Chapter 6

"Heaven and Hell: Africans and the Image of Africa"

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What is Africa to me:

Copper sun or scarlet sea,

Jungle star or jungle track,

Strong bronzed men, or regal black

Women from whose loins I sprang

When the birds of Eden sang?

One three centuries removed

From the scenes his fathers loved,

Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,

What is Africa to me?

….

In an old remembered way

Rain works on me night and day.

Quaint, outlandish heathen gods

Black men fashion out of rods,

Clay, and brittle bits of stone,

In a likeness like their own,

My conversion came high-priced;

I belong to Jesus Christ,

Preacher of Humility;

Heathen gods are naught to me.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

So I make an idle boast;

Jesus of the twice-turned cheek,

Lamb of God, although I speak

With my mouth thus, in my heart

Do I play a double part.

Ever at Thy glowing altar

Must my heart grow sick and falter,

Wishing He I served were black,

Thinking then it would not lack

Precedent of pain to guide it,

Let who would or might deride it;

Surely then this flesh would know

Yours had borne a kindred woe.

Lord, I fashion dark gods, too,

Daring even to give You

Dark despairing features where,

Crowned with dark rebellious hair,

Patience wavers just so much as

Mortal grief compels, while touches

Quick and hot, of anger, rise

To smitten cheek and weary eyes.

Lord, forgive me if my need

Sometimes shapes a human creed.

"Heritage" by Countee Cullen (1930)

This poem by Harvard alumnus Countee Cullen is his most famous. It gives flesh to the dilemmas of a population cast as the symbols of darkness in the modern domain of European and Euro-American empire. That dilemma is most explicit for the African constituent other living in the belly of the beast, the African American, and his self-positioning in relationship to Africa is the key question. Lest we forget, the other great empire of the eastern hemisphere—Islam—has been equally involved in the dehumanization of Africa and, amid its own dehumanization by the West (Said 1978), has had an especially difficult time living up to its own ant-racist ideals. Today, Africa and her diaspora must look both ways—west and east—to contest our role as the world's constituent other.

Should we aspire to lightness and criticize our own darkness, or invest in gods who look like us? Is it possible to make new gods in our own image that are not themselves enslaved by the need to contest and invert Europe's invention of blacks and whites as opposite kinds of people? However, this chapter articulates not only the African-American dilemma, but that of the people whom Nigerian-American novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's character Mwombeki calls "American-African" (Adichie 2013:141). Mwombeki is Tanzanian and a "double major in engineering and political science" (ibid.:140) who teaches the protagonist about the two separate organizations on their college campus—one enlisting "our brothers and sisters whose ancestors were slaves" and the other by African-born people who, even when they have

American accents, typically eat African food at home and are slapped by their parents for getting a C or a B-. This chapter also concerns their articulation of an amplified dilemma. They are extremely diverse in their origins, natal lifeways, earnings and reasons for immigration to the United States. However, among all continent-of-origin immigrant groups, they are, on average, the most highly educated and the second-highest-earning. Yet they come from the poorest continent. And their image is not their own.

Since the late 18th century, learned Europeans like Hegel and learned Euro-Americans like Thomas Jefferson have treated the enslaved African as the foil to their own aspirations to freedom and sought to explain why freedom-loving Europeans are still fully justified in enslaving Africans. American Africans at Howard seek to earn their living and articulate their own retort in the midst of an African-American project to do the same. Like the Louisiana Creoles who articulate their collective ambition very differently in African-American-dominated and white-dominated settings, so the American Africans at Howard and at the TWIs answer their shared dilemma in very different ways.

This chapter, then, is a series of vignettes, a representational strategy motivated by three facts. First, American Africans are extremely diverse. They range from war refugees and famine victims to high-ranking professors and the student offspring of industrial magnates. Second, they and their relatives at home are key symbols—positive and negative—in so many peoples' self-understandings. And, third, they are the most highly educated of continent-of-origin groups, requiring me to give ample space to their own "literally-defined worlds." Overall, the trajectory of this fractal story acknowledges, first, the symbolic hell and, then, the symbolic heaven that American Africans and their interlocutors in the university have conjured out of real, earthly African lives.

