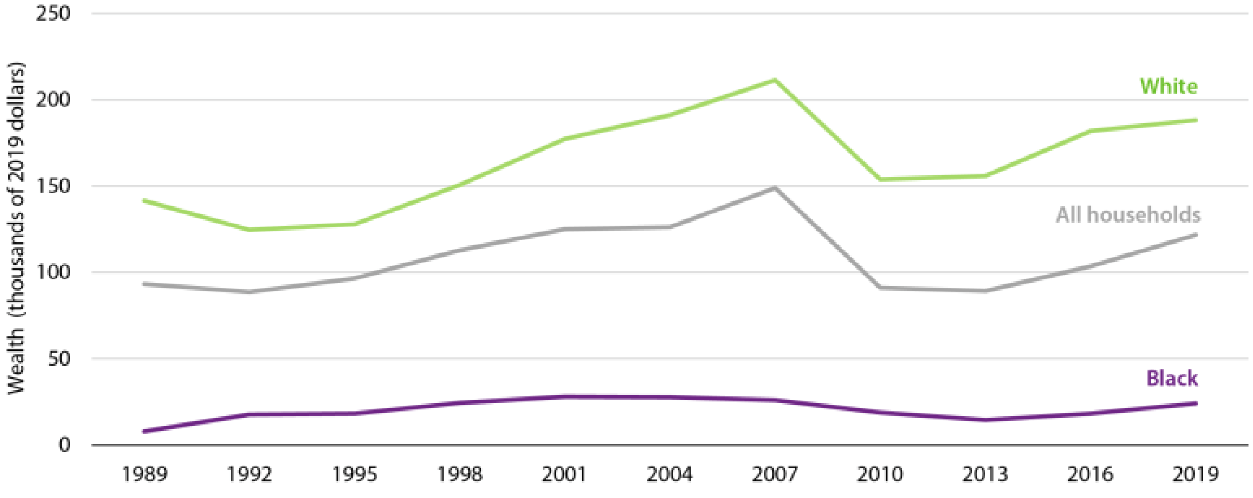
> the median white household held $188,200 in wealth—7.8 times that of the typical Black household ($24,100; figure 1). It is worth noting that levels of average wealth, which are more heavily skewed by households with the greatest amounts of wealth, are higher: white households reported average wealth of $983,400 which is 6.9 times that of Black households ($142,500; SCF) … The Black-white wealth gap today is a continuation of decades-long trends in wealth inequality, as shown in figure 1. Over the past 30 years, the median wealth of white households has consistently dwarfed that of Black households—ranging from a gap of $106,900 in 1992 to $185,400 in 2007 (both adjusted for inflation to 2019 dollars). Furthermore: In the second quarter of 2020, white households—who account for 60 percent of the U.S. population—held 84 percent ($94 trillion) of total household wealth in the U.S.
>
> Comparatively, Black households—who account for 13.4 percent of the U.S. population—held just 4 percent ($4.6 trillion) of total household wealth." (Moss, McIntosh, Edelberg, Broady, 2020)

Figure 8

Median Wealth within Black and White Households.

FIGURE 1.

Median Wealth for Black and White Households, 1989-2019



Source: Survey of Consumer Finances 1989-2019.
Note: Wealth refers to the differences between assets and debt for a household head. Race is that of the survey respondent.

THE HAMILTON PROJECT
BROOKINGS

Source: Moss et al. (2020), the Brookings Institution.

These survey findings demonstrate the need to consider reparations for African Americans as a policy outcome for resolving the historic legacy of housing discrimination in the United States. The task for any Congressional and state commission on reparations needs to center on demonstrating the historical facts and consequences for an entire generation of African Americans affected by the 1930 housing policy practices of private banks and real estate companies along with federal, state, and local institutions. Each of these entities must be held accountable for addressing the "lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society."

To suggest implementing a policy of African American reparations to resolve the historic legacy of housing discrimination is daunting. And yet, the enormous Black-white gap in wealth underscores the need to think judiciously about overcoming this historic legacy of housing discrimination. The "playing field" of the 1930s was unequal for African Americans. A contrived policy of segregation and exclusion was orchestrated by the Federal Housing Administration and exacerbated by the practices of private banks and real estate firms. These institutional practices resulted in redlining and various forms of block-busting and panic-peddling to enact the vast differences we observe today in the Black-white wealth gap. Seeking to resolve this structural inequality through piecemeal strategies and policies would not prove sufficient to address the "lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society."

References

Bates, L. K. (2013). *Gentrification and displacement study: Implementing an equitable inclusive development strategy in the context of gentrification* (Working paper, Urban Studies and Planning Faculty Publications). City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. https://doi.org/10.15760/report-01

Biersdorf & Associates. (2022). *Everything you need to know about eminent domain.* http://www.condemnation-law.com/eminent-domain-definition/

Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like: Selected writings.* University of Chicago Press.

Blauner, R. (1972). *Racial oppression in America.* Harper & Row.

Bonacich, E. (1972). A theory of ethnic antagonism: The split labor market. *American Sociological Review, 37*(5), 547–559.

Bonacich, E. (1973). A theory of middleman minorities. *American Sociological Review, 38*(5), 583–594.

Burke, M. N. (2021, April 14). House panel advances reparations bill that Conyers championed. *The Detroit News.* https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2021/04/14/us-house-reparations-black-americans-bill-john-conyers/7219385002/

California Newsreel. (2003). The house we live in. *Race—the power of an illusion.* http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race3.htm

Chattopadhyay, S. (2012). Urbanism, colonialism and subalternity. In T. Edensor & M. Jayne (Eds.), *Urban theory beyond the west* (pp. 75–92). Routledge.

City of Denver. (2022). *How government works.* https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Legislation-and-Transparency/How-City-Government-Works

Clark, K. (1965). *Dark ghetto: Dilemmas of social power.* Harper & Row Publishers.

Cordell, K. (2015). Five Points: You have arrived. *5820.* http://www.5280.com/news/magazine/2015/09/five-points-you-have-arrived?page=full

Denver Business Journal. (2009, November 24). *New Five Points Business Development Office opens.* https://www.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2009/11/23/daily36.html

Denver Office of Children's Affairs. (2016). *The status of Denver's children: A community resource 2016.* https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/713/documents/data-resources/StatusOfDenversChildren_2016.pdf

Denver Office of Economic Development. (2016). *Gentrification study: Mitigating involuntary displacement.* https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/690/Reports%20and%20Studies/GENT%20STUDY%20052316.pdf

Downtown Denver Partnership. (2015a). *Key facts and rankings: Downtown Denver by the numbers.*

Downtown Denver Partnership. (2015b). *State of downtown Denver 2015.*

Downtown Denver Partnership. (2019a). *About the BID.* https://www.downtowndenver.com/bid/about-the-bid/

Downtown Denver Partnership. (2019b). *About us*. https://www.downtowndenver.com/about-us/

Downtown Denver Partnership. (2021). *State of downtown Denver 2021.* https://www.downtowndenver.com/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Downtown-Denver-2021.pdf

Dreier, P., Mollenkopf, J., & Swanstrom, T. (2000). *Place matters: Metropolitics for the twenty-first century*. University of Kansas Press.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the Earth.* Grove Press.

Feagin, J. R. (1983). *The urban real estate game: Playing Monopoly with real money*. Prentice Hall.

Freeman, L. (2005). Displacement or succession? Residential mobility in gentrifying neighborhoods. *Urban Affairs Review, 40*(4), 463–491. https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087404273341

Goldstein, A. (Ed.). (2014). *Formations of United States colonialism*. Duke University Press.

Goldstein, B. D. (2017). *The roots of urban renaissance: Gentrification and the struggle over Harlem.* Harvard University Press.

Harsanyi, J. C. (1962). Measurement of social power, opportunity costs, and the theory of two-person bargaining games. *Behavioral Science, 7*(January), 67–80.

Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Hass, L. (1996). *Conquests and historical identities in California, 1769–1936.* University of California Press.

Hirsch, A. (2021). *Making the second ghetto: Race and housing in Chicago, 1940–1960.* University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1983)

Ho, V. (2022, January 9). If not us, then who? Inside landmark push for reparations for Black Californians. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jan/09/california-reparations-slavery-african-americans

H.R. 40, Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. (2021). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40

Hraba, J. (1979). *American ethnicity.* Wadsworth Publishing.

Katznelson, I. (2006). *When affirmative action was white: An untold history of racial inequality in twentieth-century America.* W.W. Norton Company Ltd.

KDVR. (2016, March 22). *Protesters rally to oppose Denver's removal of homeless camps from streets.* https://kdvr.com/news/protesters-rally-to-oppose-denvers-decision-to-remove-homeless-camps-from-streets/

King, A. (1990). *Urbanism, colonialism, and the world economy: Cultural and spatial foundations of the world urban system*. Routledge.

Lieberson, S. (1981). *A piece of the pie: Blacks and white immigrants since 1880*. University of California Press.

Lieberson, S., & Carter, D. K. (1979). Making it in America: Differences between eminent Blacks and white ethnic groups. *American Sociological Review, 44*(3), 347–366.

Logan, J. R., & Molotch, H. L. (1987). *Urban fortunes: The political economy of place.* University of California Press.

Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass.* Harvard University Press.

Mele, C. (2000). *Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, real estate and resistance in New York City.* University of Minnesota Press.

Meyers, J. P. (2012, May 14). Denver City Council votes 9–4 to ban homeless camping. *The Denver Post.* http://www.denverpost.com/2012/05/14/denver-city-council-votes-9-4-to-ban-homeless-camping/

Moskowitz, P. (2018). *How to kill a city: Gentrification, inequality, and the fight for the neighborhood.* Nation Books.

Moss, E., McIntosh, K., Edelberg, W., & Broady, K. (2020, December 8). *The Black-white wealth gap left Black households more vulnerable.* The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/12/08/the-black-white-wealth-gap-left-black-households-more-vulnerable/

Mumford, L. (1961). *The city in history: Its origins, its transformations, and its prospects*. Harcourt, Inc.

Oropeza, L. (2014). Becoming Indo-Hispanic: Reies López Tijerina and the New Mexican land grant movement. In A. Goldstein (Ed.), *Formations of United States colonialism* (pp. 180–206). Duke University Press.

Park, R. E., & Burgess, E. (1925). *The city.* University of Chicago Press.

Piton Foundation. (2016). *Community facts.* http://denvermetrodata.org/

Sampson, R. J. (2012). *Great American city: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect.* University of Chicago Press.

Shapiro, T. M. (2004). *The hidden cost of being African American: How wealth perpetuates inequality*. Oxford University Press.

Smith, N. (1996). *The new urban frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city.* Routledge.

Spear, A. H. (1967). *Black Chicago: The making of a Negro ghetto.* University of Chicago Press.

Stampp, K. (1956). *Peculiar institution: Slavery in the ante-bellum South.* Vintage Books.

Steinberg, S. (1995). *Turning back: The retreat from racial justice in American thought and policy*. Beacon Press.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2013). *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Stone, C. N. (1989). *Regime P = politics: Governing Atlanta 1946–1988.* University of Kansas Press.

Taylor, K. Y. (2019). *Race for profit: How banks and the real estate industry undermined Black homeownership.* University of North Carolina Press.

United Way of Chicago. (1990). *Community development needs assessment report.*

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Social and economic characteristics. Federal, state and local government census (1960–1990).*

Williams, R. (1973). Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory. *New Left Review, 82*(3), 16.

Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy.* University of Chicago Press.

Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research, 8*(4), 387–409.

World Population Review. (2021). *Denver, Colorado population 2021.* https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/denver-co-population

Zukin, S. (1995). *The cultures of cities.* Blackwell Publishers.

What We Must Do Before Reparations!

by

Linwood F. Tauheed, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Economics
University of Missouri–Kansas City

Many scholars have written in support of reparations for the harm done to African Americans by enslavement and anti-Black[5] terrorism to this day. The arguments have been economic/financial, political/legal, moral/ethical, psychological/social, and even religious/spiritual in nature.

Recent work has provided well-structured estimates of the size of reparations payments due, either to individual African Americans who can trace their lineage back to an enslaved ancestor, or to the African American community—outlining through these two streams of thought how reparation payments should be distributed either individually or communally.

There are also divisions over who should pay: cities, counties, states, organizations, or the U.S. government. A number of cities have initiated studies to determine whether reparations payments are due. Some have even promised to begin making such payments.

The main focus of these estimates has been on "payments." However, there is another aspect of reparations that has received little attention. The question is, what should (or must) the African American community do before reparations in order for reparations payments to sustainably achieve their intended effects? In other words, how can we ensure they not only close the wealth gap, but repair the harm done?

This paper focuses on preparations for reparations, particularly from a community economic development (CED) perspective, exploring which economic forms will best serve the interests of the African American community. I assert that the current dominant economic form of capitalism is antithetical to that community's interests. I also assert that none of the heretofore suggested alternatives are up to the task, mainly because they have been suggested from outside the African American community. As I have stated in a previous work,

---

[5] In this essay, I use the terms "Black" and "African American" interchangeably, acknowledging that "Black" is a more inclusive term as well as a common usage (as in "Black/white wealth gap"). Hopefully this does not cause confusion.

> the dominant white paradigm, [is] exemplified in economics by its adherence to the principles and practices of American Capitalism. Yet, the proposed alternative typically leans heavily to Marxist Socialism; another theory of political economy developed out of the political, economic, and cultural history of European society; which also evades the issues of race and racism, and disregards the influence of Black culture on Black life. (Tauheed, 2008, p. 707)

I also argue that because the task is much bigger than economics, developing the appropriate economic form for an African American economy is not a task that can be completed by an individual economist or group of economists. Rather, this is an African American community task, and its execution requires organizing and mobilizing the African American community.

In this paper, I aim to propose a method for CED planning for reparations. I will precede it with a review of a recent estimate of the reparations due, followed by a discussion of the inadequacy of prior proposed non-reparations solutions for closing the Black/white wealth gap.

Reparations to Close the Gap and Estimation of the Reparations Bill

Reparations can serve as a direct way of closing the Black/white wealth gap. There have been many estimates of the monetary compensation due to the African American descendants of enslaved Africans. Darity and Mullen (2020) recount these estimates and present their own. They write:

> Another route for arriving at a similar estimate of the magnitude of a reparations bill that centers on eliminating the racial wealth gap is to calculate the amount needed to give eligible black Americans a share of the nation's wealth comparable to their share in the nation's population. The eligible black population constitutes approximately 13 percent of the American community. The nation's total household wealth reached $107 trillion by the second quarter of 2018. Thirteen percent of that figure amounts to $13.91 trillion. If, as an upper bound, black Americans are currently estimated to hold 3 percent of the nation's wealth, that amounts to $3.21 trillion. To eliminate the difference will require a reparations outlay of $10.7 trillion, or an average outlay of approximately $267,000 per person for 40 million eligible black descendants of American slavery.

The estimation method presented by Darity and Mullen (2020) is straightforward. The straightforwardness of the estimation is in itself an indication of its superiority over other more convoluted methods. However, I want to go beyond this indication of its superiority by providing an equally straightforward social, psychological, and historical justification for considering this method, and its estimate, superior to other methods.

We begin with two assumptions: one factual, one counterfactual. First, I take as fact that African Americans as a group are as skilled, intelligent, hardworking, and talented as any of the groups of voluntary immigrants to this country.[6] And, second, I make the counterfactual assumption that African Americans arrived in this country voluntarily instead of through enslavement, subsequently experiencing no acts of terrorism or even discrimination against them.

---

[6] Some may dispute the factual nature of this claim. Having no need or interest in arguing the point, I dismiss such disputes.

From these assumptions, we easily reach the conclusion that African Americans, as a group, would have, during their time here, accumulated wealth at least equal to the wealth of others. There would be no wealth gap between African Americans and whites! I say "at least" since African Americans, the majority of whose ancestors arrived in this country before the end of slavery, have a longer average history in this country than the average white, the majority of whose ancestors arrived in this country *after* the end of slavery as a result of various European immigration programs. Thus, African Americans would have had a longer time to accumulate wealth.

For that reason, Darity and Mullen's (2020) $10.7 trillion estimate is a low appraisal of the reparations bill due—even more so because it accounts only for the Black/white wealth gap for individuals. It does not account for wealth held by historically white-owned and/or -controlled organizations such as banks, universities, philanthropies, and nonprofits.

Proposed Non-reparations Solutions for Closing the Wealth Gap

The framework that mainstream economics proposes for closing the Black/white wealth gap is based on its (insufficient) understanding of the process by which wealth is created in the first place. The mainstream framework ignores the accumulation of wealth from theft and fraud (what classical economists from Smith to Marx called rent-seeking) and bases its theories of wealth creation on how it defines income. In that framework, the flow of income is disaggregated into four components: 1) wages (including salary income); 2) rent (with rent including income from property ownership in general, including intellectual property); 3) interest (income from allowing others to use your money); and 4) profit (or loss) from entrepreneurial activity. From a stock/flow analysis, wealth creation for the mainstream is an accumulation of these disaggregated income inflows, minus spending outflows, into the stock of wealth. Based on the above disaggregation schemes, there are four pathways for building wealth. I reduce them to three by combining 2) and 3):

1) A positive accumulation of net savings from wage and salary income; 1) above, net savings being the difference between income and expenditures, which accumulates over time to build wealth.
2) A positive accumulation from profits (minus loss) from self-owned business activities; 4) above.
3) Positive increases in the value of owned property and/or publicly available financial instruments; 2) and 3) above, where the increased value or income from sales or dividends flows into the stock of wealth.[7]

The Unavoidable Problem with the Proposed Non-reparations Solutions

All three of the pathways described above suffer from what I call the "law of catching up." As in any race, in order for those behind to close the gap with those ahead, the velocity of those behind must reach a sustained higher rate than the velocity of those ahead. In order to close the Black/white wealth gap, the Black flow into wealth must be higher than the white flow into wealth. This is what accountants call a cash-flow problem!

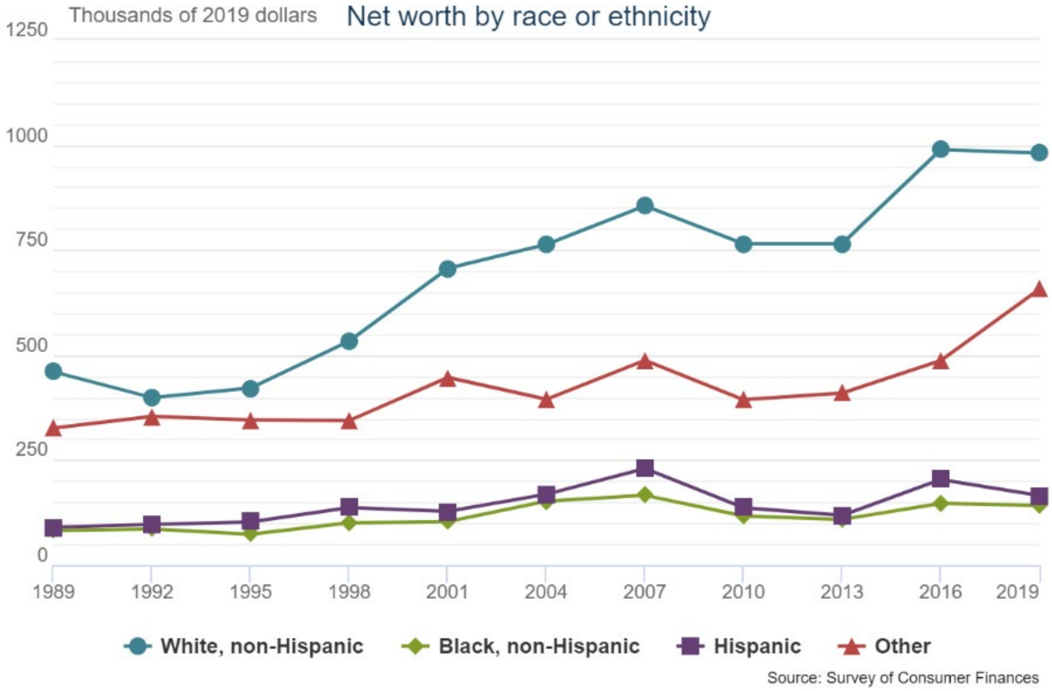
---

[7] While the increase in the value of financial and non-financial assets is not generally thought of as income, instead being called a capital gain (a designation for tax purposes), a capital gain increase (decrease) is an increase (decrease) in the stock of net wealth, and increases (decreases) in stocks happen only because of flows. An increase = net inflow; a decrease = net outflow.

Data from the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances, diagrammed in Figure 1, show that this certainly has not been the case between 1989 and 2019, as the gap between Black/white household mean net worth (as a measure of wealth) has widened in that period. This pattern is typical of the expanding Black/white wealth gap prior to 1989.

Figure 1

Mean Net Worth by Race or Ethnicity



Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

Mean white household net worth (HNW) was $460,000[8] in 1989, while mean Black HNW was $82,000—a gap of $378,000. Even with the downs and ups of the 1992 and 2008 recessions, we see that mean white HNW in 2019 has grown to $980,000, while mean Black HNW has grown to $142,000. The gap has widened from $602,000 to $838,000!

The increase in white HNW from $460,000 to $980,000 in 30 years signifies a rate of increase of 2.55% per year compounded annually. The increase in Black HNW from $82,000 to $142,000 in 30 years signifies a rate of increase of 1.85% compounded annually. But even if the rate of increase in Black HNW were the same as the white rate of increase, Black HNW would have been only $175,000 after 30 years—still representing a widening of the gap by $427,000 from $378,000 to $805,000!

The Black/white HNW gap can only be closed if the rate of increase in Black HNW is **greater** than the rate of increase in white HNW. To have accomplished that in 30 years would have required a rate of increase in Black HNW of 8.62% over that period. If the rate of increase in white HNW continues at the 2.55% rate, it will take a sustained Black rate of increase of 4.55% to close the gap in 100 years! Whites, with every advantage, were only able to average a 2.55% rate of increase in HNW. Neither of these rates of increase (8.62% or 4.55%) in Black HNW, or anything comparable, is attainable!

---

[8] All numbers are rounded.

How the Comparative Rate Problem Is a Problem

Each of the above three mainstream proposed pathways for closing the Black/white wealth gap suffer from the same "catching up" problem and are therefore not viable pathways for closing the Black/white wealth gap. Ironically, the limit to the expected Black rate of increase has already been identified in the factual and counterfactual assumptions discussed earlier.

Assuming that African Americans as a group are as skilled, intelligent, hardworking, and talented as any of the groups of voluntary immigrants to this country implies that we also assume they are not more so. Assuming no discrimination against African Americans implies no discrimination in their favor. Thus, the Black rate of increase for each of the three pathways is expected to be no greater than the white rate of increase. This creates a problem with pursuing any of these pathways as a solution to closing the Black/white wealth gap.

Pathway (1): Blacks, who currently have lower savings rates than whites, even controlling for income, would need to have a substantially higher savings rate than whites for savings out of wages to close the gap. This is not to dismiss the importance of savings, but it will not close the gap!

Pathway (2): Against the assertions of those who support Black Capitalism, Black business development will not close the gap. Most small businesses fail, and because white-owned businesses have greater opportunities for success than Black-owned businesses, Black-owned businesses fail at a higher rate than white-owned businesses. Additionally, those Black-owned businesses that succeed grow at a slower rate on average than the average white-owned business. The most we can hope for from Black business development is that Black-owned businesses succeed at the rate of white-owned businesses and that those businesses grow at the average rate of white-owned businesses. The law of catching up shows that this will not be nearly a high enough rate to close the gap. Of course, this is not intended to dismiss the value of Black business development, but rather, to show the limitations of Black business development for closing the wealth gap. Business development is necessary in order to establish places within the Black community through which Black dollars will circulate, but it will not close the gap!

Pathway (3): This option encompasses many different types of "investment" income flows into wealth, from ownership of financial assets such as stocks, bonds, and mutual funds to the ownership of non-financial assets such as real-estate, including residential homes. Of the three pathways, pathway (3) is the one over which individuals have the least control. Income from these pathways closely follows the conditions of financial and real estate markets, which for most people is mainly an external set of conditions. Thus, we should not expect that income flows for Blacks from pathway (3) will, on average, exceed income flows for whites. This is not to dismiss the importance of investment, but it will not close the gap!

To summarize, for all of the above pathways, the Black rate of increase in wealth should not be expected to exceed the white rate of increase in wealth. Neither (1), (2), nor (3) is capable of closing the gap.

Why We Must Plan for Reparations

What is economic development; what is not?

Before I discuss a proposal for community planning for economic development and what will likely happen in the absence of such a plan, it will be useful to define economic development—and particularly, community economic development (CED).

As an institutional economist, I am drawn to the definition of development in the work of institutional and developmental economist Gunnar Myrdal, of *An American Dilemma* fame, who defined economic development as "the movement upward of the entire social system" (1974, p. 730). I find Myrdal's definition simple enough that most people, including economists, can understand it, and challenging enough to require serious thinking about how it is to be achieved. Two interrelated considerations are 1) what is meant by "upward," and 2) who determines its meaning.

From the perspective presented here, and in the discussion of community-led development to follow, what is meant by "movement upward" is to be determined by the entire African American community itself, not by a select group of African American academics, intellectuals, and political, business, or religious leaders who, by virtue of their influential positions in society, are typically called upon to speak and decide for the African American community. Of course, they are also members of the community and their voices are part of that determination, but only a part. From this perspective, "entire social system" encompasses all members of the African American community, in every aspect of their lives: economic, political, educational, cultural, familial, spiritual, social, and psychological. Thus, economic development—and particularly, CED—is surely not about a few of us getting rich while reproducing the class structure of American society: poverty for most in the midst of plenty for a few!

Unfortunately, in many cases, the discussion on closing the Black/white wealth gap often strays into the "reproduction of U.S. class structure" narrative. It goes like this.

1. According to the Forbes "Billionaires List," as of 2021, there are 724 U.S. billionaires.
2. Only 7 of those billionaires are Black, representing less than 1% of U.S. billionaires.
3. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Blacks or African Americans make up 12.1% of the U.S. population.
4. If U.S. billionaires were to be proportionally represented according to population percentages, 12.1% of U.S. billionaires would be Black or African American, meaning 87 of the 724 billionaires would be Black or African American.

This is then discussed as something to be achieved to close the Black/white wealth gap. What's missing from this mainstream economics-driven narrative is any discussion of the vast inequality and poverty in the U.S. wherein the wealthiest (the top **1%**) own **32.1%** of the total wealth (totaling $43.94 trillion), while the poorest (the bottom **50%**) own **2.5%** of the total wealth (totaling $3.42 trillion; U.S. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System).

It's increasingly understood that this "new gilded age" style of vast U.S. wealth inequality is unhealthy for social cohesion and unsustainable. While this narrative may be supported by the African American super-wealthy or near-wealthy, it's very doubtful that the African American community as a whole would assent to follow the American example wherein some of us become wealthy and super-wealthy while most of us languish in poverty. The goal is a sustainable "movement upward" of *all* members of the African American community, as determined by that community.

It is also clear that economic development, particularly CED, does not mean business development only. In fact, certain types of businesses may be antithetical to CED. And, although the conventional wisdom in capitalist economies is that the economy is the most defining characteristic of a society, a community (society) is more than its economy and so community economic development has community development at its core.

A Proposal for a Community-Led Community Economic Development (CED) Process

For politicians, CED typically means business and real-estate development: building malls and shopping centers or other consumer-oriented entities controlled by persons called "developers" from outside the community. These developers are presented as necessary because they have access to financial and technical resources, which the community lacks.

In 2009, I worked with a group of community organizers in Kansas City, Missouri[9] to collaboratively develop a process for community-led CED, which we named WEdevelopment™. That process established a method for community members to 1) analyze their current situations; 2) envision a better future for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren; and 3) strategically plan to reach that vision.

A major theme of WEdevelopment™ is "Linking Community and Economics back into Community Economic Development." This is done by adhering to a focused set of interlocked foundational principles: Principles of Community, Principles of Economics, Principles of Praxis, and Principles of Linkage. With limited space, I can only discuss one Principle of Community and one Principle of Economics.

One of the three WEdevelopment™ Principles of Community is *Community (Self) Reliance: Recognition of the Distribution of Labor, or Who Is Responsible for What?* This principle recognizes that the complexities of CED are such that problems cannot be addressed with a single set of skills; there must be a division of labor, or as Dr. John Henrik Clarke has stated (as cited in Bourne, 1996), everyone should do their best work.

There is also recognition that this work cannot be done "for" or "on" community, but must be done *by* community members for themselves, with the help of others *if* the community invites that help. The help that others give, however valuable, cannot serve as the foundation of sustainable development and eventually results in dependency unless community members develop the ability to do that work.

---

[9] Melanie Allen Spark Bookhart, Dr. Cokethia Hill, and Glenda Russell.

The responsibility for CED lies in the hands of community members who act as agents of their own development and not in the hands of others who treat community members as merely clients, as in the standard CED approach.

The building of a self-reliant Black community economy aligns with the vision of W.E.B. Du Bois' "co-operative commonwealth" of producer and consumer cooperatives. This would not be a completely separate Black economy capable of providing for all of the needs of the Black community. Interaction between the Black economy and others would occur. Still, Du Bois (1986) considered that the developed part of the Black economy "could be so important and wield so much power that its influence upon the total economy of Negroes and the total industrial organization of the United States could be decisive for the great ends towards which the Negro moves" (p. 699).

One of the two WEdevelopment™ Principles of Economics is Community Vetting of Projects: Recognizing Community "Profitability" and Sustainability. A major component of the vetting process involves leaky bucket analysis[10], which entails an accounting of community income minus outgo in order to calculate the net income for the community.

The goal of leaky bucket analysis is to help the community structure an internal economy that "plugs the leaks." Projects that result in zero-to-positive community net income are consistent with that goal. The accumulation of community positive net income builds community wealth. Among other things, this allows for reinvestment back into the community, by community members, sustaining growth and development.

What Happens Without Planning for Reparations?

We can expect that with reparations payments, there will be all manner of proposals to Black community members offering opportunities for those members to buy things, start businesses, or make investments. Some of these proposals will come from the previously mentioned Black elites. If the Black community has not planned its own development, setting its own agendas, others can be expected to offer their agendas to their own advantage.

A lack of community-vetted Black business development means that reparations payments will leak out of the Black community through spending. Furthermore, different types of business activities have different community income/outgo relationships. While there is not enough space to elaborate, externally (white) owned retail businesses are particularly problematic and almost *always* lead to leakage of wealth from the internal (Black) community.

Investment in Black-owned businesses is necessary in order for Black-owned businesses to raise the needed funds for growth. Reparations payments that flow out of the Black community as investments in white-owned businesses would constitute a leakage.

Whether from spending or investment, leakages increase the success and growth rate of white-owned businesses and decrease the success and growth rate of Black-owned businesses. The end result is that the Black/white wealth gap, which was closed by reparations, widens again.

---

[10] The term "leaky bucket" as used here does not refer to the leaky bucket theory of Arthur Okun. This analysis grew out of the theoretical work of the Latin American Structuralist and Dependency schools of the 1950s and '60s. Insights from those schools and the American Institutionalist school informs this work.

The economic effect of another type of expected investment is problematic for a different reason. A significant component of wealth is invested in home ownership. Black home ownership rates are around 40% compared to white home ownership rates of around 70%; it is therefore expected that Black demand for housing will increase as reparations payments are made. Particularly for new houses, the increased demand is expected to lead to inflation in house prices. While this is problematic, the question of who gets to build these new houses is even more troubling. Lack of Black firms in house building, and limited Black labor in the building trades, becomes a likely source of leakage out of the Black community.

Conclusion

Preventing the above problems and other issues that would re-widen the Black/white wealth gap after reparations payments is one reason that the African American community must engage in preparation for reparations. Another is to plan a Black economy that is primed for development.

That preparation cannot be piecemeal. The entire African American community is not restricted to a single location; it is a nation scattered across this country, and indeed the world. Whether via WEdevelopment™ or some other community-led CED process, the planning done in one location must be coordinated with other locations. Preparation for reparations is a Black Nation imperative.

References

Bourne, S. C. C. (Director). (1996). *John Henrik Clarke: A great and mighty walk* [Film]. Black Dot Media.

Darity, W., & Mullen, A. (2020). *From here to equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the twenty-first century.* University of North Carolina Press.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1986). Dusk of dawn: An essay toward an autobiography of a race concept. In N. I. Huggins (Ed.), *Writings* (pp. 549–802). Viking. (Original work published 1940)

Myrdal, G. (1974). What is development? *Journal of Economic Issues, 8*(4), 729–736.

Tauheed, L. F. (2008). Black political economy in the 21st century: Exploring the interface of economics and Black studies: Addressing the challenge of Harold Cruse. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*(5), 692–730. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934707310292

U.S. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2021). *Distributional financial accounts, 3rd quarter 2021.* https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/table/#quarter:128;series:Net%20worth;demographic:networth;population:all;units:shares

Reparations for African American Descendants of the Enslaved as Part of a Larger Process of “Coping with the Past” in the United States (“Vergangenheitsbewältigung”)

by

Thomas Craemer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
University of Connecticut
Department of Public Policy

Since the debate on reparations for African American descendants of the enslaved in the United States went mainstream in the U.S. beginning in the early 2000s, a number of reparations initiatives have been developed on various levels, from the individual to the corporate as well as local, state, and federal levels. A new element in the most recent initiatives is that the successors or heirs of the *perpetrating* side acknowledge responsibility and seek to make amends. Prior to that, the reparations debate was largely an internal affair of the African American community. In the following sections, I will briefly describe the abortive first attempt at reparations in the United States and the following century and a half of African American political activism for reparations. Then I will describe recent developments that involve the new element of perpetrator-side acknowledgment. I will discuss to what degree such individual, corporate, local, state, or federal initiatives can claim the technical title “reparations” based on the origin of reparations for historical injustices in the tradition of war reparations. I will conclude that many of these piecemeal initiatives do not quite qualify as reparations in the historical sense because they do not involve the federal government as a reparations provider. However, both actual federal-level reparations and these other initiatives form an important part of what Germans refer to with regard to the Holocaust as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or, literally translated, “coping with the past” (compare Neiman, 2019, p. 25).

Early Attempts at Slavery Reparations in the United States

A reparations program for the newly liberated enslaved in the United States almost came to fruition in 1865 with General Sherman’s Special Field Order No. 15. The order was issued as a war measure and provided 40 acres of confiscated confederate land for each household of freed people (Winbush, 2003, p. 325), totaling about 10 acres per freed person (Darity, 2008) and entering popular culture under the slogan “40 acres and a mule.” Within a few months, 40,000 freedmen received land until President Lincoln’s successor Andrew Johnson returned the land to the former slave owners.

Attempts by radical Republicans like Representative Thaddeus Stevens to expand the “40 acres and a mule” wartime policy to an official reparations program failed in 1865–1866. Stevens proposed that House Bill H.R. 63 would permanently expropriate Confederate land, stating:

> the slaves who have been liberated . . . shall have distributed to them . . . to each male person who is the head of a family, forty acres; to each adult male, whether the head of a family or not, forty acres; to each widow, who is the head of a family, forty acres. (H.R. 63, 1865)

In the end, though, slavery reparations were not implemented.

However, Sherman's Field Order 15 and Stevens' proposed bill inspired land-based reparations demands from African American activists for the next century and a half. For example, Sojourner Truth demanded reparations for slavery through land redistribution in the 1870s (Araujo, 2019). Audley Eloise Moore, better known as Queen Mother Moore, created the Reparations Committee for the Descendants of American Slaves (RCDAS) in 1962 and was a co-founder of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) in 1968 (Allen, 1998). Central to the RNA's demand was land. Like the Nation of Islam around the same time, the RNA envisioned the establishment of an independent Black republic in five Southern states with large Black populations. In 1972, the organization called for \$300 billion in reparations from the U.S. government as start-up capital for the new republic (Allen, 1998, p. 3).

Harking back to the promised "40 acres and a mule," the Black Panther Party stated that "for slave labor and mass murder of Black people [w]e will accept payment in currency" (cited in Allen, 1998, p. 3). In 1970, Black businessman Dempsey Travis developed the proposal for a new Homestead Act as a form of land-based reparations. Darity (2008) took up this idea, estimating the price of land in 1865 at about \$10 per acre (Mittal & Powell, 2000). He wrote:

> An allocation of 40 acres to a family of four would imply 10 acres per person, hence a value of \$100 per ex-slave in 1865. If we also take as a conservative estimate the total number of ex-slaves who had attained emancipation at the close of the Civil War as 4 million persons, 40 million acres of land valued at \$400 million should have been distributed to the ex-slaves in 1865. (Darity, 2008, p. 662)

He proposes to compound that sum of money from 1865 at 6%, reaching \$2.978 trillion by 2018 (Craemer et al., 2020).

Craemer et al. (2020) assert,

> One problem with taking "40 acres and a mule" as a baseline for estimating proper slavery reparations is the fact that Sherman's Special Field Orders No. 15 (1865) and Thaddeus Stevens' Reparations Bill . . . albeit very progressive, were likely tainted by the anti-Black prejudice of the time. For example, at the same time, the Homestead Act of 1862 promised 160 acres to White settlers. Thus, Black families were promised only 40 acres, whereas White settler families were promised 4 times the amount. (p. 228; see also Darity & Mullen, 2020, p. 262)

As a result, the bias-corrected reparations amount would be \$12.6 trillion in 2019.

However, "40 acres and a mule" was not the only basis for African American reparations demands over the past century and a half. In the late 19th century, formerly enslaved Callie House led the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, demanding pensions for the ageing formerly enslaved (Berry, 2005; see also Araujo, 2019). She was incarcerated for her efforts (Berry, 2005, p. 188). In the early 20th century, Marcus Garvey demanded reparations from European powers for depredations under colonialism in Africa (Garvey, 2017), presumably in the form of cash. In his famous *I Have a Dream* speech, Martin Luther King referred to the idea of cash reparations when he stated,

> America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." . . . We have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. (King, 1963)

In 1969, approaching white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader James Forman sought $500 million in reparations (Allen, 1998, p. 3). In 1974, African American economist Robert S. Browne demanded "a massive capital transfer of a sizable chunk of America's wealth to the black community" (Allen, 1998, p. 5).

Following President Reagan's signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which paved the way for reparations payments to former Japanese American World War II internees in the amount of $20,000 per recipient, Representative John Conyers introduced House Bill H.R. 40—named after "40 acres and a mule"—in every House since 1989. It is currently introduced by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas. The bill does not provide for reparations, but for the formation of a "Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans" (H.R. 40, 2021).

In 1990, Richard F. America published his groundbreaking edited volume *The Wealth of Races*, which contained numerous economic estimates for slavery reparations as well as reparations for post-slavery racial discrimination (America, 1990).

The Advent of Perpetrator-Side Acknowledgment

Motivated by a number of suits filed by direct descendants of enslaved Americans, some private corporations, such as the Aetna Insurance Agency (Slevin, 2000, A17) and *The Hartford Courant* (Leavenworth & Canfield, 2000, A1), began issuing apologies for their roles during slavery at the turn of the new millennium. In response to these initiatives, David Horowitz placed a provocative advertisement in a number of college newspapers in the spring of 2001, entitled "Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery Are a Bad Idea and Racist, Too" (Brophy, 2005, p. 195; see also Horowitz, 2001). The resulting debate sparked renewed public interest in reparations.

In early 2007, a number of Southern states began issuing formal apologies for slavery—but no reparations payments. Virginia apologized in February, followed by Maryland in March, North Carolina in April, and Alabama in May. In January of 2008, New Jersey became the first Northern state to issue a formal apology for slavery, and in July 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives became the first branch of the federal government to do so (Craemer, 2009, p. 275). In June 2009, the U.S. Senate followed suit, while also ruling out reparations (Welna, 2009).

Soon after Ta-Nehisi Coates' (2014) call for reparations in *The Atlantic*, the first slavery reparations initiative with perpetrator-side acknowledgement in the United States emerged. In 2015, the hashtag #GU272 captured the public's imagination, referring to the sale of 272 people enslaved by Georgetown University in 1838 to save the university from financial ruin. The university's Working Group on Slavery, Memory and Reconciliation issued a report in 2016 recommending financial reparations (Svrluga, 2018).

In 2017, the university renamed a building for Isaac Hawkins, one of the GU272, at a ceremony with descendants. In 2019, in a non-binding vote, Georgetown students elected to impose on themselves a symbolic fee of $27.20 per semester to go to the descendants of the GU272 (Svrluga, 2019). The university chose not to follow the student vote but continued to look for other solutions. On March 16, 2021, the Jesuits pledged $100 million for descendants of enslaved people once owned by the Catholic order, which would apply to the GU272 as well (Iati, 2021). While the first in the United States to engage in perpetrator-side acknowledgement, Georgetown University's initiative is falling short in a number of ways, beginning with the small symbolic amounts involved, the reluctance to include the direct descendants in the decision-making process, and the resulting one-sided decisions on the part of the university.

On Juneteenth (June 19) 2019, the first Congressional hearings on reparations since Reconstruction were held, debating House Bill H.R. 40 (Stolberg, 2019). Since the bill does not provide for actual initial reparations installments, but merely for the study of reparations, it does not represent a reparations initiative per se. In the same year, several Democratic presidential hopefuls supported the idea of studying reparations put forward in House Bill H.R. 40 (Politico, 2020).

On September 9, 2019, Virginia Theological Seminary followed Georgetown University's lead and set aside $1.7 million for slavery reparations with the idea that the funds should go to the direct descendants of those enslaved who built the institution and worked for it (Burke, 2019). Although not directly involved in slavery, Princeton Theological Seminary set aside $28 million for slavery reparations on October 26, 2019, to atone for its entanglements with the institution of slavery (Kaur, 2019).

On July 15, 2020, the city of Asheville, North Carolina, became the first jurisdiction in the U.S. to vote unanimously to approve reparations for Black residents (Mizelle, 2020). Actual payout, however, has since stalled. California became the first state to form a reparations task force modeled after H.R. 40 on October 1, 2020. Assembly Bill 3121 had been introduced by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber (D–San Diego) and established a task force to study and make recommendations on reparations for slavery and post-slavery discrimination in the state of California (Holcombe, 2020). The bill has a similar limitation to that of H.R. 40, in that it creates a task force to *study* reparations rather than beginning to make payments.

The city of Evanston, Illinois, became the second city in the U.S. to vote for reparations for its Black residents on March 23, 2021. Reparations will be financed through a sales tax on recreational marijuana and, as a first step, $400,000 is being paid out to 16 eligible Black households, each qualifying for $25,000 to make up for housing discrimination (Associated Press, 2021). Rather than giving the recipients full decision-making rights over the funds, however, their use is limited to housing-related costs, and the funds go directly to the very banks that in the past may have been responsible for discriminatory lending practices.

Distinguishing Federal Reparations from Local Initiatives

Not all agree that individual, corporate, local, or state initiatives represent "reparations" in the true sense of the word. Darity and Mullen (2020, February 25) state,

> local . . . attempts at racial atonement do not constitute reparations proper . . . a series of local initiatives is highly unlikely to match the minimum bill for black reparations. . . . Taken separately or collectively, there is no evidence that local "reparations" will come close to . . . achieving an appropriate level of restitution.

Based on the historical precedent of German Holocaust reparations, one criterion essential for proper reparations is that a government—either the government that was responsible for the historical injustice, or its legal successor—take responsibility, issue an apology, and make reparations to individual victims, their descendants, or organizations representing and supporting victims or their descendants. This fact is rooted in the history of reparations for historical injustices in war reparations. In the case of war reparations, all parties are states, not individual victims or non-governmental organizations.

This was the case when the victors of World War I extracted reparations from Germany. Since these reparations and the economic crisis in Germany they engendered were believed to have contributed to the rise of the Nazi movement, the Western Allies were reluctant to demand war reparations from West Germany after World War II. In addition, in the emerging Cold War, they were interested in binding West Germany into the Western Bloc (Ludi, 2006). Thus, they did not act when Israel demanded that the Western Allies extract Holocaust reparations on its behalf from West Germany. What happened next set a precedent for future reparations measures: Going against public opinion at home, the West German government acknowledged its responsibility for paying reparations and turned to Israel for direct negotiations.

As early as November 11, 1949, West Germany's first Chancellor Konrad Adenauer stated, "The German people are resolved to make good the wrong done to the Jews in their name by a criminal regime. . . . This reparation we regard as our duty" (cited in Brecher, 1973, p. 86). This was the first time that perpetrator-side acknowledgment for reparations was forthcoming from a government representative, and it would set the tone for future reparations for historical injustices.

Eventual negotiations between West Germany, Israel, and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims resulted in an agreement with three components in 1952. First, Germany would help Israel with the expenses of resettling 500,000 Holocaust survivors. Second, West Germany would pay a lump sum to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims for "heirless Jewish property" (P. G., 1954). And third, West Germany would enact legislation for individual compensation (Brecher, 1973; P. G., 1954). Germany began paying individual Holocaust reparations pensions to survivors from 1953 and continues to pay them today.

Independent of these individual payments, West Germany paid reparations to 71,500 remaining Holocaust survivors in 1988 (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1988) and set up the foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future in 1999 to pay reparations to World War II-era slave laborers (Jewish Virtual Library, 2018). Overall, Eizenstat (2019) estimates that Germany has paid more than $60 billion in Holocaust reparations as of October 2019.

Federal Reparations for Historical Injustices

What remains from the original meaning of war reparations is that a *state actor* takes responsibility, apologizes, and pays. What is new is that the recipients are individual victims or their heirs, organizations taking care of victims, and a state that did not exist at the time of the historical injustice (Israel), also acting as a caretaker of victims (Holocaust refugees). The idea that governments owe reparations for historical injustices to individual victims and their heirs, or victims' organizations, ultimately led to reparations programs in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil for human rights violations committed under their respective dictatorships (De Greiff, 2006). This idea also helped guide South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Process that addressed the historical injustice of apartheid. This in turn inspired Canada's Truth and Reconciliation process regarding the impact of its residential school system on Indigenous children. Other cases include Malawi, where Life President Banda had violated human rights from 1961 to 1994, and the

United States, where reparations were paid to Japanese American World War II internees beginning in 1988 (De Greiff, 2006).

Consistent with these historical precedents, it would be the responsibility of the federal government of the United States to provide reparations to the African American descendants of the enslaved in the U.S. This is notwithstanding the fact that the federal government abolished slavery at great cost. Ending an injustice is not the same as making up for its enduring effects. Because many of the above-described individual, corporate, local, and state-level reparations initiatives for African American descendants of the enslaved in the U.S. do not involve the federal government as a reparations provider, they technically do not qualify as reparations policies. While they can drive forward the public debate on federal reparations, they are unlikely to be able to close the Black-white wealth gap, which according to Darity and Mullen (2020) represents "the cumulative economic effects of white supremacy in the United States" (p. 263).

"Coping with the Past"

Does this mean that individual, corporate, local, and state initiatives are less worthy than federal reparations? No, they drive the public debate on federal reparations and represent indispensable forms of restoring justice in their own right. Together with federal reparations, these individual, corporate, local, and state initiatives form part of a larger ongoing, and open-ended, process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*: "coping with the past."

In Germany, reparations for the Holocaust were paid long before other initiatives took place. Reparations were agreed upon in 1952, only seven years after the Holocaust ended. At the time, talking about the Holocaust was considered taboo in Germany, until the 1960s when the younger generations confronted their elders about the need for dialogue. This marked the beginning of the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which remains ongoing. People began researching their local archives, visiting concentration camp memorial sites, reworking school curricula, establishing museums, and producing and consuming historical documentaries. In conclusion, individual, corporate, local, and state initiatives, even if they do not technically constitute reparations, are important components of an effort to authentically cope with the past in the United States.

References

Allen, R. L. (1998). Past due: The African American quest for reparations. *The Black Scholar, 28*(2), 2–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1998.11430911

Araujo, A. L. (2019, June 1). *The history of Black women championing demands for reparations*. Truthout. https://truthout.org/articles/the-history-of-black-women-championing-demands-for-reparations/

Associated Press. (2021, March 23). *Evanston, Illinois, becomes first U.S. city to pay reparations to Black residents.* NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/evanston-illinois-becomes-first-u-s-city-pay-reparations-blacks-n1261791

Berry, M. F. (2005). *My face is Black is true. Callie House and the struggle for ex-slave reparations*. Vintage Books.

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2021). *Survey of consumer finances, 1989–2019.* https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scf/dataviz/scf/chart/#series:Net_Worth;demographic:racecl4;population:1,2,3,4;units:mean;range:1989,2019

Brecher, M. (1973). Images, process and feedback in foreign policy: Israel's decisions on German reparations. *American Political Science Review, 67*, 73–102.

Brophy, A. L. (2005). Reparations talk in college. *Michigan Journal of Race and Law, 11*, 195–217. https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=mjrl

Burke, D. (2019, September 9). *Virginia seminary sets aside $1.7 million to pay reparations to descendants of slaves.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/09/us/virginia-seminary-reparations

Coates, T. N. (2014, June). The case for reparations. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

Craemer, T. (2009). Framing reparations. *The Policy Studies Journal, 37*(2), 275–298.

Craemer, T., Smith, T., Harrison, B., Logan, T., Bellamy, W., & Darity, W. (2020). Wealth implications of slavery and racial discrimination for African American descendants of the enslaved. *The Review of Black Political Economy, 47*(3), 218–254. https://doi.org/10.1177/0034644620926516

Darity, W. (2008). Forty acres and a mule in the 21st century. *Social Science Quarterly, 89*(3), 656–664.

Darity, W., & Mullen, K. (2020). *From here to equality. Reparations for Black Americans in the twenty-first century*. University of North Carolina Press.

Darity, W., & Mullen, K. (2020, February 25). *True reparations are a national debt: Localities and individuals should not foot the bill and cannot build systemic remedies alone*. Roosevelt Institute. https://rooseveltinstitute.org/2020/02/25/true-reparations-are-a-national-debt-localities-and-individuals-should-not-foot-the-bill-and-cannot-build-systemic-remedies-alone/

De Greiff, P. (Ed.). (2006). *The handbook of reparations*. Oxford University Press.

Eizenstat, S. E. (2019, October 27). What Holocaust restitution taught me about slavery reparations. *Politico Magazine*. https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/10/27/slavery-reparations-holocaust-restitution-negotiations-229881

Garvey, M. (2017, August 4). *Marcus Garvey on reparations*. Institute of the Black World 21st Century. https://ibw21.org/reparations/marcus-garvey-reparations/

Holcombe, M. (2020, October 1). *California passes a first-of-its-kind law to consider reparations for slavery.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/01/us/california-bill-slavery-reparations-trnd/index.html

Horowitz, D. (2001, March 13). *Ten reasons why reparations for slavery is a bad idea—and racist too* [Facsimile]. Brown Digital Repository. https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:40830/

H.R. 40, Commission to Study & Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. (2021). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40

H.R. 63. (1865). http://rs6.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=039/llhb039.db&recNum=283

Iati, M. (2021, March 16). Jesuits pledge $100 million for descendants of enslaved people the Catholic order once owned. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2021/03/16/jesuits-slavery-reparations/

Jewish Telegraphic Agency. (1988). *Over 70,000 Holocaust survivors receive $200 million in reparations*. https://www.jta.org/1988/07/18/archive/over-70000-holocaust-survivors-receive-200-million-in-reparations

Jewish Virtual Library. (2018). *Holocaust restitution: German reparations*. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/reparations.html

Kaur, H. (2019, October 26). *A New Jersey religious college will set aside nearly $28 million for slavery reparations.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/26/us/princeton-seminary-slavery-reparations-trnd

King, M. L. (1963, August 28). I have a dream *by Martin Luther King, Jr; August 28, 1963*. The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, & Diplomacy. Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp

Ludi, R. (2006). The vectors of postwar victim reparations: Relief, redress and memory politics. *Journal of Contemporary History, 41*(3), 421–450. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30036397

Mittal, A., & Powell, J. (2000). The last plantation. *Food First, 6*(1), 1–8. https://foodfirst.org/publication/the-last-plantation/

Mizelle, S. (2020, July 15). *North Carolina city votes to approve reparations for Black residents.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/15/us/north-carolina-asheville-reparations/index.html

Neiman, S. (2019). *Learning from the Germans. Race and the memory of evil*. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

P. G. (1954). German reparations to Israel: The 1952 treaty and its effects. *The World Today, 10*, 258–274.

Politico. (2020, August 8). *Reparations.* https://www.politico.com/2020-election/candidates-views-on-the-issues/economy/reparations/

Stolberg, S. G. (2019, June 19). At historic hearing, House panel explores reparations. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/politics/slavery-reparations-hearing.html

Svrluga, S. (2018, January 17). “Make it right”: Descendants of slaves demand restitution from Georgetown. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/01/16/__trashed-2/

Svrluga, S. (2019, April 12). Georgetown students vote in favor of reparations for enslaved people. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/04/12/georgetown-students-vote-favor-reparations-slaves/

Welna, D. (2009, June 18). Senate apologizes for slavery [Audio podcast episode]. In *All Things Considered*. NPR. https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=105620620

Winbush, R. A. (Ed.). (2003). *Should America pay? Slavery and the raging debate on reparations*. Amistad.

Rematriation: Defining an Afrikan-Centered Reparatory Justice Response to the Epistemic Violence of Afrikan Enslavement

by

Dr. Nicola Frith Dr. Joyce Hope Scott & Ms. Esther Stanford-Xosei

from the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR)[11]

At this moment in time, many are questioning what is needed to heal from and transcend the harms enacted by the interconnected legacies of Afrikan enslavement, colonization, genocide, and racist oppression. Never before have there been so many invocations to deliberate on and atone for the crimes against humanity suffered by Afrikans who were trafficked and enslaved, and their descendants. A call for repair and restitution is foremost among the proposals to redress these crimes against humanity. Among the multiple features of that repair is the recognized need for psychological and spiritual rehabilitation to enable Afrikan-descended people to recenter or ground themselves culturally in, and spiritually to, the Afrikan Motherland through a process called rematriation.

Rematriation is a term often deployed by Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (the so-called Americas) to characterize the actions needed to heal the epistemic violence suffered at the hands of white enslavers and colonizers who brutality disconnected them from the land and epistemologies of their forebearers. It envisions "the restoration of a living culture to its rightful place on Mother Earth," or the restoration of a people to "a spiritual way of life, in sacred relationship with their ancestral lands, without external interference" (Newcomb & Lenape , 1995, p. 3).

A similar concept of rematriation is also being used in reference to the historical and spiritual restitution needed to repair the violations suffered by the descendants of those who were forcibly removed from Afrika. It is seen as the method by which the Afrikan Diaspora can return—culturally and spiritually—to its Indigenous knowledge archives and inform ways of thinking and being in the world. As both a theory and a praxis, it acknowledges that slavery not only entailed the theft of the body and its [pro]creations but also, and equally importantly, it encompassed the severing of the captive Afrikan from the cosmological and metaphysical knowledges that inform the very foundation of human identity—in this case, the Afrikan self.

---

[11] The INOSAAR is an independent and voluntary reparations consultancy and advocacy group that acts as a self-organizing cross-community bridging agency. It is co-facilitated by the authors of this article, Nicola Frith, Esther Stanford-Xosei, and Joyce Hope Scott.

The purpose of this essay is to outline an Afrikan-centered vision for rematriation, specifically as it is being developed by progressive Afrikan heritage grassroots communities and scholar-activists operating within what some recognize as the International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations (ISMAR) and the People's Reparations International Movement (PRIM). This is about envisaging or imagining a future to enable all of us, as Robin Kelly (2002) puts it, "to realize that things need not always be this way." Equally, this is about recognizing what practical solutions already exist or are actively being put in place by Afrikan heritage communities through their own desire for self-repair and how this connects to the urgent need for planet repairs.

In what follows, we will seek to provide both working definitions and practical examples of rematriation that stand in critical opposition to the neocolonial concept of repatriation. To do this, we will interrogate two recent examples of repatriation, including France's restitution of 26 cultural "artifacts" to Benin (November 2021) and Ghana's Year of Return (2019). These examples will act as counterpoints that present an alternative vision and praxis of return, reconnection, and revalorization.

The Repatriation of Afrikan Cultural Heritage

The past decade has seen mounting pressure for museums (and other institutions) to decolonize, along with the first tentative steps of the former colonizers to engage in reparatory justice—for example, through the return of objects of great cultural import seized during military conquests, so-called "scientific expeditions," and other examples of illicit trade. However, the process of return is not simply one of giving back, any more than reparations is simply a question of money. The process of restitution, as one aspect of reparations, requires us to pay close attention to the violation of the Afrikan episteme, or, to quote Molefi Kete Asante (2007), the extent to which "African people have moved off of or been moved off of their own philosophical, cultural, economic, and political terms" (p. 156).

The theft of artifacts from Afrikan colonies and elsewhere, including the well-known case of the Benin bronzes (British Museum, 2022), testifies to this process of cultural alienation. Cultural theft was part of a broader imperialist agenda that sought to violate Indigenous epistemologies through conquest, enslavement, and the territorial control of lands. As Elias notes, this kind of attack on the very epistemology of a people is what undergirded the chattelization of Afrikans, leading to the "extermination, annulment and destruction of certain knowledge and its bearers," including the loss of names, spirituality, languages, and ethnic history, or what is termed *epistemicide* (Elías, 2020).[12]

Statistically, we can measure the extent of the expropriation of Afrika's spiritual and cultural artifacts for Western markets—whether sold as art for "economic capitalization" or displayed in museums for "symbolic capitalization"—since it is estimated that "over 90% of the material cultural legacy of sub-Saharan Africa remains preserved and housed outside of the African continent" (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 3, 11). As Sarr and Savoy (2018) note in their important report, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage," this has created an "ensemble of displaced objects" that "constitute in fact a 'diaspora'" of their own (p. 30). This untenable situation is further compounded by the fact that 60% of Afrika's population is under 20 years of age, meaning that Afrikan youth are continuously being denied their right to "access to their own culture, creativity, and spirituality" (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 4). What is needed, Sarr and Savoy argue, is the immediate restitution of these artifacts.

---

[12] In Foucault's (1966/1989) terms, the *episteme* refers to the rules that validate "the fundamental codes of a culture—those governing its language, its schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchies of its practices" (p. xxii).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Sarr and Savoy's report was not well received by many sectors of the French press or among museum curators (Paquette, 2020). It was commissioned in the wake of French President Emmanuel Macron's speech to students at the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso on November 28, 2017. This address was notable for Macron's (2017) statement that he could no longer "accept that a large share of several African countries' cultural heritage be kept in France" and wished "the conditions to exist for temporary or permanent returns of African heritage to Africa" during his five-year mandate. To speak of a permanent return was remarkable because it went against the longstanding position adopted by France in relation to all artifacts held in its public museums and institutions, which are conveniently defined as "inalienable" through an antiquated French law dating back to the monarchic *Ancien Régime* (French Senate, 2008).

While this statement made for a good headline, the reality of returning these artifacts was and remains more complex. First and foremost, it requires us to think about the critical differences between Western- and Afrikan-centered approaches to restitution.

A Western-centric reading of Macron's speech and the subsequent actions taken by the French government would suggest that this was a watershed moment. It lent substance to the French president's quest to put to rest the ugly system of post(?)-colonial power relations known as *la Françafrique*, while simultaneously oiling the wheels of a brand-new, colonial-free Franco-African relation (Diop, 2018). The French government set to work creating a new law to permit the restitution of 27 artifacts. These included 26 artifacts looted from the Palace of Abomey in Benin in 1892 by the French army and held by the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, and a sword belonging to El Hadj Omar Tall held by the Musée de l'Armée, which is now on loan to the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar, Senegal. Their successful return in November 2021 symbolically marked the beginning of France's new Afrikan partnership, with the French Development Agency funding the construction of a museum in Abomey to house the artifacts (Agence Française de Développement, n.d.). The aim is to benefit Benin by bringing a much-needed boost to its tourist industry—a win-win for all concerned. The artifacts will remain protected in a museum (as the conditions for their return stipulate) and all (or at least tourists) will have the benefit of being able to visit them. This benevolent act of restitution, accompanied by significant commitment to providing French support at both financial and scientific levels, signals that France has done its duty, and in doing so, has saved Afrika's youth.

If we re-read these events through a decolonial lens, a somewhat different vision emerges. There is a marked difference between the way in which these artifacts are perceived by the French government and its museum curators and the Beninese government and its cultural and spiritual leaders. We get a glimpse of this difference in the comment made by Benin's President Patrick Talon during the ceremonies that accompanied the return of the heirlooms. These are not simply "cultural goods" (as French law on restitution labeled them), he stated, but rather, "our soul" (cited in Al Jazeera, 2021). Similarly, when the University of Aberdeen returned a looted Benin bronze statue to Nigeria, the Obasuyi of Benin, Chief Charles Uwensuyi-Edosomwan, noted that "For us, this is the recovery of a long-lost family member. These sculptures represent us. They are wrongly described as art pieces—they are not" (cited in Andonova, 2021).

As with much Afrikan material culture, there is no separation between art and life. Instead, art is used "to channel spiritual power from beyond the visual world, to aid and guide one's life through the existing world," meaning that these so-called objects represent ancestral "vessels of communion" ("The Communion of the Spiritual & Sculptural," n.d.). What was stolen was not a marketable good or a quantifiably valuable art object (as viewed through a colonial-capitalist worldview) but rather ancestral and spiritual heirlooms that link cultures generationally by transferring particular kinds of knowledge and identity. When considering their return, we therefore also need to recognize what is really needed to repair the "additional violence inflected onto the objects themselves" and how these heirlooms need to be re-socialized and re-initiated into their original culture (or what is left of it), as Lotte Arndt explains (cited in Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 30).

The restitution offered by France seems to pay scant attention to these concerns. Rather than signaling the beginning of a wholesale return of Afrikan heritage—including the estimated 90,000 objects of sub-Saharan Afrikan origin being held in French museums (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 44)—the restitution of these few pieces operates on a more invidious neocolonial level. The much-hailed new French law on restitution does not even slightly alter the original law on the alienation of cultural patrimony, and without this legal transformation, there will be no systemic decolonization of France's museums. Instead, the new law represents "a limited derogation" (or legal exemption) that permits only the return of these 27 artifacts and no more (LOI, 2020). As the French cultural minister Roselyne Bachelot has stated, this was *not* to be seen as an invitation to overturn France's heritage code and "will not create a legal precedent" (cited in McGivern, 2020).

Moreover, the conditions of return imposed by France require these artifacts "to be preserved and presented to the public in places dedicated to this [heritage] function" (McGivern, 2020)—hence the reason that the French Development Agency is funding the construction of the museum in Abomey. While such a move may well bring a welcome boost to Benin's tourism industry, we might question whether this is not just another way for France to broker its post(?)-colonial power relations. In this case, the need for restitution becomes little more than a political performance that occupies "symbolic space as a tool of *soft power* aiming to 'revalorize' France's image to an African generation of youth that is less and less Francophile" (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 31). In this semantic shift, France is no longer the colonial thief who ought to pay restitution, but rather, the benevolent steward of Afrika's cultural heritage for its youthful population.

The museumification of these cultural heirlooms under French protection is a far cry from the legal concept of restitution that seeks to "restore the victim to the original situation before the gross violations of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law occurred" (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2005). This leads us to the troubling question of what remains of the "original situation" and therefore, what is needed to achieve rematriation. In this sense, restitution acts as a yardstick for measuring all that has been lost and destroyed, not just through the theft of material culture, but because of the whole system of colonial epistemicide.

The Repatriation of Afrikans Living in the Diaspora

Similarly, concerns can be raised around the return and repatriation of Afrikans living in the Diaspora. In 2019, the Ghana Year of Return marked the 400-year anniversary of the first enslaved Afrikans' arrival in Jamestown in what would become the United States of America—

although the date itself is problematic, since 1619 was not the first date that enslaved Afrikans were trafficked to what would become the U.S. (Guasco, 2017). The Ghanaian government's website states that "'the Year of Return, Ghana 2019' is a major landmark spiritual and birth-right journey inviting the Global African family, home and abroad" (Accra Tourist Information Centre, 2019). However, many other commentators have opined that its main purpose was to "promote Ghana as a tourist destination and investment opportunity," which commercializes and commodifies the "return" of the Afrikan Diaspora (Engmann, 2019).

It is telling that the Year of Return and its 2007 predecessor—the Joseph Project, which formed part of the nation's 50th independence celebrations—were managed by the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture. Just as the Joseph Project "targeted middle-class, Christian African-Americans," so the main goal of the 2019 Year of Return "is to position Ghana as a key travel destination for African Americans and the African Diaspora," with events designed to serve "as a launch pad for a consistent boost in tourism for Ghana" leading to future "business and investment" (Engmann, 2017; Accra Tourist Information Centre, 2019).

As Engmann rightly argues, the "commercialisation of the 'return' requires the saleability of the history of the transatlantic slave trade for African diasporan consumption" (Engmann, 2017). In December of 2019, claims were made by the Ghanaian Minister of Tourism that the program had brought into Ghana an additional 200,000 people and injected $1.9 billion into the Ghanaian economy (Asiedu-Addo, 2019).

This model of return to "Euro-Afrika" (in Ghana) is hostile to the letter and spirit of Afrikan Indigenous concepts of rematriation. Like the museumification of cultural heirlooms for touristic and economic purposes, Ghana's Year of Return can be analyzed as a coloniality project of European power. Despite independence, the commercializing of the diasporan desire for return attests to the continued presence of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This commercial-capitalist matrix seeks to destroy Indigenous Afrikan communities, nations, states, and institutions by imposing structurally violent institutions and agencies of the dysfunctional European or British-style state machinery upon Indigenous communities. Such mechanisms reinforce the vestiges of European colonization and imperialism by further disempowering, dispossessing, and disenfranchising Indigenous Afrikan communities and nations.

Five decades since the independence proclamations of so-called sovereign Afrikan nation-states, Afrikans are still not able to reclaim community stewardship of their previously community-controlled environmental resources, including lands and sources of agricultural, aquacultural, and mineral resources. They are unable to return to their own collective utilization of such resources, in accordance with their own laws, traditions, and customs of Indigenous community participatory democracy. Afrikans living in the Diaspora are not returning to the "original situation" that existed pre-colonialism, but rather to an Afrika that is battling to effect rematriation in its own lands. This requires, first and foremost, stopping the Maangamizi of coloniality—that is, the continuation of colonial harms—regaining sovereignty and effecting *Sankofa* in charting alternative paths of progression and living well.[13]

Defining Rematriation as Theory and Praxis

In direct contrast with neocolonialist projects that seek to profit economically (again!) from crimes against humanity, while calling themselves "reparations," true reparatory rematriation seeks to address the enduring wrongs of enslavement and colonization. It does this by paying attention to the ongoing psychological and spiritual damage caused to the sensibilities of Afrikan-descended people through epistemicide and the continued existence of coloniality or the colonial matrix of power. No amount of money, land, or even assurance of social equality as reparation for slavery, colonialism, and their legacies is sufficient alone to repair the damage done to the Black psyche and spirit. True rematriation includes the right to return and belong. It encompasses the Sankofa principle of returning to Afrikan indigeneity to fetch one's Afrikan personality in material and spiritual terms, which are all rooted in the land and peoplehood of Afrika.

---

[13] A Twi word from the Akan people of Ghana that loosely translates to "go back and fetch it."

In this regard, it is important to highlight two concrete examples of rematriation in practice. In Benin, we are seeing the emergence of key cultural revalorization movements that are seeking to address concerns around epistemicide, notably through the formation of the Fédération des Associations des Cultes Endogènes du Bénin (FACEB; Info du Moment, 2020). The creation of the FACEB underscores the need for rematriation through self-repairs and community regeneration. Its purpose is to promote the revalorization of traditional kingship and chieftaincy, as well as the spiritual and cultural sects and other manifestations associated with the practice of Dahomean Vodoun and Yoruba Orisha traditions. In line with President Talon's desire to revalorize and protect endogenous beliefs, the FACEB might be seen as an act of reclaiming the very soul of a nation. Supported by the state, it has the potential to represent an archive of traditional knowledge for future reconnection and cultural study that will assist Afrikan people in the Diaspora and Afrikans on the continent in reconnecting to, and sustaining, Afrikan indigeneity.

In Ghana, the MAATUBUNTUMITAWO-Global Afrikan Family Reunion International Council (GAFRIC) is leading similar efforts. This is a Pan-Afrikan rematriation conclave of self-selecting Indigenous Afrikan community chiefs, elders, and other dignitaries who are involved in the restoration of Indigenous Afrikan sovereignty and the reunification of Afrikan people from the ground up. A key part of its work involves reconnecting the Afrikan Diaspora to Indigenous Afrikan and other communities of resistance.

Importantly, this process of reunification centers on connecting back to Mother Earth, or what is called *planet repairs*. When safeguarding the rights of past, present, and future generations, *planet repairs* refers to:

> the need to proceed from a standpoint of Pluriversality that highlights the nexus of reparatory, environmental and cognitive justice in articulating the impetus to repair holistically our relationship with, and inseparability from, the Earth, Environment and the Pluriverse giving due recognition to Indigenous Knowledges in contrast with western-centric Enlightenment ideals that separated Humanity from Nature and thereby justified exploitation for capital accumulation. (Frith & Stanford-Xosei, 2022)

MAATUBUNTIMITAWO-GAFRIC works in partnership with the U.K.-based Global Afrikan People's Parliament (GAPP) and is facilitated by the Stop the Maangamizi: We Charge Genocide/Ecocide Campaign to prefigure post-Afrikan reparations futures that will establish the building blocks of a future "self-repaired" Afrika. This vision is called *Maatubuntuman*: a Pan-Afrikan Union of Indigenous Afrikan nationalities and communities located on the continent of Afrika that embraces the Afrikan Diaspora's right to belong. Maatubuntuman is anchored in the ancient Afrikan humanist concepts of *Ma'at* (referring to the seven principles of truth, balance, order, harmony, righteousness, morality, and justice that all communities should embody) and *Ubuntu* (meaning "I am, because you are," or "a person is only a person through other people").

More than just a future vision, this is also a reality that is being established through the unification of glocally liberated zones of rematriation known as *Sankofahomes* throughout the continent. By bringing together Afrikan heritage communities across the world and utilizing models of non-territorial autonomy, these initiatives seek to restore national self-determination in the Diaspora through self-organizing and therefore "self-repairing" communities known as *Maatubuntujamaas*.

As a concept, then, rematriation acknowledges that for thousands of years, Afrikan ancestors lived (and continue to live) in spiritual relationship with the land through their ancestral cultures and traditions, and that a vital feature of reparations involves a sacred duty to reestablish or restore and maintain that relationship for the benefit of this and future generations. It means a spiritual rebirth to restore, reform, and recreate anew what was stolen or lost through systems of enslavement, colonialism, and the accompanying epistemicide (Sogorea Te' Land Trust, 2021). For Afrika's progeny, it is the restoration of a process that was disrupted by the transoceanic trafficking in Afrikan bodies, colonial conquest, and the hegemonic imposition of alien and alienating epistemologies. As a feature of reparations and restorative justice, this is a journey to reclaim ancestral knowledge lost to centuries of brutal enslavement, colonization, dispossession, confiscation of natural resources, miseducation, imposed religions, and epistemic violence. Ultimately, rematriation is a reclaiming of the spirits and everything else essentially indispensable to the Afrikan personality, peoplehood, and humanity on a collective journey to liberation (Newcomb, 2019).

References

Accra Tourist Information Centre. (2019). *About Year of Return, Ghana 2019.* https://www.yearofreturn.com/about/

Agence Française de Développement. (n.d.). *Abomey Museum: Promoting historical and cultural heritage in Benin.* https://www.afd.fr/en/carte-des-projets/abomey-museum-promoting-historical-and-cultural-heritage-benin

Al Jazeera. (2021, November 9). *France returns 26 treasures looted from Benin.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/9/france-hands-back-26-treasures-looted-from-benin

Andonova, D. (2021, October 28). "We are recovering a family member": Aberdeen University returns stolen Nigerian cultural artefact to its rightful owners. *The Press and Journal*. https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/3566574/we-are-recovering-a-family-member-aberdeen-university-returns-stolen-nigerian-cultural-artefact-to-its-rightful-owners/

Asante, M. K. (2007). *An Afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African renaissance.* Polity Press.

Asiedu-Addo, S. (2019, December 16). Year of Return generates $1.9 billion. *Graphic Online*. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/year-of-return-generates-1-9-billion.html

British Museum. (2022). *Benin bronzes.* https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/contested-objects-collection/benin-bronzes

The Communion of the Spiritual & Sculptural in African Art. (n.d.). https://artsandculture.google.com/usergallery/the-communion-of-the-spiritual-and-sculptural-in-african-art/GQJitCq_Gol1LA

Diop, B. B. (2018, March 23). Françafrique: A brief history of a scandalous word. *New African*. https://newafricanmagazine.com/16585/

Discours d'Emmanuel Macron à l'Université de Ouagadougou. (2017, November 28). https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-829-fr.pdf

Elías, S. (2020, November 25). *Epistemic violence against Indigenous Peoples.* International Work for Indigenous Affairs. https://www.iwgia.org/en/news/3914-epistemic-violence-against-indigenous-peoples.html

Engmann, R. A. A. (2019, August 22). *Ghana's Year of Return 2019: Traveler, tourist or pilgrim?* The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ghanas-year-of-return-2019-traveler-tourist-or-pilgrim-121891

Foucault, M. (1989). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. Routledge. (Original work published 1966)

French Senate. (2008). *Étude de législation comparée n° 191, décembre 2008: L'aliénation des collections publiques.* https://www.senat.fr/lc/lc191/lc191_mono.html

Frith N., & Stanford-Xosei, E. (in press). Reparations activism in the UK: A Pan-African journey towards planet repairs. In A. Adebajo (Ed.), *Slavery, colonialism, and reparations*. Institute for Pan-African Thought & Conversation.

Guasco, M. (2017, September 13). The misguided focus on 1619 as the beginning of slavery in the U.S. damages our understanding of American history. *Smithsonian Magazine*. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/misguided-focus-1619-beginning-slavery-us-damages-our-understanding-american-history-180964873/

Info du Moment. (2020, November 5). *Bénin/Culture: La Faceb procède à l'inauguration de son siège national.* http://infodumoment.info/benin-culture-la-faceb-procede-a-linauguration-de-son-siege-national/

Kelley, R. (2002, November 2). Freedom dreams. *New Internationalist*. https://newint.org/features/2002/11/01/race

LOI n° 2020-1673 du 24 décembre 2020 relative à la restitution de biens culturels à la République du Bénin et à la République du Sénégal. (2020, December 24).

McGivern, H. (2020, December 17). French restitution bill passes final hurdle in Parliament. *The Art Newspaper*. https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2020/12/17/french-restitution-bill-passes-final-hurdle-in-parliament

Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis.* Duke University Press.

Newcomb, S. (2019). *Rematriation.* Rematriating Borikén. https://rematriatingboriken.com/rematriation/

Newcomb, S., & Lenape, S. (1995). Perspectives: Healing, restoration, and rematriation. *News & Notes*. http://ili.nativeweb.org/perspect.html

Paquette, J. (2020). France and the restitution of cultural goods: The Sarr-Savoy report and its reception. *Cultural Trends, 29*(4), 302–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2020.1819773

Sarr, F., & Savoy, B. (2018). *The restitution of African cultural heritage: Toward a new relational ethics.* http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf

Sogorea Te' Land Trust. (2021, July 12). *Rematriation resource guide.* https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/2021/07/12/rematriation-resource-guide/

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2005, December 16). *Basic principles and guidelines on the right to remedy and reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law.* https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/remedyandreparation.aspx

Framing the Study of Black Economics

by

Justin Gammage, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
California State University Dominguez Hills
Department of Africana Studies

African Americans' quest for economic justice and equality has been a complex and multifaceted journey that is at the core of African Americans' resistance to racism and its ill effects. Thus, a discussion focusing on the economic reality of African Americans must explore the historical politics of race that remain a prevailing certainty in the 21st century. The harmful effects of institutional white supremacy have manifested as a contemporary reinforcement of the racial currency that has been attached to race, which negatively impacts the global African community.

The study of Black economics is a growing field and a critical pillar in addressing historic and systemic barriers that hinder the forward progress of people of African descent in eliminating threats that challenge their wellbeing. Economics is wide in scope and intertwined with nearly every aspect of American society. Economists recognize that economics is an integrative system that informs and influences all aspects of our society (e.g., politics, education, social structures; Karenga, 2002). Thus, it is impossible to isolate an economic analysis without considering factors such as race, gender, class, power, and politics. While economics is the study and process of producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services, Africana studies scholars have worked to provide a better understanding of its relationship with other social institutions.

In May 2008, the *Journal of Black Studies* published a special issue dedicated to exploring the relationship between the discipline of Africana studies and economics. This collection of articles emphasized the need for Africana studies, as an intellectual enterprise, to infuse economics into its curricula, academic discourse, and training of future scholars. While this is not the first intellectual project to focus on an interdisciplinary approach to studying and conceptualizing Black economics, it raised critical questions that must be addressed.

A central theme of this special edition is the significance of tackling economic challenges facing African Americans. Jessica Gordon-Nembhard (2008) states it best when proclaiming,

> Economic equality is the unfinished business of the civil rights struggle. . . . An investigation into the ways African American students are being trained in economics, and the limitations of this training, suggests that we are not preparing them (or youth in general) to adequately address this unfinished business or to become economic movers and shakers. (pp. 758–759)

To accurately assess the current state of Africana peoples' economic reality, adopting the appropriate approach is therefore necessary. Black political economy informs this analysis, which is "the study of the interrelationship between politics and economics and the power relations they express and produce" for the purpose of actualizing Black economic development (Karenga, 2002, p. 47).

African Americans' Current Economic Status

The following section establishes a context for locating the economic status of African American households and understanding the state of their financial activities. My analysis will focus on wealth holdings, investment activities, homeownership rates, and employment. As stated, these considerations do not fully encompass all factors that influence African Americans' economic status, but they provide a snapshot of the fundamental dynamics that measure a group's financial health.

Wealth and Investment Practices

Wealth is the foundation of good economic health. "Wealth is anything of economic value bought, sold, stocked for future disposition, or invested to bring an economic return," write Shapiro and Oliver (2006, p. 30). An accurate assessment of African Americans' economic health must therefore include an examination of their collective wealth holdings.

Significant Issues

The literature reveals that most African American households do not own wealth-generating assets. This trend has been consistent since the 1970s, when economists began intentionally studying wealth disparities. According to the Federal Reserve (Bhutta, 2020), African American families have a median net worth of $24,100. In addition, African American families have a mean net worth of $142,500 (Bhutta, 2020). While these figures may already appear significant, it is worth noting that net worth is inclusive of home equity and the financial value of nonliquid assets. Moreover, African Americans are more likely to store their wealth in their home equity. Essentially, this means to gain access to their wealth (i.e., convert it to liquid cash), most African Americans would have to liquidate (sell) or borrow against the asset. Most lending institutions generally allow homeowners to borrow up to 80% of the total value minus the debt on the asset. Thus, the actual cash value of nonliquid assets is a fraction of the net worth value.

African American households have the lowest wealth holdings among the racial groups tracked by the Federal Reserve. In 2019, African American heads of household 35 years of age and younger were virtually without any wealth holdings. The median wealth holdings of African Americans 35 and younger is $600 (Bhutta, 2020). African Americans between 35 and 54 control $40,100 of wealth, while African Americans 55 and older, on average, have $53,800 of wealth stored (Bhutta, 2020). The data show that African Americans' wealth holdings follow the typical life cycle for wealth accumulation. Unfortunately, African Americans accumulate wealth at the lowest rate among all other racial groups within the United States.

African Americans' wealth holdings are also influenced by the rate of inheritance. Only 10% of African Americans inherit generational wealth. Generational wealth is primarily passed down through homeownership. However, in 2019, only 18% of African Americans under 35 owned their homes (Bhutta, 2020). In 2019, 51% of African Americans between 35 and 54 owned their homes, and 58% of African Americans 55 and older owned their homes. These statistics are troubling, given that the pathway toward wealth in the United States generally flows through real estate and property ownership. Generational transfer of wealth is a key factor in addressing the racial wealth gap. When controlling for all variables, generational transfer of wealth explains more than 60% of the racial wealth gaps (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Another important observation denoting the lack of wealth accumulation is the mean holding of liquid assets. Among African Americans, the mean holding of liquid assets was $1,500 in 2019. Further, just 33.5% of African American households owned stocks in the same year (Choe, 2020).

African Americans continue to be systematically barred from homeownership, which directly affects their ability to accumulate wealth. The historical legacy of restrictive housing covenants continues to constrict African Americans' ability to accumulate generational wealth. In addition, these practices perpetuate a system that ascribes economic value to race. This value system works to depreciate housing assets owned by African Americans while simultaneously increasing home values for white Americans. This social value system inflicts critical harm upon African Americans' economic wellbeing, since African Americans primarily store their wealth in their homes. The mechanisms that help shape African Americans' access to wealth-generating assets are rooted in a racist structure that dictates the value of Black home assets. In the 1930s, the Federal Housing Authority institutionalized this practice, and it still has not been corrected. Contemporary movements that seek to dismantle systemic barriers to wealth will have to confront the social value system that works against the best economic, social, and political interests of African Americans.

Recommendations

Africana studies scholars, in collaboration with economists, must spearhead the work of identifying the factors that contribute to producing a lag in the growth of Black wealth. These projects should be grounded and informed by African Americans' reality and explore internal and external variables that shape the current health of African Americans' collective wealth holdings. This recommendation follows the tradition of Africana studies scholars and economists to produce data-driven analysis geared toward transforming African Americans' current collective status. In addition, this research should aim to guide policy intended to address wealth disparities and inequitable access to wealth-generating assets. This research will play a guiding role within social movements that seek to create a more equitable society.

Additional efforts to address wealth inequities such as reparations should be explored as well. This would require that H.R. 40 be moved forward and approved. It is worth mentioning that H.R. 40 is simply a proposal to study the effects of the enslavement of people of African descent, meaning the idea of reparations has not even reached the exploratory phase for the federal government.

Employment

Employment is the second leading variable that explains the racial wealth gap. African Americans continue to lag behind most racial groups in terms of income.

Significant Issues

The factors contributing to their lower earnings include African Americans' high concentration in low-paying industries. In 2018, the Center for American Progress reported that African Americans were overrepresented in some of the lowest-paying agricultural, domestic, and service vocations (Solomon, 2019). For example, African Americans represented 37% of all baggage porters, bellhops, and concierges, 30% of all barbers, 27% of all taxi drivers and chauffeurs, and 25% of all food servers at non-restaurant venues. While in 2019, African Americans' collective consumer expenditures approximated $839 billion, the average African American household earned $45,870 in 2020 (Hale, 2021). The median African American household income is reflective of having moderate to low-income jobs.

African Americans' collective economic reality has improved with regard to decreasing the rate of African American households living below the poverty line. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2010, 27.4% of African American households lived below the poverty line (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2011). Within a 10-year span, the rate of African American households living below the poverty line decreased to 19.5% in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). While this statistic is encouraging, I must note that this analysis only focuses on the lowest-earning households and does not examine upward mobility of African American households in other earning categories. A deeper dive into the numbers shows a starker reality. Between 2010 and 2020, African American median household income had an annual average increase of 4.3%, slightly more than the rate of inflation for the same period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). It is worth noting that between 1965 and 2010, African American median income increased by less than $20,000. This indicates that African Americans' mobility has changed little over the past decades.

Recommendations

A commitment must be made by the federal government as well as local and state governments to track and collect data on hiring trends. More importantly, these agencies must ensure that they monitor their own hiring practices with regard to government bids and contracts. Diversifying employment distribution among African Americans must be prioritized and supported at all levels of government. In addition, educational institutions must take measures to address the growing digital divide that contributes to inequities in employment. Current policies on employment discrimination must also be enforced, and new policies must be enacted, to protect African Americans from underemployment and trends that increase employment inequities.

Homeownership

As stated above, homeownership is crucial for understanding African Americans' economic situation. Homeownership rates have fluctuated among African Americans in the last 10 years but have never undergone a notable rise.

Significant Issues

In 2010, 45.4% of African American families were homeowners. In 2020, African American homeownership rates took a small dip to 45.3%. While the decrease was minor, it is extremely alarming that in a 10-year span, African Americans did not experience any upward movement in their rate of homeownership.

This snapshot illustrates that African Americans have made no significant advancements in the last 10 years in the areas of wealth holdings, homeownership rates, and movement away from industries that are saturated with low-wage jobs. There has been an uptick in African Americans' diversification of their investment portfolios; however, the majority of African Americans' investment activities involve practical assets such as their homes and retirement accounts. A large-scale exploratory research project that seeks to identify and explain African Americans' investment practices would address a void in the current research that would provide much-needed insight on the rational for African Americans' investment strategies.

Recommendations

Homeownership is the hallmark of wealth for African American households. Policies that seek to protect African American borrowers from discriminatory lending practices must be enforced. In addition, the federal, state, and local governments must track trends in lending institutions' decisions in order to address racial bias in lending practices. In addition, homeownership programs should be created to increase African American homeownership rates.

Critical Concerns

A critical question that must be adequately answered is, does the current economic system have the capacity to facilitate Black economic development? Black economic development extends beyond affording African Americans access to financial resources. In large part, we must assess whether the economic system can address the racial and cultural value system embedded in the structure that influences political, social, and economic outcomes. More specifically, we must answer this question: "Is capitalism a viable means of actualizing and maintaining Black economic development without compromising Africana peoples' cultural integrity?" As we continue to explore the potential strategies for improving African Americans economic reality, we must be systematic in our approach and intentional about developing new economic systems that align with our culture and social-psychological wellbeing. If capitalism (or any other existing economic system) does not aid in building community that nourishes our cultural roots that have been critical for sustaining our humanity, it is imperative to think and collectively work together to develop a new system that champions justice, equity, and growth.

Past initiatives geared toward Black economic development have largely sought to challenge policy and institutional practices that undermine Black peoples' economic potentials. In addition, an extensive amount of attention has been geared toward analyzing Black peoples' engagement in the economy to assess whether their collective economic behavior is conducive to success and economic development. Beyond public policy, institutional practices, and Blacks' engagement, a critical analysis must be conducted to explore the centrality of race and how it transcends the basic theory for economic success. While institutions past and present such as slavery, Jim Crow legislation, segregation, and racially discriminatory practices in lending within the banking industry bar African Americans from accumulating wealth, they also reinforce a system that assigns value to race, with equally devastating results. In essence, the historical practice of producing Black disadvantage while simultaneously affording white privilege supports and reinforces the concept of white supremacy. Addressing Black economic disadvantage perpetuated by a system rooted in advancing and preserving white privilege, power, and prestige will be a critical element of adequately resolving racial inequality with respect to economic justice.

| It is common for economists and federal agencies to produce reports that provide a racial comparative analysis. These reports offer a snapshot that highlights production gaps among

racial groups but often ignore current racial factors and historic barriers that produce these disparities. In addition, these reports standardize the production of white households. This approach implicitly labels African American households as deficient and underperforming. An analysis of the generational transfer of wealth would aid in expanding our understanding of these disparities and understanding the weight of systematic racism over time.

Conclusions

It is essential for Africana studies scholars to collaborate with economists to understand the current economic challenges faced by people of African descent. Collaborations in the past have proven useful for confronting structural racism. Stewart (2008) speaks to the significance of these collaborations in stating, "The environmental justice movement champions redevelopment policies that are in balance with nature, honor the cultural integrity of communities, and provide fair access for all to the full range of resources" (p. 801). Similarly, a collaboration between Africana studies scholars and economists could help to generate new policy and fuel current social and economic movements that are pushing for structural change.

References

Bhutta, N., Chang, A. C., Dettling, L. J., & Hsu, J. W. (2020). *Disparities in wealth by race and ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances* [FEDS Notes]. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. https://doi.org/10.17016/2380-7172.2797

Choe, S. (2020, October 12). *Stocks are soaring, and most Black people are missing out.* ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/stocks-soaring-black-people-missing-73567655

DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2014). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2013* [Current population reports, P60–249]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2014/demo/p60-249.html

DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D., & Smith, J. C. (2011). *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2010* [Current population reports, P60–239]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2011/demo/p60-239.html

Fontenot, K., Semega, J., & Kollar, M. (2018). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2017* [Current population reports, P60–263]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.html

Gordon-Nembhard, J. (2008). Alternative economics: A missing component in the African American studies curriculum, teaching public policy and democratic community economics to Black undergraduate students. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*(5), 758–782. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021934707310294

Hale, K. (2021). *The $300 billion Black American consumerism bag breeds big business opportunities.* Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/korihale/2021/09/17/the-300-billion-black-american-consumerism-bag-breeds-big-business-opportunities/?sh=7271168f34fc

H.R. 40, Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. (2021). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40

Karenga, M. (2002). *Introduction to Africana studies.* Sankora Press.

Oliver, M., & Shapiro, T. (2006). *Black wealth/white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality.* Routledge.

Proctor, B. D., Semega, J. L., & Kollar, M. A. (2016). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2015* [Current population reports, P60–256(RV)]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.html

Semega, J., Kollar, M., Shrider, E. A., & Creamer, J. F. (2020). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2019* [Current population reports, P60–270 (RV)]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p60-270.pdf

Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., & Castrol, A. (2019). *Systematic inequality and economic opportunity.* The Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systematic-inequality-economic-opportunity/

Stewart, J. B. (2008). Africana studies and economics: In search of a new progressive partnership. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*(5), 795–805.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *Quarterly residential vacancies and homeownership, third quarter 2021* [CB21–166]. https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/q321ind.html

“Whatever We Call Our Politics—Leftist, Feminist, Anti-Racist—Dignity and Survival Are Our Core Concerns”: On the “Core Concerns” of the Black Lives Matter Movement

by

Dr. Reiland Rabaka
Professor of African, African American,
and Caribbean Studies,
Department of Ethnic Studies;
Founder and Director of the Center
for African & African American Studies
University of Colorado Boulder

After centuries of arduous struggle, the new collective cry of “Black Lives Matter!” has risen from the ashes and anger, the heartache and moral outrage, of the aftermath of the Black Freedom Movement (circa 1945 to 1975), which includes the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Black Women’s Liberation Movement, and Black Arts Movement (Jeffries, 2018). It is important to emphasize that the Black Lives Matter movement (hereafter abbreviated as BLM) is not about *hating* white people, but instead about *loving* Black people and defending them against anti-Black racist assaults (both physical and psychological). In *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*, BLM co-founder Alicia Garza (2020) asserts, “For most of us, whatever we call our politics—leftist, feminist, anti-racist—dignity and survival are our core concerns” (p. 9). Many people know about the Black Lives Matter movement. However, few have taken the time to explore its core concerns, and how those core concerns were inherited from previous Black protest movements. Fewer still have examined the ways in which BLM built on the visions and missions of previous Black protest movements to develop an expansive and inclusive movement that has as much concern for the lives and struggles of Black women and Black queer folk as it is about Black men’s distinct lives and struggles.

Revolutionary Blackness and Relearning to Love Ourselves (and Others)

It is only when continental and diasporan Africans systematically and critically engage in interrogating white supremacist constructions of Blackness that we begin to consciously decolonize and deconstruct these false, anti-Black racist constructions of Blackness and reconstruct a new *revolutionary Blackness*—that is, *a Blackness that transgresses and transcends anti-Black racism and white supremacy and, also, a bold Blackness that promotes* *revolutionary humanism and solidarity with other racially colonized and economically exploited people, as well as authentic white anti-racist allies*. Transgressing and transcending anti-Black racism and white supremacy revolves around revolutionary humanism, because at the heart of real humanism is an emphasis on *love*—and, although I know I need not say it, authentic love goes above and beyond race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation (Rabaka, 2010, pp. 49–96).

By combating anti-Black racism and white supremacy with revolutionary humanism, Black folk embrace *the utility of anger*—that is, we literally use our anger and moral outrage as an instrument in our battles against anti-Black racism and white supremacy. By incorporating our anger and moral outrage into our processes of *revolutionary self-reclamation, decolonization, and re-Africanization*, continental and diasporan Africans evoke something Audre Lorde (1984) shared with us long ago in "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" when she wrote "anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies. Anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 127).

In working through our anger and moral outrage at anti-Black racism and white supremacy, *continental and diasporan Africans must positively use the negativity of anger*. In this way, our anger becomes an "act of clarification," and instead of destabilizing us and inducing a deep and destructive depression, it teaches and inspires, which is why Lorde asserted that "anger is loaded with information and energy." One of the great lessons that using anger as a source of self-reclamation and social transformation offers is that ultimately it is *relearning to love*, both ourselves and others, that provides us with the strength to continue the struggle, the will to go on, and the resolve to revolutionize our relationships, not only with Black and other non-white folk, but—and this is precisely why revolutionary humanism is at the heart of revolutionary Blackness—with whites as well. However—and here is the hitch—in consciously committing ourselves to Black liberation, to the struggle to end anti-Black racism and white supremacy, we must not make the mistake of committing to working for, and with, other Black people exclusively. Our vision of a world without anti-Black racism and white supremacy must be expansive, inclusive, ethical, and more profoundly, love-based. In other words, our vision must be guided by principles of revolutionary humanism, which means it must be open to struggling in concert with all authentic anti-racist allies and critical comrades, fostering coalitions and alliances to inspire and strengthen national and international anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements. Undoubtedly, the Black Lives Matter movement is the most electrifying Black protest movement to emerge in the first quarter of the 21st century, and it unambiguously embodies both revolutionary Blackness *and* revolutionary humanism (Rabaka, 2010, pp. 271–304).

The "Red Summer of 1919" *Redux*

When the long history of anti-Black racist violence in the U.S. is taken into serious consideration, then, and perhaps only then, does the Black Lives Matter movement make any sense. Even though the media has frequently focused on the "shouting" and "ranting" of a few members of the movement, in practice the major expressions of the movement have followed more carefully defined and, for the most part, more familiar African American socio-political movement methods (e.g., direct-action protests, street rallies, marches, demonstrations, conferences, and concerts). In fact, although the Black Lives Matter movement is mainly social and political, the cultural and artistic influence of the movement should not be overlooked:

Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," Beyoncé's "Formation," Janelle Monae's "Hell You Talmbout," Jamila Woods' "VRY BLK," Childish Gambino's "This Is America," H.E.R.'s "I Can't Breathe," and Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture," for instance, did not emerge out of the ether. These songs are part of a BLM soundtrack that helps to highlight the fact that the movement is simultaneously social and political, as well as cultural and artistic. Consequently, similar to the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement that preceded it, the ideals and ethos of the Black Lives Matter movement manifest themselves in a variety of ways and in a variety of works: some spiritual and intellectual, some social and political, some cultural and artistic (Orejuela & Shonekan, 2018; Rios, 2021).

Echoes of Ida B. Wells and W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune and Marcus Garvey, Zora Neal Hurston and Langston Hughes resound from the tear-soaked and blood-stained pages of the literature emerging out of the Black Lives Matter movement, eerily recalling the critiques of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow laws, as well as the anti-lynching activism during the first decades of the 20th century. As is often said, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*—the more things change, the more they stay the same. In other words, for those of us who have a serious sense of African American history, culture, and struggle, it would seem that we are sadly passing through an epoch in the 21st century that is essentially the "Red Summer of 1919" redux (Brundage, 1997; Dray, 2003; Markovitz, 2004; Shapiro, 1988; Waldrep, 2009; Zangrando, 1980).

As African Americans fanned out across the country in the early years of the 20th century, most thought very little of the Red Scare of 1919, but anti-communism quickly translated into xenophobia, and xenophobia almost immediately mutated into fickle forms of anti-Black racist violence that in many ways rivaled the horrors African Americans endured during the 1880s and 1890s—an era that noted historian Rayford Logan, in *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877–1901*, famously characterized as "the nadir of American race relations" (Logan, 1954). African Americans had many reasons for migrating to the North, including to escape lynching, Jim Crow laws, anti-Black racist restrictions on their voting and civil rights, and the collapsing economy of the rural South, where the boll weevil was devastating cotton crops. By most accounts, the Red Summer of 1919 began in May in Charleston, North Carolina, where a white sailor shot an African American civilian to death. The "race riot" that ensued left 7 African Americans dead and more than 35 wounded, with 3 white sailors and 1 white policeman injured (Foley, 2003; Krugler, 2014; McWhirter, 2011; Tuttle, 1970; Voogd, 2008; Whitaker, 2009).

Next, Ellisville, Mississippi exploded in late June. There, a fanatical gang of white men fatally wounded an alleged Black rapist by the name of John Hartfield as he sought to escape from capture by way of a sugar cane field. Reports indicate that a local white physician fiendishly kept Hartfield alive so that he could be "properly" lynched the next day. The local newspapers gleefully announced the time and place of Hartfield's lynching, while the governor of Mississippi, Theodore Bilbo, callously remarked that "nobody can keep the inevitable from happening" (McWhirter, 2011, p. 69). On the day after Hartfield's lynching, the local newspapers shamelessly reported that more than three thousand townspeople and "upstanding" citizens gathered at the appointed tree and, after fervently debating the "best" way to torture him before they killed him, Hartfield's executioners castrated, hanged, burned, and then, for good measure, repeatedly shot his lifeless, charred, and brutally bludgeoned body. Several sources reported that "pieces of his corpse were chopped off and sold as souvenirs" (Finnegan, 2013, pp. 13–34; McWhirter, 2011, pp. 68–71).

By summer's end, this sickening scene was repeated in more than three dozen U.S. cities, including the nation's capital. In response to the carnage, one of the leading lights of the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay, drummed out his most defiant and most famous poem, the immortal "If We Must Die." It became both the battle oath and battle anthem of the New Negro Movement: "If we must die, let it not be like hogs/ Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot/ While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs/ Making their mock at our accursed lot" (McKay, 1919/2008, pp. 177–178). Indeed, this was not Paul Laurence Dunbar's much-heralded "dialect poetry." It represented something altogether different—something clearly distinguished from even those race-conscious writings offered up by notable 19th-century Black radicals such as Frederick Douglass, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Martin Delany, Alexander Crummell, Mary Ann Shadd, and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. Similar to McKay's passionate plea over a hundred years ago, the Black Lives Matter movement symbolizes the evolution of the Black protest tradition (Gates & Jarrett, 2007).

The Core Concerns of an Intersectional, Multi-Issue, Black Queer Feminist-Inspired Movement

The distinct discourses of *Africology*/Africana studies exist furtively in the insurgent intellectual-activist imagination, seemingly stripped of its critical potency and even mocked by postmodernists, postcolonialists, post-feminists, and post-Marxists (among many others) who argue that Black radicalism is old-fashioned and irrelevant in the "post-racial" world of the 21st century. It seems as though Black radicalism in the 21st century continues to represent a riddle, or series of riddles, that remain the hallowed hallmark of the "wretched of the earth," even though "conventional" critics consistently downplay and attempt to diminish the salience of race, racism, racial violence, and of course, white supremacy. Black radicalism has been all but banished in contemporary discourse, as it was with classical discourse, blithely relegated to the status of a ruse put forward by the unruly Blacks of bygone eras—that is to say, those "Pan-African insurgents," "Negritude nuisances," "Civil Rights radicals" and, of course, "Black Power pests" of the past.

However, for those of us with unquenchable commitments to continuing the fight for freedom, for those of us deeply disturbed by what is going on in our warming and war-torn world, and for those of us who desperately search for solutions to our most pressing social and political problems, Black radicals' anti-imperialist ideas and actions, Black radicals' increasing commitments to racial *and* gender justice, Black radicals' revolutionary humanist political vision and theories of social change are far from antiquated. These decidedly Black *and* radical ideas, actions, and theories of social change have historically offered, and continue to offer, much-needed *Africological* alternatives to, and through, the mazes of ever-increasing Eurocentrism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, post-feminism, and post-Marxism, among other contemporary conceptual distractions and disruptions. Along with other Black radicals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Claudia Jones, C.L.R. James, Louise Thompson Patterson, Frantz Fanon, Ella Baker, Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Amilcar Cabral, Angela Davis, and Assata Shakur, the Black Lives Matter movement provides us with an opportunity to begin to critically rethink the possibilities of resistance to, and the transgressive transformation of, the new global imperialisms of our age.

The Black Lives Matter movement is a wide-ranging and far-reaching movement for racial justice, gender justice, LGBTQIA+/queer justice, economic justice, and radical socio-political transformation that was sparked by police violence, state violence, white vigilante violence, and other forms of ongoing racial terrorism against African Americans (circa 2012 to the present). "While it may be surprising that a Black protest movement . . . emerged during the Obama presidency . . . the reluctance of his administration to address any of the substantive issues facing Black communities has meant that suffering has worsened in those communities over the course of Obama's term in office" and its aftermath, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2016, p. 10) insightfully asserts in *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*.

It is important for us to know the historical roots, political critiques, social commentary, cultural contributions, and artistic activism of BLM. Moreover, it is important for us to emphasize that the Black Lives Matter movement is grounded in, and grew out of, the Black radical feminist tradition in the U.S., which is distinguished from other forms of feminism by its emphasis on intersectionality; the centrality of race and anti-Black racism in interlocking systems of oppression such as patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, colonialism, and the U.S. criminal justice system; the critique of Black women's devaluation both within and without the Black community; the importance of Black women's group-centered/collective leadership (i.e., non-hierarchal *and* non-heteropatriarchal leadership); the need for a deeper understanding of, and alliance with, Black LGBTQIA+ lives and struggles; and, finally, the significance of centering the most marginalized and vulnerable members of the Black community in theories, praxes, and movements claiming to be working on behalf of Black people and contributing to the Black liberation struggle.

In *Making All Black Lives Matter*, acclaimed historian Barbara Ransby (2018) perhaps put it best when she declared:

> Black feminist politics and sensibilities have been the intellectual lifeblood of this movement and its practices. This is the first time in the history of U.S. social movements that Black feminist politics have defined the frame for a multi-issue, Black-led mass struggle that did not primarily or exclusively focus on women. (p. 3)

In keeping with the Black feminist origins and evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement, we should note that the movement serves as a central source and site of 21st-century Black radical feminist theory *and* praxis (i.e., *Black feminist praxis-promoting theory* or, rather, *Black feminist theory with practical intent*). Furthermore, considering the fact that two of the three co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi, openly and unapologetically identify as "Black queer feminists" (Sullivan, 2019) and are committed to including the lives and struggles of Black LGBTQIA+ folk in BLM, this movement also offers us an opportunity to critically explore the ways in which Black queer and trans folk have been marginalized and ostracized both within and without the Black community (Carruthers, 2018; Khan-Cullors & bandele, 2018).

The Black Lives Matter movement is unique, even when compared with other Black protest movements, because it builds on, synthesizes, and seeks to go beyond the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Women's Liberation Movement, LGBTQIA+ Liberation Movement, Free Speech Movement, New Left Movement, Anti-War Movement, Prisoners' Rights Movement, Pan-African Movement, Decolonization Movement, Anti-Apartheid Movement, Hip Hop Movement, and Occupy Wall Street Movement. Some of the major theories the Black Lives Matter movement draws from, and contributes to, include critical race theory and the critique of anti-Black racism, Black feminism and womanism, Black queer theory and queer of color critique, Pan-Africanism and Black radicalism, Black Marxism and Black leftism, and anti-colonial theory and decolonial theory. Understanding the Black Lives Matter movement as a 21st-century manifestation of the Black Freedom Movement, numerous connections can be made between the historical figures, movements, and organizations that BLM took as models to refer to in building its multi-issue movement. For example, it is virtually impossible to fully comprehend the Movement for Black Lives' (2020) "A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom, and Justice" without some working knowledge of the Combahee River Collective's (1977/1986) "The Combahee River Collective Statement" and the Black Panther Party's (1968) "Ten-Point Program." There is a serious sense in which the Movement for Black Lives' "A Vision for Black Lives" can be conceived of as a 21st-century re-articulation of many of the arguments, critiques, and demands made in the Combahee River Collective and Black Panther Party documents from the 1960s and 1970s.