This chapter is about the image of Africa in the self-making of not only African immigrants and transmigrants but also a greater circle of the dark and disenfranchised—Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Cubans, Cuban émigrés, African Americans, and immigrants from Guatemala and El Salvador, for whom Washington, DC, is likely to have been the first point of contact with African-inspired lifeways. The African student body in Howard's College of Arts and Sciences has plummeted since the 1980s, and, in inverse proportion, the population of African professors at Howard and African professionals in the DC area has skyrocketed, many of them highly educated refugees from the declining fortunes of Nigeria. In particular, in 2002, Howard had become the North American headquarters of a Yoruba nationalist movement struggling for democracy in their homeland. At the same time, the West African religions of the Yoruba and Ashanti peoples were the focus of a cultural renaissance richly subsidized, debated, re-figured and canonized in a series of North American universities, and especially in the Traditionally White Institutions. This cosmopolitan renaissance has incorporated not just Latino Americans and African Americans but also local Ethiopians and Sudanese, who, before immigration to the US, probably had as little exposure to the Yoruba and the Ashanti gods as did the Central Americans. This renaissance is visible in both scholarship and daily life.

Like the ingenious political strategy of a once-discredited politician, Yoruba-Atlantic religion in particular changes the narrative on Blackness. However, like any collective identity, this super-ethnicity incorporates many of the standards of the dominant, ethno-racially unmarked group. Moreover, it can be mobilized in projects of ethnic upward mobility within the existing hierarchy, or as a racialized declaration of independence from that hierarchy.

Earth

Africa is, in truth, neither heaven nor hell. Writes Adam Hochschild:

> Africa has too many corrupt statesmen, but such figures blight countries everywhere, from Afghanistan to Belarus. Yes, many African societies are deeply scarred by the heritage of masters and slaves, but so is Russia: some 150 years ago, most people there were serfs…. one would never guess that for all the continent's troubles, democratic elections are today far more common [there] than in the states of former Soviet Central Asia or the Arabian Peninsula. Or that Africa's economic growth has, for more than a decade and a half, been far higher than Europe's (Hochschild 2012).

Likewise, the African-born population of the US is full of surprises to those who know Africa through the television imagery of "Tarzan," "Daktari," "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom," Save the Children, and even Alex Haley's "Roots."

The third-greatest surprise is the rapidity of the recent growth in their population. By 1990, the 363,819 voluntary, 20th-century African immigrants to the United States were but a tiny percentage of the immigrants to the US, but they had already exceeded in number the 361,100 Africans who arrived here in chains between 1619 and 1859 (Wish 1941; Eltis 2001; US Census Bureau 1999). Almost as shocking, between 1990 and 2007, the number of African-born people in the US nearly quadrupled, reaching 1.4 million (Priority African Network 2011). Three-quarters have come in the past two decades, and almost half of the African-born population of the US has entered since 2000. There were nearly 1.5 million of them in 2009 (McCabe 2011). Their leading countries of origin are Nigerian, Ethiopia, Egypt and Kenya. They are concentrated on the east coast of the US, between New York City and Washington, DC., the last of which is the US metropolitan area with the highest concentration of African immigrants, whether they are measured as a proportion of the metropolitan area's entire population or as a

proportion of that metropolitan area's black population. More than a few of them, like Daag and Anyong, have worked or studied at Howard.

The second-greatest surprise for those of us who grew up on "Tarzan" is that they are significantly more educated on average than their fellow immigrants. Among the African-born, 47.7% have a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared with only 26.8% of immigrants as a whole and 28.1% of native-born people. However, there is great heterogeneity from one national-origin population to another. For example, 60% of Nigerians in the US have a bachelor's degree or higher, but 38.4% of Cape Verdeans and 37.5% of Somalis lacked even a high school diploma. The incomes of African immigrants reflect these educational gaps. Overall, African immigrants are slightly more likely to live in poverty (18.5%) than immigrants overall (17.3%) and considerably more likely than native-born people (13.6%). However, only 10.6% of Nigerians in the US live in poverty, in contrast to 49.9% of Somalis (McCabe 2011).

The greatest surprise is that, even though three-quarters of African immigrants reported their race as "Black" in 2009 (McCabe), many of even the phenotypically blackest Africans—that is, southern Nigerians--were initially shocked to learn, upon arrival in the US, that they are "Black." In Nigeria, it is more commonplace to think about "tribe" and "tribalism" than about "race" and "racism." Moreover, especially since their "Oil Boom" and among the kind of people who emigrate, rapid individual class mobility have been regarded as normal and independent of ethno-racial background. The idea of a skin-color-based, collective struggle for equal opportunity does not immediately strike them as natural or necessary. To and equal and opposite degree, the naturalness and the necessity of this strategy are obvious to most African Americans. The resulting misunderstandings between Nigerians and African Americans are numerous. Relatedly, most Nigerians, Ethiopians, and Eritreans become "African" for the first time when

they immigrate to the US and must both embrace and redefine that category in reaction to Fanon's hierarchy of light-to-dark. In other words, they face a new struggle of their own.