All of this is to say, the Black Lives Matter movement is both the culmination and continuation of previous Black protest movements. It is not merely the mainstream media frenzy flashpoints (e.g., Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Michael Brown and the Ferguson Uprising, Freddie Gray and the Baltimore Uprising, Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Walter Scott, Laquan McDonald, Alton Sterling, Akai Gurley, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, among others), but also the ways in which police violence, state violence, white vigilante violence, and other forms of racial terrorism have targeted Black women and Black LGBTQIA+ folk (e.g., Sandra Bland, Marissa Alexander, Korryn Gaines, Jasmine Abdullah Richards, Rekia Boyd, Aiyana Jones, Shereese Francis, Sharmel Edwards, Shantel Davis, Alesia Thomas, Darnisha Harris, Shelly Frey, Miriam Carey, Yvette Smith, Aura Rosser, Tanisha Anderson, Natasha McKenna, Malissa Williams, and India Kager, among others; Crenshaw et al., 2015). Ultimately, the Black Lives Matter movement is an unprecedented *intersectional, multi-issue, Black queer feminist-inspired movement* that speaks to the special needs of Black folk in the 21st century. It is an unapologetically Black *and* queer *and* feminist movement. It is a movement that embodies Alicia Garza's (2020) assertion that "whatever we call our politics—leftist, feminist, anti-racist—dignity and survival are our core concerns" (p. 9). Consequently, the "core concerns" of the Black Lives Matter movement are, indeed, the core concerns of every major Black protest movement from the Black Women's Club Movement, New Negro Movement, and Harlem Renaissance through the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Black Women's Liberation Movement, and Black Arts Movement: Black dignity and Black survival *ad infinitum*.

References

Black Panther Party. (1968). The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense ten-point platform and program: What we want, what we believe! *North American Review, 253*(4), 16–17.

Brundage, W. F. (Ed.). (1997). *Under sentence of death: Lynching in the South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Carruthers, C. A. (2018). *Unapologetic: A Black, queer, and feminist mandate for radical movements*. Beacon Press.

Combahee River Collective. (1986). *The Combahee River Collective statement: Black feminist organizing in the seventies and eighties.* Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. (Original work published 1977)

Crenshaw, K., Ritchie, A. J., Anspach, R., Gilmer, R., & Harris, L. (2015). *Say her name: Resisting police brutality against Black women*. African American Policy Forum; Center for Intersectionality & Social Policy Studies.

Dray, P. (2003). *At the hands of persons unknown: The lynching of Black America*. The Modern Library.

Finnegan, T. (2013). *A deed so accursed: Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881–1940.* University of Virginia Press.

Foley, B. (2003). *Spectres of 1919: Class and nation in the making of the new Negro*. University of Illinois Press.

Garza, A. (2020). *The purpose of power: How we come together when we fall apart*. One World/Random House.

Gates, H. L., & Jarrett, G. A. (Eds.). (2007). *The new Negro: Readings on race, representation, and African American culture, 1892–1938*. Princeton University Press.

Jeffries, H. K. (2018). Black Freedom Movement. In E. R. Edwards, R. A. Ferguson, & J. O. G. Ogbar (Eds.), *Keywords for African American studies* (pp. 22–27). New York University Press.

Khan-Cullors, P., & asha bandele. (2018). *When they call you a terrorist: A Black Lives Matter memoir*. St. Martin's Press.

Krugler, D. F. (2014). *1919, the year of racial violence: How African Americans fought back.* Cambridge University Press.

Logan, R. (1954). *The Negro in American life and thought: The nadir, 1877–1901*. Dial Press.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches.* Crossing Press.

Markovitz, J. (2004). *Legacies of lynching: Racial violence and memory*. University of Minnesota Press.

McWhirter, C. (2011). *Red Summer: The summer of 1919 and the awakening of Black America*. Henry Holt.

Movement for Black Lives. (2020). A vision for Black lives: Policy demands for Black power, freedom & justice. https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/

Orejuela, F., & Shonekan, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Black Lives Matter and music: Protest, intervention, reflection*. Indiana University Press.

Rabaka, R. (2010). *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon's critical theory and the dialectics of decolonization.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Ransby, B. (2018). *Making all Black lives matter: Reimagining freedom in the twenty-first century.* University of California Press.

Rios, K. (2021). *This is America: Race, gender, and politics in America's musical landscape.* Lexington Books.

Shapiro, H. (1988). *White violence and Black response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery.* University of Massachusetts Press.

Sullivan, M. J. (2019). *Black queer feminism.* Oxford African American Studies Center. https://oxfordaasc.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.001.0001/acref-9780195301731-e-78530

Taylor, K. Y. (2016). *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation*. Haymarket Books.

Tuttle, W. M. (1970). *Race riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919.* University of Illinois Press.

Voogd, J. (2008). *Race riots and resistance: The Red Summer of 1919.* Peter Lang.

Waldrep, C. (2009). *African Americans confront lynching: Strategies of resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights era*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Whitaker, R. (2009). *On the laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the struggle for justice that remade a nation*. Broadway Books.

Zangrando, R. L. (1980). *The NAACP crusade against lynching, 1909–1950*. Temple University Press.

ANTI-BLACK VIOLENCE, MEDIA, AND JUSTICE

What Is the American Dream to a Black Boy? Combating Juvenile Recidivism Through Service-Learning Programs

Crystal S. T. Russell
Doctoral Student
Department of Instructional Support Programs
Alabama State University

Tamara T. Venice
Doctoral Student
Department of Instructional Support Programs
Alabama State University

Kiyomi Moore
Doctoral Student
Department of Instructional Support Programs
Alabama State University

This paper addresses the challenges of one of our most vulnerable yet capable populations: justice-involved youth. Policies within many juvenile detention centers are counterproductive and ineffective in reducing recidivism. This is extremely unfortunate, because the conditions of the juvenile detention center provide the optimal environment for behavioral and cognitive change. It is the responsibility of these institutions to inspire reform in the students they serve. Service-learning programs such as academic debate act as catalysts of change for minority youth caught in the system. Malcolm X discovered his voice while competing on a prison debate team and used that voice to change not only his life but the very fabric of this nation. He writes,

> I think that an objective reader may see how in the society to which I was exposed as a black youth here in America, for me to wind up in a prison was really just about inevitable. It happens to so many thousands of black youth. (X & Haley, 1965, p. 436)

Utilizing debate to inspire cognitive transformations in adjudicated youth would play a monumental role in the fight against structural oppression and juvenile recidivism.

Throughout American history, dreams have been a recurring motif that symbolizes opportunity, upward mobility, and prosperity. Unfortunately for Black Americans, this "dream" is more often than not a nightmare of systemic oppression. Today, the United States houses nearly 35,572 children in detention facilities, and Black males are severely overrepresented in this statistic (Sickmund et al., 2021). Black juvenile males make up only 14% of the American youth population, yet they account for 41% of those caught up in the juvenile justice system (Sawyer, 2019; Rovner & Nellis, 2021). These children are brilliant yet undervalued, creative but repressed, and innovative yet hopeless. Langston Hughes (1951) once lamented, "What happens to a dream deferred?" Dreams of adolescent Black males become the antithesis of their greatest selves. They sit in detention centers, gifted beyond belief, yet forgotten by America's stalemated dream. While there, these children have the opportunity to develop self-awareness and purpose if exposed to service-learning programs, which integrate social awareness projects that address community needs into academic, critical-thinking activities (Dickerson, 2020). There are several examples of service-learning activities; however, this paper will specifically highlight public speaking and debate programs.

In his autobiography, Malcolm X mused, “prison enabled me to study far more intensively than I would have done otherwise” (X & Haley, 1965, p. 207). His life serves as a testament that programs that employ a service-learning approach yield positive results for growth in interpersonal communication skills, vital leadership behaviors, and in some cases, a sense of calling (Dickerson et al., 2020, p. 89). These programs empower America’s children to emerge like butterflies from the institutional cocoon designed to overtake them. Service-learning programs have laid the foundation for transformative cognitive development and a reduction in juvenile recidivism.

The Fundamental Role of Mentorship

One key component to most service-learning programs is mentorship. The environmental, societal, and educational barriers woven into the fabric of this nation scale the walls of juvenile correctional facilities and rear their ugly heads far beyond the gates. Nonetheless, these students can achieve accomplishments they never imagined, like earning GEDS, vocational certifications, and post-secondary education, all with the aid of mentoring relationships. According to the National Institute of Justice, mentoring programs are widely used in the U.S. to avoid poor outcomes and build resilience in at-risk adolescents (DuBois, 2021). These initiatives connect young individuals with role models, positive examples, and most importantly, genuine care and guidance. YouthBuild, a national youth development program that successfully implements the service-learning tenants of community service and mentoring, identifies relationships and accountability as essential to fostering lasting change (YouthBuild, 2016). Young males involved in the juvenile justice system benefit from the guidance of individuals who sincerely have an invested interest in their success. Malcolm X’s autobiography cites his relationship with his mentor, Elijah Muhammad, as “an all but electrical effect” that inspired him to believe in the person he was destined to be (X & Haley, 1965, p. 195). Unlike large class sizes in traditional settings, classrooms in juvenile detention centers are significantly smaller. Thus, teachers in these settings have a unique opportunity to rouse self-awareness and purpose in discouraged youth. Studies show that linking juveniles to mentoring programs is a feasible technique for preventing and decreasing deviant behavior (DuBois, 2021). Although juvenile detention centers have historically been an introduction to institutionalization, their captive audience and small classroom size allow educators to penetrate the hearts and minds of their students.

Literacy

Malcolm X’s insatiable appetite for knowledge and self-discovery was birthed behind the prison gates. “My alma mater was books, a good library. . . . I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity,” he wrote (X & Haley, 1965, p. 207). Literacy serves as both a mirror for self-reflection and a doorway to intellectual liberation. Detention forces students to unplug from familiar surroundings and the demands of their social persona, presenting an optimal opportunity to immerse students in literature. While there may be some initial hesitation, books that connect to their experiences and encourage self-introspection pique the interest of adjudicated youth and are typically in high demand. The mental resurrection Malcolm X experienced was made possible by the isolation of detainment, the guidance of a mentor, and the power of literature. Malcolm X recalled, “I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life . . . the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive” (X & Haley, 1965, p. 206). The current curriculum in American schools distorts historical truth, forcing minority students to constantly digest images that praise oppressive behavior while incessantly forgiving the sins of America’s forefathers. This makes it practically impossible for many Black youth to consider education as a means of achieving their goals. While in detention centers, students have the unique opportunity and almost unlimited time to become autodidactic learners without the oppressive perspective of the American curriculum. Educational stakeholders within detention centers can optimize the opportunity presented by their location by helping students learn beyond the textbook.

Debate

Academic debate can serve as a service-learning program that connects academics, self-discovery, and community leadership. Such programs "positively impact a variety of academic and non-academic outcomes, including writing skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities and commitment to activism and civic responsibility," assert Dickerson et al. (2020, p. 89). Destiny Driven Inc., a comprehensive debate program, utilizes service-learning elements to develop leadership and social responsibility through public speaking and debate. The organization uses academic debate to empower young people to develop self-value, critical thinking skills, effective communication, and conflict resolution skills. Malcolm X recalled, "When I had read enough to know something, I began to enter the Prison Colony's weekly debating program—my baptism into public speaking" (X & Haley, 1965, p. 210). He found that debate enabled him to sharpen his mental fortitude while simultaneously challenging him to learn more in defense of his perspective. Debate is an effective service-learning tool because it forces academic research and encourages social awareness, all while developing confidence among participants. "You let this caged-up black man start thinking . . . realizing when he was young and ambitious . . . he might have been a lawyer, doctor, a scientist, anything," Malcolm X wrote (X & Haley, 1965, p. 211), insightfully examining the possibilities of actualized dreams. Once a convicted criminal, Malcolm X became a world-renowned speaker and social advocate who changed the face of the world. He is not an anomaly—some of the country's most inventive and gifted youth are imprisoned.

Debate is unlike most extracurricular activities in that it develops skills that align well with many academic goals. Debaters are 3.1 times more likely to graduate from high school than non-debaters, and male African American debate participants are 70% more likely to graduate from high school and 3 times less likely to drop out than non-participants (Muzek, 2009; Anderson & Mezuk, 2012). The confidence, academic support, and self-identity developed in debate programs empower young Black males to undermine the trapdoors of American education. Debate and public speaking develop communication, academics, and community engagement. Even more crucially, debate exposes students to current social issues, which helps them establish a voice for social change and activism. Under-education appears to be one of the strongest predictors of criminality among juveniles, according to research. Furthermore, while there is warranted enthusiasm for the importance of supporting school success early in life on educational trajectories (Heckman, 2006), debate presents an opportunity to influence college matriculation among adolescents in the later stages of their academic trajectories, making this activity useful for justice-involved students (Shackelford et al., 2019, p. 407). In a nation where inequitable barriers to success overshadow academic achievement, debate service-learning programs foster positive self and social awareness. Debate is the only academic activity that cultivates the interconnection of character, charisma, and critical thinking; therefore, it is essential to reversing the effects of structural oppression in education.

Cognitive Transformation

Unfortunately, the structural oppression embedded in this country forces children of color into incarceration. However, Malcolm X's experience with service learning in prison serves as a testament and blueprint for how to transcend barriers and advocate for human rights. Prison is where he found mentorship, a voice, purpose, and direction for his life, he asserts:

> I've told how debating was a weekly event there, at the Norfolk prison colony. My reading had my mind like steam under pressure . . . once my feet got wet, I was gone on debating. Whichever side of the selected subject was assigned to me, I'd track down and study everything I could find on it. I'd put myself in my opponents' place and decide how I'd try to win if I had the other side; I'd figure a way to knock down all those points. (X & Haley, 1965, p. 212)

The skills developed on that prison debate team gave him the mental fortitude needed to secure a better life for himself and the language required to be a champion for change in this country. While dismantling the entire educational system is a daunting proposition, educational stakeholders can cultivate voice and leadership in adjudicated youth through mentorship, literacy, and debate.

Conclusion

What is the "American dream" to a Black boy? "Lady Liberty" stands tall as a beacon of hope for the world to see, while the Southern trees sing songs of strange fruit where children attend schools named after men who owned slaves. Born into a system whose educational policies perpetuate failure, our children must be equipped to save themselves. Students behind bars are often forgotten and omitted from the conversation around educational reform. Service-learning programs promote self-discovery, social responsibility, and confidence. The sanction-based model present in many detention centers does not help criminal rehabilitation or prevent future crimes (Donnelly, 2017, slide 2A). However, according to the Bureau of Justice Assistance, YouthBuild produces strong, replicable, and effective results in reducing recidivism and offering post-incarceration paths to success. This model is bolstered by a focus on leadership development, a caring and supportive staff, counseling, and vocational training (Youthbuild, 2016, p. 3). Adjudication is not a death sentence. Introducing justice-involved students to programs such as YouthBuild and Destiny Driven Inc. gives them the tools needed to survive and help others despite educational risk factors. Through service-learning programs, our youth can enter detention facilities burned by this nation's sins and emerge unscathed like the phoenix.

References

Anderson, S., & Mezuk, B. (2012). Participating in a policy debate program and academic achievement among at-risk adolescents in an urban public school district: 1997–2007. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*(5), 1225–1235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2012.04.005

Dickerson, M., Fall, R., & Helm-Stevens, R. (2020). Service learning programs with juvenile offenders. *International Education Studies, 13*(2), 88–95. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v13n2p88

Donnelly, L. (2017). *Debate as a tool for rehabilitation: An 8 week debate and public speaking course at Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.* Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects. 258. https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk/258

DuBois, D. L. (2021, May 26). *Mentoring programs for youth: A promising intervention for delinquency prevention.* National Institute of Justice. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/mentoring-programs-youth-promising-intervention-delinquency-prevention#citation--0

Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science, 312,* 1900–1902. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1128898

Hughes, L. (1951). *Montage of a dream deferred.* Holt.

Rovner, J., & Nellis, A. (2021, July 15). *Black disparities in youth incarceration.* The Sentencing Project. https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/

Sawyer, W. (2019). *Youth confinement: The whole pie 2019.* Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2019.html

Shackelford, D. T., Ratliff, S. M., & Mezuk, B. (2019). Participating in a high school debate program and college matriculation and completion: Evidence from the Chicago Debate League. *Educational Research and Reviews*, *14*(11), 397–409.

Sickmund, M., Sladky, T. J., Puzzanchera, C., & Kang, W. (2021). *Easy access to the census of juveniles in residential placement.* Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp

Walker, L. S., & Mezuk, B. (2018). Mandatory minimum sentencing policies and cocaine use in the U.S., 1985–2013. *BMC International Health and Human Rights 18*(43). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-018-0182-2

X, M., & Haley, A. (1965). *The autobiography of Malcolm X.* Castle Books.

YouthBuild. (2016). *Life after lock-up: A special report on successful recidivism reduction.* YouthBuild U.S.A.

Haiti as Trauma Porn: U.S. Media and Narratives of Haiti

by

Charmane M. Perry, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
African American Studies Program
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

> *I think Haiti is a place that suffers so much from neglect that people only want to hear about it when it's at its extreme. And that's what they end up knowing about it.*
>
> – Edwidge Danticat

Discourse on Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora has been a relatively constant topic in the mainstream news cycle and the dispersion of information across social media over the course of 2021. While many Americans may not have been paying attention earlier this year to disputes and protests in Haiti over President Jovenel Moïse's refusal to resign, Haiti was catapulted onto front-page news and across social media over the summer (Delaney, 2021; Porter, Santora, & Robles, 2021). In the early morning hours of July 7, 2021, President Moïse was assassinated in his private home in Port-au-Prince. Shortly afterward, more information was learned and various questions arose as a man hunt for an alleged 28-member group of mercenaries consisting of Columbian, Haitian, and U.S. nationals ensued, during which they were sought, captured, and/or killed and politicians and businessmen were interrogated. Many questions remain unanswered, and Moïse's murder has yet to be solved.

In the weeks and months since July, Haiti and Haitian migrants have appeared and reappeared in the news and social media. On August 14, 2021, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck southwestern Haiti, affecting over 800,000 people and resulting in over 2,000 deaths and 12,000 injuries (UNICEF, 2021). Roughly a month later, thousands of Haitian migrants made a very dangerous journey from Central and South America to the U.S./Mexico border. While Dominican, Cuban, and Venezuelan migrants were also within the group of migrants camped at the border by an international bridge near Del Rio, Texas, most were Haitian migrants (Debusmann, 2021; Miroff, 2021). While the migrant "crisis" at the border was definitely newsworthy, it was the images of U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback chasing and using whips on Haitian migrants that caused outrage and allegations of racism as these photos conjured narratives of American slavery. As if this were not enough, in late October, Haiti once again made the news after the 400

Mazowo gang demanded $17 million in ransom after the kidnapping of 17 U.S. missionaries from the Christian Aid Ministries (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Like most countries, Haiti is beautiful and complicated. However, if you ask the average person about Haiti, they are more likely to reinforce the complicated narrative. Discourse on Haitian people, history, and culture is generally negatively and inaccurately represented in the news and Hollywood films. A one-dimensional narrative of Haiti has been created and repeated for decades, and that narrative is often ahistorical and embedded with racism and anti-Blackness. Instead of media coverage on various news and events in Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora, the public only hears stories that reinforce narratives of violence, poverty, political instability, chaos, and danger. Analyzing over 700 articles from five newspapers from 2004, Potter (2009) found that "violence" was the most common word used to describe Haiti. "The media has described Haiti as a politically unstable place, full of violence, turmoil, chaos, corruption, and a multitude of other problems," she writes (p. 216). Haiti is represented as, in the words of the former U.S. President Donald Trump, a "shithole" country (Vitali et al., 2018). The popular narrative of Haiti invokes an image of constant suffering, and this suffering has been packaged and repackaged for widespread consumption. Thus, representation of Haiti in the news and social media is akin to trauma porn.

"Trauma porn" refers to the mass consumption or exploitative sharing of traumatic, distressing, or disturbing images via the media. As Johnson (2020) explains:

> Trauma porn is media that showcases a group's pain and trauma in excessive amounts for the sake of entertainment. Trauma porn is created not for the sake of the marginalized group, but instead to console or entertain the non-marginalized group. . . . Trauma porn at its core is exploitive and emotionally provocative for unethical reasons that lack compassion for anything other than the society ruled "default," aka those who are white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, able-minded and neurotypical. (para. 4)

The term gained more widespread usage with the increased recordings of Black men being murdered by police and the circulation of those recordings across social media and other media outlets. While it is not limited to Black bodies but the exploitation of marginalized groups' pain, the theme of trauma porn for Black people is one of state violence.

When I awoke the morning of President Moïse's assassination, I was met with an overload of information on social media concerning the president's assassination. In the hours and days that followed, I perused the various Haitian and Haitian Diaspora-based social media pages I follow to stay up to date with new information as well as to stay connected with what residents of Haiti and members of the Haitian Diaspora were feeling, thinking, and discussing. As with any story associated with Black death and suffering, I quickly became exhausted. A few months later, images of Haitians being chased and whipped by U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback were circulating through the media. As I am a child of the Haitian Diaspora, this news was shared in a family WhatsApp group chat, to which a cousin replied, "I can't even look at it." Her response started a conversation around the difficulty of consuming and digesting media on Haiti and Haitian people. On the one hand, you want to be informed, but at the same time, the constant narrative of Haitian suffering is traumatic and exhausting.

The history of biased and racist portrayals of Haiti in the U.S. dates back to the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804). Stereotypes about Haiti being the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, violent, filled with devil worshippers, and a failed state have been reinforced and perpetuated by the U.S. government, films, television shows, books (fiction and nonfiction), travelogues, and newspapers (Potter, 2009). For example, like many African-based religions, Vodou was and continues to be falsely depicted as satanic, evil, violent, and dark. Even the revolutionary spirit of enslaved Africans has been demonized, racialized, and misunderstood, and it continues to stigmatize Haiti. The August 1791 Vodou ceremony at Bwa Kayiman, officiated by early revolutionary leader Dutty Boukman, consecrated by Cecile Fatiman, and attended by dozens of enslaved Africans from nearby plantations, which preceded the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, has been grossly misrepresented (Polyné & McAlister, 2017). In 2010, Evangelical Christian Pat Robertson stated that the cause of the 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti, which killed over 200,000 people and catapulted the migration of Haitians to South America, was the result of a "pact to the devil" Haitians made at the 1791 ceremony in return for their freedom from France (CNN, 2010). During the 19th century, Haiti was associated with cannibalism (Potter, 2009), and this continued through the 19-year U.S. occupation of Haiti from July 28, 1915 to August 1, 1934. Again, Vodou was demonized and the racist distortion of the religion, people, and culture was used as a political tool to gain support for the occupation. Vodou practitioners and Haitians who resisted the occupation were viewed as cannibals and devil worshippers. During this time, Hollywood also reinforced and helped create false narratives with the fetishization of zombies, "Voodoo," "Voodoo dolls," and drums in movies about Haiti, Haitian people, and Haitian culture (Polyné & McAlister, 2017). Hollywood has played a key role in cementing representations and circulating messages about Haitian people and culture that continue to be proliferated today.

The one-dimensional narratives are endless. In the early 1970s, there was widespread coverage of Haitians fleeing Haiti as political refugees despite the U.S. referring to them as economic refugees because of its support of the Duvalier dictatorship. However, these images created the narrative of Haitian "boat people," a derisive term used to refer to these migrants seeking political refuge. In the 1980s, during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Haitians were associated with the epidemic, and it was stated that being Haitian could make one more susceptible to the virus. In fact, in 1990, a federal policy recommendation by the Food and Drug Administration resulted in the exclusion of Haitians from donating blood to protect against the spread of AIDS (Lambert, 1990). This information was widely circulated on the front pages of newspapers; however, when evidence arose that proved this information false, that news received little coverage or exposure (Potter, 2009). This narrative has been damaging and long-lasting. Shortly after the humanitarian crisis at the border, Trump, without evidence, stated that many of the Haitian migrants probably have AIDS and that "Haiti has a tremendous AIDS problem" (Chamberlain, 2021).

Narratives of poverty, devastation, violence, Satanic worship, and the inability to govern have resulted in the stigmatization of Haiti and Haitian people and culture. These stereotypes continue to be produced and reproduced by various media outlets, and news coverage plays a critical role in the fixation, accessibility, and circulation of Haitian death and suffering. The consumption of these narratives has aided in the dehumanization and "othering" of Haitian people and a continued history of paternalism and justification for foreign intervention to "help" Haiti. Further, these narratives have created a fear of the country resulting in the decline of the tourism industry and the hesitancy or refusal to travel there to visit or vacation (unless for missionary work, which continues the narrative of Haiti needing saving).

As argued by Gina Athena Ulysse (2015), Haiti needs new narratives that represent the complexity and beauty of the country and people. There is no easy solution. And while I advocate for new narratives, that does not mean the negation of information on the political economy and environmentalism. Rather, it is a call to offer a complete picture that contextualizes current events for the average person while ensuring that Haiti appears in the news cycles outside of stories on suffering and death. For example, the coverage and treatment of Haitians at the U.S./Mexican border in August must be placed in the context of the historical legacy of U.S. intervention in

Haitian affairs, anti-Blackness, and migration practices and policies concerning Haitian people. The mass deportations of Haitians is not new. In 1993, President Bill Clinton quickly abandoned his campaign pledge of offering asylum to Haitians and continued the policy of forced deportations and interception at sea conducted during the former Bush Administration, a policy Clinton had criticized previously (Sciolino, 1993).

Further, there is a history of journalists being sent to Haiti who often cannot speak Kreyol. How can one thoroughly cover and report information if they cannot speak the language of the people? Because of this, journalists can only interview Haitians who can speak English or use a third party to translate, and in some of these cases, interpreters have been former members of the Tonton Macoutes (Potter, 2009). It would be more responsible for journalists covering Haiti to be fluent in Kreyol and have familiarity with the history and culture. These practices would better ensure complex rather than simplistic reporting, providing viewers with a more nuanced understanding. It is also important to read news stories (and other works) by Haitians and circulated by Haitian news sources and access these sites not just when it concerns a catastrophe. However, this brings up the challenges of freedom of the press in Haiti (Charles, 2021). Last, in an age of "fake news" and algorithms narrowing diverse perspectives, people must also educate themselves. There are numerous books, articles, and other resources available for people to seek out more information about Haiti. Education is a tool that will dismantle and deconstruct stereotypes about Haitians in the media. The desire to learn more and critically think about media coverage of Haiti will help unravel the obsession and consumption of Haitian death and suffering.

References

Al Jazeera. (2021, October 19). *Haitian gang demands $1m each for kidnapped US missionaries*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/19/haitian-gang-demands-1m-each-for-kidnapped-us-missionaries

Chamberlain, S. (2021, October 8). Trump suggests Haitian migrants heading for the US "probably have AIDS." *New York Post.* https://nypost.com/2021/10/08/trump-suggests-haitian-migrants-heading-for-us-border-probably-have-aids/

Charles, J. (2021, February 11). Haitian journalists injured as nation plunges deeper into turmoil amid constitutional crisis. *Miami Herald.* https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article249163765.html

CNN. (2010, January 13). *Pat Robertson says Haiti paying for "pact to the devil.*" CNN News. http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/01/13/haiti.pat.robertson/index.html

Debusmann, B., Jr. (2021, September 24). *Why are so many Haitians at the US-Mexico border?* BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58667669

Delaney, R. (2021, February 15). *Dispute over Haiti presidential term triggers unrest*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-56069575

Johnson, B. (2020, November 15). *What is trauma porn?* The Mighty. https://themighty.com/2020/10/trauma-porn/

Lambert, B. (1990, March 14). Now, no Haitians can donate blood. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/14/us/now-no-haitians-can-donate-blood.html#:~:text=

In%201988%2C%20no%20one%20from,regardless%20of%20when%20they%20 immigrated.

Miroff, N. (2021, October 1). Most of the migrants in Del Rio, Tex., camp have been sent to Haiti or turned back to Mexico, DHS figures show. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/haitians-border-deportations/2021/10/01/bfa38852-222a-11ec-8fd4-57a5d9bf4b47_story.html

Polyné, M., & McAlister, E. (2017, March 17). *Haiti and the distortion of its Vodou religion*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/17/opinions/believer-haiti-vodou-polyne-mcalister/index.html

Porter, C., Santora, M., & Robles, F. (2021, July 7). Public anger had been rising over Moïse's attempt to stay in office. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/07/world/americas/haiti-president-killing.html

Potter, A. E. (2009). Voodoo, zombies, and mermaids: U.S. newspaper coverage of Haiti. *Geographical Review, 99*(2), 208–230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2009.tb00427.x

Sciolino, E. (1993, January 15). Clinton says U.S. will continue ban on Haitian exodus. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/15/world/clinton-says-us-will-continue-ban-on-haitian-exodus.html

Ulysse, G. A. (2015). *Why Haiti needs new narratives: A post-quake chronicle*. Wesleyan University Press.

UNICEF. (2021). *Emergency response Haiti earthquake, August 2021–February 2022*. https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/emergency-response-haiti-earthquake-august-2021-february-2022

Vitali, A., Hunt, K., & Thorp, V. F. (2018, January 11). *Trump referred to Haiti and African nations as "shithole" countries*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-referred-haiti-african-countries-shithole-nations-n836946

Media Racism and the Public Framing of Black Lives

by

Marquita Gammage, Ph.D.
Full Professor
Africana Studies Department
California State University, Northridge

Examining the role of media in creating barriers to sustaining positive life outcomes among African Americans has proven pivotal over the past centuries. While media productions have evolved technologically, what I term *media racism* remains embedded in the fabric of American media productions, including television and film, news and radio broadcasts, and social media. Twenty-first-century media depictions of Black lives mirror past centuries' stereotyped portrayals of Blackness and media injustice against African Americans. The content of contemporary media, including television shows, is entrenched with the systematic promotion of unhealthy lifestyles and negative images of Black communities. Assessments of the news media coverage of African Americans illustrates that media disproportionately represents Blacks within the tropes of race, class, and justice. Depictions of African Americans as criminal and violent in contemporary news media do not diverge from coverage of Blacks in past centuries. Instead, the racist media used during the launch of the war on drugs parallels the current mistreatment of African Americans amidst the Black Lives Matter movement (Dukes & Gaither, 2017).

In recent years, the killing of unarmed African American men, women, and children by police officers and individuals acting as neighborhood monitors has sparked outrage across the nation and globally. Many of these incidents have been captured on video and shared on social media and through news outlets. A disproportionate number of Blacks killed by police officers have been unarmed, yet the majority of these cases have closed without indictments or convictions. According to Mapping Police Violence (n.d.), "Police killed at least 104 unarmed black people in 2015, nearly twice each week" and "nearly 1 in 3 black people killed by police in 2015 were identified as unarmed, though the actual number is likely higher due to underreporting." Mapping Police Violence (MPV) also reports that "36% of unarmed people killed by police were black in 2015 despite black people being only 13% of the U.S. population" and "Unarmed black people were killed at 5x the rate of unarmed whites in 2015." The organization went on to highlight:

> Only 13 of the 104 cases in 2015 where an unarmed black person was killed by police resulted in officer(s) being charged with a crime. 4 of these cases have ended in a mistrial

> or charges against the officer(s) being dropped and 4 cases are still awaiting trial or have a trial underway. Only 4 cases (Matthew Ajibade, Eric Harris, Paterson Brown Jr., and William Chapman) have resulted in convictions of officers involved, with a fifth case (Walter Scott) resulting in the officer pleading guilty. Of the 4 cases where the officer(s) involved have been convicted and sentenced, none were sentenced to serve more than 4 years in prison. Only 1 of 2 officers convicted for their involvement in Matthew Ajibade's death received jail time. He was sentenced to 1 year in jail and allowed to serve this time exclusively on weekends. The officer who killed Paterson Brown was sentenced to only 3 months in jail. Deputy Bates, who killed Eric Harris, was sentenced to 4 years in prison and Officer Cobb, who killed William Chapman, was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison. Officer Slager, who killed Walter Scott and pled guilty, has yet to be sentenced.

In 2017, Michael Slager was sentenced to 20 years in prison. These rulings are instances of the few cases in which police officers, and white police officers in particular, have been convicted and sentenced for killing African Americans. These unjust policing and judicial practices have resulted in the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement: a systematic social movement designed to affirm the value of Black humanity and challenge the criminal justice system's assault on Blackness. Founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi created the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag in 2013 to launch a racially conscious movement dedicated to addressing the injustices faced by African Americans in the criminal justice system. The founders write,

> Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. (Black Lives Matter, 2018)

The movement has grown into a global crusade for the humanity of Black people around the world, sparking many local and national protests and working toward legislative reform. The expansive public participation in the movement has been recorded and discussed by the media—yet the bulk of the media coverage has been dedicated to the initial phase of street protest and later the criminal proceedings announcements (i.e., indictment and verdict decisions).

In cases of on-duty shootings by police officers, both news media and social media have played a vital role in the promotion of images about the victims and the officers. In effect, an overwhelming majority of the Black victims have been negatively framed in the media as violent, criminal, aggressive, and a perceived threat to the public, while the officers and neighborhood "monitors," who have been predominantly white, have been represented as upstanding public servants. These racially biased messages have informed public perceptions of the victims and have been used to validate the state's failure to indict or convict officers in the case of unarmed African Americans. Consider the case of Trayvon Martin, a young African American boy who was killed by George Zimmerman. Images from Trayvon Martin's social media pages and cell phone were showcased in the news media that portrayed him as a drug-using violent thug. Photographs of Trayvon Martin that gave the appearance of him smoking an unknown substance and brandishing what appears to be a weapon, along with messages and images that have been interpreted as bragging about physical altercations, were republished all over social media and broadcast through multiple news outlets. The media prescribed the role of a stereotypical character, the dangerous Black man, to a Black boy without any criminal record and, before the trial, no evidence of drug use. Examining the news media headlines demonstrates a stereotypical racialized framing of Trayvon Martin as violent and unstable. While additional context is provided in each of these news stories, the headlines speak for themselves and communicate a very clear message about Martin that portrays him as a dangerous thug. These media stories along with public comments and social media posts ushered in a wave of assaults against Trayvon Martin that influenced the public's perception of the 17-year-old Black boy. The criminalization of Martin and other unarmed African American males reflects the stereotypical classification of Black males as brutes and thugs (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016).

Table 1.1

Media Portrayals of Trayvon Martin as a Dangerous Drug User

News Headline	Media Company and Date of Publication
Gun, drug texts feature in new Trayvon Martin shooting evidence	CNN, May 26, 2013
Trayvon's thug pix	*New York Post*, May 24, 2013
Trayvon Martin: Typical teen or troublemaker?	USA Today, December 11, 2012
Trayvon Martin started confrontation, Zimmerman lawyer says	*The Washington Post*, March 26, 2012
Trayvon Martin shooter told cops teenager went for his gun	ABC News, March 25, 2012

The media diverged significantly in the representations of Martin and Zimmerman. Despite police recordings of George Zimmerman using racist language and stereotypes to target others as criminals, coupled with the dispatch audio recording from the night he killed Trayvon Martin wherein law enforcement instructed Zimmerman not to follow or pursue Martin, Zimmerman was painted as an innocent victim who had to stand his ground and protect himself. The court ruling mirrored this judgement and found Zimmerman not guilty under Florida's stand-your-ground law. Ironically, the law permits the use of violent force when the person is being pursued and/or attacked. In this case, a considerable amount of evidence indicates that the armed Zimmerman pursued and stalked an unarmed child, Trayvon Martin. If Martin attempted to protect himself, why was his defense not considered standing his ground? Ironically, news media coverage of George Zimmerman aids in justifying Zimmerman's "killing" of Trayvon Martin. News outlets avoided the word "murder" when reporting on the case and instead overly sensationalized Zimmerman's minor injuries as potentially life-threatening. Within U.S. news coverage, Zimmerman was portrayed as a heroic neighborhood watch leader, acting within his right to protect and defend himself and his community. Even public commentary, such as Geraldo Rivera's claim that Martin was killed because of the hoodie he was wearing, attempted to rationalize the murder of this young Black boy.

Table 1.2

News Media Stories of George Zimmerman as Justified

News Headline	Media Company and Date of Publication
Photo appears to show Zimmerman bleeding after Trayvon Martin killing	CNN, December 4, 2012
George Zimmerman: Trayvon Martin threatened my life	CNN, June 22, 2012
Trayvon Martin shooting wasn't a case of racial profiling	CNN, May 30, 2012
Did Trayvon Martin attack George Zimmerman first?	*The Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 2012

Cops, witnesses back up George Zimmerman’s version of Trayvon Martin shooting	ABC News, May 17, 2012
ABC News exclusive: Zimmerman medical report shows broken nose, lacerations after Trayvon Martin shooting	ABC News, May 15, 2012
Zimmerman to argue self-defense, will not seek “stand your ground” hearing	CNN, May 1, 2013

The injustice against Trayvon Martin and other young Black boys over the past decades have caused many to draw parallels between 21st-century violence against Black youth and 20th-century domestic terrorism against Blacks, as in the case of Emmett Till. Emmett Till was a 14-year-old African American boy visiting his family in Money, Mississippi in 1955 when he was brutally murdered for allegedly flirting with a white woman. Till’s murder left his body and face so disfigured that he was hardly recognizable. His mother requested his body be returned to her for burial and held an open-casket funeral to advertise to the country the horrific nature of racial injustice in America. Over 60 years later, African Americans’ brutalized lifeless bodies still lay on display in public and serve as a constant reminder of the racial hatred and subjugation of Blacks in America.

A dissimilar brand of media coverage transpires in the case of white men in America who have been accused of violent crimes against African Americans. In the majority of the recent cases where white men have been accused of committing hate crimes and mass shootings against African Americans, and they have not committed suicide, the police successfully apprehended the suspects without incident. The media coverage of these cases has been more exploratory and descriptive versus the prescriptive approach taken in the case of African American victims. In the case of Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white male accused of killing nine African Americans in a historic Black church in North Carolina, news forums on the case described the incident and focused on the victims and their families. For instance, when Roof was provided with food from Burger King by police officers in Shelby, North Carolina, news outlets simply provided details and did not take a prescriptive stance on the situation. Consider ABC 7’s June 23, 2015 news coverage of the case, which read, “Cops bought Burger King for Dylann Roof following his arrest.” The headline does not include any prescribed character attributes of Roof, nor does it assume a moral or social position on the actions of the officers. However, when African American news commentator Symone Sanders misspoke and reported that the police “brought” Dylann Roof to Burger King, news coverage shifted and began to describe her actions as false reporting. The over-focus on her mix-up between the phrases “brought him to” versus “brought him” completely ignored the larger point, which was that Dylann Roof was provided with a meal from Burger King by the police department, which was an insult to the victims and their families, and African Americans in general. While the police department attempted to justify the officers’ actions by stating that the holding facility did not have adequate food to supply him with, their actions raised many questions regarding the value of white life versus Black life.

Consider the cases of African Americans who have been killed by law enforcement or have died in the custody of law enforcement after requesting their basic human rights be upheld. African Americans’ request for the basic human right to breathe have been denied by law enforcement, resulting in their death. George Floyd proclaimed his life was exiting his body. Eric Garner stated that he could not breathe over 10 times as police officers restrained him in an illegal chokehold and restricted his air passage; he was later pronounced dead at the hospital. Several African American women have died in police custody over the years. Sandra Bland, Ralkina Jones, Kindra Chapman, Raynette Turner, and Natasha McNenna were all African American women who died in police custody in 2015. In 2016, Symone Marshall died in police custody in Walker County Jail in Huntsville, Texas after not receiving medical care despite the fact that she was arrested after a car accident that left her in a ditch. Her family informed law enforcement that she needed medical attention, which the police department claims she refused. Symone was found having a seizure in her cell and later declared dead at the hospital. The contested and controversial deaths of Black women in police custody have resulted in outrage. After the death of Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old Black activist who died in police custody in Waller County, Texas, the #SayHerName movement was launched to address police brutality and in-custody deaths of Black females, and to challenge the media and public perceptions of racial injustice against Black women. These cases provide evidence that the criminal justice system and media are often less sympathetic to the human rights of African Americans than white people, showing that the media instead once again provided prescriptive reporting wherein they seemed to offer some rationale for the denial of African Americans' human rights by law enforcement.

Justifications for the murders of unarmed African Americans are abundant in U.S. news media headlines and stories. The hyper-criminalization of African Americans in the media and American society contributes to these falsified ideas of unarmed African Americans (Oliver, 2003). Framing of psychological instability, violent and criminal histories, and aggression is frequently used to characterize African Americans who have been murdered by police officers. Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others all were represented with these racialized tropes, which consequently were accepted by many as rationales for their deaths. The term "raid" was consistently attached to Breonna Taylor's name, and she was repeatedly linked to drug activity. "Robber" and "robbery" were routinely used to describe Michael Brown. Sandra Bland and George Floyd's mental health was consistently questioned, and drug abuse was interwoven with Floyd's name and case.

Table 1.3

News Media Stories of Unarmed African Americans Killed by Police

News Headline	Media Company and Date of Publication
No dice, BLM, Michael Brown was not innocent	*The Washington Times*, March 13, 2017
Sandra Bland previously attempted suicide, jail documents say	*The Washington Post*, July 22, 2015
Failure to be bonded out led Sandra Bland to suicide, jail officials allege	*Chicago Tribune*, November 12, 2015
"Lethal dose": What drugs did George Floyd have in his system?	*The Sun*, March 29, 2021
Floyd's drug use, prior arrest central to murder defense (2)	Bloomberg Law, April 13, 2021
George Floyd had "violent criminal history": Minneapolis police union chief	*New York Post*, June 2, 2020
Breonna Taylor case evidence does not "prove a homicide" by police, Andy McCarthy says	Fox News, September 23, 2020
Breonna Taylor is a drug war victim	*Forbes*, September 23, 2020
Breonna Taylor's ex-boyfriend sentenced on	WAVE 3, November 30, 2021

drug charges	

When engaging in exploratory reporting, news media often evaluate the psychological state of whites and Blacks in significantly different ways. In the case of Dylann Roof, news outlets dissected his potential state of mind at the time of his criminal actions to provide a potential rationale for his behavior. However, media analyses have been more psychologically forgiving toward whites than when this approach was used in cases of unarmed Blacks who were killed by police officers. Consider the media treatment of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American boy who was shot to death several times by officer Darren Wilson. The media speculated that Brown's psychological state was unstable because he allegedly had just committed a "strong-arm robbery" and therefore may have been on guard when the officer approached him. There is of course no evidence to support this assessment of Brown's mental state. In fact, the police department's strategic release of the video footage of Brown from earlier that day was questioned as a premature rationale for the murder. Even the use of the phrase "strong-arm robbery," which was used by law enforcement and later adopted by the media, constituted part of the racist justification for Brown's death. Although a monetary transaction was captured on tape—Brown provided money and took a product—this part of the video was overshadowed in the media by the section in the video where Brown appears to force his way out of the exit door of the store, which was being blocked by the store owner. In describing the video, the police department and media never used non-criminal terminology and did not consider using language pertaining to minor crimes such as "misdemeanor shoplifting. Instead, the media more aggressively described Brown's actions as a violent criminal act. Even still, the rule of law is that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Yet Brown, who had never been charged of this crime, was convicted in the court of public opinion without due process, which he could never receive because he had been killed. The use of hyper-criminal and violent terminology in the media against African Americans killed by law enforcement is another instance of media racism. These injustices in the media have been used to validate law enforcement's use of deadly violence against Blacks even when unarmed, lying on their backs, and with their hands up in the air.

The humanizing of white male terrorists and murderers in the media conveys a possessive investment in white supremacist racist propaganda. This form of racism calls for news outlets, social media, and the general public to champion the innocence and justification of whites in killing and terrorizing African Americans. News media is used to promote the humanity of whites as regular people who have somehow fallen victim to the assumed violent nature of Blacks, as in the case of Darren Wilson, or have suffered the consequences of a broken mental healthcare system, as in the case of Dylann Roof. Explorations of who these men are, beyond the immediate headlines, lead the discourse and frame the public narrative around their cases.

Table 1.4
Media Representations of White Males Who Murder African Americans

News Headline	Media Company and Date of Publication
Charleston church shooting: Who is Dylann Roof?	CNN, June 19, 2015
FBI says Dylann Roof should not have been cleared to purchase a weapon	CNN, July 10, 2015
Dylann Roof's past reveals trouble at home and school	*The New York Times*, July 16, 2015
Forgiveness for Dylann Roof after	*The Atlantic*, June 20, 2015

Charleston's mass murder	
Darren Wilson: Ferguson made me unemployable	USA Today, August 4, 2015
What we know about Ferguson officer Darren Wilson	USA Today, August 19, 2015
Police officer in Ferguson is said to recount a struggle	*The New York Times*, October 18, 2014
"I felt like a five-year-old holding on to Hulk Hogan": Darren Wilson in his own words	*The Guardian*, November 25, 2014
Ferguson cop Darren Wilson is expecting a child: "I want to live a normal life"	*People*, November 26, 2014

Media racism is a form of structural racism, and it allows the current racial biases to persist in American society. Media racism supplements the embedded institutional forms of racism by providing imagery and news content that gives credence to the systematic oppression of certain groups. In this case, the subjugation of African Americans is bolstered by racialized media content that frames African Americans as dangerous to the health, safety, and sovereignty of America. These victim-blaming media frames have significant influence on the criminal prosecution and verdicts or lack thereof (Dukes, 2017). There is alarming evidence that politics, scholarship, and media contribute to the stereotype that African Americans are chronically unhealthy and in need of social control. The distortion of African American reality helps to validate American racism and the resulting marginalization of Black Americans.

References

ABC 7. (2015, June 23). *Cops bought Burger King for Dylann Roof following his arrest*. https://abc7.com/news/cops-bought-burger-king-for-dylann-roof-following-his-arrest/801013/

Black Lives Matter. (2018). *Herstory*. https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/

Dukes, K. N., & Gaither, S. E. (2017). Black racial stereotypes and victim blaming: Implications for media coverage and criminal proceedings in cases of police violence against racial and ethnic minorities. *Journal of Social Issues, 73*(4), 789–807. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12248

Mapping Police Violence. (2017). *Police killed 305 unarmed Black people in 2015*. https://mappingpoliceviolence.org

Oliver, M. B. (2003). African American men as "criminal and dangerous": Implications of media portrayals of crime on the "criminalization" of African American men. *Journal of African American Studies, 7*(2), 3–18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41819017.

Smiley, C. J., & Fakunle, D. (2016). From "brute" to "thug": The demonization and criminalization of unarmed Black male victims in America. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26*(3–4), 350–366. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1129256

HEALTH

“Collective-Self” Care: Our Healing, Health, and Wellness as People of African Descent

by

Anna Ortega-Williams, Ph.D., LMSW
Assistant Professor
Silberman School of Social Work
Hunter College of the City University of New York

In the 21st century, there have been extraordinary challenges as well as wins for people of the African Diaspora. Wins include small steps forward in representation at many levels of decision-making power, recognition of egregious human rights violations, and enactment of policies affirming basic civil rights. Additionally, we have developed strong alternative institutions, programs, and initiatives that practice transformed ways of living and being to disrupt the status quo (Brown, 2017; Greene, 2020; Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective, 2020). However, there have also been extraordinary losses, such as disparities in mortality during the global COVID-19 pandemic (Mude et al., 2021), and continued anti-Black racism exerted on interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels, as well as the continued ripple effects from colonialism. In the United States, we live in a time where critically thinking about race using critical race theory is actively being challenged across the country (Ray & Gibbons, 2021) alongside active disenfranchisement (Abrams et al., 2020). How will we know when Black people are well in these times? What are our own indicators of healing, health, and wellbeing as a people?

In this essay, the contemporary state of Black wellbeing in the United States will be explored through the lens of the “collective self” (Ortega-Williams, 2020). The wisdom of 20 Black youth organizers, from whom the concept of collective self was derived, will be presented as critical guidance for arriving at healed Black futures. The proposition is situated in international discourses about historical trauma (Brave Heart, 1998; Ortega-Williams et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2020; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018) and intergenerational healing (Henderson et al., 2021). The essay will conclude by envisioning possibilities for intersectional Black collective wellbeing in these times, incorporating my personal standpoint.

Black Folk, Historical Trauma, and Intergenerational Healing in the U.S.

We are more than the sum of our disparities. We are not 2D statistics, black lettering against a white page. We are our resistance. We are how we have healed. We are the outgrowth of generational ingenuity and ancestral desires. We are Black girl magic, Black boy joy, and #Blacktranslivesmatter. Contemporary times demand an accounting for how our historical context is informing our realities, which includes not only our wounds but also our strengths.

Our times are reflective of patterns of violence and subjugation that have occurred intergenerationally, as well as whispers from our elders of ways to navigate these stolen terrains moving forward. Understanding historical trauma while conjuring our intergenerational wellbeing means we have access to multidimensional tools that transform the linear limitations of this present moment.

Historical trauma was first conceptualized by Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998), a Lakota social work scholar. She developed the framework in search of a conceptualization of public health disparities among her people that acknowledged the distal factors impacting wellbeing. Attempted genocide, cultural disruption, land theft, and persistent subjugation were theorized to be historical traumas, mass group-level harms that initiated a cascade of historical trauma responses that could be passed toward subsequent generations (Brave Heart, 1998; Sotero, 2006). Compounded losses, cumulative trauma, and unresolved grief, in the historical trauma framework, could create a soul wound (Brave Heart, 1998). Dr. Joy DeGruy-Leary (2005) similarly conceptualized post-traumatic slave syndrome to describe the sequelae of pain and trauma responses emanating from enslavement for African Americans. Colorism, as a function of racism, has also been explored as a salient factor (Ortega-Williams et al., 2019).

The conceptualization of historical trauma continues to expand, acknowledging the harm and polyvictimization it causes (Hamby et al., 2021) while also uplifting the power passed forward generationally. Dr. Karina Walters and colleagues (2020) explored the concept of original instructions in recovery from historical trauma as a social determinant of health among Choctaw people. In a study funded by the National Institutes of Health to address elevated diabetes levels, Choctaw elders were consulted about original instructions on nutrition, nourishment, and wellness that existed before the injury of colonization (Walters et al., 2020). As a part of this exploration, a cohort of Choctaw women re-walked the Trail of Tears to gain insight into the wisdom they carry intergenerationally (Walters et al., 2020). This is a powerful contemporary demonstration of how to recover from historical trauma. It transforms the typical approach to healing by centering collective action to retrieve cultural knowledge, wisdom, and strategies from ancestors, including from the land itself.

In this paradigm shift about wellness, it is not a sacrilege to expand our laser-focused gaze upon glaring national statistics blankly stating how quickly we will die. We can also turn to the wellness we carry within our bones, within our narratives, for pathways to truth and evidence. Historically, our ancestors were specialists in creating a way out of no way. We can (re)member how they prepared us to survive these times and be well during attempted annihilation in a racially hostile environment.

We Gon' Be Alright: When We Are Well, I Am Well

A white supremacist lens of history distorts who we are as Black people. It will depict us as a rootless, landless people (Williams, 1987). White supremacy will emphasize our disparities and harm alone, reducing deep, expansive histories solely to our wounds. We are much more.

Who was the “we” alluded to when singing “We Shall Overcome” (Seeger, 1963) or later, “We Gon’ Be Alright” (Lamar, 2015)? We have a relationship with a larger self, a mass group-level identity based not only on how we have been racialized—a “collective-self” through which we find relationality. It fuels our resistance to injustice, giving us courage to envision our wellbeing (Ortega-Williams, 2020). Enslavement would have us believe that we had nothing, were nothing, and definitely were not a “we.” The presence of a “we” meant a collective humanity existed. Connectedness and communality were dangerous, antithetical to the subjugation and reduction of a people to property. The presence of a “we” meant that there was a larger whole to which we belonged.

In listening to the wisdom of 20 Black youth organizers in New York City about their collective work for racial and economic justice, a theme emerged about collective wellbeing. Black youth at the frontlines of organizing against systems hostile to their existence understood that they belonged to a collective self (Ortega-Williams, 2020). Police and vigilante-led violence and murder of Black people are not an attack upon an individual, in their view, but a violation against a collective self to which all Black people belong. Black youth in this study referenced vital dimensions of collective-self care, such as mutual aid, organizing, and channeling the wisdom and strategies of ancestors (Ortega-Williams, 2020). Historical trauma, as well as historical resistance, was an inherited legacy that could not only inform why youth today fight for justice but also guide them in healing the futures they desired to create.

What can we learn from Black youth about what will help Black people be well now and into the future? One, fighting back against injustice is collective-self care. Actions for personal care, in a framework that honors belonging to a collective self, acknowledge that healing occurs within acts for the whole (Richards, 1994). Caring for a collective self demonstrates Ginwright’s (2015, 2018) focus on radical healing and healing-centered engagement. Hope, according to Ginwright (2015), is a sociological rather than psychological phenomenon, based on collective action and vision. In this framework, hope is evident in acknowledging the care that our collective self requires to heal and get free. Embracing that there is a “we,” a collective self, can help us to reframe and interrogate the reduction of self-care to just what can be found with a price tag in a marketplace that does not have our best interest at heart (Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective, 2020). A vision can emerge that can tap into ancestral wisdom and historical resistance to fuel our journeys forward (Greene, 2020). We can build our legacy of wellness.

Conclusion

Yes, there are disparities of health among our people. However, these disparities are not new, and neither is our resistance to the systemic injustices that are associated with them. We have a chance to promote a dimension of wellness that is responsive to our collective self. We are joy, we are magic, we are virtual DJ battles during the pandemic to keep our spirits up (Cobb, 2020). We are knocks on a neighbor’s door to share food during the height of COVID-19 transmission, when many organizational doors needed to close. We are resistance to policies and priorities that limit access to health care. We are the experts that create culturally responsive healing models, reflecting our ethos and worldview. We are intergenerational healing and wellbeing that incorporates our ancestral training (Henderson et al., 2021). As we push forward, we can trust, we gon’ be alright.

References

Abrams, S., Anderson, C., Kruse, K. M., Richardson, H. C., & Thompson, H. A. (2020). *Voter suppression in U.S. elections.* University of Georgia Press.

Brave Heart, M. Y. H. (1998). The return to the sacred path: Healing the historical trauma and historical unresolved grief response among the Lakota through a psychoeducation group intervention. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, *68*(3), 287–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377319809517532

Brown, A. (2017). *Emergent strategy*. AK Press.

Cobb, J. (2020, March 22). D-Nice's Club Quarantine is what you need. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/d-nices-club-quarantine-is-what-you-need

DeGruy-Leary, J. A. (2005). *Post-traumatic slave syndrome. America's legacy of enduring injury and healing*. Uptone Press.

Ginwright, S. (2015). *Hope and healing in urban education: How urban activists and teachers are reclaiming matters of the heart*. Routledge.

Ginwright, S. (2018, May 31). *The future of healing: Shifting from trauma informed care to healing centered engagement.* Medium. https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healingshifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c

Greene, A. C. (2020). *Grassroots tales: Journeying of inward healing and outward movement building* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. City University of New York, Graduate Center.

Hamby, S., Elm, J. H., Howell, K. H., & Merrick, M. T. (2021). Recognizing the cumulative burden of childhood adversities transforms science and practice for trauma and resilience. *American Psychologist*, *76*(2), 230. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000763

Henderson, Z. R., Stephens, T. N., Ortega-Williams, A., & Walton, Q. L. (2021). Conceptualizing healing through the African American experience of historical trauma. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* *91*(6), 763–775. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000578

Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective. (2020, July 23). *Kindred offering to this moment.* Medium. https://medium.com/@kindredhealingjustice/kindred-offering-to-this-moment-2d10e322c866

Lamar, K. (2015). We gon' be alright [Song]. *To pimp a butterfly.* Top Dawg Entertainment; Aftermath Entertainment; Interscope Records.

Mude, W., Oguoma, V. M., Nyanhanda, T., Mwanri, L., & Njue, C. (2021). Racial disparities in COVID-19 pandemic cases, hospitalisations, and deaths: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Global Health, 11*. https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.11.05015

Ortega-Williams, A. (2020). Organizing as "collective-self" care among African American youth in precarious times. *Journal of African American Studies*, *25*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-020-09506-2

Ortega-Williams, A., Crutchfield, J., & Hall, J. C. (2019). The colorist-historical trauma framework: Implications for culturally responsive practice with African Americans. *Journal of Social Work, 21*(3), 294–309. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017319890083

Ray, R., & Gibbons, A. (2021, July 14). *Why are states banning critical race theory?* The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/07/02/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/

Richards, D. M. (1994). *Let the circle be unbroken: The implications of African spirituality in the diaspora.* Red Sea Press.

Seeger, P. (1963). We shall overcome. *Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American freedom songs 1960–1966.* Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

Sotero, M. M. (2006). A conceptual model of historical trauma: Implications for public health practice and research. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1*(1), 93–108. https://ssrn.com/abstract=1350062

Walters, K. L., Johnson-Jennings, M., Stroud, S., Rasmus, S., Charles, B., John, S., Allen, J., Keawe'aimoku Kaholokula, J., Look, M. A., de Silva, M., Lowe, J., Baldwin, J. A., Lawrence, G., Brooks, J., Noonan, C. W., Belcourt, A., Quintana, E., Semmens, E. O., & Boulafentis, J. (2020). Growing from our roots: Strategies for developing culturally grounded health promotion interventions in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. *Prevention Science*, *21*(1), 54–64. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-018-0952-z

Williams, C. (1987). *Destruction of Black civilization: Great issues of a race from 4500 BC to 2000 AD.* Third World Press.

Williams-Washington, K. N., & Mills, C. P. (2018). African American historical trauma: Creating an inclusive measure. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *44*(4), 246–263. https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12113

The Azibo Nosologies as Fantasias and Soliloquies: The Soliloquizer's Response to the Africanity Dissimulators

by

Daudi Ajani ya Azibo, Ph.D.
Public Intellectual

> *For a [colonized,] captive and enslaved people which we Blacks [worldwide] are, the highest form of mental instability could be . . . a Black who has adjusted to his [sic] condition and/or has accepted the value system of the White [or Arab] oppressor. . . . [she or he] is more in need of the services of the mental health provider than the traditional "patient." . . . because [his or her] . . . level of adjustment [to Eurasian society] . . . is dangerous not only to him or herself and the family related, but also to present and future Black generations.*
>
> – Yosef ben-Jochannan (as cited in Alexander, 1980, pp. 34–35)

The number-one mental health disparity affecting people of African descent globally is not to be found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* nor the International Classification of Diseases, but mentacide-induced psychological misorientation as presented in the Azibo Nosologies—an issue the mental health professions overlook. This essay lays a foundation for reversal.

In May 1890, Thayer (cited in Kimball, 2009) called Harvard University's refusal to allow W.E.B. Du Bois to deliver the valedictorian address a "pitiable rejection of a great opportunity" for moving society forward. I find Thayer's statement deeply relevant to the Azibo Nosologies (systems for professionally diagnosing personality breakdown or disorder in African-descent people; ADP), which have existed since 1989 but have not yet become a standard tool of choice in the armamentarium of mental health workers (MHWs). This essay seeks to advocate for the widespread use of the Azibo Nosologies not for vainglory, fanfaronade, or cock-a-hoop, but for alleviating the greatest mental health disparity currently visited upon ADP. Although schizophrenia, depression, PTSD, racial stress (a misnomer; Azibo, 2014, pp. 61–64), and hosts of other conditions in the United Nations' International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) may come to mind, the greatest mental health challenge that ADP face is actually psychological misorientation, defined as:

> (a) interpreting and negotiating reality or proceeding in the world with that part of one's individual consciousness that determines his or her psychological Africanity (racial identity) being bereft of cognitions and lacking ideation that would orient him or her toward prioritizing own-race maintenance and, most importantly, (b) the person's cognitive structure/ideational mechanism, i.e., constellation of beliefs, values, attitudes, and so forth is composed of concepts opposed to or incongruous with African-centricity in thinking and behaving, especially those of psychological Arabism, psychological Europeanism, or nihilism. Genetic blackness minus psychological Africanity is a capsuled definition [that is mainly accompanied with or induced by menticide, defined as Eurasian society's] deliberate and systematic destruction of an individual's or group's mind with the intention of extirpating that group. (Azibo, 2014, pp. 48, 57)

These two mental disorders predispose and precipitate 53 additional ones, which serve to break down African personality or psychological functioning writ large across concerns of individual ontogeny and racial phylogeny. Mentacide-induced psychological misorientation appears responsible for myriad psychopathologies inherent in interiority and bereft of elements pertaining to African-centered cultural ideation. Metaphorically, these disorders represent the Eurasian forced (usually) inside the ADP's interiority. Can you imagine that—an ideational entity inside one's consciousness, stabbing, slicing, devouring, carving up, miring, and obliterating the cognitive elements that might orient that person in the direction of African survival? Imagining it should be easy if this premise is accepted:

> All of our problems can be attributed to the systematic theft of our Afrikan personality. . . . brought about by the conscious destruction of our culture by both our Arab and European enemies. The results of their cultural imperialism [have] been devastating as we stumble around leaving "Race First" logic behind. (Del Jones, 1996, p. 162; Azibo, 2011a, 2016b, 2018c)

The 55 disorders are (a) without precedent and entirely nonexistent in Eurasian-based nosology and personality theory, and (b) stand to overturn standard operating procedures in mental health work, should they become recognized. Small wonder, then, that this great opportunity to move ADP worldwide forward apparently has been rejected—so far—by Africana psy-professionals who, ironically, are quick to espouse an ethical obligation to attack the psychological holdups to ADP's liberation. Supposing it is these disorders that underlie much of the analyses of en masse mental disorder in the African U.S. population (while no doubt being applicable to all ADP) by Amos Wilson (1989, 1993; Wilson & Plata, 2019) and Frances Welsing (1991, 2014), then the DSM/ICD stuff can be viewed as secondary, albeit nontrivial, concerns (Azibo, 1996, 2014, 2018b, 2018c).

The Azibo Nosologies in Brief

What are they? The Azibo Nosologies are African culture-focused diagnostic systems of classifying and understanding mental disorders peculiar to ADP. Yoked to the African personality construct (Azibo, 2014, 2015a, 2018b; Azibo et al., 2013; Khoapa, 1980; Osei, 1981; Tembo, 1980), meaning psychological functioning inclusive of racial identity and personhood from an African-centered perspective, they are distinguishable from Eurasian-based perspectives on ADP's personality. The initial Azibo Nosology (Azibo, 1989) containing 18 disorders was succeeded by a second edition, the Azibo Nosology II, containing 55 disorders and drawing on 6 decades of literature and 22 theorists and practitioners (Azibo, 2014). As these nosologies assume that African beingness is neither romantic nor figment, but real, the diagnostic formulations they contain derive from the African worldview independently of enslavement, colonialism, and Eurasian domestication, all the while maintaining responsiveness to the psycho-social-cultural havoc these existential realities convey in the present. Assessment and treatment is 100% integrative with Eurasian-centered diagnoses contained in the DSMs and ICD—when these do not violate African-centered reality (Azibo, 2014, 2016a, 2018b).

Why are they needed? Historically, Western nosologies chew up and mock ADP's realities. Since Emil Kraepelin's diagnostic assessment of ADP, the study of their psychology has been fraught with invalidity, frequently yielding "deficits" of healthy traits and overabundances of not so healthy ones (Abdullah, 2003; Azibo, 1993; Guthrie, 2004; Thomas & Sillen, 1972). That this is married to racist civilization imperatives seems obvious. However, as psy-professions now recognize acknowledging people's borders or culture as central to psychological inquiry about them, an African-centered nosology should logically enter over and above Indigenizing, Africanizing or Blackenizing, and culturally adapting or otherwise sensitizing the practice of diagnosing with Eurasian nosologies.

How do they work? The Azibo Nosologies are situated in a general guide for living specified by centering African civilization's view of human nature. For ADP, then, thinking and behaving deviant to this African-centered guide a priori violates what normalcy or appropriate behavior entails (Azibo, 1996, 2014, 2015a, 2018b; Kambon, 1996; Khoapa, 1980; Tembo, 1980). A simplified behavioral templet adopted from Marcia Sutherland accompanies the Azibo Nosology II, which asserts that the authentic African personality:

> sees value in . . . [and] is dedicated to his or her [individual] African self and by extension to all African persons. . . . not allowing the oppressor to manipulate him or her to maintain the oppression of [ADP] . . . lives in accordance with African-centered attitudes . . . is a person of [African-centered] culture . . . informed by our collective history and common concern . . . has fallen in love with the race and consistently sacrifices for our uplift [as] . . . a situation of oppression can never be adjusted to . . . existing as a sovereign people [is preferred as] our only stake in the present order of things would be to change it . . . [thus] seek justice, but strive for the liberation of productive forces [resources] . . . possessing a true and lucid consciousness of the Manichean world's design . . . [is] accept[ing] of the risks and responsibilities associated . . . [as his or her] will to freedom . . . exceeds any . . . psychological and physical fears . . . [is] resolved never to yield . . . to rebuild . . . and to fight. (Azibo, 2014, p. 41; 2018b, 2018c)

Plus, every Azibo Nosology diagnosis is formulated in Fanon's sociogeny (environmental causation) framework—"beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny," states Fanon (1967, p. 11; see also Fanon, 1963)—either in its original presentation or in my nosological recasting of it, which provides a nomenclator for some diagnoses and explication for all.

Soliloquy as Point of Emphasis

Even though the Azibo Nosologies would appear to be a *succés fou*, the complaint has arisen that they have been ignored because it seems as though the author is a fantasist talking to only himself (Azibo, 2015b). The opposite is true, as from the outset, MHW were invited into the enterprise:

> This *Africentric* nosology is humbly presented for . . . its adoption and refinement by African[a] psychologists and its usage with African [descent] clients. . . . It (a) provides a

> more accurate normalcy reference for mental health, and (b) resplendently systematizes the major disorders . . . deriving from the African-centered perspective as well as . . . [the] European-centered . . . DSM-III. (Azibo, 1989, p. 206, original emphasis)

Despite this, MHW may have declined this invitation because they perceived the Azibo Nosologies as non-mainstream or "underground." The non-mainstream notion affects Africana MHW, both continental and Diaspora, most of whom, apparently, still hold Western-based psy-professions as authoritative enough to defer to (Azibo, 2018a). The term "underground" is always inappropriate and insulting when classifying Africentric personality and identity work. It is self-evident that the Eurasian is still inside many Africana psy-professionals, miseducation-wise and perhaps psychopathologically too. Mental health doctors—and perhaps most of all, the Africanity dissimulators—sometimes need a doctor themselves (Azibo, 2015b).

These unfortunate attitudes (perceiving this field as non-mainstream and underground) likely stem from a negativity that persists well beyond the Azibo Nosologies. These nosologies actually have accumulated significant support from Africana scholars (Anderson, 2003; Curry, 2014; Harrell, 1999; Jamison, 2014; Jennings, 2014; Kelsey, 2014; Schultz, 2003) and textbook writers (Anderson & Stewart, 2007; Belgrave & Allison, 2006). Additionally, case studies (Abdullah, 1998; Atwell & Azibo, 1991; Denard, 1998) demonstrated the superiority of Azibo Nosology diagnoses over DSM-III and DSM-IV diagnoses. Several quantitative studies of Azibo Nosology constructs have all explained their reliable levels of variance, indicating construct validity (Azibo, 2018b).

The lone negative evaluation of either Azibo Nosology was provided by Jackson-Lowman (2004). Her top three criticisms are as follows:

> (a) One of the difficulties with the Azibo nosology is [Azibo's] assertion suggesting the possibility of using both the Azibo nosology and Eurocentrically-developed nosologies [DSM and ICD] together, (b) interventions at the level of the invisible realm are also necessary to facilitate healing and restoration, and (c) [the Azibo Nosology leads [to] a continued search for pathology in the individual. . . . continu[ing] the process of victim blaming. (Jackson-Lowman, 2004)

As to (a), is this a difficulty or a strength? In regard to (b), whenever scholars get around to operationalizing the stuff of invisible realms, it will bear more fruit to correlate Azibo Nosology conditions with it instead of criticizing the Azibo Nosology for not conceptualizing such things! Also, as the Azibo Nosologies are expressly situated in African-centered spiritual essentialism (Azibo, 2011b), they incorporate in non-dilettantish, intelligent ways the matters of the invisible realm—courtesy of their derivation from an absolute psychological nature of the human nature model, meaning "result[s] of an intrapsychic personality process gone awry" wherein disorder is postulated "to be the lacking of some nonarbitrary standard" (Azibo, 1996, p. 49) for behaving (like a template). The absurdity of (c) is unbearable, because I articulate each Azibo Nosology disorder as sociogenetic.

Moving Beyond Soliloquy

The notion of the Azibo Nosologies as fantasia can be rejected because the 55 conditions addressed by 22 scholars over 60 years, and my systematization of them, coupled with the conceptual, case study, and quantitative research support involved shows that they reflect something real that we ignore at ADP's peril. However, the state of soliloquy must be overcome for these nosologies to be placed in service of ADP globally. Realization of the vision that the discursive and practical power the Eurasian-based DSMs and ICDs have is potentially attainable with the Azibo Nosologies used to assist in readying ADP for re-birthing African civilization (Williams, 1993), exercising power (Wilson, 1998) in the context of building African realities (Baruti, 2009) toward the African renaissance (Aristide, 2006; Gutto, 2013), which requires teaching, applied implementation in research and practice, and institutionalization of the Azibo Nosology II (Azibo, 2014, 2015b).

Implementation speaks for itself and can be carried out with or without official psy-profession grace. Institutionalization refers to recognition and incorporation by professional societies and the legal boards and third-party stakeholders involved in mental health. Each presupposes teaching about which it seems appropriate to invoke Fanon's call to "leave this Europe" (meaning to leave behind its ideas about African human nature) as "the European game has ended" (Fanon, 1963, pp. 311–312) and Hilliard's (2015) statement "forget Europeans, what kind of things did African people think?" (p. 150). After all,

> The license to name the world, to categorize, classify, or otherwise demarcate the world and behavior on the part of Whites, must be revoked. Afrikans *must* assert their right and power of self-definition—of categorizing and classifying the world and the nature of their being in it ... in ways which make their minds and bodies humanitarian instruments of Afrikan power and liberation. (Amos Wilson, 1993, 119, original emphasis)

For this task, I continue humbly, but now with urgency, in recommending the Azibo Nosology II. The Africanity dissimulators and other MHPs should find it indispensable in eliminating the greatest mental health disparities victimizing ADP today. Its usage portends real healing in the context of preparing to fight the bitter enemy, the implacable foe of Eurasian hegemony. As an illustration of how our society would benefit from this invaluable tool, consider the urgent needs revealed by current societal upheavals around post-George Floyd, -Ahmaud Arbery, -Breonna Taylor, -Rayshard Brooks, -Daniel Prude, and -Jacob Blake demonstrations as well as in preceding situations in the wake of the deaths of Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, and Tamir Rice, ad nauseam.

2022 and Beyond

On display among many protestors are reactionary disorders of the oppression, including those that fall into the violent reactions and Black rage categories presented in the Azibo Nosologies. Many will face psy-profession/psychiatric scrutiny, but without the benefit of these three psychological diagnoses. The significance is that the diagnoses could mitigate guilt and/or sentencing and could be used to underlie sentencing alternatives (Azibo, in press). It seems psy-professionals armed with the Azibo Nosology II could immediately and into the future influence the mental wellness needs of ADP in society-building ways. However, not until this nosology is recognized and respected—securing the roots of legitimacy (Azibo, 2015b; Clark, 1973)—as the go-to system of African personality disorganization that happens to unify the various (and in some cases, disparate), extant theses and analyses on the topic (Curry, 2014; Jamison, 2014) delivered by a diverse group of 22 authors over decades, and likely subsuming of still more to come, will my soliloquies end and the practice shift to the earthly realm (Atwell & Azibo, 1991; Denard, 1998)—enabling African-centered, spirituality-based diagnosing to begin en masse.

References

Abdullah, S. (1998). Mammy-ism: A diagnosis of psychological misorientation for women of African descent. *Journal of Black Psychology, 24,* 196–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984980242009

Abdullah, S. (2003). Nosology and diagnostics in Eurocentric psychiatry and psychology: Foundation and current praxis in racism. In D. Azibo (Ed.) *African-centered psychology: Culture-focusing for multicultural competence* (pp. 67–82). Carolina Academic Press.

Alexander, E. C. (1980). *Axioms and quotations of Yosef ben-Jochannan.* ECA Associates.

Anderson, T. (2003). Black psychology and psychological concepts. In D. Azibo (Ed.), *African-centered psychology: Culture-focusing for multicultural competence* (pp. 3–38). Carolina Academic Press.

Anderson, T., & Stewart, J. (2007). *Introduction to African American studies*. Black Classics Press.

Aristide, J. B. (2006). The psychological renaissance. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies, 1*(1), 164–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/18186870608529712

Atwell, I., & Azibo, D. (1991). Diagnosing personality disorder in Africans (Blacks) using the Azibo Nosology: Two case studies. *Journal of Black Psychology, 17*(2), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984910172002

Azibo, D. (1989). African-centered theses on mental health and a nosology of Black/African personality disorder. *Journal of Black Psychology, 15,* 173–214. https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984890152008

Azibo, D. (1993). Eurocentric psychology and the issue of race. *Word: A Black Culture Journal, 2,* 43–57.

Azibo, D. (1996). Mental health defined Africentrically. In D. Azibo (Ed.), *African psychology in historical perspective & related commentary* (pp. 47–56). Africa World Press.

Azibo, D. (2011a). The psycho-cultural case for reparations for descendents of enslaved Africans in the United States. *Race, Gender & Class, 18*(1–2), 7–36. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23884865

Azibo, D. (2011b). Understanding essentialism as fundamental: The centered African perspective on the nature of prototypical human nature: Cosmological Ka (spirit). *Western Journal of Black Studies, 35*(2), 77–91. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A260494448/AONE?u=anon~c83ccf75&sid=googleScholar&xid=82f54340

Azibo, D. (2014). The Azibo Nosology II: Epexegesis and 25th anniversary update: 55 culture-focused mental disorders. *Journal of Pan-African Studies, 7*, 32–145. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol9no5/9.5-6-Azibo%20(1).pdf

Azibo, D. (2015a). Can psychology help spur the re-birth of African civilization? Notes on the African personality (psychological Africanity) construct: Normalcy, development, and abnormality. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 8*(1), 146–187. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol8no1/8.1-13-Azibo-final.pdf

Azibo, D. (2015b). Moving forward with the legitimation of the Azibo Nosology II. *Journal of African American Studies, 19*, 298–318. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-015-9307-z

Azibo, D. (2016a). The backstory on the 500 lb gorilla and the elephant meeting in the consulting room for critical perspective on evidence-based practice and nosology in mental health establishmentarianism: A possible way out of the conundrum of multiculturalism and cultural competence in psychopathology. *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry, 18*(3), 229–257. https://doi.org/10.1891/1559-4343.18.3.229

Azibo, D. (2016b). The domain of psychological restoration: Reparations down payments for the defeat of mentacide, transcendence of psychological misorientation, and the mental overturning of a terminated people. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 9*(*5*), 50–82. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol9no5/9.5-6-Azibo%20(1).pdf

Azibo, D. (2018a). Aziboist concepts and psycho-cultural orientations for the African-centered: Part of a non-Eurocentric world psychology (Part 1). *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 42*(1–2), 41–59. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A589127443/AONE?u=anon~97c8ee4a&sid=googleScholar&xid=7f85fe5e

Azibo, D. (2018b). *Azibo's metatheory of African personality: A holistic, evolutionary, African-centered, racial theory with quantitative research and case study support* [Open access ebook]. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies;* NationTime Press. https://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol12no4/12.4-3-Azibo.pdf

Azibo, D. (2018c). Ramifications of 1619 for personality/mental disorganization in African-U.S. people: Fifty-five psycho-sexual terrors attacking personality's phylogenetic core alongside myriad breakdowns in its ontogenetic periphery. *Race, Gender & Class, 25,* 207–233.

Azibo, D. (In press). From conceptualizing to institutionalizing Black rage, oppression violence reaction, and reactionary disorders: Towards legal defenses. *Intercultural Law Review*.

Azibo, D., Robinson-Kyles, J., & Johnson, M. (2013). Prototypical psychological Africanity (racial identity) profiles and orientation for social engineering of African descent people. *Race, Gender & Class, 20*(1–2), 110–129. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43496909

Baruti, M. (2009). *Centered: Building Afrikan realities.* Akoben House.

Belgrave, F., & Allison, K. (2006). *African American psychology: From Africa to America.* SAGE Publications.

Clark, C. (1973). The concept of legitimacy in Black psychology. In E. Epps (Ed.), *Race relations: Current perspectives* (pp. 332–354). Winthrop.

Curry, T. (2014). On the meta-theoretical orientation of Daudi Azibo's nosology: Placing the development of his African-centered diagnostic system against the methodological crisis argued for by Dr. W. C. Banks. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 7*(5), 20–32. http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol7no5/3-Nov-Azibo-Curry.pdf

Denard, D. (1998). Application of the Azibo nosology in clinical practice with Black clients: A case study. *Journal of Black Psychology, 24*(2)*,* 182–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984980242008

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth.* Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin/white masks.* Grove Press.

Guthrie, R. (2004). *Even the rat was white.* Pearson.

Gutto, S. (2013). In search of real justice for Africa and Africans, and her/their descendants in a world of justice, injustices and impunity. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies, 8*(1), 30–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2013.834553

Harrell, J. (1999). *Manichean psychology: Racism and the minds of people of African descent.* Howard University Press.

Hilliard, A. G. (2015). Asa Grant Hilliard III (Nana Amankwatia Baffour II). In K. Person-Lynn (Ed.), *First word* (2nd ed.). Third World Press.

Jackson-Lowman, H. (2004). Perspectives on Afrikan American mental health: Lessons from Afrikan systems. In R. Jones (Ed.), *Black psychology* (4th ed., pp. 599–630). Cobb & Henry.

Jamison, D. (2014). Daudi Azibo: Defining and developing Africana psychological theory, research and practice. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 7*(5), 3–20. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol7no5/2-Nov-Azibo-Jamison-Daudi%20Azibo.pdf

Jennings, R. (2014). Azibo interviews Dr. Regina Jennings on the template for the racially normal individual. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 7*(5), 185–191. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol7no5/7-Nov-Azibo-Jenn.pdf.

Jones, D. (1996). *Invasion of 'de body snatchers: Hi-tech barbarians.* Hikeka Press.

Kambon, K. (1996). The Africentric paradigm and African-American psychological liberation. In D. Azibo (Ed.), *African psychology in historical perspective and related commentary* (pp. 57–70). Africa World Press.

Kelsey, M. (2014). Azibo interview of Moriba (Richard) Kelsey, Ph.D. on the template for the racially normal individual. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 7*(5), 192–195. http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol7no5/7-Nov-Azibo-Jenn.pdf.

Khoapa, B. (1980). *The African personality.* United Nations University.

Kimball, B. (2009). "This pitiable rejection of a great opportunity": W. E. B. Du Bois, Clement G. Morgan, and the Harvard University graduation of 1890. *Journal of African American History, 94*(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1086/JAAHv94n1p5

Osei, G. K. (1981). *The African concept of life and death.* African Publication Society.

Schultz, D. (2003). African-American personality theory. In D. Azibo (Ed.), *African-centered psychology: Culture-focusing for multicultural competence.* Carolina Academic Press.

Tembo, M. (1980). *Concept of African personality among Zambian students: Sociological implications—summary*. Hunger for Culture. http://www.hungerforculture.com/?page_id=1096.

Thomas, A., & Sillen, S. (1972). *Racism and psychiatry.* Citadel Press.

Welsing, F. (1991). *The Isis papers.* Third World Press.

Welsing, F. (2014). *Frances C. Welsing: "Blacks in a state of insanity," police killings, Ferguson* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7GL2cJl0cs

Williams, C. (1993). *The re-birth of African civilization.* Third World Press.

Wilson, A. (1989, September 10). *The psycho-historical destruction of African civilizations* [Video]. Afrikan World InfoSystems.

Wilson, A. (1993). *The falsification of Afrikan consciousness.* Afrikan World Infosystems.

Wilson, A., & Plata, S. (2019). *The psychology of self hatred and self-defeat: Towards a reclamation of the Afrikan mind.* Afrikan World InfoSystems.

The African Medical Paradigm: Delineating Tradition from Pathology During the Coronavirus Pandemic

by

Tarik A. Richardson, M.A.

Temple University

Uzima haubadilishwi mali
"Life (health) and wealth are not bartered"
– Swahili proverb

Now more than ever, African communities across the globe have unprecedented access to a wealth of information. However, as demonstrated within the last several years, communities of African descent across the world have been flooded with an almost equally unprecedented amount of misinformation. This misinformation serves as a major danger to these communities as their members navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. This report does not intend to refute western scientific achievements, efforts, or approaches to fighting the coronavirus, but instead to give agency to a global community that has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. By exploring the experiences of these communities, and investigating the historiography of the African medical paradigm, these communities can be better informed about the implications of their medical possibilities.

COVID-19 and African Americans

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the insecurities concerning the medical industry within African and diasporic communities have manifested themselves through a heightened sense of vulnerability. Over the last several years, members of the African communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable, expressed their anxieties about both COVID-19 and institutional apparatuses designed to deal with the ongoing situation. In November of 2020, the NAACP as part of a COVID Collaborative conducted a comprehensive survey on the coronavirus vaccine within Black and Latinx communities. This survey demonstrated a lack of confidence that these communities have in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 14% of African Americans surveyed indicated that they trust the vaccine will be safe, only 18% of African Americans surveyed believed that the vaccine will be effective, and only 28% of African Americans were confident that "the vaccine will be tested specifically for safety in their racial/ethnic group" (Langer Research Associates, 2020).

The public response to African American hesitancy and anxieties about the pandemic and the subsequent vaccine has been dismissive. Government and public health officials have tried to explain away this hesitancy by "invoking the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study" (Dembosky, 2021). By invoking this unethical and abusive study, which began in 1932 and ended in 1972, as the source of African American anxieties, their concerns have been reduced to archaic perturbation. It should be made clear that the Tuskegee experiment is not the cause for African American hesitancy to trust external medical institutions, but rather a justification of that hesitancy. Karen Lincoln, University of Southern California professor of social work and founder of Advocates for African American Elders, articulates in an interview with the National Public Radio:

> [Tuskegee is] a scapegoat. It's an excuse. If you continue to use it as a way of explaining why many African Americans are hesitant, it almost absolves you of having to learn more, do more, involve other people—admit that racism is actually a thing today. (cited in Dembosky, 2021)

This sentiment is shared by Fatima Cody Stanford and Simar Singh Bajaj (2021) in their article "Beyond Tuskegee—Vaccine Distrust and Everyday Racism," who similarly state,

> These historical traumas certainly provide critical context for interpreting present-day occurrences. But attributing distrust primarily to these instances ignores the everyday racism that Black communities face. (p. e12)

Prior to the pandemic, there had already been academic discourse on the history of racism within the medical field, the lack of quality medical care for Black communities, as well as a growing awareness of medical malpractice. The history of medical malpractice and experimentation on the Black community in the United States is illuminated in Harriet Washington's (2006) book *Medical Apartheid.* Washington writes,

> African Americans must remain wary of research abuses. They are rarer, but the potential for exploitation and abuse still looms.
>
> Physicians, patients, and ethicists must also understand that acknowledging abuse and encouraging African Americans to participate in medical research are compatible goals. History and today's deplorable African American health profile tell us clearly that black Americans need both more research and more vigilance. (p. 358)

Lack of quality information about the virus—and specifically, how it would affect Black communities at the beginning of the pandemic—along with the overabundance of faulty information created the perfect environment for the propagation of conspiracies theories and outlandish ideas. Within the first few months of the pandemic and the beginning of the lockdown in the United States, news circulated on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook that people of African descent were immune to the virus. The assertion that Africa had a null COVID infection rate was also propagated (Ross, 2020). There is a very real possibility that this type of misinformation exacerbated the spread of the virus within the Black communities, which would become disproportionately affected during the pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) indicated five factors that have affected health equity within the Black community by increasing the risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. These factors include (1) discrimination within the medical field; (2) access to quality health care; (3) the occupation of members of the community; (4) the educational, income, and wealth disparity in America; and (5) the crowded conditions of many Black communities' living spaces. In the field of public health, these factors are known as social determinants of health. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.) defines social determinants of health as "conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks." These social determinants of health reflect the factors that have contributed to the increased risk faced by African Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are intrinsically tied to the history of race relations in the United States, issues of environmental racism, and the economic marginalization of the Black community in America. Without reconciling these longstanding issues of structural racism within the country, it is unlikely that these current factors that impede African American survivability during the pandemic will be adequately addressed.

Tanzania, COVID-19, and the African Continent

Within Swahili culture, there are many proverbs concerning health and medicine. One that embodies the concern many African nations have is *Dawa haitolewi bure* ("Medicine is never given freely"). During the pandemic, many if not most African nations became overly reliant on western organizations such as the World Health Organization and their former colonial masters for medical supplies, vaccines, and testing kits. This reliance painfully demonstrates how African political sovereignty and self-dependency have yet to be realized.

Tanzania, Burundi, Madagascar, and Eritrea were four African nations that were initially hesitant to administer vaccinations. During the pandemic, the nation of Tanzania positioned itself as a state in denial. Tanzanian public health laws state that only the government can declare a disease outbreak. Furthermore, regulations introduced in July of 2020 sought to extend government control on the publication of pandemic-related information online (Buguzi, 2021a). Due to these laws and governmental pressure, many medical experts were censored in Tanzania from promoting the idea of governmental control of the situation. Additionally, according to Buguzi (2021a), "doctors felt unable officially to diagnose covid-19 for fear of government reprimand." Despite the growing realities of the pandemic affecting the nation, Tanzanian President Magufuli maintained "that God stood by the nation and that there was no covid-19 in Tanzania" (Buguzi, 2021a). However, due to pressure from Tanzanian medical professionals, the World Health Organization, and the death of high-ranking government officials, including the First Vice President of Zanzibar Seif Sharif Hamad, the Tanzanian government began to take steps to adequately address the pandemic in Tanzania. Prior to this change in policy, Tanzania was the target of international scrutiny about the lack of transparency in how the nation was handling the pandemic; however, in November of 2021, South African officials stated that they felt as though they had been punished by the international community due to their efforts to be transparent about the conditions of their country (Frazier, 2021).

It should be noted that Tanzania is not a country that has historically been against vaccinations. In 2014, it ranked among the top 10 most immunized nations on the African continent (Buguzi, 2021b). It should also be noted that the legacy of African medicine goes beyond the popular colloquialisms about the Moors introducing proper hygiene practices in Medieval Iberia. In the United States, it was Africans who introduced the concept of vaccinations in what began the Boston Inoculation Controversy of 1721 (Minardi, 2004). Like the African American community, the Tanzanian government's hesitancy was rooted not in its distrust of medicine, but in those who created the "cures." In February of 2021, President Magufuli stated that the Tanzanian health ministry would "only adopt vaccinations after they had been certified by Tanzania's own experts" (Mfinanga et al., 2021). Additionally, Tanzanian Minister of Health Dorothy Gwajima stated that "we are not yet satisfied that those vaccines have been clinically proven safe" (Mfinanga et al., 2021). From these statements, it is clear that Tanzania was working in the best interests of its people and was, as the western saying goes, "wary of Greeks bearing gifts." In January of 2021, President Magufuli addressed this idea, stating:

> You should stand firm. Vaccinations are dangerous. If the White man was able to come up with vaccinations, he should have found a vaccination for AIDS by now; he would have found a vaccination [for] tuberculosis by now; he would have found a vaccination for malaria by now; he would have found a vaccination for cancer by now. (Mfinanga et al., 2021)

This sentiment is shared across country lines and embodies the core essence of African and diasporic communities' concerns about the vaccine. Along with these sentiments comes a feeling of vulnerability where African communities are reliant on external aid and at the mercy of the success of western medicines. Essentially, African and diasporic communities have had their agency reduced in order to promote the idea of global medical security. Furthermore, President Magufuli's apprehension concerning the intention of the Europeans is not unfounded. In November of 2021, Prince Williams of the United Kingdom was accused of being an eco-fascist when he remarked that Africa's increasing population was the source of their ecological problems (Mohamed, 2021). Prince Williams's eugenical and imperialist remarks echo sentiments of the "White Man's Burden," which formed the rhetorical core of European colonial enterprises in Africa. An element of this type of rhetoric is present in the discourse in international medical compliance, which, no matter how well-intentioned, robs Africans of their ability to act on their own accord and explore their own possibilities.

Alternative Medicine versus African Medicine

In order to retain a sense of agency, many have taken steps to further engage in the process of understanding the outcomes, consequences, and possibilities of medical treatments. In order to protect Black communities, it must be stressed that when it comes to research, we must get off of these digital plantations that have us conceptually incarcerated within echo chambers of disinformation. The community's agency to act upon quality information should be protected and defended. For better or for worse, individuals who have acted have utilized their agency to investigate proper alternatives—and have been ridiculed for their anxieties. Understanding the legacy of western medicine within Black communities demands that these individuals are met with compassion and understanding. Their concerns are not unfounded; however, many of the alternatives to vaccinations are.

During the pandemic, there has been a resurgence of interest in the benefits of herbal medicine. African culture should not be conceptualized as an alternative but as its own separate paradigm that demands further exploration. Elements of herbal medicine can be understood as part of this medical paradigm. In Tanzania, steps have been taken by many medical practitioners to blend their professional training in modern/western medicine with the tested traditions of their culture.

Prior to Tanzania's acceptance of western medicine and procedures in the early spring of 2021, Minister of Health Dorothy Gwajima advocated for more traditional, albeit unproven, remedies (Buguzi, 2021a). In his *British Medical Journal* report on Tanzania, Buguzi (2021a) states that "in a widely circulated video, she and her husband are seen covering themselves with a blanket to inhale steam from a saucepan of herbs." Westerners, and colonized or conceptually incarnated Africans, ridiculed Gwajima's actions as superstitious and eccentric. African herbalism and the African medical paradigm, in general, have been the target of pathological misrepresentation and prevarication.

The African Medical Paradigm

In *The African Condition,* Ali Mazrui (1980) shares his thoughts and experiences concerning the African medical paradigm. Mazrui recounts two of his colleagues' experience with illness on the continent, and while he does not provide a date for these events, given the time at which this text was written, these stories must have taken place in the early 20th century during the period of European colonial repression. The first story recounts a child suffering from polio whose affliction sparked a debate in the family on how the child should be treated. Mazrui writes that the African "theory of reincarnation had been converted into a form of therapy for a child deformed by polio." What Mazrui means by this is that members of the family wanted to throw the child into the river so the child could be reborn free from their previous afflictions. The second story deals with an old playmate of Mazrui who had a similar type of traumatic experience that reshaped the way they conceptualized the intersection of African culture and medicine. Mazrui writes that these personal histories are "part of the history of medical science in Africa" (Mazrui, 1980, p. 47). Mazrui is not wrong; these experiences as well as many other traumatic ones indeed constitute part of our shared history. However, we should not allow for these experiences, without proper investigation, to indict the African culture and medical practices.

Mazrui's handling of the conversation about the intersection of medicine and traditional culture demonstrates a lack of historical awareness, critical understanding of the cultural effects of colonization, as well as a lack of respect and appreciation for the legacy of the medical tradition in Africa. Many scholars, including Mazrui, fail to reconcile with African culture prior to the intrusion of foreign pressures. This failure creates an inability to perceive Africa outside of the historical experiences of foreign interaction.

By reducing the African medical paradigm to a collection of superstitions instead of a dynamic medicinal tradition, Mazrui robs Africans of their agency to investigate the possibilities of their own traditions. The African medical paradigm extends as least as far back as Imhotep the Kemetic polymath and surgeon in the 27th century before the common era to Mary Seacole's establishment of a nursing hospital during the Crimean War and incorporates the various herbal traditions on the continent and in the Diaspora, as well as integrating African spiritual philosophies.

This type of ontological reduction that pathologizes African culture and is unable or unwilling to conceptualize African culture outside of the interactions of African and foreign culture is emblematic of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon (1968) states:

> Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today. (p. 207).

As Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory implies, the colonial experience distorted many realities of African culture. The Maafa compromised African agency to practice and develop Indigenous ontological and cosmological ideas. African philosophy and cultural traditions continued to develop; however, due to the constraints of imperialism and loss of consciousness, many of these traditions lost their original cultural context. This necessitates that any research on contemporary African cultural systems must be in conversation with the systems of African ancestors. With cross-cultural analysis, between the various systems on the continent, and the classical systems, we can begin to delineate what is Indigenous, authentic, and uncompromised by foreign intrusions.

There are several contemporary examples of African cultural thought that have been bastardized during the colonial period, including the conceptualization of twins, the relationship between men and women, and spiritual possession, as well as the ontology of African people born with genetic defects. This last example has become quite an issue in Tanzania, as African people born with albinism have become victims of bastardized African spiritual practitioners (*mchawi*) who use the body parts of their victims for traditional healing (*uganga*). What originally was seen as a special spiritual attribute has been taken out of its original context as a malicious tradition developed in its place. The issue in Tanzania is not an inherent lack of respect within the community concerning traditional medicine. In Tanzania, it is understood that the African medical paradigm is not limited to the pathological work of these fraudulent and superstitious witchdoctors (*wachawi)*, as many traditional healers (*waganga*) operate with respect throughout the country. Many of the *waganga* (traditional healers) in Tanzania even operate clinics that blend "modern" medicine with culturally grounded traditional medicine. The principal issue in Tanzania, among other African communities, is the failure to adequately delineate between the actual practices that constitute the African medical paradigm and the practices of fraudulent opportunists. Steps need to be taken to better distinguish between malicious *mchawi* (witches) and their *uchawi* (witchcraft), and *mganga* (traditional healers) and *uganga* (traditional healing).

As a result of such confusion, traditional healers have become victims of reactionary violence in Tanzania (Rasmussen, 2015). In recent years, the Tanzanian government has taken steps to regulate traditional African medicine. In 2009, Tanzania passed the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act in an effort to register the healers and regulate Tanzanian *uganga* (Woo, 2019). Although this type of regulation seeks to legitimize the practice of African medical traditions, the only true way to delineate between the malicious opportunist who has taken advantage of African culture and the authentic traditional healers is to develop an informed understanding of what constitutes the parameters of traditional African culture and ethics.

Many if not most Africologists, Africanists, and other professionals in fields that concern the study of African phenomena do not have expertise in medicine. What these professionals do have is the training to begin to delineate culture from pathology. With an awareness of the importance of illuminating elements of African culture, we can begin to have more informed conversations about the possibilities of traditional medicine as well as celebrating and protecting those who practice African traditional medicine.

References

Buguzi, S. (2021a). Covid-19: Counting the cost of denial in Tanzania. *The British Medical Journal, 373.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1052

Buguzi, S. (2021b). Tanzania's dilemma: It's not so easy to go from vaccine denier to vaccine embracer [Audio podcast episode]. In *Goats and Soda.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/

goatsandsoda/2021/07/27/1021118952/tanzanias-dilemma-its-not-so-easy-to-go-from-vaccine-denier-to-vaccine-embracer

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. (2021). *Health equity considerations and racial and ethnic minority groups.* https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html

Dembosky, A. (2021, March 23). Stop blaming Tuskegee, critics say. It's not an "excuse" for current medical racism [Audio podcast episode]. *Shots.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/03/23/974059870/stop-blaming-tuskegee-critics-say-its-not-an-excuse-for-current-medical-racism

Fanon, F. (1968). *The wretched of the earth.* Grove Press.

Frazier, K. (2021, November 27). South Africa says it's being "punished" for detecting new COVID variant. *Axios.* https://www.axios.com/south-africa-covid-variant-omicron-6574e1fe-fc94-47c5-b1b3-0c8b6c5b5922.html

Langer Research Associates. (2020). *Coronavirus vaccine hesitancy in Black and Latinx communities.* COVID Collaborative. https://www.covidcollaborative.us/resources/coronavirus-vaccine-hesitancy-in-black-and-latinx-communities

Mazrui, A. (1980). *The African condition: A political diagnosis.* Cambridge University Press.

Minardi, M. (2004). The Boston inoculation controversy of 1721–1722: An incident in the history of race. *The William and Mary Quarterly, 61*(1), 47–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/3491675

Rasmussen, S. (2015). *Murdering albinos and witches in northwestern Tanzania: Connections and differences.* Henry Center for Theological Understanding. https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2015/07/murdering-albinos-and-witches-in-northwestern-tanzania-connections-and-differences/

Ross, J. (2020, March 19). *Coronavirus outbreak revives dangerous race myths and pseudoscience.* NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/coronavirus-outbreak-revives-dangerous-race-myths-pseudoscience-n1162326

Stanford, F. C., & Bajaj, S. S. (2021). Beyond Tuskegee—vaccine distrust and everyday racism. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 384*(5), e12. https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmpv2035827

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (n.d.). *Healthy People 2030: Social determinants of health.* https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health

Washington, H. (2006). *Medical apartheid: The dark history of medical experimentation on Black Americans from colonial times to the present.* Anchor.

Woo, N. (2019, September 16). *Tanzania's Zanzibar begins to register traditional healers.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/tanzania-health-idINKBN1W10J0

EDUCATION

“Truth, Reconciliation, and Education”: Healing the Original Sin of Slavery

by

Sonya McCoy-Wilson, Ed.D.
Executive Coach
McCoy Wilson Consulting, LLC

The United States has found itself incapable of escaping the original sin of slavery. A full 156 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, we find vestiges of slavery in every U.S. system and every social and political movement since the U.S. Civil War. The once-titled “dark and peculiar institution” is indeed the dark underbelly of every governmental, educational, and social policy from the U.S. Constitution and its 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, to landmark Supreme Court cases like *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 and the Jim Crow laws of the post-Reconstruction South to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, as well as the eight Civil Rights Acts (and restoration of those acts) between 1957 and 2021. Indeed, America has a dark past as well as a dark present. Yes, the conceptualization of Americanism is a beautiful dream—for some. However, for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, the Americanism and the “American dream” have been largely relegated to whites. Various measures have been attempted with the aim of transforming the United States into the democratic republic that it set out to be. None of these measures—the Civil War, Reconstruction, copious amendments to the Constitution, civil rights acts, affirmative action—have truly been successful. These measures have ideologically failed because the entire nation has not been invested in dismantling the system that birthed a slave colony and eventually a democratic republic. That system is deeply rooted in the ideology of “the white plantocracy.” That system is predicated on eugenics. That system is white supremacy itself. I argue here that the best way to dismantle white supremacy is through education and re-education. Truth, reconciliation, and education are the best hope we have for moving the country forward into authentic equity and inclusion. This essay posits truth, reconciliation, and education as the best model by which to transcend America’s dark past.

Truth

When one imagines truth and reconciliation, one naturally envisions South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its emphasis on restorative justice (Tutu, 2019). According to Tutu (2019), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a “court-like body established by the new South African government in 1995 to help heal the country and bring about a reconciliation of its people by uncovering the truth about human rights violations that had occurred during the period of apartheid" (p. 1). Unlike similar initiatives, such as the Nürnberg Trials of World War II or the International War Crimes Tribunal of 1972, the goal for the TRC in South Africa emphasized "truth and reconciliation" rather than punitive recourse. As such, "truth and reconciliation" in South Africa represented a global model for restorative justice.

The U.S. must go further than restorative justice, however. We must strive instead for *transformative* justice, which seeks to dismantle oppressive systems and transform society (Ruffin, 2020). As a means of facilitating transformative justice, the U.S. must be dedicated to telling the multiple and manifold truths of the history of race in the country. There is a proverb that argues, "until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter" (cited in Brooks, 1994). Therefore, we must articulate, clearly and often, that educating children in a culturally responsive way is not about shaming white people, so that they simply feel ashamed about the parts that they have played in oppressing Black and brown people. Rather, the history of race and white supremacy in America must be reframed by the surviving lions as a cautionary tale that warns future generations about what can happen if we only allow history to glorify the hunters. Achebe explained that he became a historian and a writer "so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—the bravery, even, of the lions" (Brooks, 1994). Ultimately, the truths that manifest from this reframing should operate as a justification for dismantling white supremacy as the core of systemic and systematic racism in the U.S. Not only must we dismantle white supremacy because we do not want to repeat the historical events of oppression in the U.S., but we also want to break the cycle of the oppressed/oppressor relationship (Freire, 1970/2000). By dismantling white supremacy, we have the potential to break irrational racial hierarchies and make the world a better place.

What does the "truth" look like? Ultimately, truth is testimony. The U.S. can arrive at this ever-elusive truth by first acknowledging that the nation has yet to heal the wounds that slavery inflicted and then establishing a national body (or commission) that focuses on the victims—the descendants of enslaved Africans—and the harm they have endured in the 156 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. The goal of testimony is not only to achieve a sense of purgation for the oppressed person but also to begin the process of atonement for the oppressing group or system. In this case, that system is the white supremacist ideology interwoven systemically into the United States of America. Truth also constructs an impartial historical record of the past (Tutu, 2019, p. 2).

Reconciliation

Only when we can hold space for "the lions" to be heard can the country hope to reconcile its dark past—its original sin of slavery. Reconciliation must include reparations and begin with changes in the ideological state apparatuses that perpetuate the ideology of a nation state (Althusser, 1970). According to Althusser (1970), there are repressive state apparatuses (RSA) and ideological state apparatuses (ISA). RSAs are used by the ruling class to dominate the working class through aggressive, confrontational, and violent means. In the case of the U.S., the ruling class can be correlated to the "white ruling class," as class and race are inextricably linked in the American binary construction of race. Accordingly, RSAs are police forces, armed forces, lower courts, and prisons. ISAs, on the other hand, use nonviolent means to oppress the working class by perpetuating oppressive systems that keep the ruling class in power. Those ISAs are typically churches, media, sports, social organizations, and educational systems. Some examples of the systematic racism permeating ISAs like school systems can be found in school-to-prison pipeline theory and practice (Heitzeg, 2009), redlining (Rothstein, 2017), high-stakes standardized testing, and school performance-based funding models.

Education

Some may argue that systems are immutable. However, Baldwin (1962) claimed instead that "not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced" (p. 12). Societies have adopted some defeatist perspectives about change, believing that nothing ever really changes, so we might as well accept varying degrees of evils. In fact, many change leaders sabotage their efforts to exact sustainable change by targeting symptoms of larger problems rather than targeting the core of the problems. I would argue that the core of the problem of anti-Black racism and white supremacy in America begins with educational systems (ideological state apparatuses), not judicial or policing systems (repressive state apparatuses). There are several generations of Americans who have been systematically miseducated and therefore have accepted myths of American meritocracy and counternarratives about the brutalization of Africans in America. We must, therefore, transform how people think before we can change how they behave. And if we hope to do this, we must be in the business of liberation education.

Others have proposed truth and reconciliation in the U.S. However, what differs from those arguments and the one I posit here is the vehicle by which the nation could hope to heal. Although Táíwò's (2020) argument rightly situates the American race problem in what he calls a "political morality" (or immorality), he leaves us with few solutions. Táíwò (2020) poses the question, "Does the U.S. need a truth and reconciliation commission?" His answer is yes; however, Táíwò does not illustrate how this would look in practice.

Over the course of American history, we have never witnessed the country attempting to change its dark past through reeducation on a massive scale. King (1963) argued, "while it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless." Clearly, as we have witnessed for the past 60 years, the restraining of the heartless through legislation is a precarious business. However, education, if done carefully and thoughtfully, can change hearts and minds. King (1963) also noted that religion and education must play a significant role in changing the hearts of the nation. Religion, however, has simply functioned to perpetuate oppressive ideologies. Hence, the cure for racial immorality and the original sin of slavery is a complete dismantling and rebuilding of the American educational system, so that it no longer seeks to indoctrinate citizens with American myths and nationalism rooted in eugenics, but rather, truly strives to educate "we the people," beginning with foundational education in the K–12 system.

Liberation Pedagogy

Freire (1970) advocated for liberation pedagogy, which was not (as some bastardized understandings present it today) simply a practice of teaching learners to have psychological realizations and discuss them in class. For Freire, liberation pedagogy was a practice that could be lifted out of classroom spaces. Liberation pedagogy sought to transform students, give them a voice, and call them to action so they might dismantle oppressive systems. "The agency of this transformation is what Freire called *conscientization,*" says Bertoff (1990, p. 362). Freire defined conscientization as the process by which one becomes a subject with agency to act upon and transform the world (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 32). Only this type of education can truly dismantle oppressive systems.