The stories of Nigerians' first encounters with US racialism are often comical. For example, one Nigerian Igbo professor in Massachusetts told me about the day that his 6-year-old son came home from school and announced with pride, "Guess what, Daddy! I'm Black!" The father furled his eyebrows, retracted his chin, and replied, "What's that?" The same professor told me that, during a trip back to Nigeria by another Nigerian-American family, their child asked, "Daddy, where are the white people?" An obvious answer might have been: "There are hardly any of them here, so neither they nor their images are important reference points in our self-understanding." But I do not, in truth, know how the other father answered. It must also be said that there is something peculiar in this regard about the Nigerian experience since the Oil Boom. Kenyans, Zimbabweans, South Africans, Senegalese, and other Africans are still accustomed to a demographically and politically massive white presence in their countries, as well as the light-dark hierarchy, often as a daily reality. American race and racism cannot be as surprising an experience for them.

Having grown up decades after decolonization and the so-called "Indigenisation Decree" of 1972, most of my Nigerian-diaspora friends report that they had never thought of themselves as "Black" (or "black") until they arrived in the US or UK.[1] That is, they had never thought of their skin color as a distinguishing mark or as the badge of any particular political affiliation, rank or endogamous social group. During her lecture at Duke University in 2013, Adichie, then 36, reported that said the first time an African American called her "sister," she thought, "I have

[1] The "Nigerian Enterprise Promotion Decree" gave Nigerians "the exclusive right to the ownership of some enterprises and greater participation than hitherto in the equity ownership of others" (Inanga 1978:31). This decree and the wealth-creating oil boom of the early 1970s eliminated whites, Indians, and Lebanese as major, visible presences in the Nigerian marketplace and even more so in Nigerian society at large.

three brothers, I know where they all are, and you're not one of them" (caaar.duke.edu/films). And when she wrote a memoir reporting this initial non-cognizance of her Blackness, her white editor deemed the claim too implausible to publish. In her brief time in the US, she realized that she had already absorbed this country's negative stereotypes about Blackness and the sense of many black immigrants that success means moving away from it. She did not say so, but many black immigrants have mentioned the warnings they received from white Americans about the importance of avoiding African Americans, on account of our ostensible dangerousness, laziness or irresponsibility—all linchpins of many white Americans' conviction that their long monopoly on opportunity and power were perfectly fair and reasonable. Few black immigrants recognize the ulterior motive behind such white Schadenfreude, and most ultimately confabulate their own genre of the same. However, after years of reading and experience, Adichie concluded, "I am happy to announce that I am happy to be Black, happy to be a sister."

In the United States, I am as mindful of others' reaction to my skin color as I am unmindful of it in Nigeria. There, I am more frequently judged by my eyeglasses than by the color of my skin. New Nigerian arrivals in the US are shocked that they are not recognized primarily for what they regard as salient about themselves—their high education levels, high incomes, and the excellence of their diction relative to their social peers at home and, in their view, relative to most native-born Americans (see also Adichie 2013). For such elite black immigrants, the precipitous drop into "Blackness" feels like hell. The reports they make from predominantly white communities and TWIs are particularly anxious.

My wife Bunmi is Nigerian. I met her during my first year out of Harvard College, during my stint as a Rotary Scholar at the University of Ibadan. We married eight years later, in 1990. Soon thereafter, I became an assistant professor at Harvard, and we moved to Cambridge.

After five years in the shadow of the nation's leading TWIs—one at Princeton and the next four at Harvard--she clearly named her image in even the most enlightened reaches of the white American mind:

> Before my immigration to the United States… I was known as a Nigerian of the Yoruba ethnic group. I was also a Western-educated woman with certain privileges and high expectations. Since coming here, though, my identity has changed. I am now an "African woman." My culture, attitude, and experience are presumed to reflect all of Africa, a continent of 55 countries, 400 million people, and thousands of ethnic and linguistic groups. By definition, I am supposed to be poor, uneducated, and ridden with disease….
>
> I grew up in a rural town in Nigeria. We had five primary schools and a high school. There was a post office and a small clinic. All these facilities have since expanded as Nigeria grew rich from its oil….
>
> In high school, we studied Shakespeare, George Eliot, Jonathan Swift, the Bronte sisters, and Charles Dickens. Under British colonial rule, generations of Nigerians studied such writers to the exclusion of African authors….
>
> I can understand the misconceptions of the average person. But in December 1993, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D) of South Carolina, returning from trade talks in Switzerland, jokingly implied that African leaders were cannibals.
>
> I was shocked to read this, not only because of the insult, but also because of what it implied about the great ignorance of the realities of our lives.
>
> Some of the worst riots in Nigeria have their roots in the disparity between the opulent lifestyles of the elite—the privileged diplomats who traveled to Geneva—and the

austere lives forced on the rest of the population by the government. While a large percentage of the population is suffering, the elites are driving BMWs, Mercedes-Benzes, and Alfa Romeos. Their opulent houses are built with tall fences and staffed with servants, guards, and dogs….