"Banking models" are in direct conflict with liberation pedagogy. In the U.S., the banking concept of education persists. As Freire (1970/2000) described, "education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72). Thus, the teacher is subject and the student is object. The teacher is the holder of all knowledge and truth, and the students simply "receive, memorize, and repeat" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 72). Banking concepts of education are designed to build a citizenry so blinded by nationalism and loyalty to the nation state that they are either unwilling or afraid to lift the veil and critique the flaws that lie beneath. We cannot transform the world by infantilizing our students and rendering them mute and incapable of critical thought. We must instead liberate students so that they are empowered to first recognize oppressive systems when they encounter them; next, give voice to action and work to dismantle oppressive systems; and finally, transform their world into a liberatory space.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching is the best vehicle by which we could hope to liberate future generations of Americans. Culturally relevant and responsive teaching argues that education for all must include cultural perspectives that represent the diverse groups of students those educational institutions serve in the U.S. In other words, culturally relevant teaching seeks to deconstruct the myth that the U.S. is a "white" nation and decenter whiteness as the primary lens through which we frame all knowledge in the U.S. Through this culturally responsive framework, the "voices of the lions" are heard. Culturally relevant teaching facilitates transformative justice rather than simply restorative justice. As Ruffin (2020) explains, restorative justice seeks to repair harm, but transformative justice seeks to transform systems, structures, and institutions.

Ladson-Billings (1995) developed a culturally relevant model of pedagogy divided into four propositions. First, the concrete experiences of learners should be considered a credible source of meaning-making. In other words, individuals' lived experiences should be privileged over those who have simply studied those experiences. Second, like Freire (1970/2000), Ladson-Billings argued that knowledge emerges in dialectical relationships of collaboration. Third, culturally responsive pedagogy must include a deep ethic of caring between educators and learners. Finally, culturally responsive educators must value an ethic of personal accountability (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 471).

A large body of literature has focused on culturally relevant and responsive teaching, starting with Irvine (1990), who first provided a counternarrative to deficit-model theories in education. Then, Gay (2013) outlined educator professional development and cultural responsivity. Hayes and Juarez (2012) indicted American school systems as being gatekeepers of white supremacy and proposed culturally relevant teaching as the solution to address systematic racism. Matias (2013) examined white liberals who teach Black and brown students but lack intersectionality and true cultural responsivity. Khalifa (2010, 2011, 2012, 2015) examined urban K–12 systems and their propensity to approach Black and brown students through pedagogies informed by deficit-model ideologies. Khalifa (2015) concluded that the impetus for the reproduction of white supremacism is self-hatred and internalized racism (McCoy-Wilson, 2020), and that cultural responsivity should be embraced.

When we endeavor to reeducate a nation so deeply entrenched in white supremacy and anti-Black racism, we must include curricula that also address racial identity development for all of the diverse populations in the U.S. Although the binary construction of race complicates this type of discourse, there is a body of work (Cross, 1971, 1991; Poston, 1990; Helms, 1992) that has summarized the stages of racial development for various diverse groups in the U.S.

Conclusion

If we ever hope to escape the original sin of slavery, we must seek truth, reconciliation, and education. The essential component is education. The U.S. must exorcize the ghosts of slavery and anti-Black racism through a progressive and transformative framework. The country was torn apart on the question of enslavement and the underlying ideology of white supremacy that kept slavery alive and resulted in a bloody civil war. In the two centuries following the U.S. Civil War, the country has persisted in clinging to the myths of whiteness and white superiority that birthed the war in the first place. And now, in 2021, those who still hold to white supremacy and anti-Black racism cloaked as "states' rights," conservatism, nationalism, and other anti-democratic ideologies are waging battles in the state departments of education, the courts, and the legislature that threaten to send the nation back to its dark past. Ultimately, we must unlearn several hundred years of miseducation in educational systems that have gone to great lengths to massage the truth. The country must heal the wounds of white supremacy if we want to usher in transformative justice and avoid destruction.

References

Althusser, L. (1970). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* (pp. 121–176). Monthly Review Press.

Baldwin, J. (1962, January 14). As much truth as one can bear. *The New York Times.* Section 7, 120–148.

Bertoff, A. E. (1990). Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy. *Liberation Education, 67*(4), 362–369. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41961745

Brooks, J. (1994). Chinua Achebe, the art of fiction no. 139. *Paris Review, 133*(Winter). https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1720/the-art-of-fiction-no-139-chinua-achebe

Cross, W.E., Jr. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Toward a psychology of Black liberation. *Black World*, 20, 13–27.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity*. Temple University Press.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.; 30th Anniversary ed.). Continuum. (Original work published 1970)

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(1), 48–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12002

Hayes, C., & Juarez, B. (2012). There is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here: A critical race perspective. *Democracy & Education*, *20*(1), 1–14. https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol20/iss1/1/

Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on Public Policy Online, 2009*(2). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ870076

Helms, J. E. (1992). *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life*. Microtraining Associates.

Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: Policies, practices, and prescriptions.* Greenwood Press.

Khalifa, M. (2010). Validating social and cultural capital of hyperghettoized at-risk students. *Education and Urban Society, 42*(5), 620–646. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124510366225

Khalifa, M. (2011). Teacher expectations and principal behavior: Responding to teacher acquiescence. *The Urban Review, 43*, 702–727. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-011-0176-z

Khalifa, M. (2012). A re-new-ed paradigm in successful urban school leadership: Principal as community leader. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(3), 424–467. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11432922

Khalifa, M. (2015). Can Blacks be racists? Black-on-Black principal abuse in an urban school setting. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 28*(2), 259–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.916002

King, M. L., Jr. (1963, December 18). *Address at Western Michigan University.* https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/MLK.pdf

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches.* Crossing Press.

Matias, C. E. (2013). Check yo'self before you wreck yo'self and our kids: Counterstories from culturally responsive white teachers? . . . to culturally responsive white teachers! *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *3*(2), 68–81. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1063061.pdf

McCoy-Wilson, S. (2020). "We have a *Black* professor?" Rejecting African Americans as disseminators of knowledge. *Journal of Black Studies, 51*(6), 545–564. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934720925777

Poston, W. S. C. (1990). The biracial identity development model: A needed addition. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 62*(2), 152–155. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1990.tb01477.x

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America.* Liveright Publishing.

Táíwò, O. (2020). Does the United States need a truth and reconciliation commission? *The Philosopher, 108*(2), 20–25. https://www.thephilosopher1923.org/taiwo

Tutu, D. (2019, February 4). Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa. *Encyclopedia Britannica.* https://www.britannica.com/topic/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Commission-South-Africa

We Come from Love: Positioning Black Love Counternarratives in Public Education

by

Natalie D. Lewis, Ph.D.
DSST Public Schools

> *Everything that you needed—the movies, the barbershop, the cleaners—all that was in [the Black community]. So you really didn't have to go outside [the Black community] for your needs. It was just a supportive community.*
>
> – Dr. Lewis, Black superintendent and former segregated school student
> (Horsford, 2009)

The purpose of this essay is to explore the significance of Black love narratives in the field of public education. In a contemporary educational world struggling to redefine and recenter itself after the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper seeks to highlight the love narratives of the Black community as an attempt to counter the narratives of tragedy and scarcity most commonly associated with the experiences of Black children in schools. Without encountering a narrative of love, it is difficult for educators to see similarities and, more importantly, humanity in the lives of the children they serve who come from different lived experiences than their own.

The above quote by Dr. Lewis illustrates that Black communities have a historic legacy of representing love and support for their members. This article centers on the critical need to further assert this narrative within the field of education. Using the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) along with social justice tenets, it works to center and prioritize the love narratives that exist in Black communities and that Black children carry into school buildings each day. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) positioned CRT as a framework for education. They asserted that school inequity is based on three central propositions:

1) Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2) U.S. society is based on property rights.
3) The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

This inaugural presentation of CRT in education laid the foundation for others to further develop ways in which CRT could be used in education. Daniel Solórzano (2009) identified five tenets of CRT that could be used in the world of education: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology and narratives through counternarratives, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches. This article will focus on elucidating the counternarratives of love that exist within the Black community as a means of countering the more dominant narratives of lack and despair. The use of counternarratives acts as an illustration of the cultural community wealth that poor children, BIPOC, and specifically Black children bring with them every day into school environments (Yosso, 2005).

Education continues to be plagued by practices that hinder the success and surface huge disparities and inequities for Black children (Ward Randolph, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). Despite this reality, education has had the historic legacy of representing freedom and access to opportunities to Black communities in the United States since the beginning of Black educational systems in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). There is pivotal literature centered on the experiences of Black principals that highlights stories of love, care, and a deep sense of collective responsibility that permeates Black spaces (Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Walker, 2018). Various examples in the literature further assert that historically, Black educators (specifically Black principals) were deeply committed to their school communities and their leadership was demonstrated as acts of love both within and outside of the confines of the school building (Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). Loder's (2005) description of care—which she referred to as "othermothering"—furthered the example of commitment to their school communities; othermothering is a way in which Black principals love and care for the students as if they were their own children (p. 314). However, the field of education is currently plagued by deficit narratives and hyper-discussion of educational gaps that exist between Black children and their primarily white peers, and not the various examples of love that exist within Black educator practice and the Black community (Malkus, Christensen & Schurz, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to shift the world, and the United States more specifically, in ways that most did not imagine (Whitt-Glover, 2019; Malkus et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2020). It has revealed for some and reiterated for most the centuries of inequities that have continued to exist in the United States for Black people (Shaw et al., 2020; Dorn et al., 2021). These inequities range from job disparities to homelessness, inadequate health outcomes, and continued educational gap disproportionalities (Shaw et al., 2020; Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021)—all while the onslaught of messaging that comes from media and social media continues to paint the narrative of lack and loss (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020).

This narrative is particularly significant within the sphere of education, where educators are trying to make sense of their new context after the introduction of the pandemic (Shaw et al., 2020; Dorn et al., 2021). Eighteen-plus months of virtual and hybrid learning has significantly reshaped the infrastructure of public education (Shaw et al., 2020; Dorn et al., 2021). In fact, the first 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic is often referred to as the period of learning loss and the deepening of educational gaps (Barnum, 2021; Engzell et al., 2021). The negative narrative is important because it contributes to an ongoing battle within public education to try to respond and recenter itself as it comes to terms with the possibility of adopting a new identity. This narrative is significantly more impactful for Black children who have been battling deficit mindsets and structures aimed at them since the beginning of their journeys in public education (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Knaus, 2014). Black children have consistently battled against negative beliefs about their possibilities, and the realities of this have resulted in a lack of opportunities and resources (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016).

In an educational world in which achievement and opportunity gaps are frequently explained and highlighted, often missing are positive images and discussions of Black students (Valencia, 1997; Hammond, 2014; Muhammad, 2020). The stories that educators share with one another are important. Informal "teacher talk" about students often takes on a narrative form (Pollack, 2012). Stories have the power to reveal deeply held beliefs and attitudes in ways that other forms of communication cannot (van Dijk, 1993). The deficit view of Black children and their families in public education is prominent. Deficit thinking takes the position that BIPOC students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, and (b) parents neither value nor support their children's education (Yosso, 2005). Deepening the analysis of the ways in which educators talk about their students and their families will play a significant role in understanding the beliefs held about students and their families.

The Black and Latino student population represents 46% of the public school population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Having an educator population that does not share a similar cultural experience or background lays the foundation for the vital need for intentional work toward ensuring the use of responsive and reflective practices by educators. Challenging educators' stereotypical constructions of Black students can shape educators' development of the capacity to identify and empathize with their students (Picower, 2009; Khalifa et al., 2016). Therefore, it is extremely important to contextualize the field of education that is desperately seeking to draw committed young people to join the ranks of the profession while also reeling from its current transformation due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Dorn et al., 2021). Students across the country deserve committed and knowledgeable educators who have an informed understanding of the communities and students they desire to serve. Without a counternarrative that lends well-rounded understanding, educators run the risk of walking into school buildings with flawed perceptions—and more dangerously, a belief in an "other" that comes with an inability to see the humanity of the students sitting in the seats before them (Du Bois, 1903/1994; Delpit, 2012; Hammond, 2014).

Having more interactions and familiarity with the love narratives of the Black community helps to establish and more concretely reiterate a view of its members' humanity, laying the groundwork for connection—a vital element of teaching. To further understand education's capacity for empowerment of the Black community, it is important to examine the literature that illustrates the conditions of schools and the meaning of leadership for Black principals during the time of segregation. Horsford's (2009) research described schools for Blacks during segregation as bastions of learning that had a powerful sense of community. Using a case study of Black superintendents practicing during the time of segregation, Horsford (2009) positioned a counternarrative to the narrative of Black schools being under-resourced and underperforming. The experiences described by the participants portrayed segregated schools as places where students felt a connection between all of the most important places to them—their schools, homes and families, and community. Horsford (2009) used rich descriptions to paint a picture of connectedness within a culture. Each of the participants in the study described ways in which their Black principals operated and set a tone of high expectations. Horsford's (2009) study used counter-storytelling to affirm the idea that all things Black—in this case, schools, and particularly Black principals—do not equate to inadequacy or despair. In fact, the stories of love, care, and collective responsibility shown in segregated Black school environments point to the exact opposite (Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Walker, 2018).

Black educators, and more specifically, Black principals, have played a variety of roles both within and outside of the school (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012). The experiences of Black principals often meant that they served in capacities beyond that of *just* principal; in fact, Black principals often served as community leaders, fathers and mothers, guidance counselors, activists, mentors, and a variety of other roles to members of their community (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012). This quotation from a parent in the research of Lewis and Adkins-Sharif (2020) highlights the love and care that Black principals pour into their school communities:

> Of the Black principals that I've encountered in my children's schooling, I've found that they are easier for me to relate to. They show that they want my child to succeed. I don't know how to describe it, but it feels different—it's just a knowing that I have. They understand me and my family different than White principals.

Reflection and response to the effects of created pathologies must guide educator growth to ensure success for all students. Nieto (2006) calls for educators to consider four components of social justice:

> 1) challeng[ing], confront[ing], and disrupt[ing] misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination;
> 2) providing all students with the resources necessary to learn to their full potential;
> 3) drawing on the talents and strengths that students bring to their education; and
> 4) creating a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and supports agency for enacting social change. (p. 2)

These four components provide a structure for educators to consider as they examine their bias and reflect on the outcomes that they desire for the students they serve. The use of these tenets is important in framing the critical contexts that must be explored to share more widely about the love narratives of the Black community, particularly as the world and country are navigating how to deal with all of the "loss."

The Black community deserves stories of love that underscore and act as a foundation for their triumphs beyond mere survival. Their love has carried them from enslavement through Jim Crow, and now through COVID-19. It will be critical to uphold these stories as the foundation for continuing to fight and advocate for options that prioritize the greatness and capacity of Black students and the greater Black community as students navigate public education each day.

References

Anderson, J. D. (1988). The education of Blacks in the South. The University of North Carolina Press.

Barnum, M. (2021). The pandemic's toll: national test scores show progress slowed, gaps widened. Chalkbeat. https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/7/28/22596904/pandemic-covid-school-learning-loss-nwea-mckinsey

Bess, L. (2009). Fostering an ethic of care in leadership: A conversation with five African American women. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *11*(5), 619-632. doi: 10.1177/1523422309352075

Dantley, M. E. (2010). Successful leadership in urban schools: Principals and critical spirituality, a new approach to reform. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *79*(3), 214-219. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20798344

Delpit, L. (2012). *"Multiplication is for White people": Raising expectations for other people's children.* The New York Press.

Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2021) COVID-19 and education: the lingering effects of unfinished learning. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning

Dubois, W.E.B. (1994). *The souls of black folk.* Toronto, Ontario; Dover Publication, Inc.

Engzell, P., Frey, A., & Verhagen, M.D. (2021). Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PNAS.* 118(17). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2022376118

Gibson-Hill, C. & Hill, H.D. (2021). Childhood wealth inequality in the united states: implications for social stratification and well-being. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of Social Sciences*. Aug 2021 7(3), 1-26. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2021.7.3.01

Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.* Corwin

Horsford, S. D. (2009). From negro student to black superintendent: Counternarratives on segregation and desegregation. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *78*(2), 172-187. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25608733

Knaus, C. (2014). Seeing what they want to see: Racism and leadership development in urban schools. *Urban Rev*, *46*, 420-444. doi: 10.1007/s11256-014-0299-0

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Round*. 97:1, 47-68, DOI: 0161-4681-95/9701/047$1.50/0

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3-12. doi: 10.3102/0013189X035007003

Lewis, N.D. & Adkins-Sharif, J. (2020) Allying and leading through racial realities. *Journal of Education Human Resources*. 38(2) Spring 2020. https://doi.org/10.3138/jehr-2019-0014

Loder, T. L. (2005). African American women principals' reflections on social change community othermothering, and Chicago public school reform. *Urban Education*, *40*(3), 298-320. doi: 10.1177/0042085905274535

Khalifa, M., Gooden, M. A, & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 1272-1311. doi: 10.3102/0034654316630383

Madsen, J., & Mabokela, R. (2014). Leadership challenges in addressing changing demographics in schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, *98*(1), 75-96. doi: 10.1177/0192636513514110

Malkus, N., Christensen, C., & Schurz, J. (2020). School district responses to COVID-19 pandemic: round 6, ending the year of school closures. *American Enterprise Institute*. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25360

Muhammad, G. (202). An equity framework of culturally and historically responsive literacy. *Scholastic*.

Murtadha, K., & Watts, D. M. (2005). Linking the struggle for education and social justice: Historical perspectives of African American leadership in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *41*(4), 591-608. doi: 10.1177/0013161X04274271

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2016). *Public school population.* U.S Department of Education.

Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_309.30.asp?current=yes

Newcomb, W. S., & Niemeyer, A. (2015). African American women principals: Heeding the call to serve as conduits for transforming urban school communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *28*(7), 786-799. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2015.1036948

Nieto, S. (2006). Occasional paper series: T*eaching as political work: learning from courageous and caring teachers*. Child Development Institute. Sarah Lawrence College. Bronxville, NY

Pavetti, L., & Robinson, H. (2020). *LIFT Voices Describe Hardships Among Black and Latina Mothers in Pandemic*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27228

Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined whiteness of teaching: how white teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12:2, 197-215, DOI: 10.1080/13613320902995475

Pollack, T. (2012). Unpacking everyday "teacher talk" about students and families of color: implications for teacher and school leader development. *Urban Education*, 48: 3, 863-894, DOI: 10.1177/0042085912457789

Pollard. D. S. (1997). Race, gender, and educational leadership: Perspectives from African American principals. *Educational Policy*, *11*(3), 353-374. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904897011003005

Shaw, E., Mason, C.N., Lacarte, V. & Jauregui, E. (2020). Holding up half the sky: mothers as workers, primary caregivers, & breadwinners during COVID-19. *Institute for Women's Policy Research*, https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/esme/holding-up-half-the-sky-mothers-as-workers-primary-caregivers-breadwinners-during-covid-19-2/

Shields, C.M. (2004). Dialogic leadership for social justice: overcoming pathologies of silence. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41:1, 109-132, DOI: 10.1177/001316X03258963

Shields, C.M. (2013). Transformative leadership in education: Equitable change in an uncertain and complex world. New York, NY: Routledge

Tillman, L. C. (2004). African American principals and the legacy of brown. *Sage Journals*, *28*(1), 101-146. doi: 10.3102/0091732X028001101

Tillman, L.C. (2008). The scholarship of Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III: implications for black principal leadership. *Review of Educational Research*. September 2008, 78:3, 589-607, DOI: 10.3102/0034654308321454

U. S. Department of Education. (2016). *The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce.* https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf

Valencia, R.R. (1997). The evolution of deficit thinking: educational thought and practice. The Falmer Press/ Taylor & Francis

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: US-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York: SUNY Press

van Dijk, T.A. (1993). Stories and racism. In D.K. Mumby (Ed.), *Narrative and social control: Critical perspectives* (pp. 121-142). London, UK: Sage.

Walker, V. S. (2015). School “outer-gration” and “tokenism”: Segregated Black educators critique the promise of education reform in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *84*(2), 111-124. doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.84.2.0111

Walker, V. S. (2018). The lost education of Horace Tate. The New Press.

Walker, V. S., & Byas, U. (2003). The architects of Black schooling in the segregated South: The case of one principal leader. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *19*(1), 54-72.

Ward Randolph, A. L. (2012). “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”: Ethel Thompson Overby and democratic schooling in Richmond, Virginia, 1910-1958. *Educational Studies*, *48*(3), 220-243. doi: 10.1080/00131946.2012.660795

Whitt-Glover, M.C. (2019). Unprecedented times: advancing minority concerns in the midst of COVID-19. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity*, 12 (2), ii-vi. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26954201

Wilson, C. M. (2016). Enacting critical care and transformative leadership in school highly impacted by poverty: An African-American principal’s counter narrative. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *19*(5), 557-577. doi: 10.1080/13603124.2015.1023360

Witherspoon, N., & Arnold, B. M. (2010). Pastoral care: Notions of caring and the Black female principal. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *79*(3), 220- 232. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20798345

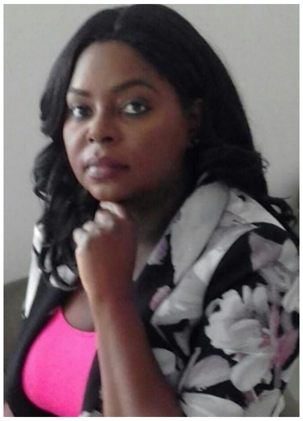
Yosso, T.J. (2006). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91, DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006

Yosso, T., Smith, W., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659-69, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m707l

Leaving No Child Behind . . . Little Black Boys and Girls in the Bahamas, Caribbean, and Latin America Matter Too: Exploring a Solutions Approach to Counter Racial and Gender Disparities in STEM Education

By

Patrice Juliet Pinder, Ed.D.
Professor
Global Humanistic University
Curacao, Caribbean



This paper explores a first-of-its-kind *global innovative strategic academic intervention*, which infuses African-centered teaching and learning of historical and cultural elements into *STREAM* (*S*cience, *T*echnology, *R*eading/w*R*iting, *E*ngineering, *A*rts, and *M*ath) activities for early learners of color. In delivering such an intervention initiative to preschool and elementary teachers and their students, we are hoping to counter some of the troubling ongoing issues of racial/ethnic and gender disparities in STEM achievement seen across the world. We are also hoping to address the urgent calls by educators, researchers, and some world leaders for more to be done to motivate and encourage participation of underrepresented groups of students in STEM.

Across the globe, from the picturesque, laid-back, sunshiny beach paradise islands of the Caribbean—from the Bahamas in the Northern Caribbean, an archipelagic nation made up of 700 tiny islands, islets, and cays, to the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago in the eastern southernmost Caribbean, over to the busy hustle-and-bustle continental areas and countries of the United States (U.S.) and the continent of North America, to the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the continent of Europe, to the motherland and the continent of all continents, Africa, the troubling phenomenon of Black and African children's underperformance and low achievement rates in K–12 and college STEM courses and disciplines has been well documented. Thus, many studies from around the world have examined and reported on the achievement gap between white and Black students or between white, Asian, Hispanic, and Black students (Campaign for Science & Engineering, 2014; Codiroli, 2015; Giraldo-Garcia & Bagaka, 2013; The Globalist, 2014; Haughton, 2013; Norman et al., 2001; Norman et al., 2006; Norman et al., 2009; Pinder, 2008; Pinder, 2010; Pinder, 2012; Pinder, 2013; Pinder, 2016; Pinder, 2020a; Pinder, 2020b; Royal Society of Chemistry, 2006; Strand, 2006). The problem becomes even more vexing for females of African descent (Campaign for Science & Engineering, 2014; Ogunkola, 2012; Pinder, 2016; Pinder, 2020c).

To aid in countering these problems, this paper presents a brief snapshot of a *solutions approach mechanism* designed to motivate, pique the curiosity of, and encourage younger students of color to get involved in STEM as inquirers and action-oriented doers and movers. The proposed STREAM intervention described herein is intended for preschool and elementary teachers and their students of color and is being put forth to help counter the ongoing racial/ethnic and gender disparity issues in STEM performance by addressing recent calls by leading researchers and some world governmental leaders who are urging for more to be done to increase the numbers of underrepresented students in STEM (Burbanks et al., 2020; Holly, 2021; Pinder, 2016; Turnquest, 2021; U.S. STEM Act, 2015; U.S. Supporting STEM Learning Opportunities Act, 2021).

The African-Centered STREAM Intervention Solutions Initiative for the Bahamas, Caribbean, and Latin America

This newly designed intervention program will total two years in length and will be led by world-class educators—professors, teachers, and education research scientists primarily of African descent who are from the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, and the U.S. Those of us collaborating on this initiative believe that the historical stories and cultural richness of Africa and African people, which are the core essence of African-centered/Africentric/Afrocentric teaching and learning, can be better told and delivered to African and Black children by those who are also of African ancestry (Burbanks et al., 2020). In this way, disconnections can be avoided as there would be constant connections between the delivers of the African content, the recipients of the African-centered knowledge—the African children who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the African-based knowledge—and the rich African content being taught.

Our goal is to reach several countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, including the Bahamas, and their respective pre-K–6 schools, teachers, and students. Because we are attempting to reach several countries and schools, and due to COVID-19 restrictions in many countries around the world, we have decided to make our African-centered STREAM intervention initiative virtual. Every aspect of the educational intervention will be virtual in nature. The Bahamas and eight other countries will be chosen to take part in this initiative. Countries will be selected from the Caribbean and Latin American regions. Two key public schools, one preschool and one elementary (primary), will be randomly selected from each of the participating eight countries. The selected schools will be tracked, and progress and outcomes will be closely monitored and evaluated. The chosen schools must have a large percentage of students of African descent. The program will be made up of these components: educational games, simulation activities, approved NASA K–12 *SEMAA* (*S*cience, *E*ngineering, *M*athematics, and *A*erospace *A*cademy) science and engineering project-based activities, and introduction to 3D computer design, robotics, and coding. Some of the components will be intermixed with African-inspired cultural performing arts, such as African-influenced music, songs, and dance. Reading/literacy and writing exercises will involve African history and culture, in respect to STEM interventions (see suggestions of Burbanks et al., 2020). Teachers, through teacher-training workshops, and their respective students will all be exposed to the aforementioned components of the program. Permission will be sought to conduct sessions with teachers and their students approximately once a month (virtually) for 50 minutes during the regular school schedule of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Teachers participating in these monthly sessions will be encouraged to regularly reinforce the STEM concepts and educational tools and strategies with their students in order to keep concepts relevant to their students.

Moreover, the intervention is designed to meet and fulfill global 21st-century standards of learning for early learners and will be tailored to diverse learning styles: hands-on/kinesthetic learners, audiovisual learners, and those learners with special needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism. We will make every effort to accommodate teachers and students with visual and hearing challenges as well. Additionally, focusing on inquiry-based learning, cross-curricular learning approaches, cooperative or collaborative learning, and problem-solving in collaborative modes will hold paramount importance for the program's participating students.

Quarterly evaluations and assessments will be conducted each year for the two years of the program, monitoring the teacher participants' and their students' outcomes. A mixed-methods data collection system will be used. Data will come from completed teachers' quantitative questionnaires (virtual, to be completed online) and interviews with teachers (conducted virtually), which will both allow us to gain teachers' feedback on the effectiveness of our intervention program's activities and strategies. Students' achievement outcomes will also be assessed through pre-tests and post-tests with an experimental design (teachers will provide us with this data). The complete findings will be made available to relevant stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, and parents. Participating schools and the relevant departments of education in the Bahamas, other parts of the Caribbean, and Latin America will also receive copies of the report on the effectiveness of our intervention initiative. We hope that the findings will help to influence and inform educational policies and measures, as well as aiding any future teaching practices, strategies, and instructional methodologies used in STEM/STREAM disciplines in the targeted territories. Some preliminary information on our solutions-oriented, African-centered STEM/STREAM intervention program can be found on *The Nassau Guardian* and Eyewitness News websites[14] (which provide information specific to the Bahamas).

Evidence of the Need for Our STREAM Intervention: Worldwide Racial/Ethnic and Gender Achievement Gaps in STEM

Ogunkola (2012) reports on students' science/STEM performance in Asia, Europe, the U.S., South America, Africa, and the Caribbean. In Ogunkola's (2012) article entitled "Improving Science, Technology, and Mathematics Students' Achievement: Imperatives for Teacher Preparation in the Caribbean Colleges and Universities," she presents a table of data for 1995, 1999, and 2003 that show eighth-grade students' average science scores were higher for some Asian and European countries than for the U.S. as well as some African and South American territories, according to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS report) for those years. Singaporean eighth-graders were the highest performers of all countries represented in the TIMSS report for 2003 and 1995, whereas Chilean, Tunisian, and South African eighth-grade students were the lowest performers of all countries represented in TIMSS 2003 and 1999.

---

[14] See "Bahamanian Educator Partners with Director of Prestigious NASA K–12 SEMA to Launch New STREAM Activities Series" in Eyewitness News (September 14, 2021), https://ewnews.com/bahamian-educator-partners-with-director-of-prestigious-nasa-k-12-semaa-to-launch-new-stream-activities-series
See also "Joining Forces in STEM and STREAM" by Shavaughn Moss (September 27, 2021) in *The Nassau Guardian,* https://thenassauguardian.com/joining-forces-in-stem-and-steam

Similarly, the TIMSS 2019 data for fourth- and eighth-grade math and science also show that some Asian and European countries are ahead of South and Central American countries like Chile and Honduras, as well as South Africa, as these countries are listed among the lower performers in the TIMSS 2019 exams. The argument might be advanced that some developed nations place more emphasis on science and math education than some developing nations, as the TIMSS data seem to suggest.

Deficiencies and lesser importance placed on science learning and achievement seemingly demonstrated by developing countries are being observed in the Caribbean, as Jamaican students' passing rates fell below 50% on the standardized Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exams in biology, chemistry, physics, and integrated science over a 10-year period (Ogunkola, 2012). In the Bahamas, the performance and results on the yearly Bahamas' General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) can only be described as "dismal," as I recently expressed in an interview with a Bahamas news website: "As an educator and research scientist, I am deeply concerned about the serious state of education in the Bahamas and I have been concerned for quite some time" (cited in *The Tribune,* 2021). Collie-Patterson (2008), another Bahamian professor, echoed similar sentiments in her published research, which found that the majority of students in the Bahamas who sat for the standardized BGCSE exams achieved an overall "D" average across subjects, and for math, the average was an "E."

Troubling data on the lower attainment in STEM of females of color has also emerged from other parts of the Caribbean and some other countries of South, Central, and Latin America, as Gibbs (2020) states in a UNICEF report (see also Osorio et al., 2020; Williams, 2020). The United Nations Children's Fund states that girls are consistently underrepresented among top performers in STEM subjects. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, among sixth graders, girls either perform on par with or supersede boys in math in only 12 out of 42 countries. For adolescents, girls perform at the same or higher level of attainment in math and science in only 3 and 13 countries, respectively, out of a total of 78 countries tested on the PISA exams (Gibbs, 2020). Williams (2020) examined Jamaican secondary students' performance on the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC), where 50% constituted a passing grade and 49% or below denoted a failing grade. Williams' research findings suggest that Jamaican males and females did not do well in some of the CSEC STEM subjects of agriculture (double awards), biology, chemistry, and mathematics, with girls achieving the lowest passing rates when compared to boys on the same four subjects.

In their study "Participation of Women in STEM Higher Education Programs in Latin America: The Issue of Inequality," Osorio et al. (2020) administered surveys to nine Latin American universities and collected data on student population, staff, attraction, access, and graduation rates. Key results of their study are as follows:

- For the countries of Columbia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Chile, males consistently had the highest enrollment in STEM disciplines, and enrollment rates ranged from 65.2% for the country of Costa Rica to 71.5% for the country of Chile. Female enrollment rates ranged from a low of 34.8% for Costa Rica to 28.5% for Chile.
- Of all five participating countries and nine universities, among staff, there were 994 males to 347 females in the STEM areas of sciences, math, and statistics.
- For the year 2018, there were more applications received from males, more males accepted, more males enrolled, and more male graduates than females.

These results underscore the dire need to increase the involvement of females of color in STEM and STREAM subjects while strategically improving their learning experiences within these areas.

The Historical Exclusion of Africa and Africans' Contributions to STEM, Including Inventions: Supporting the Call for More African-Centered Teaching and Learning for Young Black STEM Students

From Garrett Morgan's invention of the traffic light to Madam C. J. Walker's invention of the straightening comb, more and more, little Black boys and girls need to be told of their ancestral scientific legacies (Hildreth, 2015). As Burbanks et al. (2020) state:

> Perhaps an understanding of the African origins and contributions to STEM both, historical and contemporary, is likely to empower Black youths to tap into their full potential. They will also contribute to civilization as their brilliant African ancestors have done over millions of years. (p. 19)

Historically, we as Blacks and as Africans have been excluded from science and STEM, and our contributions including scientific inventions have been either ignored or wrongfully credited to non-Blacks. Thus, Burbanks et al. (2020) contend that the "genesis of STEM" began on the continent of Africa more than four million years ago and feel that Black children need to be informed about this legacy through African-centered learning mechanisms that teach boys and girls of color about their connection to Africa.

The *Kamili Approach*, or *African-centered learning*, is a holistic educational framework that involves both Black and non-Black educators explicitly including Africans as subjects in their development of history and humanity (Johnson, 2016). Thus, educators employ the African-centered approach when they inform Black students about Africa and their African ancestors' contributions to culture, history, and scientific and mathematical discoveries (Burbanks et al., 2020; Finlayson, 2013; Holly, 2021; Johnson, 2016). This might include informing little Black girls and boys worldwide—be they African Americans, Afro-Canadians, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro/African Latinos/as, Afro/African Latin X, and others of African descent living in other areas of Central, Latin, or South America, or elsewhere. Findings seem to suggest that students are aware of the exclusion of their ancestral legacy and history from school curricular programs and text, and that they often feel hurt by this erasure (Johnson, 2016). Thus, as Dr. Fatima Morell & Dr. Kriner Cash, and the Buffalo Public Schools Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Initiatives Strategic Plan 2019–2021 states:

> we believe that achievement gaps in performance occur as a result of our students not seeing themselves historically within the implemented curriculum, and a lack of access to culturally relevant learning opportunities where the unique historical backgrounds of students are centered within the curricula and are both nurtured and valued.

Burbanks et al. (2020) produced a recent article called "The Need for African Centered Education in STEM Programs for Black Youth." The researchers, all of African descent, created a program for middle-school Black boys. One hundred boys participated in the STEM program and were exposed to technology/STEM curricula while at the same time learning about Africa and Africans' contributions to science, technology, and STEM. The boys were taught that Africa was the original place where STEM began, and were *intentionally taught* (correctly informed) that they came from a long line of technology innovators and inventors (Burbanks et al., 2020).

The boys took classes in technology and African culture and history. The students were taught 3D design as well as critical and scientific thought, while also learning about the African movement, African history and culture, coding, and augmented and virtual reality. The interconnectedness of culture and technology was discussed in all classes, and students were encouraged to think deeply about the foundations of technology. *Importantly, in the execution of the program, all educators had to be of African descent and all schools that participated in the program had to be African-centered schools; these elements had to be in place to avoid any disconnect* (Burbanks et al., 2020). Additionally, African history and culture were taught to the young boys through videos, field trips, lectures, discussions, proverbs, riddles, debates, and movies. Communities of parents and others were made a part of the learning events.

Positive student outcomes resulted from the program, including:

- A 75% increase in knowledge in STEM-related topics.
- A 74% increase in confidence in math and science.
- More than 70% of the young boys in the program reported that they were more likely to later choose a STEM career.
- Students were able to create 3D models of various things, such as a solar-operated city bus and a talking robot that could go to homes in their communities to tutor. (p. 21)

Burbanks et al. (2020) believed their program resulted in such success because it was grounded in knowledge of the African origins of STEM and the humanities. Similar to Burbanks et al. in their highly successful U.S.-based African-centered STEM intervention program for middle school-age boys of African descent, we are hoping to achieve successful outcomes with our newly designed African-centered STREAM intervention program for preschool and elementary school Black boys and girls and their teachers in countries of the Bahamas, Caribbean, and Latin America—the other America.

Conclusion

Our contention is that this proposed STREAM educational intervention initiative will prove beneficial for students and teachers in the targeted countries. Moreover, we believe it will offer solutions and much-needed assistance to help counter low student attainment on the international TIMSS math and science exams and the local standardized examinations within particular countries and schools. By implementing this initiative, we aim to help improve the achievements of students of color in STEM, increase numbers of female students in STEM majors at college, and bolster a diverse STEM workforce of Black males and females in the targeted regions and beyond.

References

Burbanks, S. M., Shockley, K. G., & LeNiles, K. (2020). The need for African centered education in STEM programs for Black youth. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 11*(2), 12–24.

Campaign for Science & Engineering. (2014, May). *CaSE report—improving diversity in STEM.* http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/resource/ImprovingDiversityinSTEM2014.html

Codiroli, N. (2015). *Inequalities in students' choice of STEM subjects*. Centre for Longitudinal Studies. https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CLS-WP-20156.pdf

Collie-Patterson, J. M. (2008). The national average is a D: Who is to blame? *International Journal of Bahamanian Studies, 14*, 28–37. https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v14i0.102

Finlayson, M. (2013). Infusing African heritage into a Canadian curriculum. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ), Special Issue, 2*(2), 1392–1399. https://doi.org/10.20533/licej.2040.2589.2013.0185

Gibbs, M. (2020). *Towards an equal future: Reimagining girls' education through STEM.* United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); International Telecommunication Union (ITU). https://www.unicef.org/media/84046/file/Reimagining-girls-education-through-stem-2020.pdf

Giraldo-Garcia, R. J., & Bagaka, J. G. (2013). Analysis of the educational success of African immigrants and African Americans in the US: Examining the Black-white achievement gap. *Proceedings of the 6th Annual Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA) Conference.* Kenya Scholars & Studies Association.

The Globalist. (2014, August 9). *7 facts: African Americans and education.* http://www.theglobalist.com/african-americans-and-education/

Haughton, J. (2013). Why are British Africans better in school than Caribbeans? Exam results are showing an increasing disparity between the two groups. *The Voice.* https://archive.voice-online.co.uk/article/why-are-british-africans-better-school-caribbeans

Hildreth, D. (2015, December 23). Why STEM education is so important for African American youths. *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/why-stem-education-is-so-important-for-african-american-youths.html

Holly, J. (2021). Teaching the disinherited: Embedding pro-Blackness in engineering pedagogy. *Academic Journal of Engineering Studies*, *2*(2), 1–2.

Johnson, T. A. (2016). Why Black lives (and minds) matter: Race, Freedom Schools, and the quest for educational equity. *The Journal of Negro Education, 85*(2), 143–155. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.2.0143.

Morrell, F., & Cash, K. (2019). *Buffalo Public Schools, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Initiatives Strategic Plan 2019–2021.* Office of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Initiatives. https://www.buffaloschools.org/cms/lib/NY01913551/Centricity/Domain/9000/CLRI-Plan-2-Year_2019-2020_2019.12.19_PDF.pdf

Norman, O. (1998). Marginalized discourses and scientific literacy. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 35*(4), 365–374. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2736(199804)35:4<365::AID-TEA6>3.0.CO;2-O

Norman, O., Ault, C., Bentz, B., & Meskimen, L. (2001). The Black-White achievement gap as a perennial challenge of urban science education: A socio-cultural and historical overview with implications for research and practice. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 38*(10), 1101–1114. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.10004

Norman, O., Crunk, S., Butler, B., & Pinder, P. (2006). *Do Black adolescents value education less than white peers? An empirical and conceptual attempt at putting a thorny question in perspective* [Paper presentation]. The International American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco, CA, United States.

Norman, O., Pinder, P. J., Crunk, S., & Butler, B. (2009). *The thorny issue of Black students' academic aspirations: Stigmatizing or empirically warranted?* [Paper presentation]. The International American Educational Research Association Conference, San Diego, CA, United States.

Ogunkola, B. T. (2012). Improving science, technology, and math students' achievement: Imperatives for teacher preparation in the Caribbean colleges and universities. *European Journal of Education Research, 1*(4), 367–378. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.1.4.367

Osorio, C., Ojeda-Caicedo, V. V., Villa, J. L., & Contreras-Ortiz, S. H. (2020). *Participation of women in STEM higher education programs in Latin America: The issue of inequality* [Paper presentation]. 18th LACCEI International Multi-Conference for Engineering, Education, and Technology. Buenos Aires, Argentina. http://www.laccei.org/LACCEI 2020-VirtualEdition/full_papers/FP368.pdf

Pinder, P. J. (2008a). *The "Black girl turn" in research on gender and science education: Towards exploring and understanding the early experiences of Black females in science* (ED499925). ERIC. https://www.files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/Ed499925.pdf

Pinder, P. J. (2008b). *Cultural, ethnic differences, and educational achievement of African heritage students: Towards employing a culturally sensitive curriculum in K–12 classrooms, A literature review* (ED 499783). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ ED4999783.pdf

Pinder, P. J. (2010). *An exploration of the impact of family background factors on the science achievement of Afro-Caribbean and African American students in the United States* (Publication No. 3419388) [Doctoral dissertation, Morgan State University]. UMI/ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Pinder, P. J. (2012). Afro-Caribbean and African American students, family factors, and the influence on science performance in the United States: The untold story. *Education, 132*(4), 725–738. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ994236.

Pinder, P. J. (2013). Cultural, ethnic differences, parental involvement differences, and educational achievement of African heritage students: Towards employing a culturally sensitive curriculum in K–12 classrooms, a literature review. *Journal of African American Studies, 17*, 116–128. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43525450

Pinder, P. J. (2016). Caribbean and African students' performance in STEM in the diaspora—Canada, USA, and the UK: A test of John Ogbu's theoretical model. *International Journal of Education and Culture, 5*(1–2), 2–12.

Pinder, P. J. (2020a). Exploring an interdisciplinary theoretical model of migrant schooling to effectively account for achievement differences between migrant and native students. *International Journal of Education and Culture, 9*(1–2), 1–17.

Pinder, P. J. (2020b). Blast from the past: A quantitative study comparing Florida's and Maryland's assessments and students performance in STEM. *International Journal of TESOL and Learning, 9*(3–4), 37–62.

Pinder, P. J. (2020c). The renewed call for little Black children to matter more in the discourse on race and culturally-connected science teaching. *International Journal of Education and Culture, 9*(3–4), 31–35. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24944.69125

Pinder, P. J., & Blackwell, E. (2013). The "Black girl turn" in research on gender, race, and science education: Toward exploring and understanding the early experiences of Black females in science. *Journal of African American Studies, 18*(1)*,* 63–71. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43525535

Royal Society of Chemistry. (2006). *Ethnic groups in the physical sciences* (RSC Policy Bulletin No. 4). http://www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Policy?Bulletins/Issue4/Ethnicgroupsinphysicalsciences.asp

Strand, S. (2006). The educational progress of African heritage pupils in all Lambeth schools. In F. Demie, C. McClean, & K. Lewis (Eds.), *The achievement of African heritage pupils: Good practice in Lambeth schools* (pp. 24–44). Lambeth Children and Young People's Service.

The Tribune. (2021, October 4). *We need to build a research culture.* http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/oct/04/we-need-build-research-culture/

Turnquest, A. (2021, October 6). *Speech from the throne*: *Governor-General Sir Cornelius A. Smith outlines the government's "Blue Print for Change."* Eyewitness News. https://ewnews.com/speech-from-the-throne-governor-general-sir-cornelius-a-smith-outlines-the-governments-blue-print-for-change

U.S. STEM Education Act of 2015, H. R. 1020. (2015). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED571994.pdf

U.S. Supporting STEM Learning Opportunities Act, S. 1565. (2021). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1565/text

Wiggan, G. (2007). Race, school achievement, and educational inequality: Toward a student-based inquiry perspective. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3), 310–333. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4624901

Williams, E. V. (2020). *Investigating the impact of the integrated STEM program on student test scores in Jamaica* (Publication No. ED 606494) [Doctoral dissertation, William Howard Taft University]. ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606494.pdf

Beyond Institutions:
Promoting Afrocentric Education in African/Black Communities

by

Naaja Rogers
PhD Candidate
Department of Africology and African
American Studies, Temple University

Since their inception during the Black Power Movement in the late 1960s, Afrocentric schools—which Watson-Vandiver and Wiggan (2021) explain are K–12 institutions created to combat the miseducation that African/Black people receive at Western hegemonic schools due to their traditional Eurocentric curriculum—have played vital roles in facilitating both the mental decolonization and liberation of African/Black people across the U.S. Informed by Afrocentricity, which "through logic, challenges Eurocentric epistemology and information that place Europe as the wellspring of human knowledge [and] places Africa at the center of the story of humanity" (Dove, 2021, p. 7), Afrocentric schools have done this by prioritizing the cultural reclamation and agency restoration of African/Black people and fostering it through the implementation of curricula, values, rituals, and ideals that promote self-determination as well as the traditions of African/Black people across the Diaspora. In other words, in addition to providing an Afrocentric education that Shockley and Frederick (2008) contend cultivates "a sense of agency, empowerment, and entitlement to the Black community in order to positively change the sociomaterial circumstances therein" (p. 1215), Afrocentric schools also ensure that African/Black people are "taught about events, places, people, and things with crucial reference and in the critical context of the historical trajectory of people of African descent" (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011, p. 55). Given this mission, the effects of being educated in Afrocentric schools have proven to be both gratifying and long-term for African/Black people because aside from centering us in African history and culture, Afrocentric education also provides us with the tools to relocate ourselves not in a universalized European worldview, but instead, within a non-hegemonic African worldview. This paradigmatic shift ultimately prepares us to not only serve as integral members of our communities who are "able to produce and compete on the global world stage" (Shockley & Lomotey, 2020, p. xxiii) but also agency-driven people in a world that heralds alien Western cultures and traditions as dominant.

Some additional benefits of Afrocentric schooling and education being "viewed as the path to personal and social developments, cultural identity and the route to intelligence and higher learning" (Dove, 2021, p. 20) for African/Black people include identity development, enhanced self-confidence (Shockley, 2008), intellectual and character growth (Durden, 2007), growth of leadership skills (Shockley et al., 2015), the development of nation builders (Shockley, 2007), and African/Black people who understand the importance of establishing community control and institution building (Shockley, 2007). Shockley and Lomotey (2020) assert that another benefit of Afrocentric education is that it "has been used to take students from educational depression to educational excellence" (p. xxii). Taken together, these advantages have all helped Afrocentric schools across the U.S. experience a period of exponential growth during the mid to late 20th century. For example, between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, there were approximately 60 Afrocentric schools in various U.S. cities like Chicago, DC, Atlanta, and Detroit where African/Black people made up a significant part of the population (Huffman, 2019). This growth continued throughout the 1990s into the 21st century (Watson-Vandiver & Wiggan, 2021), reaching its peak in 1999 after swelling to approximately 400 (Cohen, 2016).

Unfortunately, though, many of these Afrocentric schools collapsed just as quickly as they expanded, which greatly overshadowed their overall vitality in African/Black communities across the U.S. as well as their functionality as tools to unlock the African genius (Dove, 2021). In fact, Watson-Vandiver and Wiggan (2021) estimate that there are less than 100 public, private, and charter Afrocentric schools open across the U.S. today, and most of them are in "northern urban cities such as Washington, DC and Philadelphia, and in areas where there are organized educated Black communities" (pp. 82, 89). Former teachers, staff members, and administrators of these defunct schools have cited various reasons for their collapse such as financial strife, poor academic performance and student motivation, low attendance, admissions policies, ideological splits, and lack of teacher competence as well as low motivation, poor school location and parent involvement, and changes in "district guidelines and the revocation of school charters" (Watson-Vandiver & Wiggan, 2021, p. 82).

To put the rapid decline of Afrocentric schools over the past several decades into perspective, consider the fact that during the 1990s, Detroit had about 20 Afrocentric schools, which at the time was the most that any U.S. city had (Huffman, 2019). However, over the next three decades, that number dwindled to less than half and now stands at three. Several Afrocentric schools in Philadelphia, a city that was also a hub for centered learning in the late 20th century, suffered a similar fate, closing in successive fashion between 2014 and 2016. Although these are just two examples, they still offer a glimpse into the severity of the issue since most cities with Afrocentric schools have at one point experienced, or are currently experiencing, school closures.

In all, since African/Black people cannot achieve mental liberation without agency or "a people's ability, empowerment, and entitlement to control and mandate the arenas of life around them" (Shockley & Lomotey, 2020, p. xxiii), which is best fostered at Afrocentric schools, the rapid decline of these schools across the U.S. poses a serious threat to African/Black children, leaders, and educators alike and has created several key issues and challenges that have hindered our mental and emotional development. For example, the lack of Afrocentric schools in the U.S. has left many African/Black people, especially youth, with no other choice than to attend Western schools, especially in instances where homeschooling is not an option. Since Western hegemonic institutions seek "to turn African children into black and brown copies of Europeans"

(Dove, 2021, p. ix) by miseducating and dislocating them and are notorious for unjustly targeting them for suspensions, expulsions, and special education classes (Shockley & Lomotey, 2020), being "educated" there will likely leave our people unprepared and unequipped to fight against racism and all other forms of oppression. Most importantly, a non-African-centered education will cause African/Black people to grow up lacking the kind of aspiration, attention, and disciplinary structure that they need to become powerful leaders in society (Huffman, 2019).

Although creating more Afrocentric schools designed for stability and longevity is the most salient solution to ensuring that African/Black youth are centered in their learning for years to come, since these schools take time to create—from finding founders and qualified Afrocentric educators to gathering funding and finding a building and a location—African/Black community members and activists should focus on the more immediate challenge of determining what measures their communities can take or should continue to enforce to promote Afrocentric education across the Diaspora on a smaller scale, beyond the classroom, to help supplement the decrease in the number of Afrocentric schools across the U.S. Mwalimu Shujaa, author, educator, and staunch supporter of Afrocentric schools, has also advocated for such efforts, saying that Afrocentric schools foster such a unique and ideal learning environment for African/Black people, especially the youth, that there must be committed community members who are dedicated to creating networks to help properly educate them wherever Afrocentric schools do not exist (Shujaa, 1994).

Akoto (1992) explains that community efforts have proven instrumental in promoting Afrocentric education for African/Black children because Afrocentric schools are fueled by the "interactive roles of family, school, and community" (p. 107). Afrocentric schools also center African/Black children in the "needs of their community" (Shockley & Lomotey, 2020, p. xxii). Asante (2020) adds that yet another reason why community efforts play pivotal roles in promoting Afrocentric education beyond the classroom is that they allow African/Black children to see that learning is not restricted to institutional settings, since their environments are curricula. Finally, the efforts of African/Black community members and activists to promote Afrocentric education are also important, since they help African/Black children develop a clear and theoretical understanding of agency by allowing them to ground themselves in "group autonomy, collective self-determination, and communal sovereignty" (Tillotson, 2011, p. 105).

With the thoughts of these prominent Afrocentric educators in mind, one measure that African/Black community members and activists can either implement or continue to enforce to augment the rapid decline of Afrocentric schools over the last half century and promote Afrocentric education on a smaller scale, beyond the classroom, is to create more opportunities for African/Black youth to learn about their history and culture. Mazama (2020) argues that it is imperative for Afrocentric thinkers to enlighten African/Black youth about "Africans whose agency has been exemplary, not only as a source of inspiration but also as a testament of African resiliency, strength, and determination to be free" (p. 3). African/Black community members and activists can transmit this information in several ways.

The first way involves establishing more community centers that embrace African/Black cultural symbols and motifs like "a map of Africa, pictures of pyramids, masks" (Mazama, 2020, p. 4), and the Pan-African flag. These centers, which can exist in one's home, in a recreational hall or room, or in an actual building (Dove, 2021), should also be modeled after Afrocentric school buildings and classrooms and named after African ethnic groups, regions, countries, empires, cultural symbols, historical figures, or even personal names (Mazama, 2020). Additionally, these centers should display positive images of African/Black families in healthy relationships and African/Black people doing “community building activities such as caring for elders” throughout their facilities (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 50). Structuring the community centers in this way will not only help African/Black youth familiarize themselves with, and learn about, Africa, but will also provide them with a more culturally focused education in comparison to the one they receive at Western institutions, which will help foster cultural reclamation. Adults will also appreciate the presence of Afrocentric community centers, since these institutions will likely reveal life-changing information about their history and culture that they were unaware of due to being miseducated, which will hopefully inspire them to seek agency.

Another measure that African/Black community members and activists can take to educate African/Black youth about their history and culture entails organizing field trips that aim to show them different historical and cultural aspects of Africa in their communities. These trips will also help promote the values of Ma’at and the Nguzo Saba. Ma’at was a set of ethical and moral principles—specifically order, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, and reciprocity—that ancient Kemetians used to govern their daily lives and prevent chaos (Asante, 2007). In 1966, Afrocentric scholar, educator, and activist Maulana Karenga modified the Maatian principles to create the Nguzo Saba, which is Kiswahili for “The Seven Principles.” These principles—namely, *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith; Akoto, 1992; Mazama, 2020; Watson-Vandiver & Wiggan, 2021)—are important because they serve as essential standards that help shape the growth and development of African/Black people as well as building blocks that help us to not only create communities but to also strengthen, maintain, and treasure them (Mazama, 2020). Thus, by visiting Black museums and research centers, and touring historical African landmarks, African/Black youth will not only see the various ways in which the Nguzo Saba can be manifested in their lives and communities but will also uncover truths about their history and culture and use the Maatian principles of order and harmony to handle any psychological confusion they may have about their Africanness due to being miseducated at Western schools that inform Africa using Eurocentric hegemony (Watson-Vandiver & Wiggan, 2021). This quest for “real” knowledge or truth, a Maatian principle, is also vital to the African/Black experience because it is founded on knowledge of self (Dove, 2021), and our ability to define ourselves in our history and culture is what will give us agency.

In line with this thinking, African/Black community members and activists can also implement media nights at these community centers to show films that promote African/Black heroes in a positive light and bring more awareness to both global and domestic issues that affect African/Black people across the Diaspora. These screenings will offset the narrow scope of Black history that is taught at Western schools and will greatly enhance and broaden the youth’s perspective on the world by showing them the importance of agency and self-determination.

Yet another way in which African/Black community members and activists can promote Afrocentric education outside of the classroom involves educating the youth about inventions and innovations by African/Black people and encouraging them to either research ones that they admire or ones by African/Black people who live(d) in their communities. To maximize the impact of these trips, the community members and activists can also recruit Black studies majors and Afrocentric educators from their communities to help coordinate and chaperone. They can also volunteer at Afrocentric Saturday schools: smaller Afrocentric schools that tend to be more widespread and feasible options for African/Black families. Since the role of the Afrocentric educator is to set an example for “the students, their careers, and the community and society in which they live" (Dove, 2021, p. 17) and to "encourage the awakening of African consciousness" (Dove, 2021, p. 86), their presence will provide another benefit because they can serve as mentors to the African/Black youth, inspire them to work hard, instill the importance of Ujima and Umoja, promote higher education, and create stronger village links.

Finally, African/Black community members and activists can strive to reintegrate Kwanzaa, a cultural holiday created by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to highlight the principles of communal living while integrating the cultural practices of African people across the Diaspora into their communities. Kwanzaa is based on the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba—which, as previously explained, play a vital role for both African/Black people and our communities.

One way that our community members and activists can reintegrate Kwanzaa into their lives is by encouraging African/Black families to make the celebration of this holiday a community effort, which will likely increase the number of annual participants and emphasize the importance of celebrating African culture, heritage, and unity rather than Western holidays that are not centered in African values and beliefs. For example, they can form a community-wide Kwanzaa planning committee and either designate or have a few families volunteer to work together to plan activities for each day of Kwanzaa. The families can also come together to make dishes for the Karamu feast on the sixth day, Kuumba.

Another measure that African/Black community members and activists can take to reintegrate Kwanzaa into the African/Black community and promote Afrocentric education on a smaller scale is to ensure that the essential values of the Nguzo Saba are practiced all year round. One way to drive this home is by encouraging the families who participated in Kwanzaa to continue doing the activities that they engaged in to honor each principle, like reflecting on the ways in which each one influenced their lives, venerating their ancestors, helping the elders, doing community service and outreach, or supporting Black-owned businesses whenever possible. They can also emphasize the importance of incorporating African phrases and sayings into their vocabulary, like the greeting "Habari Gani?" which means, "What good news do you have?" in Kiswahili (Asante, 2020, p. 71).

In line with supporting Black-owned businesses, African/Black community members and activists can also help reintegrate Kwanzaa into their lives by highlighting the presence of these establishments in their communities. This is an important measure because in addition to promoting Black excellence, which can be defined as the actions or achievements of any African/Black person who is positively contributing to the uplift of their community and seeking their own agency and self-determination, Black businesses also embody several principles of the Nguzo Saba like Kujichagulia, Ujamaa, Kuumba, and Nia and show our youth that being African is both a daily practice and a long-term commitment. Yet another benefit of highlighting Black-owned businesses in our communities is that they help African/Black children to not only feel impelled to embody Ujamaa and give back to their own communities but to also feel empowered and inspired to create businesses of their own. More importantly, since non-Black establishments tend to be more accessible and abundant in our communities, it is imperative that African/Black community members and activists not only bring awareness to Black-owned businesses in their communities, but also create, maintain, and advertise directories for them to ensure that our people are not only familiar with the services that these businesses provide but also the people who own them.

Lastly, as with the earlier suggestion that African/Black community members and activists can enlist the help of Black studies majors and Afrocentric educators, they can also encourage business owners to participate in the community events designed to promote and implement Afrocentric education on a smaller scale. The business owners can also give motivational speeches to the youth about their entrepreneurial and life journeys and stress the importance of not only keeping our money in our communities to "strengthen our economic base" (Johnson, 2021) but also relying on each other for resources whenever possible. Their participation in these events would also be beneficial to African/Black communities since it could help strengthen alliances between community members and potentially influence the creation or growth of Black-owned business coalitions. A movement of this caliber would give African/Black people more opportunities to seek agency and make substantial improvements in their communities, especially in the economic and political realms.

In all, the aforementioned community-driven proposals, which are rooted in culture and agency, are not only poised to supplement Afrocentric schooling and education in light of frequent school closures, but also to revolutionize and strengthen both African/Black people and our communities, since they foster a sense of solidarity and promise for current and future generations of African/Black people to act and grow upon.

References

Akoto, E. K. A. (1992). *Nationbuilding: Theory and practice in Afrikan centered education*. Pan Afrikan World Institute.

Asante, M. K. (2007). *The history of Africa: A quest for eternal harmony* (1st ed.) Routledge.

Asante, M. K. (2020). From critical pedagogy to revolutionary pedagogy: Toward transformative practice. In K. G. Shockley & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *African-centered education: Theory and practice* (pp. 65–83). Myers Education Press.

Cohen, R. M. (2016, September 2). *The Afrocentric education crisis*. The American Prospect. https://prospect.org/education/afrocentric-education-crisis/

Dove, N. (2021). *The Afrocentric school [a blueprint]*. Universal Write Publications LLC.

Durden, T. R. (2007). African centered schooling: Facilitating holistic excellence for Black children. *The Negro Educational Review*, *58*(1–2), 23–34. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cyfsfacpub/16/

Huffman, B. (2019, April 2). Decline of African-centered schools is a loss for Detroit's Black community. *Here & Now*. NPR; WBUR. https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/04/02/african-schools-detroit

Johnson, J. (2021, November 26). *Dallas megachurch Friendship-West spearheading 100 days of buying Black*. Black Enterprise. https://www.blackenterprise.com/dallas-megachurch-friendship-west-spearheading-100-days-of-buying-black/

Mazama, A. (2020). Afrocentric instructional practices: An assessment. In K. G. Shockley & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *African-centered education: Theory and practice* (pp. 1–16). Myers Education Press.

Shockley, K. G. (2007). Literatures and definitions: Toward understanding Africentric education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *76*(2), 103–117.

Shockley, K. G. (2008). *The miseducation of Black children*. African American Images.

Shockley, K. G., Burbanks, S. M., IV, & McPherson, K. (2015). Searching for solutions: Reflections on working with a traditional school attempting to transform into an African-centered institution. *Journal of African American Studies*, *19*(4), 377–397. http://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-015-9311-3

Shockley, K. G., & Cleveland, D. (2011). Culture, power, and education: The philosophies and pedagogy of African centered educators. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *3*(3), 54–75.

Shockley, K. G., & Frederick, R. M. (2008). Constructs and dimensions of Afrocentric education. *Journal of Black Studies*, *40*(6), 1212–1233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934708325517

Shockley, K. G., & Lomotey, K. (2020). *African-centered education: Theory and practice.* Myers Education Press.

Shujaa, M. J. (1994). Education and schooling: You can have one without the other. In M. J. Shujaa (Ed.), *Too much schooling, too little education: A paradox of Black life in white societies* (pp. 13–36). Africa World Press.

Thompson, A., Banwo, B. O., & Kuykendall-Walker, R. (2020). The roots model: African-centered education. In K. G. Shockley & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *African-centered education: Theory and practice* (pp. 45–63). Myers Education Press.

Tillotson, M. (2011). *Invisible Jim Crow: Contemporary ideological threats to the internal security of African Americans*. Africa World Press.

Watson-Vandiver, M., & Wiggan, G. (2021). *The healing power of education: Afrocentric pedagogy as a tool for restoration and liberation.* Teachers College Press.

THE STATE OF BLACK/AFRICANA STUDIES

Black Studies Departments and Community Relevancy: An Exploratory Assessment

by

Miciah Z. Yehudah, Ph.D.
Founder/Director
The SBA Center

Clyde Ledbetter Jr., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

In the United States, the discipline of Black studies emerged in the 1960s in response to persistent demands by people of African descent for the inclusion of curricula featuring accurate examples of Black life, both ancient and contemporary, at all levels of education. These demands are essentially a calling to task of K–12 school districts, higher education and academia, community enrichment programs, and public policy spaces to invest in a scientific approach that (1) privileges the study of the Black experience, (2) is sober yet optimistic, and (3) does not assume Black intellectual, historical, or civilizational experiences to be deviant.

In the early years of the discipline, Black living spaces witnessed the establishment of community enrichment programs nationwide to offset the anti-Black curriculum that the youth were subjected to in public and private schools. The Black Panther Party's breakfast program and the Philadelphia weekend Freedom Schools are prominent examples, among others. Within academia, in addition to curriculum changes, Black students and faculty from the so-called "traditional" disciplines received community backing to demand that institutions hire new Black faculty to teach their courses.

While community enrichment programs continued to be developed by and in Black communities across the country, on college campuses, activists, progressive students, faculty, and staff struggled to create a new home for the courses exploring the Black experience, and to hire the faculty who would teach these courses. Eventually, however, this quest for a more permanent space led to the emergence of Black studies departments in higher education institutions across the United States. While defining the mission and scope of Black studies, program chairs recognized the huge debt owed to the Black communities across the country that offered the initial push for the inclusion of Black studies in higher education spaces.

Consequently, since the official introduction of Black studies to higher education institutions in the late 1960s, its leadership has continually asserted that its solidarity with the Black community lies at its core, while simultaneously declaring that a nonnegotiable objective of the program, irrespective of its size and scope, is the upliftment of the Black community.

Considering this background and the ongoing demands for the inclusion of the Black experience in higher education curricula, this study involves the carrying out of the second aspect of the aforementioned statement: the sober assessment, in this case, of how true Black studies departments have been to their community-centric mission. Several approaches can be employed in measuring this commitment to the community: assessing the number of community-centric programs initiated by campuses, analyzing the focus areas and topics covered by these programs, and determining the number of Black faculty, staff, and students participating in these programs.

This study measures Black studies departments' commitment to providing scholarship relevant to the communities they find themselves working in via the dissertations produced by their doctoral students. Doctoral dissertations are a defining feature of higher education academic departments. They can help identify not only the subject matters that are most important to the department, but also the most frequently (or infrequently) studied geographical locations. Before we delve into this analysis, we explore specifically what Black studies departments have meant when expressing notions of a "Black community."

Black Studies Departments and the Black Community

Almost all of the Black studies departments surveyed in this study have expressed an obligation to serve the Black community in their mission statements. A closer look at the departments' mission statements, as well as the dissertations produced, suggests that a clear definition of the "Black community" is evasive and mainly centers on a general community that traverses all physical boundaries.

Our literature review reveals that rather than lack of effort or ability, the biggest challenges facing Black studies departments in fulfilling their mission stem from their failure to operationalize the "Black community." In other words, if the entity receiving the efforts and benefits of these efforts is nonexistent or not properly identified, the measurement of these efforts in relation to that entity is also nonexistent or subject to misidentification.

Despite the lack of clarity on what constitutes a Black community, there have been diligent efforts to discuss the mission of Black studies departments in the literature. For instance, Nathan Hare (1969) was probably one of the most progressive of the early Black studies specialists to discuss a practical process for ensuring the inclusion of the Black community in departmental endeavors. He referenced two phases of a Black studies program: an expressive phase and a pragmatic phase. The expressive phase revolves around courses such as Black history and Black art and culture but hinges on applicability (relevancy) to the Black community and its needs. The pragmatic phase is functional and includes courses intended to help students develop socioeconomic skills through extensive fieldwork and community involvement, in collaboration with classroom activities.

Further, Hare (1969) also helped secure approval for some courses from the California State College Trustees instituted at San Francisco State College, including Black math, which would "serve as a way of thinking, a means of communication, and an instrument of problem solving, with special reference to the black community, using references from black experiences where possible for illustrative and reading-problem material," (p. 728) and the social organization of Blackness, in which the "social structure of the black community was explored" (p.730).

Maulana Karenga (1988) argued that Black studies should strive to create capable Black intellectuals who use their skills "self-consciously" in the "service of the Black community" (p. 407). Vivian Gordon (1981), the leader of the Black Studies department at the State University of New York at Albany, recommended that Black studies departments invest resources and energy in closely examining the diversity of the Black identity and the Black community with the aim of investigating all aspects of Blackness—even those not popularly acknowledged—with honesty and practicality.

"The two masters" thesis proposed by Darlene Clark Hine (1992) argued that Black studies has had to answer to two masters: "the academy on the one hand, and the Black community on the other" (p. 12). Although this statement has arguably played out more as an ideal than as a reality, it nevertheless raises essential questions that still need to be addressed. Namely, outside of the academy, has Black studies truly had to "answer" to any other "master"? Have Black communities truly benefited from Black studies departments within their vicinities?

More recently, Tillotson and McDougal (2013), speaking directly to "the terminal degree holder in Africana studies," introduced the framework of applied Africana studies and reaffirmed,

> Black studies was founded on the idea of academic excellence and social responsibility, which means the discipline's current research trajectory must be engaged in helping to solve the problems that people of African descent are facing in the contemporary world (p. 102).

The authors further argue:

> When terminal degree holders in African American Studies do not produce research that speaks to the unique interests of African-descended people living in the urban core and rural areas, these populations will continue to be abandoned, and the collective interests of this community will continue to be denied (p. 111).

This study seeks to examine how this core tenet of Black studies has been fulfilled and critically assess ways in which it can be fine-tuned. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to accurately measure the efforts and resources devoted by Black studies departments to operationalize the "Black community." Black studies must not place optics over content.

Although our literature review provided certain insights into how the topic of the Black community had been discussed by leading voices (including some of the original chairs of Black studies departments), most of these discussions concern the period before the establishment of doctoral departments, and thus, before the doctoral dissertations were produced. In other words, what had been discussed may or may not have been carried out exactly as specified. Therefore, our current research on doctoral dissertations provides a comparative mechanism for measuring how the data prior to the establishment of the doctoral department compares to subsequent dissertations pertaining to the topic of Black community.

Methods

The method used for this work involved an inductive content analysis of 188 dissertations defended between 2005 and 2021. These dissertations were completed within doctoral degree programs in Black studies, Africana studies, Africology, and/or African American studies offered by six departments in Berkley, Harvard, Massachusetts Amherst (henceforth, UMass), Michigan State, Northwestern, and Temple Universities. We considered only those departments that awarded degrees independently—that is, without their degrees being anchored to another discipline in the university.

The dissertations were selected after screening the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database, as well as individual department and university theses and dissertations websites. Wherever possible, we downloaded and analyzed the full versions of the studies. Among the dissertations in which only the abstracts were publicly available, we only included those dissertations in our analysis for which we could easily identify our chosen variables. For example, from the title of Kevin Dixon Tervala's (2020) Harvard dissertation, *Desert Vision: Climate Change, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Artistic Creativity in Northwestern Kenya, 1926–1963,* we could identify several of our primary variables (geographic and chronological markers), which were subsequently confirmed in the brief abstract.

We reviewed each dissertation for the following variables: year of completion, closest primary geographic location of the dissertation subject (CPGL), location of the department, miles between the CPGL and the location of the department, the last year analyzed in the dissertation (LYA), the years between the LYA and the year of completion, and the major subject of the dissertation.

For the major subject variable, we relied on Karenga's (2010) categorization of fields in Black studies: Black history, Black religion, Black social organization, Black politics, Black economics, Black creative production, and Black psychology. Additionally, we added STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), Black philosophy, and disciplinary commentary to this list.

For each dissertation, we determined the geographic distance (whenever possible) between the primary subject of the work and the department in which the dissertation was completed. Second, if possible, we determined the chronological distance (in years) between the primary phenomenon being analyzed in the dissertation and the time at which it was completed by the scholar. We set a distance of 95 miles from the city where the department was located as our limit to determine whether the CPGL of the dissertation subject was geographically nearby.[15] For a dissertation's LYA to be considered recent, we narrowed the time period to within 10 years from the year of completion.

We also identified dissertations that were theoretical in nature and primarily involved literary, artistic, or philosophical analysis, and thus, could not be plotted on a geographic plane. For example, Monique Johnston's (2012) Temple University dissertation, *"With Hope Hunger Does Not Kill": A Cultural Literary Analysis of Buchi Emecheta,* examined literary works that transcended a particular city but could be plotted chronologically—for example, in terms of year of publication and release. Finally, we also identified a few dissertations in which no geographical or chronological specificity could be determined, such as Walter Sistrunk's (2012) Michigan State dissertation, *The Syntax of Zero in African American Relative Clauses.*

---

[15] Originally, we planned to limit this distance to 60 miles, or about an hour's drive from the location of the department, but after reviewing dissertations from UMass and Michigan State and understanding these departments' relationships with the Black communities of Boston and Detroit, respectively, we broadened the area.

Based on this process, we placed each dissertation in one of six categories, which are presented in the following descending order of relevance:

6. Geographically near and chronologically recent
5. Geographically near and not chronologically recent
4. Geographically far and chronologically recent
3. Neither geographically near nor chronologically recent
2. Geographically non-specific and recent
1. Geographically non-specific and not recent
0. Neither geographically nor chronologically specific

Findings

In this study, we analyzed 188 dissertations produced between 2005 and 2021. UMass produced the most dissertations (41, or 28.1%), followed by Temple (38, or 20.2%), Harvard (33, or 17.5%), Michigan State (29, or 15.4%), Berkley (26, or 13.8%), and Northwestern (21, or 11.1%).

Of the 188 dissertations, 17 (approximately 9%) were both geographically near and chronologically recent (Category 6). Temple (7) and Michigan State (6) jointly accounted for 76% of these dissertations. Berkley and Northwestern produced two dissertations each, while UMass and Harvard produced no dissertations in this category. Black social organization was the most prominent subject area (47%), followed by Black creative production, Black history, Black religion, and STEM.

Only eight dissertations dealt with topics that were geographically near and *not* chronologically recent (Category 5), of which four were completed at Temple University. This category comprised diverse subjects, including a dissertation on criminal justice in 1940s Chicago (Agyepong, 2014) completed at Northwestern as well as one from UMass chronicling racial relations in Boston from 1890–1930 (Miletsky, 2008).

In Categories 4 and 3, 65 dissertations (one-third of the total number) examined subjects based in areas that were far from their respective department's location. Of these 65 studies, more than half (36) of the concerned subjects were neither geographically near nor chronologically recent. A diverse array of subfields was explored in this category, ranging from a work chronicling the lives of African immigrants to Paris in the 1960s from University of Berkley (Germain, 2007) to a Northwestern dissertation reevaluating "the historical conditions leading to Ghana's independence" (Forjwuor, 2015).

A total of 84 (or approximately 45%) dissertations pertained to subjects that lacked any primary geographic location (Categories 2, 1, and 0). Of these, 39 studies concerned recent phenomena such as Kelli Morgan's (2017) UMass doctoral dissertation titled *We Are Roses from Our Mothers' Gardens: Black Feminist Visuality in African American Women's Art*, which analyzed art pieces up to 2014. The remaining 45 dealt with topics of the non-recent past, such as

Cher Love McAllister's (2009) Temple University study, *Remembering Asar: An Argument to Authenticate Rastafari's Conceptualization(s) of Haile Selassie I*. The remaining 10 dissertations were placed in Category 0, as they covered themes (theory, philosophy, language) that did not have any explicit chronological or geographical markers relevant to our study.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, we make the following recommendations to departments within our discipline.

First, we recommend that academic departments should be specific about what local Black community/communities they desire to serve. However, this specificity is contingent upon whether they still genuinely desire such a relationship. Second, if a department wishes to explore mutually beneficial relationships with the community, then the community must see a tangible need for the relationship and offer its agreement. Black studies departments cannot assume a type of colonial/colonizer position in the relationship.

Based on the percentage of dissertations that addressed the real and existential realities of local Black communities, we recommend that more dissertations be produced on topics pertaining to the Black communities surrounding the campus in the vein of the Atlanta University studies or the Philadelphia community studies carried out by W.E.B. Du Bois in the early 20th century.

The impetus for these studies must come from the departments themselves, as we are not asking individual doctoral researchers to reconsider their topics of choice, since our discipline is designed to address the gamut of the Black experience. Departments can also encourage more community-oriented research by hiring faculty with terminal degrees in Black studies, who are experts in the Black community. If suitable faculty members are lacking, the department should devote resources to developing some, possibly through the creation of programs specifically tailored to support enrollment of quality local community members at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, departments could articulate an explicit yearly objective that a certain percentage of dissertations and/or theses should focus on topics relevant to local Black communities.

If the department is not geographically close to a Black community, studies could focus on investigating the reasons for the absence of Black folk living in the area. In addition, ensuring collaboration between the department and community-based think tanks could facilitate data analysis and the development and implementation of solutions by the community.

We also suggest that future research should look at master's theses in Black studies departments; examine the role of NCBS in holding Black studies departments accountable to their mission to serve the Black community; develop special programs, initiatives, and/or scholarships specifically tailored to supporting enrollment of quality local community members; and strongly consider (within the parameters of defining what entails "community"), the intentional inclusion and consideration of Black faculty, staff, and students who are not affiliated with Black studies departments on the campus.

Conclusion

If implemented, the aforementioned recommendations would go a long way toward bringing departments closer to serving their communities' interests, rather than putting the desires of the academy over all other necessities. The recommendations concerning intentional departmental efforts regarding the promotion and production of dissertation research on the contemporary issues, concerns, and successes of geographically local Black communities should be prioritized by current and future NCBS member institutions. Above all, consistent, systematic, and authentic engagement with local communities must be an assessable requirement for all departments within the discipline if we are to maintain our original and ongoing mission as articulated by foundational scholars such as Hare and contemporary scholars such as Tillotson and McDougal.

References

Agyepong, T. (2014). *Boundaries of innocence: Race, sex and the criminalization of African American children in Cook County's juvenile justice system, 1899–1945* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Northwestern University.

Forjwuor, B. A. (2015). *Constituent specter of colonialism: Between liberal democracy and the politics of decolonization* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Northwestern University.

Germain, F. F. (2007). *Dangerous liaisons: The lives and labor of working-class Antilleans and sub-Saharan Africans in 1960s Paris* (Publication No. 3306147) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Gordon, V. V. (1981). The coming of age of Black studies. *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 5*(3), 231.

Hare, N. (1969). Questions and answers about Black studies. *The Massachusetts Review, 10* (4), 727–736.

Hine, D. C. (1992). The Black Studies movement: Afrocentric traditionalist feminist paradigms for the next stage. *The Black Scholar, 22*(3), 11–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1992.11413040

Johnston, M. N. (2012). *"With hope, hunger does not kill," a cultural literary analysis of Buchi Emecheta* (Publication No. 991037776952703811) [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. Temple University Library. https://cdm16002.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p245801coll10/id/166926.

Karenga, M. (1988). Black studies and the problematic of paradigm: The philosophical dimension. *Journal of Black Studies, 18*(4), 395–414. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2784370

Karenga, M. (2010). *Introduction to Black studies.* University of Sankore Press.

McAllister, C. L. (2009). *Remembering Asar: An argument to authenticate Rastafari's conceptualization(s) of Haile Selassie I* (Publication No. 864884697) [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. Temple University Library. http://dx.doi.org/10.34944/dspace/1845

Miletsky, Z. V. (2008). *City of amalgamation: Race, marriage, class and color in Boston, 1890–1930* (Publication No. 304566251) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Morgan, K. (2017). *We are roses from our mothers' gardens: Black feminist visuality in African American women's art* (Publication No. 1060) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst]. ScholarWorks@UMassAmherst. https://doi.org/10.7275/10681790.0

Sistrunk, W. (2012). *The syntax of zero in African American relative clauses* (Publication No. 1018565152) [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Tervala, K. D. (2020). *Desert vision: Climate change, colonialism, and the transformation of artistic creativity in northwestern Kenya, 1926–1963* (Publication No. 6273) [Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University]. FAS Theses and Dissertations. https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37365121

Tillotson, M., & McDougal, S. (2013). Applied Africana studies. *Journal of Black Studies, 44*(1), 101–113. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23414706

Locating Africa in Black Studies: Cultivating the Black Studies Africanist

by

Maria Martin, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
History/Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
University of California, Merced

As a Black studies Africanist, I have often wondered, how do Black studies scholars engage with Africa—and what are the implications of that engagement? Even as a doctoral student in Black studies, I began to think about Africa inclusiveness, or how Africa is included in Black studies.[16] As a researcher focused on Africa, I struggled to find acceptance in the face of the gatekeepers of African studies. [17] Meanwhile, in Black studies, it was relatively rare to find other African American students who focused solely on modern (post-WWII) or contemporary intra-Africa content. The question, for me, became, "Is there a means of cultivating and building interest in modern, contemporary, intra-Africa-focused research among students of Black studies? Furthermore, how has the way that Black studies scholars engage with the continent influenced overarching approaches to Africa in the field?" What follows are my reflections on these questions as a self-proclaimed Black studies Africanist. I argue that the cultivation of a Black studies Africanist paradigm can address these questions and expand the field of Black studies in engaging ways.

"What is that?" is the usual verbal or nonverbal response exuded when I introduce myself as a Black studies Africanist. These scholars of Africa essentially use their Black studies training to inform their research on Africa. Thus, they are uniquely positioned to produce novel theories, methods, analyses, and perspectives that have otherwise gone unnoticed in studies of Africa. In essence, these scholars actively place Africa into a conversation with its Diaspora in ways that bring about more connectivity in studies of the Black world. They hold an opportunity to expand the discipline of Black studies, and African studies as well, because they are highly engaged and rooted in both fields, which aids them in developing transdisciplinary approaches to research on Africa. One may ask whether Black studies in and of itself already does these things, but I argue that there is room for growth in the ways that Black studies scholars engage with Africa.

---

[16] Dr. Rita Edozie, former Director of Michigan State University's African American and African Studies program, wrote about the Black studies Africanist paradigm in her article "The Emerging Black Studies Africanist: A Case Study of MSU's Triple Heritage African American and African Studies PhD Program" (2012). She speaks to the idea of Africa inclusivity.

[17] African studies scholars, such as Jean Allman in her 2018 ASA presidential lecture (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSb_N2Ly8VY), are rightfully beginning to ask questions about expansion and inclusivity as conversations on decolonizing knowledge production, pedagogy, and thought increasingly occur in academic spaces of the current moment. L. A. Aubrey (2002) has written an article analyzing the issues that prevent or deter African American students from doing research on Africa, and sadly, it still rings true. Black studies has the potential to address this issue in earnest. In addition to the ways in which it expands knowledge on Africa, the Black studies Africanist paradigm can also address issues of inclusion in the study of Africa.

Inextricably Linked: Black Studies' Long-Founded Relationship with Africa

It is true that Black studies has always been connected to and engaged with the study of Africa from its inception. This can be seen with scholars such as Geneva Smitherman, Frank Snowden, Anani Dzidzienyo, Maulana Karenga, and Molefi Asante. There is also an older and very extensive tradition of engaging Africa in Black studies scholarship. In fact, African studies in the U.S. began with the work of African American intellectuals, such as Du Bois, and other scholars in HBCUs well before the 1960s, which saw a strong push for the establishment of Black studies, as McInerny's (2017) interview of Jemima Pierre reveals. Serious studies of Africa were carried out by the predecessors of the field of Black studies, so one could say that research on Africa has always been present in the field since its earliest prototype. In 1915, Du Bois wrote *The Negro*, which focused largely on the Nile Valley civilizations and argued that Ethiopia was the progenitor to Egyptian civilization and, in fact, that "Pre-dynastic Egypt was settled by Negroes from Ethiopia" (Gebrekidan, 2015, p. 6).[18] Lest we forget that there were also women whose scholarship was foundational to Black studies, Zora Neale Hurston's research for *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo* (2018) proved very important in shaping more humanistic views of Africa in American thought. In 1927, Hurston conducted three months of ethnographic research with Cudjo Lewis, also known as Oluale Kossola, one of the last known African adult survivors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In 1936, Woodson published *The African Background Outlined* wherein he took a humanistic approach to analyzing African history, viewing "the Negro as human" (Woodson, preface). These scholars paved the way for Black studies scholarship on Africa such as that of William Leo Hansberry, who taught African history at Howard University and wrote *Pillars of Ethiopian History* (1974) and *Africa and Africans as Seen by Classical Writers* (1977); Henry Louis Gates' (2001) *Wonders of the African World*; Mario Beatty's (2005) "Martin Delany: The First African American to Translate Egyptian Hieroglyphs"; Molefi Asante's (2007) *History of Africa*; and Jemima Pierre's *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (2012) and *Race and Africa: Cultural and Historical Legacies (Framing 21st Century Social Issues*; 2023). Though not an exhaustive list, this suffices to represent the long-founded and continuing studies on Africa by Black studies scholars.

It should be noted that while Africa has been an area of inquiry for Black studies scholars, Africa has also contributed to the very foundations of the field of Black studies both internationally and nationally. It is imperative to realize that African intellectuals fought to establish Black studies in Africa in their own right, due to the realization that African studies on Africa would not lead to liberation:

> On October 25, 1963, Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, delivered a speech at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. This speech is generally

---

[18] This work was followed by W.E.B. Du Bois' *Black Folk Then and Now* in 1938, which critiqued Orientalism and the idea that Ethiopia was a part of the Middle East and not Africa.

> referred to as “The African Genius.” For Nkrumah, African studies, under the influence of western universities, have yet to emerge from the yoke of “old style ‘colonial studies,’” colonial ideologies and mentalities. (Kemedjio, 2020)

African studies was shaped by colonial approaches and western influence, and the only way to escape that would be to develop more conscious methods and inquiries into the African condition. Black studies was poised to do this. Nkrumah went on in his speech to say that African studies should produce “a new interpretation and a new assessment” of Africa (Nkrumah, 1963). The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana was established in 1961, while in Cameroon, Professor Thomas Melone founded the “first Department of Negro-African literature at the University of Yaoundé” (Kemedjio, 2020).[19] These departments in African universities share common foundational principles with Black studies departments in the U.S., including political and intellectual liberation, although they were established *before* Black studies was welcomed into U.S. universities.[20] In his memoir *Dreams in a Time of War*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (2011) talked about the Kenyan Teachers College serving as a community-centered school meant to be an “‘African run, community-owned college’ modeled on Hampton and Tuskegee, historically Black schools in the U.S.” (p. 130). Unfortunately, it was 1938 and the colonizers deemed the school criminal. They turned it into a slaughterhouse where anticolonial protesters were murdered (Kemedjio, 2020).

African people had been fighting for Black studies on the continent, but they also contributed to the field outside of the continent in the U.S. Three African scholars exemplify this history: Dovi Afesi, Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, and Anani Dzidzienyo. According to Bright Gyamfi (2021),

> by 1970, as American universities were beginning to approve of departments that focused on Blacks in the Americas, these Ghanaian scholars were working both to link Black studies and African studies as academic disciplines and to connect Africa and the diaspora as overlapping spaces of political struggle. (p. 692)

Afesi launched a campaign to bring the papers of Du Bois from Ghana to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he was a professor. This was completed in 1976, underscoring the fact that both Africa and African America were equally important in the legacy of Du Bois (Gyamfi, 2021, pp. 682–683). In 1974, Afesi arranged an exchange program that took U.S. students to the University of Lagos and the University of Cape Coast while bringing African students and junior faculty to UMass Amherst (Gyamfi, 2021, p. 693). Nketsia and Dzidzienyo sought to broaden the scope of Black studies curricula to include a substantial addressing of Africa. Dzidzienyo was lauded for shaping, singlehandedly, Diaspora studies at Brown University. As the first tenure-track hire of the Black studies program, he brought a diasporic perspective to Black studies students in courses he developed such as “African History and Society” and “Blacks in Latin American History and Society.” With these courses as models, his colleagues created “Afro-American History and Society” and “Caribbean History and Society,” which helped propel the Afro-American Studies Department at Brown into prominence within African Diaspora studies (Gyamfi, 2021, p. 694). Meanwhile, Nketsia, who hosted Black Power leaders such as Stockley Carmichael and Michael Thelwell in his home, “argued that continued collaboration between Africans and peoples of African descent would create an avenue for the exchange of ideas that would be useful in empowering both communities” (Gyamfi, 2021, p. 696). According to Gyamfi, “Afesi, Nketsia, and Dzidzienyo worked to inject an Africa-centered sense of what political education and political mobilization meant in contrast with the notion of Africa as a place of distant heritage” (p. 694).

---

[19] According to Kemedjio, the “Negro” in the department title referred to the Negritude movement, which was heavily influenced by the Harlem Renaissance.

[20] The first Black studies program (later a department) began at San Francisco State University in 1968 under the leadership of Nathan Hare (Carapezza, 2019).

Locating Africa in Contemporary Black Studies in the U.S.

There is an established legacy of the contributions of Africa to Black studies and the production of scholarship on Africa by Black studies scholars, but questions for the field that must be posed today include, “What are the ways Africa is engaged with at present, and how can those existing approaches be expanded?” This question is not intended to blame or indict, but to develop an insightful understanding of how the study of Africa has been shaped within Black studies. Scholars have addressed Africa within Black studies in three overarching ways. The first is as a classical historical reference. In this perspective, ancient African history is utilized to reconnect and situate contemporary global Black populations within an African continuum. In addition, African history is used to make compelling points that build a more complete awareness of the complexity, long-founded civilizations, and contributions of Black peoples. These points can range from discussing the origins of cultural characteristics and ways of being in Black communities to making recommendations for finding culturally relevant resolutions to issues facing Black peoples. This practice can be seen in the way that ancient Egyptian texts are used to trace the defining characteristics of African American rhetoric in Karenga’s (2003) “Nommo, Kawaida, and Communicative Practice” (pp. 3–22). It can also be seen in works such as *Afrocentricity*, wherein Asante (2003) speaks to the possibility of Black peoples adopting a “Neo-Kemetic vision of the world” to address issues specific to their populations.

The second way that Africa is engaged with in Black studies is through a Diasporic perspective. A doctoral reading list from Rutgers University’s Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences (2015) provides many sources that adopt this lens, such as “From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America” (Berlin, 1996); *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Gomez, 2005); *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Hall, 2005); and *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (Konadu, 2010). Naturally, studies of the African Diaspora focus on culture, identity, experiences, and politics of Africans who arrived in other areas of the world. However, by virtue of their focus on migration to other areas of the world, Africa itself may be engaged with as a point of departure for studies of African descendants in other locales.

The third way in which Black studies engages with Africa involves comparative studies. For example, looking at dissertations from the University of Massachussets Amherst (UMass) from 2003–2021, one can see very few Africa-focused titles, though there is one from 2013 that leads a comparative analysis utilizing the U.S. and Nigeria as sites of study. The dissertation, entitled *Composing the African Atlantic: Sun Ra, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, and the Poetics of African Diasporic Composition*, considers the importance of the works of Sun Ra and Fela Kuti in the context of the African Atlantic intellectual environment (Carroll, 2013). There are many such dissertations by students of Black studies that lead a comparative analysis of a site in Africa and the U.S. A popular topic for students that comes to mind is Black consciousness, for example, which calls for a comparison of content from the U.S. and South Africa.

Each of these three approaches has been tremendously important in developing awareness of Africa and African-descended people, though they are not without implications. The continent has been engaged as a classical historical reference point, from a diasporic perspective, and in comparative studies, which have all brought out valuable dimensions in studies of Black peoples. These studies have added depth, breadth, and diversity to our understandings of Africa over time, which has immense importance. However, unconsciously, these works represent a pattern that has developed in the way that scholars engage with Africa. This pattern gives less attention to Africa-focused studies and courses, especially those topics on modern (to an extent) and contemporary Africa. This is an area that Black studies programs and scholars could strengthen. To further paint this picture, lists of courses from high-ranking universities with Black studies departments were reviewed, as follows:

- Temple University, Department of Africology and African American Studies[21]
- Michigan State University, Department of African American and African Studies[22]
- University of California, Los Angeles, Department of African American Studies[23]
- Northwestern University, Department of African American Studies[24]

Recent summer, fall, graduate, and undergraduate classes are represented in these lists. Upon reading through these lists, one will find that few courses focus on Africa. The lists are heavily U.S.-centric with regard to African American experiences and topics, although there are some offerings on the Diaspora and ancient Egypt. How does this affect the development of student interest in studying Africa outside of the three approaches described? How are students being taught to consider and investigate the central methodological, analytical, epistemic, social, political, historical, contemporary, and practical questions that have implications for what is happening on the continent itself? Building more diverse intra-Africa content will add a more balanced level of nuance and complexity than students encounter from the existing Black studies approaches and courses relating to Africa.

Concluding Thoughts on a Path Forward: The Black Studies Africanist Paradigm

The field of Black studies has work to do in light of increasing interest in the study of Africa, especially in modern history and the contemporary era. The Black studies Africanist paradigm can expand the field further toward this goal of more comprehensive engagement with Africa by producing transdisciplinary works that help to build new theories, pose important questions, and develop original terms and perspectives that lead to more nuanced analyses of Africa and its peoples. This includes envisioning existing sources, ideals, and topics from Africa and the Diaspora in new ways. Such efforts have been exhibited in works by Black studies scholars who focus on intra-Africa content in their work, such as Tiffany Caesar, LaToya Brackett, Tara Mock, Blair Rose Zaid, Harry Odamtten, and Jemima Pierre, to name a few.

These scholars all ask questions about Blackness on the continent when most studies by traditional Africanists do not engage with this question, making this a unique characteristic and approach of the Black studies Africanist. Dr. Caesar looks at Black women's influence on Afrocentric education models in South Africa, which engage with race and gender topics. Dr. Brackett is studying the natural hair care movement on the continent, which has implications for the views and perspectives that Africans have of features associated with Blackness. Dr. Mock is focused on contemporary Afro-China relations, which aids in envisioning implications for Africa's international relations and future. Dr. Zaid is an archaeologist whose work helps to reconstruct the pre-colonial history of Africa with material culture, an area of understanding that is direly needed in order to build a more complete archaeological record of the continent. Dr. Odamtten's work on Edward Blyden re-centers Africa in the intellectual history of the Atlantic. He used his Black studies training to develop the transdisciplinary lens of Afro-positivism to analyze Blyden's approach to researching and discussing Africa. The situating of Blyden (who was an Igbo born in the Caribbean) as an important intellectual in the Pan-African tradition actively centers African and African Diasporan contributions to Pan-Africanism, which connects Africa to the Black Atlantic. Dr. Pierre has used the Black studies approach of viewing race as an analytical tool in her two works on the importance and effects of race in African societies. Her research challenges the notion that Africa is devoid of racism by examining the idea of Blackness, the significance of whiteness and whitening, and race formation within Africa.

---

[21] https://bulletin.temple.edu/courses/aaas/

[22] https://aaas.msu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-minor/

[23] https://afam.ucla.edu/summer-2021-courses/

[24] https://afam.northwestern.edu/courses/2021-2022/class-schedules/fall-2021-class-schedule.html

These scholars all expand understandings of Africa from a Black studies perspective, which is distinct and not replicative of traditional African studies approaches. Their multifaceted engagement with Blackness in Africa and creation of transdisciplinary lenses is combined with questions that have social, political, educational, economic, and historical significance for the continent. The result is scholarship that encompasses the objective of Black studies to produce critical knowledge on Black populations while growing understandings of pre-colonial, modern, and contemporary Africa. Their approaches to the study of Africa can expand existing Black studies engagement with the continent to create more connectivity in research of the Black world.

As it stands, there is more to be desired from Black studies in regard to intra-Africa research. The field has great potential to shape research on Africa with fresh and nuanced perspectives, theories, and questions that have implications for Africa's present and future. However, the field must reflect on how it engages with Africa at present and what this communicates to students. Do the existing approaches only expose students to viewing Africa as a classical historical reference, point of departure, or comparative locale rather than the main focus of study? Answering this question could lead to an expansion of the ways that Black studies engages with Africa. The current paradigms are no doubt necessary and should continue to be utilized, though more must be done to grow student interest and Black studies scholarship regarding modern, contemporary, intra-Africa content. The Black studies Africanist paradigm presents a way forward.

References

Asante, M. (2003). *Afrocentricity.* African American Images.

Aubrey, L. A. (2002). African Americans in the United States and African studies. *African Issues, 30*(2), 19–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/1535084

Berlin, I. (1996). From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the origins of African-American society in mainland North America. *The William and Mary Quarterly, 53*(2), 251–288. https://doi.org/10.2307/2947401

Caesar, T. D. (2018). Africana women leaders of African centered education: A portraiture of mothering, Pan-Africanism, and nation-building in Africa. In R. Edozie, G. Chambers, & T. Hamilton-Wray (Eds.), *New frontiers in the study of the global African Diaspora:*

Between uncharted themes and alternative representations (pp. 117–134). Michigan State University Press. https://doi.org/10.14321/j.ctv65sxqz.10

Carapezza, K. (2019, April 21). *History of Brandeis University Department of African and African American Studies.* GBH News. https://www.wgbh.org/news/education/2019/04/21/fifty-years-ago-brandeis-created-one-of-the-first-black-studies-departments

Carroll, J. G. (2013). *Composing the African Atlantic: Sun Ra, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, and the poetics of African Diasporic composition* (Publication No. 738) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst]. ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. https://doi.org/10.7275/qp47-ye74

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1915). *The Negro.* Holt.

Edozie, R. (2012). The emerging Black studies Africanist: A case study of MSU's triple heritage African American and African Studies PhD program. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, 5*(7), 33–54. https://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol5no7/5.67MSU.pdf

Gebrekidan, F. N. (2015). Ethiopia in Black studies from W. E. B. Du Bois to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Northeast African Studies, 15*(1), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.14321/nortafristud.15.1.0001

Gomez, M. (2005). *Black Crescent: The experience and legacy of African Muslims in the Americas.* Cambridge University Press.

Gyamfi, B. (2021). From Nkrumah's Black Star to the African Diaspora: Ghanaian intellectual activists and the development of Black studies in the Americas. *The Journal of African American History, 106*(4), 682–705. https://doi.org/10.1086/716492

Hall, G. M. (2005). *Slavery and African ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the links.* University of North Carolina Press.

Hurston, Z. N. (2018). *Barracoon.* Amistad.

Karenga, M. (2003). *Understanding African American rhetoric*. Routledge.

Kemedjio, C. (2020). Black studies and the "ideology of relevance." *InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture,* (31). https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/black-studies-and-the-ideology-of-relevance/#fnref-8902-36

Konadu, K. (2010). *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas.* Oxford University Press.

McInerny, P. (2017, October 16). *Erasing the intellectual divide between African American and African studies*. UCLA International Center at University of California Los Angeles. https://international.ucla.edu/asc/article/182888

Nkrumah, K. (2013). The African genuis. In T. Manuh & E. Sutherland-Addy (Eds.), *Africa in contemporary perspectives: A textbook for undergraduate students* (pp. vi–xiii). Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Odammten, H. (2019). *Edward W. Blyden's intellectual transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church.* Michigan State University Press.

Rutgers School of Arts & Sciences. (2015, July 3). *History of Atlantic cultures and the African Diaspora graduate reading list.* https://history.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/graduate/reading-lists/1310-atlantic-diaspora-list/file

Thiong'o, N. W. (2011). *Dreams in a time of war: A childhood memoir*. Anchor Books.

Woodson, C. G. (1936). *The African background outlined*. Associated Publishers.

Creating New Knowledge: An African Digital Humanities

by

Peter Ukpokodu, Ph.D.
Full Professor
The University of Kansas
Department of African & African-American Studies

Since its founding, Black studies as a discipline has always reinvigorated its epistemic raison d'etre with an infusion of sharp scholarship, insightful pedagogy, and altruistic cultural communal service. Its beginnings were bold and assertive, and the early founders of the discipline were unsurpassed in matching their vision with praxis. Black cultural affirmation and service to the community matched intellectual and didactic rigor and dedication, and both were pursued with unparalleled energy even at the risk of the founders' academic self-immolation. It was a victorious revolution whose aftermath unleashed creative energies that could be linked to preceding or contemporaneous generation in which, for example, Maulana Karenga's robust intellect and irrepressible spirit brought forth the immortal and inimitable Kwanzaa that is now recognized worldwide as it takes its place among cultural festivals and holidays, and the phenomenon now simply referred to as "Harlem's Golden Age" or the "Harlem Renaissance" (Lewis, 1981, p. xi) also emerged. It is this spirit of always seeking to extend the intellectual and civic horizons of the Black experience that has continued to serve as the trampoline from which Black studies continues to leap to disciplinary excellence even as it rejuvenates itself. This is where the Department of African and African-American Studies at the University of Kansas (KU) has made, and continues to make, solid disciplinary contributions.

In an earlier decade, scholars from KU, among others, examined the state of Black studies and proposed areas for development in the 21st century. One of the strident calls in their publication *African Studies for the 21st Century*, edited by Gordon (2004), was for Black studies programs to seek departmental status that would provide them with a faculty core, especially at the undergraduate level, meaning their staff would be devoted to the discipline instead of representing a collection of faculty whose primary allegiance is to their non-Black-studies home departments where they are tenured and promoted, and where their salaries and merit pay increases are often determined (Gordon, 2004, pp. 83–93). As well-meaning as they might be in regard to the advancement of Black studies, that discipline would only be of secondary importance at best. It was salutary to the progress in Black studies that a good number of programs followed the advice and became departments. Of course, this shift did not occur without struggle. What would Black studies be without struggle? For a discipline forged for the most part in the crucibles of the 1960s and 1970s, the struggle continues. "A luta continua!" is the common experiential expression. In an earlier decade, I had also argued in an article, "Welfare Reform and the Black Community: Reasserting Communal Solidarity Through Moral, Economic and Residential Strategies," published in the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* (Ukpokodu, 1998, pp. 35–39) that Black businesses (including those of celebrities) should work cooperatively to build low-rent houses in Black communities that had been disproportionately and negatively affected by President Clinton's welfare reform. It is heartwarming that the vision that seemed far-fetched then is now being implemented on some fronts by wealthy African Americans.

Just before the year of COVID-19 (it seems that such events might in the future be referred to as "BC-19"—"Before COVID-19") and continuing since then, African and African-American Studies at KU had heeded the call to bridge the digital divide not only within America but between America and the Black world, especially Africa. It is terrifying that within America, Black voters who are digitally illiterate may be unable to fully participate in democracy. If the current electoral reforms and processes being carried out in some states come to fruition, digitally illiterate Black voters, minorities, and poor whites could be disenfranchised. At the international level, African and African-American Studies at KU has taken a big step in establishing an African digital humanities tenure-track faculty position to complement the existing digital humanities program. It has been said that African and African-American Studies at KU may be the first and, some say, the only department in the U.S. and in the world to have an African digital humanities program. It is our hope that if KU is the pace-setter here, other Black studies departments may soon follow without delay. The establishment of an African digital humanities program at KU is in the spirit of the founding principles of the National Council of Black Studies that implore us to retain and maintain the link that acts as the umbilical cord that tethers people of the Black Diaspora to their African genesis. It might be important to interject here that KU has an ongoing History of Black Writing Project under the directorship of Maryemma Graham, who is a distinguished African American professor of literature in the English Department. The African digital humanities program complements that initiative in reaching Africa, the African Diaspora, and the entire world.

Furthermore, an African digital humanities program helps to centralize our discipline in occurrences in the world to which Black people have made enormous contributions intellectually, politically, and economically. By its establishment, the discipline strives to play a significant and immediate role in timely participation, response, interaction, and intervention in urgent matters, some of them ontological, that define who we are and the world we live in. As some parts of the world are threatened by a new wave of militarism and rabid nationalism, the Black world must be of immediate reach to our discipline as we help to define humanism. The support we provide is both intellectual and moral. As the struggle, our struggle, the struggle of Black people continues in protests and pickets with signs and banners proclaiming, "I am a man [human being]," we are linked with our ancestral lineage that proclaimed our people's humanity in the face of daunting inhumanity over the ages and generations. This struggle is an affirmation of the humanity of all peoples of the world, a shared humanity as captivatingly articulated by Publius Terentius Afer, mainly referred to as Terence, a former Roman slave of African (Berber) descent, who had been brought to Rome by a Roman Senator, Terentius Lucanus, and later freed by him to become a famous playwright around 170 BC: “Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto” (“I am a man [human being]; nothing human is alien to me”; Terence, n.d.).

Great African American leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis had bequeathed a similar sense of humanism that defines our existence to our generation. We hear it in the cry of “Black Lives Matter” worldwide, and of “#endSARS” in Nigeria. An African digital humanities is the newest innovation that furthers our goal of retaining and transmitting that sense of the “personal immortality” and “collective immortality” (Mbiti, 1990, p. 158) of our African essence in what John S. Mbiti calls the cardinal expression of the relationship between our individual selves and our collective, communal ethos: “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1990, p. 106).

We must not underestimate the role of an African digital humanities in galvanizing people, both to share our stories, our desires, our sociopolitical successes and failures and, when necessary, to plant the seed of revolt, and to counter misinformation while providing true and correct information for everyone to see. Truth—that conformity of the intellect with reality—still exists in an age of Trumpian “alternative truths” and QAnon conspiracy theories. We must also not be limited as a Black people in gaining access to national and global jobs advertised only on digital platforms. Some unemployed Blacks do not readily know where the jobs are even at a time when it is said that there are more jobs available than there are people to take them.

An African digital humanities, linked with current and emerging social platforms, would help the Black world to participate fully in our democratic institutions and processes by speaking to and for ourselves and about ourselves and the Black world to others instead of allowing others to speak to and for us. We have a voice, and we must share it with the voiceless and teach people how to use it effectively. It would also fully equip the National Council of Black Studies, as an umbrella organization that shares opinions on intellectual and activist matters and protection of Black programs, to maintain its bold leadership. The more an African digital humanities program maintains a presence in Black units across many institutions, the more fulfillment it brings to the mission of the National Council of Black Studies. It also brings a united Black front to confront anti-Black racism that plays out in current and emerging digital platforms. It makes disciples of us all, enabling us to go to the whole world and spread the good news of Black intellection.

How do we go about establishing an African digital humanities initiative within a Black studies department? For departments (or units with affiliated African studies centers) that take part in the Federal Department of Education Title VI grant competition, it helps to include a faculty position with expertise in digital humanities on the proposal and in the grant budget. It is important to make this a tenure-track position so that when the grant ends, the institution takes over the responsibility of continuing the position’s funding. Because we are in the digital age, there would be no problem in attracting students to courses and activities related to an African digital humanities. Thus, the production of student credit hours and the money the course enrollments bring would make the program sustainable and perhaps profitable to the institution.

Black studies departments could also seek funding from corporations and foundations. There may be initial rejections, but it is good to remember that persistence pays off. No unit should be dismayed by initial failures. Keep seeking, keep knocking on doors, and keep asking. Aren’t we used to the fact that nothing comes easy for us? Where would we be as a people in the Black Diaspora if our forefathers and foremothers and our founding fathers and mothers gave up? Would we be free? Would we have been allowed to participate in the democratic process and define our being? Through existentialism, we know that freedom is not a bed of roses. A Black studies department could also request a faculty position in Black digital humanities from the institution during the regular annual budget proposal. One is not likely to get it at the first request. The key is to keep bringing the position up as a priority every year until it is funded. Collaborating with the Humanities Center of your institution and with other well-meaning departments for the position might also work. If you do get approval to open a search for a Black digital humanities faculty position, do not hesitate to join the committee, and even to serve as the search committee chair. Reach out to other Black studies departments in other institutions for advice and help as necessary.