These rulers were the same ones characterized as starving cannibals. This could be said with impunity, because this is what being an African seems to mean in America.

It does not matter that some of these "cannibals" are products of the world's best universities; neither does it seem to matter that they belong to the class that controls and distributes the resources of their countries.

I am beginning to understand the differences between the myth of the African that I am in America and the Nigerian I consider myself to be. I spoke to my first Kenyan and tasted my first dish from Sierra Leone in this country. It was at a dinner given by an American friend who worried all evening that she had not prepared it the authentic way. I doubt I convinced her that I wouldn't know an authentic Sierra Leonean dish from her version. Both were as foreign to my palate as pizza.

Even as I become accustomed to what Americans expect from me—do I know their friend in Mombasa, Kenya? Or perhaps an acquaintance in Ghana?—their stereotype of the silent and voiceless African woman remains alien to me. The women I grew up with were anything but silent.

Yoruba women of southwestern Nigeria have a long history of organization and prosperity. Many of our grandmothers put our parents through college. Many own real estate and farms. They employ workers and commute home at the end of the day in

> luxury cars after they've closed their shops. In fact, women dominate the retail sector in Nigeria….
>
> To become an African woman is to struggle against the myths and misconceptions of African womanhood. Yes, I am an African, but I am a Nigerian first. That is the only honest claim I can make. I cannot speak for a continent (Bunmi Fatoye-Matory, "I Am Not Just an African Woman," *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 July 1996).

Identified with a whole continent and its alleged misery, Bunmi has articulated an image of herself that had never been necessary in Nigeria. Africa is the most genetically diverse continent on the planet and one of the most culturally diverse. But by 2010, she says that she had also abandoned the aim implicit in her 1996 article—to change Western minds about Africa. She says that she would rather invest her energies in developing her home region. Disillusioned with the corruption of the Nigerian state, she places both her identity and her hopes for our children not in Nigeria but in Ekiti, where she says people tend to share the value that she and our family place on education, rather than, for example, on commercial wealth. She hopes that Ekiti will become a safe haven, whenever our children need it, against the predations of race in America.

Hell

On Friday, May 17, 2002, my frequent host Daag called to apologize for not having telephoned as promised the previous Sunday. I hadn't called, either. I was too tired, and had not grown accustomed to the normalcy of this kind of African in my Afro-Atlantic world. He was tall and robust Shilluk man from Sudan, a site of racially-coded oppression and ethnic proliferation far away from the imagination of most African Americans but strikingly parallel in

its ambiguities and ambivalences, poised at the border between two worlds of social classification and stratification. He had failed to call because a Dinka countryman of his—Anyong Kout Deng--had gotten into a fight in an Eritrean-owned bar on 18th Street, where, I later learned, the upstairs was called "Heaven" and the downstairs "Hell." Struck in the head with a bottle by an unidentified fellow black man, Anyong initially survived his struggle between Heaven and Hell, but the next day he woke up at 2 p.m., disoriented and crying for help due to a pain in his head. He was declared dead on arrival at the hospital, from intra-cranial bleeding. No one around Daag knew cause of the fight.

[@@@ Photo S: Graveside photograph of Anyong Kout Deng, 2002. Photograph by the author.]

In principle, Islam divides the world between believers and unbelievers, regardless of phenotype and divides the unbelievers into protected groups and unprotected peoples, whom Muslims are free to enslave in the context of war, regardless of their phenotypes. Yet Bernard Lewis (1990) argues that Islam—in contrast to the Roman and Chinese empires—was the first truly global empire, in which radically different-looking types of people were brought together in close, regular interaction. So there was a potential for the emergence of a racial taxonomy, in many ways like the one that began in 19th-century Europe and reached its crescendo in 19th-century craniometry.