By seeking new ways to extend the frontiers of knowledge and to continue to maintain and build upon what the founders of the discipline fought for, and in some cases, died for (as at the University of Kansas, where a student died), our generation bears witness that the sufferings and tears were not in vain. The burden we bear, and the honor we bestow on the founders and pioneers of the discipline, is to keep improving on Black studies and to firmly support each Black program in every institution in its effort to survive. In that manner, we will maintain for present and future generations the collective immortality of Black studies.

References

Gordon, J. U. (Ed). (2004). *African studies for the 21st century*. Nova Science Publishers.

Lewis, D. L. (1981). *When Harlem was in vogue.* Oxford University Press.

Mbiti, J. S. (1990). *African religions & philosophy*. Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Terrence. *Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Retrieved November 30, 2021 from https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/552720-homo-sum-humani-nihil-a-me-alienum-puto-I-am

Ukpokodu, P. (1998). Welfare reform and the Black community: Reasserting communal solidarity through moral, economic and residential strategies. In *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy, 4*, 35–39.

Striving to Sing Our Own Songs: Notes on the Left not Right in Africana Studies

by

Mark Christian, Ph.D.
Full Professor
Department of Africana Studies
City University of New York

By way of an introduction, the last year or more has witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in human insecurity across the globe. Perhaps it is the right time to put some historical context into what this means for peoples of African heritage globally—and more specifically, those located within the borders of the United States. This article will briefly consider the continued battle for Africana liberation, employing a Sankofa perspective—to go back and retrieve for present use. Moreover, there will be a critique of the so-called "Black Radical Left," as it seems that scrutiny of such scholars rarely occurs. Indeed, many appear "untouchable" in terms of criticism from within Africana studies—yet the same cannot be stated in regard to African-centered scholars who, ironically, argue for largely similar forms of Black liberation. Therefore, while taking into account the developments of the last year for this NCBS annual report, it is necessary to consider some of the various schools of thought in the discipline and the imperative to develop a cross-fertilization of ideas in Africana studies.

In the last 18 months, I have traveled back in time to the 19th and 20th centuries in regard to my research output, completing two major studies (Christian, 2021a, 2021b). It has been palpably worthwhile because one finds that there is nothing particularly original in terms of the struggle for social justice. Of course, there have been major structural changes in the U.S. with the collapse of enslavement in 1865, followed by the ephemeral Reconstruction era, then *de jure* segregation, followed largely by *de facto* segregation. Women's rights have also markedly improved since the 19th century, yet here we are, comfortably into the 2020s, in what could be deemed the "George Floyd era," wherein the need for racialized justice across the spectrum of society remains ubiquitous. The seemingly insuperable reality of racism remains an ever-present social problem. Meanwhile, Africana scholars, in all their various schools of thought, continue to tackle an array of "isms" in their varied capacities throughout higher education.

That stated, a main theme herein is to maintain the trope of Africana scholars being bold enough to "sing our own songs" that relate to the empowerment of Africana peoples in all their cultural complexities. One of the problems, which again is age-old, is the lack of respect that mainstream scholarship has for Black thought and scholarship that *empowers* the Africana experience. For instance, whenever an era emerges that proposes any degree of self-determination, the tactic of divide and conquer has raised its ugly head. That can be traced back as far as the abolitionist period, from the 1830s–1865, and up to the present. An array of schemes have been used to weaken Black solidarity, from falsification of messages between Black individuals and organizations, to paid informants; COINTELPRO under J. Edgar Hoover's notorious FBI leadership from the 1950s through the 1970s was responsible, directly and indirectly, for numerous Black activist political assassinations of either character or person (Churchill & Wall, 2002; Lane & Gregory, 2015; Pepper, 2016; Swearingen, 1995). In retrospection, these policies are as old as the Republic itself. Presently, in diluted form, divide-and-conquer maneuvers from the established order remain alive and kicking.

How, then, do we "sing our own songs" when many Africana scholars do not often read each other's work? This bold acknowledgement can be gleaned merely from the appraisal of books by many of the leading Black scholars. Rarely does one encounter in a bibliography an array of references that cover diverse Black perspectives. Indeed, there is little excuse for such sloppy scholarship because whenever the call for papers is announced by the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), it openly requests panels and presentations from across the range of Africana scholarship: African-centered to postcolonial, Africana womanism to Black feminism/s, Afrocentric cultural nationalism to Black "radical" social democratic perspectives, and queer theory to the study of marginalized gender communities, to name a few. While it is far-ranging and visionary of the NCBS to at least open its theoretical door to all schools of thought, in reality, there is not that much cross-fertilization taking place among varied Black scholars. Indeed, as an example, if one reads the interpretation of Frantz Fanon by some of the elite literary scholars, one would think he was anything but a political theorist and psychoanalyst of the colonizer and the colonized. I am not being facetious. The manipulation of his works alone is tantamount to fraudulent misinterpretation. Indeed, the late and venerated Marxist scholar Cedric Robinson (1993) published an article aptly titled "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon" and therein voices a critique of a group of postcolonial literary scholars who have immodestly arrogated only what is useful to them of Fanon, while diminishing his political, psychoanalysis, and anticolonial theory. As Robinson states:

> Fanon's erasure in this deliberately exclusive academic terrain was inadvertently and succinctly conceded by Gates [Henry Louis Gates Jr.] in an essay entitled "Critical Fanonism": "The course we've been plotting leads us, then, to what is, in part, Spivak's critique of Parry's critique of Jan Mohamed's critique of Bhabha's critique of Said's critique of colonial discourse." Though I am certain, there is much to challenge in Fanon's work, it is an ungracious conceit to employ him as merely a background device. (p. 79)

Robinson offers a glimpse into the widespread misinterpretations of Fanon, but that does not mean he too is free from criticism. No scholar is, but what tends to occur is that some schools of thought loosely connected to Africana studies simply remain within their boundaries, so to speak. They refuse to acknowledge alternative studies external to their points of view. Moreover, there is little to no accountability *within* such elitist scholarship. For example, can one ordinarily find any critical responses to the so-called "Black radical scholars'" output? They too tend to remain within a closed group, attend "love-fest" conferences, and backslap each other for their scholarly output. On this point, a prominent scholar once stated to me that "if one wanted to study from the leftist perspective, she would go to UMass; if one wanted to study Afrocentricity, she would go to Temple; and if one wanted to read queer studies, she would go to

Northwestern." This assessment seems rather closed-off and narrow. Certainly, scholars are not merely produced in universities. Moreover, there are scholars who have endeavored to remain independent of thought, and unconfined intellectually, yet follow the scholarly path of Black liberation wherever it may lead. For example, having never studied at Temple does not, or should not, deter a neophyte scholar from studying Afrocentric thought and knowledge elsewhere. After all, what are books for, and what about the millions of organic grassroots scholars outside of academia? Nor should a scholar be deterred from studying a leftist perspective outside of UMass—certainly, it could be contended that a most hypocritical place to read a leftist position would be within an elite university setting. As for queer studies, this topic appears to be both omnipresent and the latest academic fad across higher education.

What is rather incongruous about the Black "radical" scholars lies in their offering a theoretical critique of capitalism while scrambling to get situated at the best universities free enterprise offers. From a grassroots viewpoint, this is the height of pretense, as these same "radical" scholars who critique, say, Afrocentric scholars for their supposed inability to deal with the "here and now of class and poverty" offer little more than lyrical prose and staid notions of pseudo-intersectionality. Or to use a Marxist phrase, tongue-in-cheek, "all that's solid melts into air" (Marx & Engels, 1848/2021, p. 12). Crucially, the critique of capitalism from those who evidently benefit from its essence is rather unsavory and ungracious.

To give two examples of these seemingly "untouchable" Black radical scholars who openly represent the left and feminist/queer studies: Robin D. G. Kelley and Angela Y. Davis, the latter being a famous icon from the 1970s, when "Free Angela Davis" was ubiquitous around the world, a precursor to the George Floyd protests of 2020. There is no doubt in my mind that to critique these two scholars is heresy to some, and one may encounter being "canceled" by the Black "radicals" who proliferate at the best universities and have access to many mainstream academic and leftist publishers. Yet it is not in the interest of Black empowerment to have this kind of implicit dogma go unchecked—there needs to be room for critique beyond in-house, rather than avoidance through the fear of censorship.

To consider Kelley, he wrote in 2000 the foreword to *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition,* a very insightful analysis of Marxism in relation to Black activism first published in 1983 by Cedric Robinson. Something was inadvertently exposed by Kelley when, after lauding how the book "changed his life," he wrote:

> Just a few months into graduate school, I was toying with the idea of writing a dissertation on the South African Left. The inspiration was hardly academic; I was more interested in becoming a full-time Communist than a full-time scholar. I could not have cared less about historiography or the current academic debates about social movements. I wanted to know how to build a left-wing movement among people of color so that we could get on with the ultimate task of making revolution. (p. xi)

Now, without being too skeptical 20-plus years on, one can assume that Kelley chose being a full-time scholar and that he gave up the illusion of a communist revolution. Instead, he chose to remain in the cozy confines of elite academia, no doubt reaching the most optimum salary scale, in line with an array of higher education comforts that only the capitalist system can offer—and in turn, being as far removed from the average working-class American as possible in such exclusive universities. This critique is not personal; it is merely a reality check in what the Black bourgeoisie in academia ultimately stand for: self-interest over authentic Black community empowerment. Such "radicalism" would be acceptable if indeed their prose and espousal of Black radicalism fit their actual lifestyles—but this is not the case. Clearly, Kelley has become so well-known that his star shines bright in leftist circles, and with this fame comes an uncritical approach to his work by those who read it from a leftist point of view. Indeed, it is important for the next generation of NCBS scholars to be aware of "appearance and reality" when it comes to comprehending who actually stands for Black radicalism and community empowerment. To be sure, in my 30 years of presence in U.S. academia, I cannot recall Kelley's attendance at an NCBS conference—maybe he was busy building a left-wing movement.

On the book *Black Marxism,* as stated earlier, it represents a very useful insight into the relationship of so-called Black radicals and Marxism. The problem again, in terms of "singing our own songs," is in the coupling of "Black" with "Marxism," as it diminishes the agency from Blackness and gives it over to Marxism. There have been many brilliant Black scholars who have bought into the theories of Karl Marx. I was actually taught by Marxists in Liverpool, England during my undergraduate studies. Viscerally, Marxism never held sway with me. Moreover, the fact that the Marxist scholars who peddled "false consciousness of the masses," "alienation," and "ruling class ideology" lived in the best parts of Liverpool, ate at the best restaurants, and listened to Beethoven and Mozart seemed inconsistent. All this while patronizing Black community activists with notions of why Black poverty and racialized discrimination existed in the city. This kind of bourgeois rabble-rousing made it profoundly evident that there was immense insincerity at play.

Black people the world over need to rethink any uncritical relationship with Karl Marx's theories and that of his buddy Frederick Engels—the guy who oddly bankrolled Marx from the profits he made from owning a cotton textile factory in 19th-century Manchester, England. One should ask: Where did the cotton come from, and who produced it? Answer: African American enslaved labor. Yes, we really do need to "sing our own songs" and leave Marx and Engels alone—they were ultimately not for African liberation. Moreover, having read the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) numerous times, it is clear from that text that Marx and Engels were not interested in the contemporary freedom of enslaved African Americans laboring for capitalism on plantations across the South. There have been those leftist writers who have airbrushed this out of any Marxist analysis, just as they have overlooked the profound institutionalized racism that emanated from white unions that viewed Black people and Black labor as a threat to white working-class livelihoods. Some social theorists may dismiss the fact that Marx was at heart a racist, but it is not wise for Africana studies scholars to overlook such a revelation (see Weyl, 1979).

On Angela Davis, who has made her name in communist Black "radical" circles for decades, while also proposing an end to the prison industrial complex (Davis, 2003), and leading the feminist and queer theorists in their pursuit of equal status in an unequal society, some of her work is clearly important. Yet when her speaking fee is between thirty thousand and fifty thousand dollars, it smacks of a lucrative line of capitalist employment as a now-Emeritus scholar. Before the reader points the finger, it is not the concern of mine whether a scholar earns a dollar or one million dollars for a speaking engagement. However, what should be acknowledged is what scholars stand for and what they *do* for the empowerment of people of color communities suffering from dire social inequality. In this sense, often Black "radical" scholars' theory does not meet with praxis; nor does it seem to be evidently empowering grassroots communities from their bourgeois positions in the higher education system.

Also, there appears to be an implicit assault on Black male heterosexuals when one either listens to or reads the works of Davis. For example, in a critical edition of Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, Davis's introduction is revealing. Slanted toward contemporary gender issues, she implicitly downplays Douglass's historical role in the empowerment of women that was clearly evident throughout his career as a prominent abolitionist. In hindsight, Davis now views Douglass' narrative as a "masculinist notion of freedom," which is incredulous given that Frederick Douglass was a man writing *his* life experiences in the hell of enslavement. Certainly, there are better figures to choose to consider in contemporary notions of feminism rather than maligning a man who fought for women's rights openly, honestly, and often when it was not desirable to do so from 1848 up to the very last day of his life in 1895. Yet Davis (2010) writes:

> As I revisit the lectures that accompany this current edition of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative,* I am surprised by how much I did not know at the beginning of an era that witnessed the rise of Black Studies and Women's/Feminist Studies. . . . I welcomed the opportunity to teach courses in the tradition forged by Kant, Hegel, and Marx. Such courses would allow me to put to good use my training as a student of Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Adorno. But I was also deeply interested in the emergence of Black Studies. (pp. 28–29)

From the perspective of Africana/Black studies, there is much to critique in regard to Davis's intellectual foundation. First, her grounding in German philosophy, and specifically that of Hegel and Marx, then Marcuse and Adorno (the latter two being key members of the Frankfurt School) is disappointing when juxtaposed by the trope "to sing our own songs" in comprehending Black experiences. Is it also curious, at the very least, that all the intellectually problematic white males Davis lauds get a pass on masculinity, but dear old Frederick Douglass is put on the chopping block for a feminist critique? Indeed, the flippant criticism of Davis appears rather mean-spirited after reading a compilation of some of his key pronouncements on women's rights, *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights* (Foner, 1992). Moreover, Davis would have benefitted from a later expression put forward by her sister in feminism/lesbian theory, Audre Lorde (1984), who stated in a brief chapter in her celebrated book *Sister Outsider,* "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (pp. 110–113). In this regard, it is important to cite Douglass himself, who contended rightly, "No man, however eloquent, can speak for woman as woman can for herself" (cited in Foner, 1992, p. v). Nevertheless, Douglass still stood shoulder to shoulder with women in their struggle for women's rights. He did this against the backdrop of the continued enslavement of his people—his main life's work was its abolition.

To conclude, what is rather unusual in comprehending various Black "radical" and feminist perspectives lies in their implicit adulation of white social theorists such as Hegel and Marx, who never worked with or for their contemporaries, Frederick Douglass and others, in the abolitionist movement. Or Marcuse and Adorno, who never thought to cite a contemporary Black female or male scholar, whether it be Cooper, Du Bois, or Woodson from the early 20th century, or later Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s—a profoundly *radical* philosopher for social change who was often erroneously accused of being a communist and ultimately paid the price for speaking his truth to power. Crucially, it is imperative that Africana scholars endeavor to "sing their own songs"—to find ways to deal with the continued voter suppression, police brutality, academic policing of Africana perspectives in the publishing world, and the various divide-and-conquer strategies employed to stifle Black thought and practice. There is also the reality of those who collaborate with the established order—the insidious informants who gain from nullifying authentic Africana scholars while posing as such. It is therefore apt to close with a citation from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he contended:

> If we want to turn Africa into a new Europe, and America into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us.
>
> But if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries. (1963, p. 315)

Or, to put it another way, Fanon suggests we "sing our own songs" and create ways beyond the confines of those espoused by old white men who most often disrespected the very essence of Africana being. Just as there are Africana textbooks for future generations (Alkalimat, 2021; Christian, 2021a; Karenga, 2010; McDougal, 2014; Norment, 2007; Stewart & Anderson, 2015), Africana scholars must continue to be bold and produce new ways of *thinking* through the myriad social problems, free from the influence of hackneyed Eurocentric theories that ultimately fail to empower and liberate our minds. Lastly, there are signs of hope in the younger generation of Africana scholars—if they do not yield to divide-and-conquer manipulation. Africana scholarship exemplified by the NCBS axiom "academic excellence and social responsibility" is demonstrated in Curry (2017). Indeed, his philosophical defense of Black manhood—and in turn, womanhood—would surely make Frederick Douglass proud, bringing the past to the present. Crucially, we are very familiar with the word "misogynist" in academia, but incongruously not well acquainted with the word "misandrist"—let balance reign in the George Floyd era.

References

Alkalimat, A. (2021). *The history of Black studies.* Pluto Press.

Christian, M. (2021a). *The 20th century Civil Rights Movement: An Africana studies perspective.* Kendall Hunt.

Christian, M. (2021b). *Booker T. Washington: A life in American history.* ABC-CLIO.

Churchill, W., & Wall, J. V. (2002). *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's secret wars against dissent in the United States* (2nd ed.). South End Press.

Curry, T. J. (2017). *The man-not: Race, class, genre, and the dilemmas of Black manhood.* Temple University Press.

Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.

Davis, A. Y. (2010). Introduction. In F. Douglass, *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave, written by himself* (pp. 21–40). City Lights Books.Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.

Douglass, F. (2010). *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave, written by himself.* City Lights Books. (Original work published 1845)

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). Grove Press.

Foner, P. S. (1992). (Ed.). *Frederick Douglass on women's rights.* Da Capo Press.

Karenga, M. (2010). *Introduction to Black studies* (4th ed.). University of Sankore Press.

Kelley, R. D. G. (2000). Foreword. In C. J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition* (pp. xi–xxvi). University of North Carolina.

Lane, M., & Gregory, D. (2015). *Murder in Memphis: The FBI and the assassination of Martin Luther King.* The Lane Group.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches.* Crossing Press.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2021). *The Communist Manifesto.* International Publishers. (Original work published 1848)

McDougal, S., III. (2014). *Research methods in Africana studies.* Peter Lang.

Norment, N., Jr. (Ed.). (2007). *The African American studies reader* (2nd ed). Carolina Academic Press.

Pepper, W. F. (2016). *The plot to kill King: The truth behind the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Skyhorse Publishing.

Robinson, C. J. (1993). The appropriation of Frantz Fanon. *Race and Class, 35*(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/030639689303500108

Stewart, J., & Anderson, T. (2015). *Introduction to African American studies: Transdisciplinary approaches and implications.* Black Classic Press.

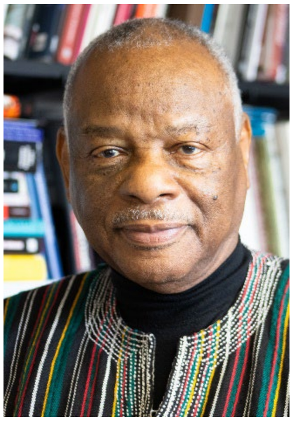
Swearingen, M. W. (1995). *FBI secrets: An agent's expose.* South End Press.

Weyl, N. (1979). *Karl Marx: Racist.* Arlington House.

The State of the Discipline: A Selective and Personal Appraisal

by

Molefi Kete Asante, Ph.D.
Full Professor and Chair
Department of Africology
Temple University



Nathan Hare, the eminent founder of the first serious Black studies program at San Francisco State University, warned in 1975 that we were allowing the discipline to slip from our grip. Hare understood that no discipline, no matter the strength of conviction shown by its votarists, can be sustained if it allows others to define it, describe its purpose, establish its limits, or create its warrants. A few months ago, I was invited to speak about Afrocentricity and African development by the Russian Academy of Sciences and their African Studies program. What was clear to me, especially as an Africologist—one who truly believes that we have a discipline and not merely an aggregation of courses about African people—was the intense interest of the Russians in understanding the foundation of our research and teaching in Africology.

Hare's caution has become my caution in the sense that I am curious about what people, other than Africologists, see in what we do. I met people with whom I am maintaining a current dialogue, such as Nadya Kholkhokova, who has written a book on Afrocentricity, and Dmitri Bondarenko, who studies African urban communities in North America. Kholkhokova and Bondarenko, among other Russians, are monitoring as best they can through the Internet the work that we are doing in Africology. They know the debates that we have had about the nature of our struggle to hold our place in the vocabulary of theory.

We have not been laggards in any regard when it comes to the production of scholarship in books and articles. Yet to truly establish a discipline, there must be a cadre of individuals who are willing to take the methodological and conceptual leads to do research, using the tools that have been given by our scholars to bring into existence new knowledge. I can at least speak of the frontiers we are pushing at Temple University in Afrofuturism and comparative African cultural studies as well as in Kemetic examinations of values. If we do not do this—that is, take the lead—we are likely to repeat the old worn ideas that have been circulating in the "traditional" disciplines for a hundred years.

How can we be interdisciplinary when the "traditional" disciplines are based on the hierarchical race paradigm? Of course, we have many interests: music, social institutions, languages, politics, ethics, and so forth, but we must see that any tradition that views Africans as inferior cannot be integrated into by a robust intellectual discipline such as Africology. We embody a critique of hierarchy and patriarchy because those ideas betrayed the original liberal arts that came out of African culture. Our discipline must be different because it is grounded in Afrocentric theory without a search for vulgar careerism that is rewarded by the controllers of Eurocentric or Arabo-centric ideologies.

The search for unity in the discourse surrounding our origin as a discipline was greatly advanced in the 1980s during the same time when we were trying to distinguish what we did from Marxist sociology. Sometimes the Marxist sociologists won the battle of determining the nature of the field at certain universities, and at other institutions, the struggle was won by those who held the view that our perspective on data had to be examined from our own historical and cultural experiences. This problem was raised in the l980s, when Winston Van Horne suggested that my term "Afrology," which appeared in the book *Afrocentricity,* should be "Africology" and held a series of conferences at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee where Maulana Karenga, Asa Hilliard, and myself were major contributors, in order to create the discipline. He gave us the term and then implemented this decision by changing the name of the department at Wisconsin. Eastern Michigan University, under the leadership of Victor Okafor, also changed the name of that department. Unfortunately, Milwaukee regressed in the past few years, threw out the history of advancement under Winston Van Horne, and went back to a less definitive name for its department. On the other hand, Temple, which had regretted the fact that we did not implement the name earlier, was able to move to Africology. While naming is important, a discipline also needs ideas, concepts, strategies, journals, intellectual debate, seminars, and symposia. I think that origin and concepts are central problems in our conversation. One can say that W.E.B. Du Bois is the founder of urban sociology with a statistical base; one can say sociology was invented at least twice—once in the middle of the 19th century by Auguste Comte, who gave the discipline its name by combining the Latin term *societas* with the Greek *logos*, and once, half a century later, by Emile Durkheim. The reason sociologists claim Durkheim is because in 1893, the Parisian was the first to produce a major sociological work employing a rigorously scientific methodology. People who tried to do that afterward were called sociologists. Political science claims to have its origins in Greece with Plato, or in the 15th century with Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (*Il Principe*). The ancient Africans recognized the oldest of disciplines, such as geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, agriculture, rhetoric, law, physics, physiology, and chemistry. The debasement of the African originals of these disciplines led Europe to alchemy, wherein they sought to achieve transmutation of base metals into gold or discover the elixir for eternal life. Technically, the alchemists wanted three things: to discover the source of eternal health and life, to find the stone of knowledge, and to discover the means of enacting transmutation of metals. They conducted their search through magic, the occult, and other forms of taking the ordinary and turning it into something extraordinary.

At this moment, I believe that Africology, the Afrocentric study of African phenomena transgenerationally and transcontinentally, is at the stage of breaking the lock on our field that has been held by several degrees of alchemy. What do I mean by this type of talk? Our discipline is characterized by how we study and teach African phenomena. I use the word *Afrocentricity.* This is not a narrow term; it is an orientation to data, and since the data we examine are about people of African descent, we must place African people at the core of our study. We are not looking at Africans as objects of European history, sociology, or literary criticism; we are thrusting Africa forth in its own right and with its own integrity. To be Afrocentric is to see the

African origin of *Homo sapiens* and the African origin of civilization as basic starting points of our discourses. Without embracing that reality, what are we talking about? To be transgenerational is to cross all generations and to look at BCE and CE; to be transcontinental is to study Africans in South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, and North America.

I suggest that having a discipline is impossible without certain clear characteristics founded on rational principles. It cannot be founded in the mere modification of the old, nor in the extension of imitation with new names of that which has gone before. To say that we are now at the point of speaking of the state of our discipline means that we have gone through the elements of cultivating a field of study.

What is the difference between a field of study and a discipline of study? I have always believed that a field of study was a broader category than a discipline. For example, *humanities* is a field, but *history* is a discipline. One could also speak of *natural sciences* as a field and *physics* or *biology* as disciplines.

Our problem is not one of simple nomenclature. We could call our area of study Africology, Africana studies, African American studies, Pan African studies or Black studies. That does not trouble me as much as the *practice* of doing the study bothers me. What does *doing* Black studies look like? What does *doing* Africana studies look like?

Answering these questions has long plagued Africology. I was one of the students who helped to bring this area of study into existence at UCLA between 1966 and 1968. To answer the question of the state of Black studies, one must ask, what were we fighting for in the l960s? Once we know what we were fighting for at the origin, we can see where we are now and what adjustments we ought to make. I am afraid that we have not lived up to our expectations, nor to the speculative wishes of our creators who wanted to see a distinct, assertive discipline utilizing the tools based on African knowledge, customs, traditions, and information.

I wrote a paper in the early l970s about analysis from a Black perspective, which was a cultural rather than a racial examination of knowledge. Racial analysis of African people had been the purview of some white scientists and scholars, looking at African brains and sexual organs, teeth and feet, to make conclusions about African people. Our idea was that by virtue of our cultural experiences, living together and understanding reality in a particular way, our responses would be different from those of white people's culture; therefore, we needed to see from a different perspective. It is out of this knowledge and desire that we eventually organized the warrants for a discipline.

To create the first doctoral program in 1988, I had to reflect on these issues in unprecedented ways. I sought to develop a Ph.D. program, not simply an aggregation of courses taught by Black people or liberal whites, and not an undergraduate program, and that meant Africology could not be history-light, or sociology-light, or Eurocentric literary theory in blackface. I had to spend time thinking about what it meant to study something from "a Black perspective." I had to support the uniqueness of our perspective, wherein we were subjects of our narratives and discourses, and not imitations of Eurocentric assumptions; in fact, Africology had to be a critique on Eurocentric understandings of society, humanity, economics, and spirituality. Our discipline is not an attachment to anthropology, history, English, or political science. If we do not continue to construct our discipline along an Afrocentric path, we might soon discover that some universities might, because of misinformation, assume that sociology might take over departments that are simply Marxist studies of African communities, or history departments might try to herd African American history courses taught by Africologists into history departments by arguing that it is the same practice. Of course, it is not, because in an Africology department, our interest in historical issues places African people, events, and culture at the core of our analysis.

From what I can see at this moment through curricular evaluations, which entails reading the catalogs and bulletins of programs online, is that we still have faculty members who teach about African people from the same disciplinary base as their highest degrees. What I see is that those with degrees in political science, psychology, sociology, communication, or history often revert to their "traditional" training. It is difficult to commit discipline suicide from those old traditions, because then you would really have to think about how you should approach various interests.

A discipline will attract in due course a certain number of concepts and ideas, such as Nah Dove's *maaticity,* Jabali Ade's *eurobliviousness,* Tillotson's *agency reduction formation*, Mazama's *cognitive hiatus*, Asante's *location theory*, Maulana Karenga's *Kawaida,* and Christel Temple's *Black cultural mythology*. What these Africologists have done is to add to the literature of the discipline by giving us definitive concepts that we can use to do further research. Without conceptual tools, any discipline will die. The students and scholars will not have a branch on the tree of knowledge on which to hang their own thoughts.

Departments are not disciplines; however, most departments are organized around single disciplines. Faculty in departments have similar perspectives, methods of inquiry, and assumptions about data, and they follow the same procedures for peer review. After nearly 60 years, we know the advantages of departments over interdisciplinary programs. Departments can hire faculty in the discipline. Most doctoral programs are organized by departments in our discipline. Once a person gains a doctorate in Africology, she should know how to assess work in the discipline. For us to be a strong discipline, we will need to work in unison on defining the nature of what we do. I have met doctoral students who have not been introduced to the origin of the field but are quite knowledgeable in the origins of political science, literary criticism, and sociology. I think there is a place for that, but it cannot be at the center of our discipline.

Let me speak to the status of the doctoral programs in our discipline as observed through self-reported data and secondary sources. There remain 17 declared doctoral degrees in Black studies, at the following institutions:

1. Temple University (10 full-time faculty)
2. University of Massachusetts at Amherst (10 full-time faculty)
3. University of California at Berkeley (13 full-time faculty)
4. Indiana University (16 full-time faculty)
5. Harvard University (6 full-time faculty)
6. Yale University (2 full-time faculty)
7. Cornell University (12 full-time faculty)
8. Brown University (11 full-time faculty)
9. Northwestern University (12 full-time faculty)
10. University of Louisville (10 full-time faculty)
11. University of Texas (20 full-time faculty)
12. Ohio State University (10 full-time faculty)
13. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (8 full-time faculty)

14. Michigan State University (5 faculty; not accepting students)

15. Clark-Atlanta University (7 full-time faculty)

The figure for each doctoral department is taken from its website. By counting the faculty who are attached one hundred percent to Africana studies, I was able to cut through some of the exaggeration that occurs when programs attach affiliated or associated professors to their departmental numbers. In some cases, nearly every faculty member was attached to some other department, as found at Harvard, Yale, and Texas. It is my opinion that the designers of these programs felt that a doctoral student should not receive a Ph.D. without being assigned to a "traditional" department as an assurance that the student would be properly guided. This is unfortunate, as it undermines the purpose for which Black studies was created by the courageous geniuses of the Sixties.

In some ways, only Indiana University, University of Louisville, and Temple University seem to express, in their publications and creative productions, Pan African discourses, confrontation with minimalization of Blackness, Afrocentric perspectives on data and historical narratives, African cultural mythology, and development of discipline-specific concepts and models. These sentiments are derived from reading the research publications and curricular documents of members of various departments.

Only three departments (Temple, Louisville, Clark Atlanta) had two or more professors with degrees in Africology. Although at least 16 departments offer the doctoral degree, only three of them have shown a commitment to hiring our doctoral students. I see in this unfortunate fact a great danger for a discipline that was born with the idea of challenging the "establishment" to provide a Pan African, Afrocentric foundation for exploring all phenomena related to African people. Each of these departments has its uniqueness; however, it is essential that we lean toward each other in championing the fundamental core principles of our discipline. This will allow us to hire Ph.D.s who have been trained in our discipline. Otherwise, we will only have a collection of professors teaching their own "traditional" disciplines and applying those tenets to African ideas, people, and events. With will, we can do this; I am prepared to say that we should be the last generation of scholars in this discipline without a Ph.D. in the field. Let us strive to hire people with doctorates from the universities offering the degree. Our Ph.D. programs must lead the discipline, not duplicate the models of Eurocentric studies. Unfortunately, in many cases, it is our undergraduate and master's programs such as the California State Universities at Long Beach, San Diego, and Northridge, as well as Stockton State in New Jersey, Georgia State, and SUNY- Albany, that have created the majors that have gone on to become specialists in our discipline.

Before I conclude, I would like to make one additional point with reference to a concern first expressed by Cecil Brown, who taught at Berkeley, in his book, *Dude, Where's My Black Studies Department? The Disappearance of Black Americans from our Universities*. While I do not agree with all of Brown's conclusions, I can agree that his observations deserve some attention. Black studies was created by African American students who opened the university up to all African knowledge from ancient Kemet to contemporary politics. I think that we must insist in our programs that students, and faculty, be introduced to the origins of Black studies, the warrants for the Afrocentric study of phenomena, and even the ideas of the Black speculative future, as in the work of Reynaldo Anderson.

Accept this selective appraisal as one person's account of what he sees as conceptual, structural, and creative problems in our beloved discipline. There is nothing sacred about what I have written; it is a simple contribution to a very paradoxical, contradictory journey on the road to an African cultural understanding of humanity.

Sankofa Black Studies: Rethinking Origins for the Future

by

Abdul Alkalimat, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Department of African American Studies and
School of Information Sciences
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

Black studies, in all its organizational forms and names, has a history that reaches back for over a century. It is therefore appropriate to use the Sankofa principal of looking back in history to learn what is useful to guide us into the future. Times have changed, but our challenge remains learning lessons from the past that we can use today. This short essay is based on my recent book, *The History of Black Studies* (2021).

At its origin, Black studies combines three dialectics:

1) The campus and the community
2) Theory and practical experience
3) Academic excellence and social responsibility

Our critical imperative is to understand how these contradictions worked to advance the freedom struggle over the last 50 years and how we can look forward to the next 50 years of social progress toward freedom.

Black studies originated from the agency of Black liberation based on the community, both directly and indirectly, through the efforts of students coming to campus with the self-determination politics of the community. The practical experience of confronting institutional racism stimulated students and faculty in Black studies to investigate Black intellectual history and embrace the theories and methods found there—as summed up in the slogan I created for NCBS, "academic excellence and social responsibility."

In summation, the creation of Black studies in the academic mainstream was a project of the Black Power Movement. The movement fought on many battlefronts, including electoral politics, job advancement, business development, and integration into sectors of society that had been segregated by law and then by practice. These experiences, and their historical development, became foundational elements for courses in the curricula of Black studies programs.

Over the course of 50 years, Black studies has been increasingly shaped by the institutional norms of higher education. Faculty careers are guided mainly by decisions of faculty and administrators, not forces in the community. The relative privilege of academic freedom has facilitated personal choices delinked from accountability to the needs of the community, both in terms of research and curriculum development. The goal of Black liberation is no longer the dominant tendency in Black studies, but it is not entirely gone. The challenge is to bring it back as the guiding principle it once was.

There has been abundant research on aspects of the Black liberation movement. This is important documentation that anchors our history in the memory of library collections. What is needed now is for Black studies scholars to link their work with the veterans of the movement, and with the current activists. This is the link between academic excellence and social responsibility, top scholarship and the rebirth of the movement, that we need to advance our people's struggle toward liberation.

In the 1960s, the Black liberation movement was a dominant force, creating the basis for social progress, including Black studies. Today, the dominant force is a rising fascist tide that has reached from the rural districts of every state all the way into both houses of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the White House. The police killings, the court decisions, and the anti-science disinformation campaign in the media is set on reversing all forms of social progress. This forms the social environment for the current attack on critical race theory. The full meaning of this is that actually, Black studies are under attack.

What can we learn from history? The slogan Black Power was attacked, and we countered with a forceful embrace of that concept. We made it acceptable first and foremost among Black people, and then we proceeded to turn it into public policy with the Black caucus organizational form as a self-determination initiative. Today, our challenge is to embrace the concept of critical race theory as a central tenet of Black studies. The battle is on, and we must close ranks and beat back the attack.

Of course, the attack is first being made in the community, with the target placed on local school boards. The challenge is for the Black studies programs in each state to respond, to rally support by holding Zoom sessions or even personal appearances by scholars at local meetings in the community. This is not a side issue, but a direct attack on Black studies.

Another lesson from history is the value of Black studies professional organizations entering into discussion with Black liberation organizations. Two such examples include a 1974 forum jointly sponsored by the African Liberation Support Committee and the African Heritage Studies Association, and the 1982 sixth annual national convention of NCBS. The challenge is to motivate scholars to get more active in the Black liberation struggle, and to prompt movement activists to study and raise their level of theoretical understanding.

To follow through on this initiative, we need an action plan for Black studies. The many hours of student research can be directed to an action program based on our great mission: academic excellence and social responsibility. Rebuilding our role as intellectual workers in defense of the Black community must be done in the coming struggles against the growing tide of fascism and white supremacy. These proposals can be worked into the curriculum in Black studies, and in that way can bring about a renaissance of student relevance.

1) **We need a history of Black studies on every campus**: This will document the importance of the Black Power Movement as the origin of Black studies. The ancestors must be remembered.
2) **We need a history of all local Black communities**: Every community has survived based on mass struggles against all forms of racist exploitation and oppression. The ancestors must be remembered.
3) **We need to document Black community institutions**: Every institution represents resources that can be activated in the struggle for social justice. The ancestors must be remembered.
4) **We need to document the Black liberation movement**: Black studies can play an archival function for movement campaigns, assisting activists in understanding their practice. The ancestors must be remembered.
5) **We need to document Black organizations**: The details of organizational life are the life blood of our resistance. We need to replicate the skills necessary for organizational sustainability. The ancestors must be remembered.
6) **We need to compile comprehensive bibliographies**: We secure memory with a record of what has been done. This documents the contribution of every generation. The ancestors must be remembered.
7) **We need to document curricula in Black studies**: After 50 years, we have developed courses that map a multitude of intellectual concerns. There is no need to keep reinventing the wheel from scratch. The ancestors must be remembered.
8) **We need to document our conferences**: Each time we gather for discussion and debate, we create a treasure trove of intellectual content. The tools for digital documentation are at our command. This is work that must be done. The ancestors must be remembered.
9) **We need to compile comprehensive webliographies**: The content we create in cyberspace can be shared to build a common body of knowledge for activists and scholars alike. The ancestors must be remembered.
10) **We need to find new ways to publish**: If we can say it, we can put it into print. This applies to every presentation, conference panel, or even class lectures. In fact, we need to dig out the tapes of the past and get them transcribed. The ancestors must be remembered.

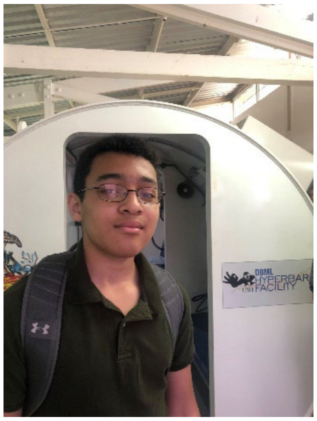
Of course, this action plan is but the start of what needs to be done. The main lesson is that Black studies was a creation of the Black Power Movement. We need to reconnect and rebuild. The biggest battles against the fascist white supremacy movement are yet to come. More will likely be killed, and more injustice will prevail. We must reorganize Black studies and get prepared.

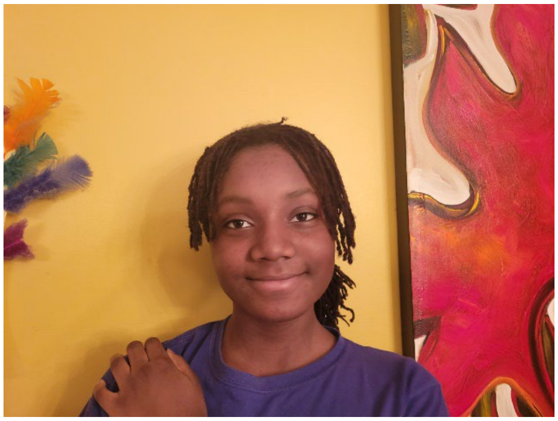
We must pay attention to this comment in George Orwell's novel *1984*: "Who controls the past, controls the future: Who controls the present, controls the past."

THE VOICES OF BLACK YOUTH

Physics and Community Engagement: Promoting Social Justice with Science

by
Bryce Davis Bohon
Trinity Munson





with
Dr. Dannielle Joy Davis
Deborah Bush-Munson
Evelyn Washington

With financial support from a Saint Louis University 1818 Community Engagement Grant, the Circle of Excellence Network Science Team of Missouri and physics teacher Mrs. Evelyn Washington of Tanzania partnered to create a culturally relevant science opportunity for middle-school St. Louis youth. The Science Team, founded by Bryce Davis Bohon, was able to delve into various applications of physics through participation in Washington's "Physics of the Pharaohs" course. The underrepresented young team was encouraged to consider future STEM careers in the field and were also awarded memberships to the National Association of Black Physicists. Hence, our intended goal of offering culturally relevant science education was met.

Impact Summary

Total Number of People Impacted: 7 students
Population: African American and multiracial
Age Range: 11–13 years
Grade Levels: 6th–8th
Gender: 3 girls and 4 boys

Personal Growth and Development

As a leader of the program, Dr. Davis's connections with participants and their families strengthened. The grant allowed her to pursue and expand her work despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In past work, Davis has observed the importance of minority representation and intersectionality within curriculum and while learning STEM subjects (Davis et al., 2015), which is a missing component in most public and private schools that underrepresented children attend (Le & Matias, 2019; Page et al., 2018; Parsons et al., 2008; Wright et al., 2016).

The most challenging aspect of the collaboration involved encouraging students to complete the physics homework, as for many of the youth, this was an additional extracurricular course. The most rewarding aspect of this work was the joy students expressed when receiving their physics packages in the mail (which included the textbook, National Association of Black Physicists apparel, and a science workbook) and their excitement about experiments Mrs. Washington conducted with them during Zoom physics sessions.

Sustainability and Future Goals

The Science Team looks forward to continuing to use "The Star of Deep Beginnings" book by Dr. Charles Finch as a text and to meet as a team, both virtually and face to face when feasible. We continue to look for additional funding sources to sustain our work.

Zoom served as a good substitute for in-person sessions within the program this past year due to the need to socially distance during the pandemic. We hoped to continue classes with Washington this semester yet were not able to do so due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, we are excited to resume meeting both virtually and face to face to prepare for science competitions and learn from local science experts.

Testimonials

Teacher and International Collaborator

> *When students are connected to their historical role in any subject, they perform better. This course will make them better physicists. Physics is about understanding how the world works and its natural extension, engineering, is about solving problems. Our communities are overwhelmed with problems. Good physicists [or] engineers can solve them.*
>
> – Mrs. Evelyn Washington, Tanzania

Students

> *I really enjoyed learning about how ancient Egyptians had eyeglasses. As a person who wears glasses, it made it even more interesting!*
>
> – Bryce, Science Team member

> *We learned about the blind spot of the eye [and] refraction, and viewed a diagram of the eye. We [also] learned about nearsightedness and farsightedness. I liked the quizzes and taking class from Mrs. Evelyn.*
>
> – Trinity, Science Team member, speaking of physics class

Parent

> *Allowing my child to participate on the Science Team builds critical thinking [and] creativity, enhances vocabulary skills and team building skills. Exposure to science in primary and secondary educational settings prepares children for the rigor of science at postsecondary levels (Page et al., 2018). [My child] was definitely excited. Thank you for always being so kind and considerate. Thank you for the inclusion and all that you do.*
>
> – Deborah, Science Team member's mother

Conclusion

The Circle of Excellence Network Science Team engaged in exploring scientific information related to "Physics of the Pharaohs," as Ancient Egyptian pharaohs were scientists of color. According to Le and Matias (2019), pedagogical techniques utilizing inclusive language and assigning homework centering scientists of color serve as interventions that aid in narrowing the achievement gap for underrepresented students. Careers in STEM require deep critical-thinking skills. Hence, building these skills in middle-school settings is essential (Le & Matias, 2019; Page et al., 2018; Parsons et al., 2008; Wright et al., 2016). Moreover, underrepresented students need role models that validate their presence in STEM fields. This renders minority representation imperative for students studying these subjects (Le & Matias, 2019). A future generation of underrepresented doctors, dentists, engineers, and scientists is needed to prepare for our new global economy (Liou-Mark & Ghosh-Dastidar, 2018). This Science Team allows students to learn, engage, enhance imperative critical-thinking skills, and better prepare for successful STEM careers.

References

Davis, D. J., Brunn, R., & Olive, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Intersectionality in education research*. Stylus Publishing.

Le, P. T., & Matias, C. E. (2019). Towards a truer multicultural science education: How whiteness impacts science education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 14*(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-01709854-9

Liou-Mark, J., & Ghosh-Dastidar, U. (2018). The peer-led team learning leadership program for first year minority science, technology, engineering, and mathematics students. *Journal of Peer Learning, 11*(5), 65–75.

Page, R. B., Espinosa, J., Mares, C. A., Pilar, J. D., & Shelton, G. R. (2018). The curvy road to student success in underserved populations. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 47*(5), 6–7.

Parsons, E. C., Foster, S., Gomillion, C. T., & Simpson, J. S. (2008). Diversity knowledge in science teacher education—translating concept to instruction: An example specific to African Americans. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, *19*(1), 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-007-9082-3

Wright, B. L., Counsell, S. L., Goings, R. B., Freeman, H., & Peat, F. (2016). Creating access and opportunity: Preparing African-American male students for STEM trajectories preK–12. *Journal for Multicultural Education, 10*(3), 384–404. https://doi.org/10.1108/jme-01-2016-0003

“Keep on Keeping on”: Boys from the Circle of Excellence Speak on Their Educational Experiences Before and During the Pandemic

by

Bryce Davis Bohon and Jamarr Hoskins

“Justice.
It’s being fair to everyone,
Treating us the same.
It’s standing up for someone or something.
It’s fighting for the people.”
– Bryce Davis Bohon (2015)

The following features the experiences of two middle-school Black males on their participation in the Circle of Excellence, a community program in St. Louis, Missouri promoting STEM education. The first student attended public school and began homeschooling before the pandemic, while the second has attended public and private schools. As they share their experiences in the program, they reflect upon challenges and highlights of their educational journeys.

My Circle of Excellence Experience

by Bryce Davis Bohon

In the Circle of Excellence, we learned how to play a math game called Equations. We also participated in the FIRST LEGO League, won its Robotics Best Project Award, and took coding classes. In the Circle of Excellence, I have done many awesome things like presenting at a conference in Hawaii. I also made new friends and learned a ton of new things. Because there is no other group like it, I think creating more places like the Circle of Excellence would benefit Black boys.

Why? When I went to public school, I was the best reader in my class. But I noticed that all the other Black boys were in lower-level reading groups. Also, at my old school, there was a program called LEAP for talented and gifted students. There were no Black boys or girls in the program. I think this is unfair, because the smartest kids I know are Black, and I think the school did not respect or care about that.

I think the Circle of Excellence helps Black boys feel more comfortable learning new things and at the same time makes it fun. Sometimes Black boys do not have Black mentors. With the Circle of Excellence, we have Black mentors to help with math, science, and just about anything.

When I went to public school, we had after-school activities like the Board Games Club. I prefer the Circle of Excellence over things like that, because in public school, they honestly don't care what your future career is going to be. With the Circle of Excellence, they actually care about your future. They want you to succeed.

Currently in the Circle of Excellence, we are working on an award-winning science fair project to filter dirty water. The Circle of Excellence is truly the most amazing group I have ever taken part in. I hope that everyone can have the same experience with the Circle of Excellence that I have had.

My Experience with the Circle of Excellence

Jamarr Hoskins

As a Black boy, I attended and still attend a predominately white school. A long time ago, I was in an advanced math group. I liked it there. It was a place where I could do challenging math while having a good time. I found out over my winter break that some people wouldn't be able to participate anymore. I am a strong math student, so I thought my spot was solidified. My mom was told the scoring had changed, so I was no longer eligible for math enrichment. In response, my parents enrolled me in the Circle of Excellence, a STEM team for Black boys that met at an African American bookstore called Eye See Me. I really didn't want to go at first, but I am glad I did. While on this team, I learned so much and got involved in so many things. Because of my involvement in the Circle of Excellence, I participated in the Noetic Math contest, where I was one of the highest scorers out of over 7,000 students in my grade. I also participated in various competitions, from robotics to math. On more than one occasion, my school team competed against the Circle of Excellence. During one of the robotics competitions, my school and the Circle of Excellence competed against each other. The Circle of Excellence won an award and my school's team did not. My overall involvement in the Circle of Excellence program allowed me to conquer my fear of public speaking and opened me up to other experiences I probably would not have been exposed to otherwise.

I don't know if my skin color played a role in not being chosen for my school's team, but I do know the Circle of Excellence accepted me the way I am and gave me experiences my school did not. I am not angry at my school. I just see it as one door being closed, and another one opening.

References

Davis-Bohon, B. (2015). Justice: A seven-year-old St. Louisian speaks. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 39*(4), 272. https://education.wsu.edu/documents/2016/07/wjbs-winter-2015.pdf/

COMMENTARIES

Building a World Beyond Brutality

by

Attorney Benjamin L. Crump
President of the National Civil Rights
Trial Lawyers Association,
President and Founder of
Ben Crump Law

America, like so much of the world, continues to grapple with the vestiges of slavery and colonialism that are reflected in systemically racist practices in every facet of modern society. Slavery in America created wholesale devaluation of Black life in education, healthcare, employment, housing, voting rights, and the law—hence, the title of my book, *Open Season: Legalized Genocide of Colored People.* I have focused much of my career on the most visible manifestation of racism in America: police brutality or the state-sponsored extrajudicial killing of innocent Black men, Black women, and Black children without recourse.

Although this is the most obvious form of racism in America, the methodologies through which Black people are oppressed and denied their fundamental human rights are as varied as the devious minds that create them. Racism evolves through time with the advent of new technologies, new legal systems, new healthcare systems, new educational institutions. Put simply, human rights practitioners must be freedom innovators and work diligently to create new ways to outpace modern-day oppressors or “Jim Crow Jr.”

These United States of America have an established history of lethal police violence applied disproportionately against persons of African descent. In innumerable instances, local, state, and federal governments have failed to hold accountable police officers who commit human rights violations. In 2014, unarmed 18-year-old African American Michael Brown was accused of stealing from a convenience store in Ferguson, Missouri, and was shot six times while he had his hands up. No police officer was criminally charged. In 2014, police accused unarmed Eric Garner of unlawfully selling cigarettes in New York City and killed him with a chokehold. None of the officers involved were convicted of any wrongdoing. In 2020, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American woman, was shot and killed in her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky, by police officers executing a “no-knock” warrant; she was unarmed and not accused of committing any crime. No officer was charged with her death.

The extrajudicial killing of African Americans by police officers in the United States is so endemic that white Americans have been emboldened to act as vigilantes. In 2012, 17-year-old African American Trayvon Martin, who was unarmed and not committing any crime, was shot and killed by self-proclaimed "neighborhood watchman" George Zimmerman. In 2020, unarmed 25-year-old African American Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed by white men while jogging in a Georgia neighborhood. He was committing no crime, and this modern-day lynch mob hunted him down and ruthlessly killed him in broad daylight. Although the extrajudicial killing of Black people by law enforcement was made illegal *de jure*, the precedent established in our legal system legalizes the extrajudicial killing of Black people *de facto* and has emboldened white persons to take the lives of Black persons.

Much of my legal career has been dedicated to holding police officers and citizens accountable for murdering Black persons. It is possible—there are glimmers of hope—that the tide may slowly be turning.

April 20, 2021, was a truly historic day for justice in America. For the first time in my career and one of the few times in American history, a white police officer was convicted for killing a Black man: George Floyd. Seven months later, on November 24, 2021, another historic victory came when a jury convicted the white men who hunted down Ahmaud Arbery and murdered him in broad daylight. Our efforts to restore justice to law and value to Black life in America have begun to bear fruit. I cannot minimize the significance of the victory represented in those two verdicts, bringing us closer to true equality in the United States.

I also cannot emphasize enough that, by itself, stopping Black men and women from getting shot in the back by police and white vigilantes is not equality. We must forever keep our eyes on the proverbial prize and strive to create equal access to opportunity in every facet of life. Black lives are stolen in many ways, Black dreams are deferred, Black talent is too often unrecognized, and Black ingenuity is not given an opportunity to flourish. The foundation of our nation, the Declaration of Independence, pledges Americans the right to pursue happiness, and I intend to commit the remainder of my career to holding that declaration to its highest ideals.

Although much of my work has been centered on police brutality cases, I have also taken on many cases involving equal access to education, health care, employment, housing, voting rights, and public accommodations. I have worked on high-profile cases that have fundamentally changed national and international law, and I have worked on cases nobody has ever heard of that have changed a single person's life. I frequently remind the young attorneys I mentor that we must maintain a constant duality of being both the "salt of the Earth" and the "light of the world." We must never be too self-important to take a moment of our time to help improve another's life.

I represented a postal worker who was subjected to racial discrimination in his employment before the United States Supreme Court. I represented the Madison 9, nine women unlawfully charged with felonies for attempting to exercise their right to vote in Madison, Florida. I represented people living in Flint, Michigan, whose drinking and bathing water was contaminated by lead from the municipal water supply. I worked on a case in Port St. Joe, Florida, where Black families were sold homes on top of a landfill that was poorly filled, causing the foundations of their homes to crack, their houses to begin to sink, snakes and wildlife to enter their houses through the holes, and exposure to toxins to occur. I worked on a case in which an elementary school teacher read a book to children using the "N-word," making the Black children in her classroom feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. I have also stopped my day in order to take a single Black mother with a newborn baby to apply for a job at a local Olive

Garden. Most recently, I collaborated with St. Thomas University College of Law in Miami Gardens, Florida, to found the Benjamin L. Crump Center for Social Justice. I am working daily to ensure that African Americans have equal access to opportunity, to ensure that as we fight to preserve the fundamental right to Black life, I am also fighting for Black life to flourish and protecting the right of Black people to pursue happiness.

I remain steadfastly focused on the future of justice in every facet of what it means to be a whole and equal person, and I use every resource at my disposal to push the bounds of justice. Fighting to eliminate acts of racism is not enough—we must fight for true equality. Stopping the active suppression of the Black vote is not equality; equality is equal representation of Black people serving in the judiciary. Stopping employment discrimination is not equality; equality is equal representation of Black people as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Stopping Black men from getting shot in the back is not equality; equality is shooting an equal number of Black men to the moon and allowing them to be competitive in every industry, including space technology. Securing medical treatment for a Black grandmother is not equality; equality is having high-quality health care available to all, no matter their zip code.

We cannot be so distracted by combatting structural and systemic racism that we fail to keep our eyes on the prize: a world beyond brutality. We cannot accept the inequities of the world we can see around us with our eyes. Instead, we must close our eyes and use the vision within our imagination to see and create a world of more perfect equality, and we must believe in that world more than we believe in the one currently around us. As leaders, our job is to envision a world beyond brutality—we must imagine the future of justice so that generations yet to be born will realize full equality, so seeds of hope will be sown and rooted into a future for our children. We must go beyond breaking every chain, to building the foundations that will raise generations. We must evolve in our ingenuity as freedom fighters at a rate that outpaces our oppressors.

In short, we must work, every day, for true equality and true justice.

A Line Between Black and Blue:
The Struggles of Being a Conscious Black Police Officer

by

Anonymous Black Police Officer

The first thing that I would like to say about being in this line of work as a Black person is that coming in the door, I'm viewed as the enemy. First, an enemy of my people—those who look like me—but also of those who run the police department, white people. For the most part, if they had their druthers, Black folks would never have been able to be police officers. Knowing that, it can be said that I'm working for my open enemy and against those who look like me and the Black community. Just being conscious of these things from the very start creates an internal struggle for me. Working in the police district or precinct as a conscious Black officer is like being in an enclave in which I am different from all the other police officers around me, and even a lot of the officers who look like me. Working with "non-conscious" Black officers is a struggle and at times is extremely problematic for me. The rapper Ice Cube of the N.W.A. once said, "Black police showin' out for the white cop," in the song "F*ck tha Police." There are other examples as well, like KRS-One's "Black Cop." The issue of the Black police officer trying his hardest to prove that he or she can fit in, or can be a part of the "Good ole boys' club," proves very problematic because, like a puppy attempting to please its owner, these non-conscious Black officers are willing to do just about anything—no matter how detrimental to their people or their career—under the direction of their "white owner." I once had an officer who was of mixed race, Black and white, tell me that if he sees a "young looking" Black person, particularly a man, in a "nice" or expensive car, he pulls them over. As if Black people cannot have a "nice" vehicle without being a drug dealer or some other type of criminal, as this officer was insinuating—and by the way, although he was of mixed race, the world sees him as a Black man. This type of skewed worldview is in complete opposition to mine as a conscious Black officer, and it hits differently when it comes from someone who looks like me.

There have been situations where I have had to intervene—times when the "heavy hand" of a Black officer was coming down on or doing bodily harm to another Black person in the community, as well as situations when I had to step in because a white officer was doing the same, while other Black officers stood around and did nothing. Having the knowledge and understanding from whence this behavior comes—fear of white people, and hate for our own—is definitely a part of being a conscious officer that proves a struggle. My main concern as a conscious Black police officer and as a man is Black people and our wellbeing. When working in our communities and witnessing the violence, disenfranchisement, and most of all, deprivation—which some would say is the main cause for most of these struggles—I know that if we just had agency and congruence, things would begin to change. If only I could yell from the corners on a soap box—if only it were that simple. In some ways, I do stand on corners, minus the physical soap box. I talk to my people in the community; I attempt to build a genuine grassroots rapport with the people. It takes time, patience, and lack of fear to get out and talk with the people to show them that, hey, all cops aren't a monolith, and in doing so, I as an officer find out the same—that not all Black folk dislike the police—but I will say it takes work, and I'm here for it. There's a quote from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* where he says, "I do not know if all cops are poets, but I know that all cops carry guns with triggers" (Ellison, 1952/1995). And I get that; I understand that point of view because, when I remove my uniform, I go back to being "just another Black man" that can be shot by the police, unseen for being the complete being that I am, or just a threat or criminal. I have felt and understand as a Black man that feeling or sense of not being seen; the feeling of not mattering. I can relate. I can recall sitting outside one of the neighborhood high schools in the inner city, which has been greatly gentrified by whites, to attempt to make sure no violence or criminal acts would go on when the students were released from school at the end of the school day. It was interesting to see the white folk from the nearby and surrounding gentrified area just walking by as nothing were happening, while we the police had to break up fights and prevent shootings between Black students. I would watch them walk on by and not bat an eye, minding their own business—not out of fear, but just as if we in the Black community didn't exist. Or thinking, "This is just what 'they' do." Ellison also said, in *Invisible Man,*

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. (1952/1995)

But with all that being said, I'd be remiss if I didn't express my anger and dismay with my own people, community, and behavior at times. It hurts me to have to drive around and patrol the same communities that I live in to attempt to prevent not only violent crimes, but just what we call quality of life crime. For example, when crowds of people gather on the front steps or porch of an elderly person, who most likely is scared to come outside of their home. Or when guys double-park in the middle of the street and have the audacity to dare someone to honk their horn and ask them to move, which in many cases in a city like mine, where we have already surpassed a 500 murder count, can lead to a shooting and possibly a homicide over something as small as a parking spot! Yes, this is a struggle for a conscious Black officer, and should be for anyone who has to endure this situation.

The glares and stares that I get while driving around make me feel like a fish in a bowl, as if folks have never seen a Black police officer before. And yes, I know, it's looks of contempt for me; I'm not confused at all. And then, I have interactions with white people that are completely different—meaning civil, respectful, and in some cases, pleasant, even in times of despair. As a conscious Black police officer, this hurts. It hurts because I want the same response from and connection with my own people. I understand where the disconnect and the strained relationship between the police and the Black community comes from; we all do. The violence, survival tactics, the self-destructive and self-hating behavior in the Black community that we see—it all has an origin. And as a conscious Black officer, I know these behaviors are responding to the unfortunate subpar conditions that were created for Black people, which have sparked the ill will, distrust, and violence toward each other as Black people, as well as the submission and, some might say, love for white people, their culture, and value system. What a person or people value will in turn dictate their behavior. In the book *Black on Black Violence* by Amos N. Wilson, the subtitle reads, *The Psychodynamics of Black Self-Annihilation in Service of White Domination.* That's it exactly—the continuous psychological struggle and hold on the Black community and the feeling of hopelessness and inability to fight back. Wilson states,

> The violently oppressed react violently to their oppression. When their reactionary violence, their retaliatory or defensive violence, cannot be effectively directed at their oppressors or effectively applied to their self-liberation, it then will be directed at and applied destructively to themselves.

He also explains, "Black men kill each other because they have not yet chosen to challenge and neutralize on every front the widespread power of White men to rule over their lives." Having knowledge of all of these different components that contribute to the struggle in the Black communities I serve, and knowing the only real way to fix these problems is through agency, congruence, and a psychological shift, as long as I am a police officer who is Black and conscious, as the saying goes, *a luta continua*—the struggle continues.

References

Ellison, R. W. (1995). *Invisible man.* Vintage International. (Original work published 1952)

Wilson, A. N. (1990). *Black on Black violence*: *The psychodynamics of Black self-annihilation in service of white domination.* Afrikan World Infosystems.

Challenges of the Dystopic Present:
The Impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC Graduate Students

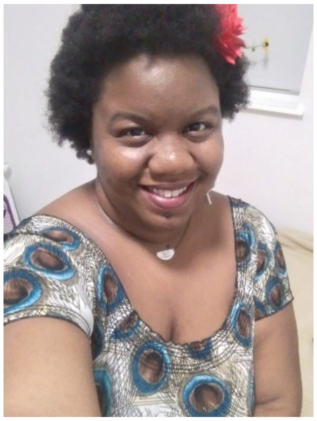
by

Taylor D. Duckett
Doctoral Candidate
Department of African American and
African Diaspora Studies
Indiana University Bloomington

Andrew Stadeker II
Doctoral Candidate
Department of African American and
African Diaspora Studies
Indiana University Bloomington

Samantha Horton
Doctoral Candidate
Department of African American and
African Diaspora Studies,
Indiana University Bloomington

Madison Clark
Doctoral Student
Department of African American and
African Diaspora Studies
Indiana University Bloomington



Corryn Anderson
Doctoral Student
Department of African American and
African Diaspora Studies,
Indiana University Bloomington

Nya Anthony
M. A. Student, Department of
African American and African
Diaspora Studies & O'Neill School
of Public and Environmental Affairs,
Indiana University Bloomington

March 2020, the beginning of the United States' recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic, changed the landscape of academia. COVID-19 has not been a respecter of persons in general, affecting students, professors, and institutions nationwide. However, the pandemic disproportionately affected BIPOC students. The purpose of this article is to provide autoethnographic accounts and statistical data gained through a survey conducted by the authors, which highlights the impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC graduate students. This article will address how graduate students in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies (AAADS) at Indiana University (IU) Bloomington and the Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University dealt with the unique challenges posed by COVID-19. Furthermore, insights from students at other U.S. institutions who are outside of Black studies have been included to highlight the efficacy of Black studies in addressing the pandemic and caring for their students.

Entering the Dystopia: March 2020

Colleges and universities across the U.S. decided to extend the 2020 spring break by an extra week as they worked to determine the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many at IU Bloomington, the last day of normalcy in academia was March 12, 2020, with several AAADS members preparing for travel to the 2020 National Black Studies Conference. A week later, what began as an extension of spring break became a complete shutdown of on-campus activity. Students around the country were given only a few days to vacate campus and return home, and instructors were expected to move their courses online expediently. Instructors at IU Bloomington were expected to do so within a two-week period. For graduate students who teach, this sudden shift posed a dual challenge. While being asked to hold space for their students, many associate instructors/TAs found that the university was not holding space for *their* needs, leading some graduate students to slip through the cracks and become overlooked casualties of COVID-19. Graduate students adjusted their expectations as students and educators, resigning themselves to accept that the semester would likely not be as fruitful as planned and they should not sacrifice their health for their courses.

The Secondary Pandemic: Racism and the Summer of 2020

It is also important to note that amid dealing with COVID-19, BIPOC students faced additional threats and uncertainty during the summer of 2020 as nationwide protests took place after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Several students from AAADS chose to participate in the various protests, either as keynote speakers or by joining in the march for solidarity. However, graduate students participating in these protests found that again, the response from the university was lacking. IU Bloomington made statements denouncing the violence that was taking place throughout the country but did nothing to keep students safe when members of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations were marching in Bloomington. Nor did the university adequately respond to BIPOC instructors who were subjected to Zoom bombing and other cyber hate crimes during the shift to online learning. It was left to individual departments and graduate students to band together to resolve these issues and create safer spaces for BIPOC students.

At Temple, in June of 2020, the University president, provost, and COO issued a statement in response to the murder of George Floyd. While the university used the traditional rhetoric of denunciation of all forms of racism and oppression, they chose not to honor the request from current students and alumni to dissolve their relationship with the Philadelphia PD. This call came in part due to the violent treatment of a student by the police during an off-campus protest. Furthermore, the administration promised that students who made racist comments on social media regarding Temple or Temple BIPOC students would be met with individually. These symbolic gestures highlight that regardless of geography, urban versus rural, universities fumbled the handling of the ongoing threat of racism to BIPOC students on their campuses.

COVID Test: How Are BIPOC Graduate Students Doing?

A survey was sent to self-identifying BIPOC graduate students at several U.S. universities. Of the graduate students surveyed, 80% stated that the response of their universities was inadequate. A respondent from Temple remarked:

> Temple did not do enough to help Black graduate students during the pandemic. We were often left hanging and without everything we needed to be successful. Also, access was an issue that the university did not consider. They just assumed that we would all be fine and able to do our work but that was not the case for everyone.

Unfortunately, this feeling of being left hanging by their university is not unique to Temple. Graduate students reported a similar phenomenon:

> It was the University who had forgotten us. While my home department in African American and African Diaspora Studies made sure to take care of its students, the University was more comfortable with the idea of leaving the students in the care of their assumed, white middle class family members, than their business model structured operation. Although the University did provide the financial assistance needed through governmental means such as the CARES act, it still wasn't enough.

When the university made the decision to close the campus and transition to an online format, it did so under the erroneous assumption that all students would have access to the technology required for online learning. Classrooms became a less safe space for many BIPOC students with instructors requiring that students have their cameras on during Zoom lectures. BIPOC students attending PWIs had to decide between not complying and losing attendance points or allowing their peers access to the intimate details of their personal lives, which could perpetuate harm and other forms of trauma.

Furthermore, graduate students during the pandemic were not always able to give their full attention to their studies or teaching responsibilities because they were also serving as caretakers within their families. A respondent from Northern Arizona University shared the following as part of their COVID-19 experience:

> The most difficult part of the pandemic was being taught online my first year and adapting to graduate school in an area with limited resources that was also a hotspot for COVID-19. In addition to this adaptation process of learning online on the Navajo Reservation, I was the only adult in the household when my father went to work, and so I had to take care of my younger siblings and make sure they went to school and ate as well.

Another respondent from the University of Florida stated:

> The pay that graduate students receive is already well below poverty for a single person, and I am in a family of three. The increased time at home meant a huge increase in utility and food costs, as well as the cost of creating a home office for my son and myself.

Of the respondents who serve in these roles, many reported having to take time off from their studies during the pandemic, or take on second, and sometimes third, jobs, because they felt unsupported by their university—be it financially or in terms of the expectations for the quantity and quality of work to be produced.

“The Forgotten Class”: Graduate Students Entering in Fall of 2020

Though COVID-19 rendered the 2020–2021 school year virtual, students still chose to begin graduate study. Of the total number of graduate students surveyed, 37% either began their graduate study in fall of 2020 or had their first year of graduate study interrupted by COVID-19 in spring of 2020. The common response among this portion of graduate students is that they felt isolated from their cohort and from their instructors. Many stated that they felt their instructors were not as accessible during the 2020–2021 school year, which made it difficult to foster meaningful relationships and get fully grounded within their studies. This isolation led to students within the “forgotten class” reporting seeking mental health services and experiencing increased mental and physical health complications. As stated by an AAADS graduate student:

> We continued to be reminded that CAPS counseling and mental health services were “diverse” in that they were accepting of all people of all backgrounds when it came to sexualities and class, but not in race and ethnicities. When it came to seeking references outside of the University, there were only so many places our university-provided insurance would cover, and many of these places lacked the cultural competency to fully understand the nuanced layers of trauma that Black students were feeling.

Students entering IU Bloomington and Temple during this time period consider themselves to be a forgotten class, and the experiences of these two cohorts are largely parallel. Some described adjusting to graduate school during the 2020–2021 academic year as trying to jump onto a moving train: dangerous, impractical, and frustrating. At Temple, students now in their second year are describing meeting their professors for the first time and the challenges that have come along with that. These students feel that because their first year was entirely virtual, they missed out on the community-building elements that help their professors know them and their research. This occurred in part, they felt, because several Zoom classes were cancelled during that first year due to a generational knowledge gap regarding the working of Zoom and other online platforms. Additionally, students did not receive their handbooks until their second year, which also occurred at IU Bloomington. Those who did get a copy of their graduate handbook received a digital copy from students further along in the respective programs.

Among the fall 2020 cohort, students expressed engaging in reassessment of their motivation for entering graduate school. One student at IU Bloomington remarked that choosing to enter graduate school felt like a "safe" option amid global uncertainty.

> My decision to attend graduate school was one that I ultimately made out of fear. COVID-19 struck during my final semester of college, and I was plagued by doubts of what the future would hold, and continuing my education felt like the safest option. I was attracted to graduate school because of the validation academics provided, the collegiality, [and] most notably, the community. Upon arrival, my hopeful inexperience was met with an overwhelming workload, institutional politics, and an overwhelming sense of isolation.

Conversely, a student at Temple remarked on having chosen to attend graduate school not because of COVID-19 concerns, but because of a desire to gain and produce knowledge, and the pandemic seemed like a good time to begin that career transition.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that both IU Bloomington and Temple experienced larger incoming classes for the 2021–2022 academic year than for years prior. Regardless of the reason students chose to enter graduate school for Black studies during this time, the common thread was feeling isolated and unsure of how to gain their intellectual footing, as the following student reflections describe.

> **Student One:** The fall semester of 2020 was arguably one of the most challenging periods of my life. Most university courses across the country were scheduled to occur in an online format. Mask mandates and limits on social gatherings were enforced which made building community extremely difficult. I spent more time than I'm comfortable admitting trying to decipher academic jargon, titles, and concepts being tossed around in the classroom and conversations across campus. There were so many unspoken rules and feelings of not belonging reared its ugly, familiar head. I struggled with mental health and feelings of dread constantly and had to learn to manage emotional stress on top of the academic and professional workload of school. The task felt impossible but, I learned quickly that asking for help was the only way for me to survive. I am grateful to the faculty, staff, and my peers who offered support during this period.
>
> **Student Two:** I was unsure of what to expect beginning my graduate program during a pandemic. However, I found myself feeling disenchanted with the entire process. Starting school in Fall 2020 felt like I was being dropped into the deepest part of the ocean without the proper training. We had orientation, but it was a few hours online and I still felt disoriented after the day concluded. Though I am grateful that older students took us under their wing, I feel that we should not have had to rely on them so much for guidance because they are students too. Also, because graduate programs are so individualized, sometimes they could mean well but still miscommunicate because different students occasionally had different requirements.
>
> I also feel that the second year is not any less difficult. Being back in the classroom is good but I still feel disconnected because I do not know the campus or department well. Also, there is sometimes the feeling that professors expect me to know things that I did not realize I was supposed to know already, as though they have forgotten that though this is my second year, it is my first year on campus and a lot of the information being provided to

> the incoming Fall 2021 students is new information to me as well. I feel still forgotten in many ways, as though I am being carried along by the current, but I am no longer sure of my destination.
>
> **Student Three:** A lot of time was spent alone during the first year due to the distance learning requirement. Also, many of the members of my cohort that began with me are no longer in the program. They chose to leave or take time off for a variety of reasons. I am close to the students who remain, but it is still difficult because now being in my second year, I have had a professor ask me where I was hiding. I wasn't hiding; I was here all along but because of the pandemic I wasn't seen.

Third-year students, students who had their first year interrupted by COVID-19, experienced a similar readjustment period, as they had only been on campus for one full semester prior to the pandemic shutdown. Despite this, these students are considered senior scholars in their departments and are often looked to for advice, direction, and leadership. While those who have found themselves in this position have arguably become more resilient, they too have experienced an increase in uncertainty regarding completing coursework and moving through their graduate programs in a timely fashion. Students at both Temple and IU Bloomington have also reported feeling higher rates of burnout.

Ubuntu: Forming Community Amid Chaos

Despite these challenges, students found ways to form community. Of the survey respondents, those within Black studies programs were found to have fared better coming out of the pandemic than did BIPOC students in traditional disciplines. Students outside of Black studies at schools including Pepperdine, Northern Arizona University, UC Santa Barbara, Graduate Theological Union, University of Georgia, and University of Michigan reported being the only, or one of few, BIPOC students within their cohorts. When students are the only or one of just a few BIPOC students in a program, feelings of isolation are already more likely to occur. Coupled with the ongoing pandemic, this creates a situation wherein BIPOC students are often overlooked because their needs may differ from those of most of their cohort. These students outside of Black studies reported that Black graduate student associations were their primary means of community formation, but with the onset of COVID-19, many became inactive. This is true of the BGSA at IU Bloomington, for instance, which has not been active during the 2021–2022 school year. However, AAADS students have their own graduate society and were still able to find ways to form community and get to know one another.

The ability of students in Black studies programs to fare better than those in other disciplines can be attributed to the mission and purpose of Black studies, which is to be community-oriented and public-facing. To form community during the pandemic, IU Bloomington AAADS graduate students chose to prioritize wellness. Michael Tillotson's (2011) Doctrine of Wellness of Being as discussed in *Invisible Jim Crow: Contemporary Ideological Threats to the Internal Security of African Americans* provides a theoretical framework that underpinned the approach that these graduate students took to advocating for their collective wellness. Tillotson states that the key to wellness lies in a return to African principles, precepts, and practices. How AAADS graduate students actualized this awareness occurred in several parts. The first step involved creating a peer-mentoring program during the 2020–2021 school year to help mitigate the feelings of isolation many of the incoming students reported experiencing. The peer-mentoring program is now in its second year, and the feedback from those within the first group of mentees demonstrates that the mentoring they received from their peers proved instrumental in helping them fight imposter syndrome and feel as though they were gaining traction within their studies.

The second means through which students formed community was through hosting small, informal get-togethers. These small groups allowed students to get the face-to-face contact they desired without running the risk of violating social-distancing regulations. These small groups helped strengthen the inter- and intra-cohort bonds. Additionally, students used these meetups to discuss challenges and successes in the classroom as associate instructors (AIs) to help sharpen one another's skills while also creating new and innovative pedagogical methods. Now that the university has moved back to in-person classes, these informal gatherings have turned into monthly group activities to continue to form bonds of collegiality and give space for innovation.

The Graduate Mentoring Center (GMC) served as another space that BIPOC students turned to during the pandemic. Founded in 2014 by department faculty member Dr. Maria Hamilton Abegunde, the GMC provides resources and mentorship that help graduate students to successfully traverse the hidden curriculum through programming and individual mentorship. When classes resumed after the extended spring break, graduate students and faculty members from a number of diverse backgrounds and disciplines flocked to the center for virtual programs, including the weekly Sitting for Peace meditation. Prior to the pandemic, Sitting for Peace was held in person at the Neal Marshal Black Cultural Center but was adapted to a Zoom format during the pandemic. Each Friday morning, Dr. Abegunde held one-hour guided meditation sessions wherein participants could check in, sit, and reflect. During the summer of 2020, many of these sessions held space for Black students who were feeling overwhelmed by ongoing violence. One graduate student recalls their experience:

> I began attending the weekly meditations due to the stress of the pandemic and ended up becoming a regular attendee. Isolated from my family and overwhelmed by the racial violence around me, I was grateful for those who held space for myself and other Black participants. And a year later, when eight people lost their lives to a racially motivated gunman and during ongoing anti-Asian rhetoric, I was able to hold space for my Asian colleagues who had supported me the year prior.

The center's focus on collective contemplative practice and wellness created a refuge where BIPOC could meet for academic community and emotional support.

Pedagogical Adaptation

As previously mentioned, when universities decided to move courses online, not everyone was in support, and online education created additional issues for BIPOC students who were also instructors. Several students who participated in the survey stated that their workload had increased because of online education. A respondent from the University of Florida mentioned in their feedback that the professor they were serving as TA for expected them to completely migrate and run the online portion of their course. There were other students who reported similar narratives of professors no longer attending the classes and leaving everything completely in the hands of the graduate students. Furthermore, students reported an uptick in migraines and other physical issues caused by Zoom fatigue. Some students reported issues with learning online because some departments did not ensure that lectures and assignments were still accessible for those who are not inclined to learn online, or those who did not have access to the technology required for online learning. A current AAADS graduate student remarks that:

> During the pandemic, perhaps even more distressing was finding a way to encourage my students to see the relevance of what happened in 1820 to what was happening in 2020, in the midst of a pandemic, as a country recovered from watching an insurrection, and while many of their family members were convinced a presidential election was stolen. If Black Studies was already viewed as the mandatory elective course, how was I to generate

> excitement through a screen when I felt it was unethical to require them to have their cameras turned on?

A student from Temple responded that:

> Having to move classes online posed a challenge because it took time to get students to buy into it. However, once the initial issues were ironed out, many of us realized that having these online formats was a way to carry out the mission of Black Studies which is to make scholarship accessible to the communities that it impacts. There is so much more that we can do by streaming lectures or creating lectures specifically for the community. Though teaching online is challenging, it has opened a new future and trajectory for the future of Black Studies.

Several AAADS students began incorporating wellness and embodiment activities into their teaching to help students remain grounded in their Black studies courses. One way through which this was done involved experiential learning assignments. These assignments required students to tune in to a lecture or visit a Black cultural site on campus to learn more about Black culture within the IU community. Additionally, technology was used to facilitate meetings that would not have otherwise been possible, such as the invitation of a Freedom Rider to address AAADS students via Zoom. Other instructors have chosen to change the assignments from being solely essay-based to using mixed media and encouraging students to create a podcast and mixtape for their midterm and final projects, respectively. These shifts, using technology to their advantage while acknowledging differing learning styles, have helped students become more engaged with the course material—with some even going so far as to add AAADS as a major or minor. Associate instructors also report witnessing an increase in the diversity of thought among their students, as students begin to look to Black studies for answers to the present racial climate instead of their traditional disciplines, which is one of the objectives of Black studies. Students in classes such as A150: “Survey of Black Culture” and A156: “Jim Crow and Apartheid” have reported to their AIs that they have been able to use theories and methods discussed in class to assist with educating their communities about the realities of living in a racialized society for those who identify as BIPOC.

Exiting the Dystopia: Recommendations for Academia Post-COVID-19

This is a preliminary discussion of the effects of COVID-19 on BIPOC graduate students. Though society is still in the midst of the pandemic, we have a series of recommendations for how Black studies and other departments can further support their BIPOC graduate students. One recommendation is to provide future studies on the continued effects on BIPOC graduate students for the next several years following the pandemic. Though students in AAADS and at Temple have graduated and advanced to candidacy amid this pandemic, it is necessary to continue tracking their trajectory to determine long-term impacts. Tracking trajectories is also necessary to see how scholars shaped by the pandemic approach the discipline and future scholarship. This is particularly important for scholars who have chosen to enter graduate school as a “safe” option during the pandemic.

Additionally, graduate students surveyed within Black studies felt that the large governing bodies of the discipline missed key opportunities to speak to, with, and for the Black community during these periods of social upheaval. Survey respondents also felt that Black studies departments were in a state of retreat during the pandemic, and that it is necessary for these departments to emerge and return to the community, be it through service or other forms of community outreach. One doctoral candidate in AAADS remarked that:

> Specifically, our field should have been in the forefront of disseminating the historicity of the medical trauma on the black body, millennia use of herbal and holistic treatments, and the social implications of past eugenics movements and present population control agendas. After all, before Melinda and Bill announced their divorce, they advocated for the most vulnerable, or African Americans, to be vaccinated first. Where was the outcry from Black Academia? Where was the caution or at least apprehension? Where was the diversity of thought? The silence was too loud. We must do better. We must serve our student population and the communities our departments are supposed to be tied to better. We must educate them so they can make informed decisions that come from critical analytical thinking. Diversity of thought must come from more than the news or our government, it must come from us.

The last recommendation is that there should not be a return to business as usual, and that Black studies should continue to expand its pedagogical tools to reach the incoming generation of students uniquely shaped by this pandemic. Students at Temple who were done with coursework at the onset of COVID-19 shared that their department changed the format of their comprehensive exam to make it more accessible to those not located in Philadelphia. Students who took their comps exam during this time found the increased accessibility to be an asset to their learning experience that helped them perform better on their exam due to feeling lower stress levels. Additionally, students who needed health accommodations found it easier to stay on top of their schoolwork with the virtual format. For many, it leveled the playing field; whereas previously they would have had to miss class completely, the virtual course sessions allowed them to participate in a different form.

Furthermore, it is recommended that departments hold listening sessions with their graduate students to understand the ways in which the department has successfully addressed the needs of its students during COVID-19, and the areas in which there is room for improvement, so that no scholar feels forgotten.

360 Nation: Bridging the Gap Between the Black Community and Africana Studies

by

Brandon Stokes
Doctoral Candidate
Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies
Indiana University Bloomington

The foundation of Africana Studies comes out of a community struggle. In the founding of the first program at San Francisco State University, Nathan Hare declared that Black Studies was for the Black community and the theories and paradigms used needed to come up with solutions for the ailments of the Black community (Hare, 1969). Scholar John Blassingame countered Hare by arguing that Africana Studies must forge deeper ties within the Academy (Blassingame, 1969). Debates within Africana Studies continued with one side arguing for direct links to community organizations. The other side argued for a stronger bond to the academy with a more tangential relationship to the community. Africana Studies has grown within the academy, but the direct links to the community have not strengthened over the years. The lack of substantial community engagement across the discipline is seen as detrimental by the foremost academics in the field. Maulana Karenga and Molefi Kete Asante lament how Africana Studies is no longer community-focused (Karenga & Asante 2005). However, there are still places where Africana Studies has links to the Black community. One example is in a small community organization in Chicago, the spirit of the community and Africana Studies connection is alive and well.

360 Nation is a community-based nonprofit agency that has taken the lead on filling community voids through the acquisition and transformation of vacant/unutilized space. 360 Nation is an intergenerational community organization based in the Garfield Park community on the west side of Chicago. 360 Nation utilizes relationship building and social capital to promote self-determination for Black children and their families. Through enriched youth/adult partnership, we promote empathy, critical thought, and the obtainment of a creative technical skillset. These valuable attributes will equip children and their families with the temperament, insight, and self-efficacy to become care agents and transform their communities. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the West Garfield Park neighborhood has a median income of $26,000, with most residents living below the poverty line and a crime index of one of the worst in the city (*C*hicago Tribune, 2016). Poverty and lack of opportunity make residents vulnerable to violence and lower their quality of life. Furthermore, families with lower income and lower educational attainment are less likely to see the connection between the learning objectives in the classroom and their daily lives and how they apply what they have learned.

In building an academic and intellectual foundation from Africana Studies, 360 Nation sets its foundation on four principles: creativity, resilience, reflection, and hope. Creativity represents the act of creating brings us closer to the source of what it means to be fully human. It catalyzes radical and community-driven change. Thus, the act of creating is not only truly human but also a political act as well. The concept of resilience offers that without determination and perseverance, liberation is not possible. Under the assumption that Black American culture derives from and cultivates out of struggle, this trait is innate and essential for the Black community. Reflection represents progress; it is imperative to learn from the past. This individual/ collective practice allows us to integrate traditional and new philosophies and practices that contribute to the transformation of Black communities. Finally, hope represents the work to provide initiatives that inspire and cultivate dreams for our members and the broader community.

These four principles come from under the intellectual foundation set forth by the four prophets of 360 Nation: Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Ella Baker. Tubman represents the spirit of freedom and sacrifice. Garvey represents the spirit of pride, beauty, and ingenuity of Black culture. Malcolm X represents the spirit of freedom through self-determination. Ella Baker represents the spirit of relationship building, hard work, and humility, which is the foundation of relationship building and strong communities. The power of relationships is essential to 360 connecting the spirit of Africana Studies to the community through the key understandings of relationships. The relationship Black people have with each other and how positive relationship within the community creates a stronger Black community allowing for the healthy growth of Black children. The relationship to the land and working with others to develop a deeper connection to the world and the universe will allow the Black community to act constructively with the environment. The relationship to the marketplace and understanding of the Black community's relationship to money and capitalism. Finally, relationship to history and learning from the past to better understand the present and future for the Black community. These principles and analysis of 360 Nation function similarly to the Kawaida Theory developed by Africana Studies professor Maulana Karenga. The Kawaida Theory surmises that Black people in America lost their social and cultural African heritage through European oppression as the source of Black cultural disconnect. Black people must reconnect to those principles, and 360 Nation seeks to do that through its principles and relationships.

Through a relationship with the University of Illinois-Chicago and Black historian Elizabeth Todd Breland, 360 Nation teaches the youth of the community to archive pieces from their community and instill in them the idea of being the voices for their history and formulating ideas based on their worldview. The archival work corresponds with one of the major goals of Africana Studies in transforming Black people from object to subject, which repositions the power back to Black people to define themselves and their humanity. 360 Nation, through its community archival works, seeks to achieve that goal. Additionally, it has transformed one vacant/hazardous lot into a community garden. Building upon the concept of Black people's relationship to the land. A group of neighbors joining together to organize, build, and manage a community garden creates a wave of positive and beneficial effects on the rest of their community. 360 Nation returns the Black community to the agricultural roots that traveled from West Africa across the Atlantic Ocean and continued during arrival in the United States and northward as part of the Great Migration.

360 Nation serves as proof of the work that Africana Studies can provide to the community through exercises and projects that provide intellectual stimulation but provide the foundation for community improvement through the scholar/activist model for which Africana Studies came into existence. The missing element from 360 Nation and organizations like them remains the broad support of Africana Studies departments and programs to engage directly with the community

outside the academy's walls. When the relationship between Africana Studies and the Black community becomes a source of strength, both institutions grow and thrive and provide a unified force to dismantle the unequal power systems affecting Black people in the United States and abroad.

U2 Rodeo and Community Engagement: More Than Sport and Entertainment

by

Demetrius W. Pearson
Department of Health and Human Performance
University of Houston

African Americans have played a significant role in the development of modern sport and were among the participants in what was arguably America's first integrated sport form: rodeo (Rattenbury, 2010). Despite experiencing systematic and pervasive discrimination throughout history, African Americans have made a concerted effort to participate in mainstream sports. However, with the exception of boxing and brief stints in cycling, horseracing, and baseball around the turn of the 19th century, they were relegated to segregated sporting organizations established by them and for them (e.g., CIAA, Negro Leagues, Harlem Rens).

According to Gems et al. (2017), a vibrant Black sporting culture during the late 19th and early 20th centuries facilitated the growth of Black sports involvement. Unfortunately, most African Americans would not be afforded opportunities to participate in integrated sports until the post-WWII years. This was the case for professional rodeo, wherein African American cowboys, much like their Negro League counterparts, organized their own associations and scheduled "colored" rodeos. This legacy was the impetus for the creation of U2 Rodeo, a Black family-owned rodeo company that has carved out a niche through the promotion of an inclusive multicultural rodeo enterprise.

Since its inception in the early 1970s, U2 Rodeo has been actively involved in community engagement activities while providing "wholesome" family entertainment through rodeo. The objective of this essay is to highlight the sociocultural significance and community engagement activities of U2 Rodeo and the Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Series.

The Architect

U2 Rodeo Production Company is the brainchild of Oklahoma native Cleo Hearn. Fondly referred to as "Mr. Black Rodeo" (Jones, 2003, p. 68), and one of the first Black men to portray the "Marlboro Man" in cigarette commercials, Hearn is the CEO of Lancaster, Texas-based U2 Rodeo, which annually promotes the Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour, billed as the "Largest Multicultural Rodeo in the Country" ("Cowboys of Color," 2008, p. 9). The Hearn family is involved in all aspects of the rodeo series, which consists of five to six rodeos in designated cities throughout Texas and Oklahoma. Unlike traditional rodeo competitions, the Cowboys of Color Rodeo series is an amalgamation of the late 19th-century Wild West shows.

Cleo Hearn is a former celebrated calf roper, who was the first African American to attend college on a rodeo scholarship and win a calf-roping event at the National Western Stock Show in 1970. In a 2001 interview (Pearson, 2012), Hearn stated that growing up in the 1940s, he had never seen any Black cowboys. This was not surprising, as African Americans were blatantly omitted or "white-washed" from depictions of the American western frontier. Even though Hollywood-produced "westerns" were an American staple throughout much of the 20th century, very few depicted African Americans as cowboys. This was cultural propaganda, since African Americans were intimately involved in the cattle industry and myriad occupational roles in the American West. Although the aggregate number of African American cowboys on the western frontier varies, researchers (Barr, 1996; Weston, 1985) contend they made up approximately 20–25% of the working cowboys. Glasrud and Searles (2016) maintain the number totaled approximately 8,000–9,000. On the George Ranch, the oldest and one of the most prosperous in Texas, "Virtually all of the cowboys shown in pay records of the mid-1890s were African Americans," writes Moore (2001, p. 241).

The lack of African American cowboy depictions in all aspects of American history (e.g., film, television, art, and literature) was part of the impetus for establishing U2 Rodeo Production Company. Hearn's early involvement in professional rodeo and his subsequent Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) membership in 1959 enabled him to see firsthand the inequities that existed in rodeo. As a result, he began producing rodeos in 1971 and the following year staged his first rodeo in Harlem, New York, for 10,000 kids. This was the legendary rodeo immortalized in Jeff Kanew's documentary titled *Black Rodeo* featuring Muhammad Ali and a cast of African American rodeo cowboys primarily from Texas. Hearn's U2 Rodeo series is far more than mere rodeo competitions. They are promoted with the pitch, "Let us educate you while we entertain you" (Hearn, personal communication, May 20, 2019).

Parallel Paths: Black Rodeo and Negro League Baseball

Much like other sports forms, rodeo was participated in and influenced by minority athletes whose legacy has been largely overlooked. This was due, in part, to unwritten discriminatory policies, government-sanctioned segregation, and social norms inhibiting their full participation prior to the 1950s. As previously mentioned, they were forced to establish their own organizations and rodeo competitions. "All Colored" rodeos (Pearson, 2012, p. 68) sponsored by the Southwestern Colored Cowboys Association and American Black Cowboy Association became the norm. This network of competitions known as the Soul Circuit or Subterranean Circuit (Pearson, 2004; Watriss, 1980) was reminiscent of the Negro Leagues during the era of segregated baseball in America.

The Soul Circuit/Subterranean Circuit was established to counteract discriminatory practices in mainstream rodeo, while affording minority athletes an opportunity to hone their rodeo skills and supplement their incomes. In line with the Negro Leagues' purpose expressed in early statements of Effa Manley, co-owner of the Newark Eagles of the Negro Leagues, the Soul Circuit/Subterranean Circuit provided a safe social space for African Americans in many ways (Pearson, 2021). As Manley contended, the Negro Leagues were much more than baseball games and entertainment. They provided an environment where civic and community needs, as well as social issues, could be addressed. Such was the case as well for many early Black rodeos, which were often held in small rural environs devoid of the many civic and entertainment options within larger urban communities. For example, as I stated in my book *Black Rodeo in the Texas Gulf Coast Region* (2021):

> Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968, which led to the dismantling of discriminatory policies and government sanctioned segregation, black rodeos like their Negro League counterparts were salient contributors to the black "eco-system" in their respective communities. At times they were a source of entertainment and pride, a vehicle for seasonal employment; a galvanizing entity for political activism; an economic revenue generator for sport entrepreneurs and small business owners; as well as educational forums. (pp. 39–40)

Not only does U2 Rodeo pride itself on its entertainment value and high-quality rodeo productions, but it also serves as a major educational, historical, and sociocultural purveyor of aspects germane to both its minority devotees and those unfamiliar with their contributions to the American West.

Although sanctioned forms of segregation and discriminatory practices are no longer the norm, remnants of these practices have scarred rodeo at the highest levels of competition. As a result, there are still very few African Americans participating in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA). Nonetheless, the legacy and spirit of the Soul Circuit appears to persist through the Cowboys of Color Rodeo Series. The goal has been to increase the number of African American rodeo cowboys competing at the PRCA level, while concurrently acquainting individuals with the often-omitted contributions and forgotten legacy of African American cowboys.

Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour

The Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour is "the largest multicultural rodeo tour in the world" ("Cowboys of Color," 2017, p. 7), and is considerably different than other rodeo competitions. It is reminiscent of late 19th-century Wild West shows and akin to a Barnum and Bailey three-ring circus. Although the rodeo is the primary attraction, several western frontier performances and reenactments are staged to educate and entertain the audience. For example, Buffalo Soldier encampments and artifacts are displayed upon entering rodeo venues. During rodeo event intermissions, charro ropers (Mexican cowboys) and Escaramuza (Mexican female mounted drill team) exhibitions, as well as Native American ceremonial dancers, acquaint rodeo spectators with their respective legacies. African American mounted drill team exhibitions, Pony Express relays, and Tennessee Walking Horse demonstrations are among the staged performances supplementing the rodeo experience.

U2 Rodeo purports to address some of the perceived needs of ethnic minority rodeo cowboys and cowgirls, along with their devoted fan base. Through the Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour, U2 Rodeo attempts to fulfill its three hallmark objectives: training, educating, and entertaining. Succinctly stated in its promotional literature, the Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour is a series of PRCA-structured rodeos designed to "give ethnic cowboys and cowgirls a chance to increase their skills, earn prize money, and be positive role models for kids" ("Cowboys of Color," 2008, p. 9). The tour is referred to as a farm system or training ground for young minority cowboys/girls to hone their rodeo skills for PRCA competition. This includes skill and technical development opportunities, personal development workshops, and professional standards seminars.

U2 Rodeo's educational objective is intimately intertwined with its entertainment aspect. The legacy and contributions of African American western frontier stakeholders, although rarely discussed in conventional American history textbooks, are conveyed through various media. Each year's souvenir program contains historical information highlighting their contributions in the expansion of the American West. Biographies of legendary figures and noteworthy historical events help reconnect individuals with the past.

State-of-the-art technology (e.g., computer registration and Ticketron seat purchasing) along with vestiges of the past like grand entries, trail rides, campouts, and post-rodeo dances have been employed within U2 Rodeo's programming. The integration of new technologies, designed to expedite contestant registration and scoring, and nostalgic activities that metaphorically recapture images of the past, have helped U2 Rodeo establish a first-rate rodeo experience. A key informant's comments are as follows:

> I enjoy coming to Cleo's rodeos. They're in nice arenas, [with] good stock, and well run. As I said, they are well run, and you can make some money. I learn something every time I rodeo. With the Cowboys of Color rodeos, you have to fill out the registration forms. I attend many rodeos and his are always among the top three minority ones. (KI-DW, personal communication, October 25, 2008, as cited in Pearson, 2012, p. 70)

A hallmark of U2 Rodeo has been its emphasis on marketing the "4 Ps Plus" (i.e., product, promotion, public, place, and price), and their interrelatedness to quality event delivery (Mullin et al., 2007). Through in-kind contributions, corporate support solicitation, sponsorship packages, and vendor space leasing, U2 Rodeo has executed an enviable business plan. It has also achieved success in negotiating major contractual agreements with corporate entities like Ford Motor Company and American Airlines to help underwrite and defray production costs. This has enabled U2 Rodeo to advertise through myriad print and broadcast media outlets. Market segmentation through commercial airtime purchased from various Hispanic and Native American radio stations is used to promote the Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour within these communities. Another salient aspect of U2 Rodeo has been its ability to attract major entertainers to perform between events and during post-rodeo dances.

Social Significance and Community Engagement

U2 Rodeo Production Company, and its Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo Tour, has contributed significantly to its community through various structured social programs and coordinated youth engagement activities with educational, civic, and philanthropic organizations. Cultural awareness and African American empowerment through education have been essential aspects of U2 Rodeo's community involvement mission since its inception. Its marketing tagline pitch, "Let us entertain you while we educate you," is not mere hyperbole. U2 Rodeo has been instrumental in the legacy restoration and cultural preservation of the diversity of the western frontier. Through depictions and narratives of African American life in the American West, many rodeo spectators have become more educated and culturally sensitive to the contributions of Blacks and other marginalized groups. For example, the authentic crinolined Adelita attire of the Escaramuza drill teams, the stylish chaps and wide sombreros worn by charros, and the ornamental ceremonial dress of Native American dancers at the rodeos provide a vivid description of the past. These cultural traditions and displays, along with Buffalo Soldier griots and encampments, help rodeo spectators vicariously enter the "worlds" of these groups.

Efforts have been made by U2 Rodeo to preserve the cultural legacy of the aforementioned American West inhabitants. Not only has the rodeo company provided a venue for recreating the past, but it has been a major factor in the establishment and funding of the National Multicultural Western Heritage Museum (formerly the National Cowboys of Color Museum and Hall of Fame) in Fort Worth, Texas. Annually, U2 Rodeo sponsors a rodeo to benefit the Museum and Hall of Fame. In addition to the financial support, numerous artifacts and memorabilia have been donated to the museum collection by Cleo Hearn and other Cowboys of Color supporters. The NMWHM serves as a repository for the collection of historical artifacts and memorabilia, and throughout the year it hosts oral presentations, cultural heritage workshops, and Western history symposiums by guest historians.

U2 Rodeo's educational mission is intertwined with its rodeo production. Over the years, it has partnered with ICREA, Inc., a 501(c) (3) educational nonprofit organization that provides teacher training in creative thinking and cultural history in North Texas public and private schools. It has also collaborated with the Dallas Mavericks basketball franchise to honor Black History Month with a competitive essay contest pertaining to Dr. King's "Dream." Further, U2 Rodeo has provided scholarship information and opportunities for numerous rodeo cowboys/girls aspiring to study and compete at the collegiate level. Through its rodeos and the information it shares online, U2 has become a conduit and purveyor of post-secondary educational information. During the 2009 College National Finals Rodeo, several young rodeo cowboys competing were former Cowboys of Color junior rodeo circuit participants. U2 Rodeo has also worked with community leaders and law enforcement agencies to address some of the contemporary issues confronting minority youth: gang violence, teen pregnancy, unemployment, and the need for proper health, nutrition, and attire. At a recent Deputy Mayor's Teen Summit, which included a multicultural film and music festival, a Black History Rodeo was scheduled with "Black Historical Moments" interjected during breaks in the rodeo. The sponsored activity was heavily supported and promoted by area businesses and free to all teen participants. U2 Rodeo Production's Fall 2009 rodeo schedule included two competitions co-sponsored by D.A.R.E., further demonstrating its social consciousness and commitment to community involvement.

Education and training of minority cowboys/girls have been major components of Soul Circuit/Subterranean Circuit rodeos over the years. Similar to "farm systems" or training schools in various sports for novice rodeo cowboys/girls to hone their respective skills for PRCA competition, U2 Rodeo has offered much more. Skills frequently overlooked in conventional training programs like interviewing, cowboy etiquette, personal development, and professional standards adherence are addressed, along with specific rodeo event technique clinics. As with mainstream rodeo, education, training, and development opportunities must start early, although aspiring Black rodeo cowboys/girls rarely live in rural or agrarian environments where roughstock is readily accessible for practice. The inclusion of early rodeo development competitions like mutton-busting, pee wee, and junior barrel racing, as well as breakaway and tie-down roping events, are scheduled to expose children to rodeo.

Conclusion

Since its inception, U2 Rodeo has arguably been the quintessential leader in championing social and community engagement activities through Black rodeo. This was evident when U2 Rodeo promoted the 31st Annual Texas Black Invitational Rodeo at the Fair Park Coliseum in Dallas on June 15, 2019. Rodeo proceeds supported the African American Museum of Dallas. This was arguably one of U2 Rodeo's most satisfying sociocultural contributions. The rodeo company has literally opened doors both in and outside of the sport that were previously closed to African Americans in the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex. For example, it was the first minority rodeo company to lease the renowned PRCA-sanctioned Mesquite Arena (Mesquite, Texas) for its National Finals, as well as the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum (Fort Worth). These opportunities were due in part to U2 Rodeo's meticulous business plan, highly structured rodeo format, corporate sponsorships, and contemporary marketing strategies.

U2 Rodeo has epitomized the African American sports culture of the late 19th and early 20th century through the goals and ideals that led to its genesis. The family-owned rodeo company has successfully created a wholesome family entertainment image, prepared numerous rodeo cowboys/girls to compete at PRCA-level competitions, and exposed spectators to the rich legacies and cultural contributions made by African, Hispanic, and Native American western frontier inhabitants. An example is the souvenir program available at each rodeo that provides a description of events, as well as brief bio-sketches of noteworthy minority contributors to the American West and rodeo. Lastly, a salient component of Soul Circuit/Subterranean Circuit rodeos is the post-rodeo dance, often featuring celebrity entertainers. U2 Rodeo has added to this spectator-oriented activity through an event titled "Kickin' in the Dirt." This novel fan-friendly activity enables spectators to dance on the arena floor, while meeting and visiting with rodeo contestants.

Contemporarily, U2 Rodeo has assumed a mentorship role in the development of aspiring minority rodeo cowboys/girls. It has established itself as a sociocultural icon through its many contributions to humankind in and around the state of Texas. This distinction has not gone unnoticed. In 2005, Cleo Hearn was immortalized with a star on East Exchange Avenue in the legendary Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District by the Texas Trail of Fame for significant contributions to the western way of life.

References

Barr, A. (1996). *A history of African Americans in Texas, 1528–1995* (2nd ed.). University of Oklahoma Press.

Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo. (2008). *Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo: National Finals Rodeo* [Souvenir Program].

Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo. (2017). *Cowboys of Color Invitational Rodeo: National Finals Rodeo* [Souvenir Program].

Gems, G. R., Borish, L. J., & Pfister, G. (2017). *Sports in American history* (2nd ed.). Human Kinetics.

Glasrud, B. A., & Searles, M. N. (Eds.). (2016). *Black cowboys in the American West: On the range, on the stage, behind the badge*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Jones, K. (2003). Rodeo renegade. *Texas Journal, 7*(4), 68.

Moore, M. R. (2001). *Settlers, slaves, sharecroppers and stockhands: A Texas plantation-ranch, 1824–1896* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Houston.

Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. A. (2007). *Sport marketing* (3rd ed.). Human Kinetics.

Pearson, D. W. (2004). Shadow riders of the Subterranean Circuit: A descriptive account of Black rodeo in the Texas Gulf Coast region. *The Journal of American Culture, 27*(2), 190–198. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2004.00129.x

Pearson, D. W. (2012). Cowboys of color: The perceived sociocultural significance of U2 Rodeo. In J. L. Conyers Jr. (Ed.), *Africana studies: African American consciousness: Past and present* (Vol. 4, pp. 63–76). Transaction.

Pearson, D. W. (2021). *Black rodeo in the Texas Gulf Coast region: Charcoal in the ashes*. Lexington Books.

Rattenbury, R. C. (2010). *Arena legacy: The heritage of American rodeo*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Watriss, W. (1980). The Soul Circuit. *Geo, 2*, 134–150.

Weston, J. (1985). *The real American cowboy.* Schocken Books.

Conclusion to the Report

Global and local crises and anti-Black attacks in various facets of society by their nature compel reaction and crisis response. However, the brilliant assessments of this report inform and inspire Black communities to maintain the larger visions of themselves that emerge from seeing themselves through their own cultural lenses; drawing on their own legacies and intellectual heritage; and embracing political agendas that address the unique needs, concerns, and goals of Black communities, which include and go far beyond the issues highlighted in mainstream media outlets. Getting caught in a cycle of crisis response not only derails more holistic development agendas for African/Black people but also can compel us to adopt deficit narratives that are harmful to our health outcomes and undermine victorious consciousness. The more grounded approaches in this report come with a host of largely complementary practical and conceptual solutions and a few areas of healthy friction, which only spark deeper thought and create opportunities for important dialogue so that we might, in the words of Dr. Mark Christian, “sing our own songs” as a powerful chorus.

The NCBS Annual Report is an eye-opening momentous occasion. This project is a multifaceted, layered composition of voices both inside and outside of the Academic world. The submissions reflect the wide-ranging concerns and examinations of the Black experience writ large. The essays and scholarly articles range from law enforcement officers to African Centered- Psychologists, to globally known defense lawyers to a wide range of Africana Studies experts. The nature of the works speaks to the cascading realities that people of African ancestry are facing as the new millennium rushes forward. This work contains entries from graduate students to seasoned experts who have made the discipline flourish and become the entity that it is today. The editors created categories that will satisfy the curiosity of any person who is seeking a variety of perspectives on the Black condition in the current moment. While the editorial board could not accept the momentous volume of submissions that were submitted, we are thankful that the idea of the annual report has been extremely well received by the general public and look forward to next year's submissions for review.