Moral equality among the believers is a powerful principle in the Islamic world. Yet, like the empires and religions that had preceded it, Islam took for granted the reality of slavery and of male superiority. However, Muslim and non-Muslim historians argue that Islam conferred rights

upon slaves and women—and recommended forms of decency in behavior toward them—that were unprecedented. No more than the prior empires and religions did Islam specify the enslavement of any particular racial group, or exclude any racial group from enslavement. Rather, all unbelievers were eligible for enslavement and capture, as were the children of Muslim slaves. Dhimmis, or people who have agreed to the terms of Islamic rule and who pay the appropriate taxes, were exempted from enslavement as long as they continued to obey the rules laid down for them. These were usually people of the book—Christians and Jews. The best-documented forms of Islamic slavery were domestic and commercial (i.e., the enslavement of apprentices and workers in urban businesses). But some enslaved people were soldiers, administrators and household managers. Many of these were men who had been castrated from an early age.

Despite the egalitarian principles of Islam, there has long been de facto prejudice and differential treatment of people according to their appearance in that part of the world, too. According to Lewis, early Islam hosted a discourse of Arab superiority to Persians, Turks and Slavs. Moreover, *One Thousand and One Nights*, a book of west and south Asian tales first compiled during the Golden Age of Islam, during the 8th century to the 12th, teems with stories about black slaves and menial cuckolding their masters with the masters' willing wives.

Eve Troutt Powell (2012) documents both the multi-racial terrain of slavery and the phenotypical stratification of society generally in the late Ottoman Empire of the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as their echoes in the 21st century. In the 19th century, both the Caucasus and Sudan were slave-hunting grounds for the Ottomans. In this empire, Turks dominated Arabs, enslaved women from the Caucasus favored as concubines to elite men, while men from the Caucasus were disproportionately assigned to leadership positions. Despite their enslaved

status, these Caucasian "Mamluk" soldiers and administrators dominated the indigenous Arab population of northeastern Africa. Enslaved Sudanese and Ethiopians were sometimes powerful but were generally at the bottom of the hierarchy, and their numbers grew sharply as a proportion of the empire's enslaved population over the course of the 19th century. During this same century, an Arab bourgeoisie arose in both Egypt and Sudan, eventually leading movements of independence from the Ottomans and the British. Yet they proudly continued the forms of domestic slavery that had characterized the Ottoman aristocracy, often attaching great sentiment to their relationships with the enslaved concubines and eunuchs who had reared them. Post-19th-century Arabic draws a close association between "black person" and "slave." The term *'abd* means both. This term is hurled contemptuously at Dinka, Shilluk and other Sudanese war refugees in Cairo—people who have fled wars in central and southern Sudan, which are partly motivated and certainly exacerbated by northern Sudanese Arabs' feelings of superiority to their non-Arab or non-Muslim countrymen. Africa and black Africans have faced hell on both the western and the eastern shores of the continent.

On the western shore, the encounter with Europe has also left the Yoruba, the Igbo, the Ashanti, the Wolof, the Kongo and their descendants trapped and struggling for rank in a hierarchy of light to dark (Fanon 2008[1952]). In that hierarchy, neither whites nor Blacks are completely human. They are the dialectical and pathological creations of each other, and each group is stripped of half of its human qualities by this dialectic, which Fanon calls "double narcissism." Whites declare themselves intellectual and Blacks physical. Whites project what is "dark" in them—sex, aggression, and unvarnished nature—on Blacks and then both fear and crave us. Many whites feel guilty about the oppression of Black people in our soi-disant democracy but must, in order to assuage their consciences, avow that Blacks are animals or, at

the very least, people likely made dangerous by our desire for revenge. Like Jews and other racially stigmatized peoples, observes Fanon, Black people cannot but see ourselves through white stereotypes, aware that we can always be discredited by one mistake, even when we outperform whites in an overall sense. The struggle is irresolvable, since even the most prodigious efforts at conformity to the white ideal can always be terminated by the sudden uncovering of one's inferior essence. If you give up, you confirm the stereotype, and if you keep trying, you will still ultimately prove the stereotype.

The degree to which this Fanonian model applies to the interaction between Africans and the Islamic world is not clear to me. But Said (1972) identifies what might be called a "double-narcissism" between the West and the Islamic world. And there are signs that Islamic North Africa suffers at the intersection of these two double-narcissisms. Once they have sized me up as a sub-Saharan African, which they often do, many Moroccans and Egyptians whom I meet in Europe and the US announce that they are "African like [me]." Yet the violence inflicted by Libyans and Egyptians upon the black Africans in their midst is astonishing. Amid their own struggles with triple consciousness, depending on the context, the embrace and the expiation of Africa seem equally—and well precedented--human reactions.

The image of Africa in the African diaspora and in Africa itself is deeply connected to its image in Europe. Africa is the negative pole that Europe and most of the colonized and the formerly enslaved have adopted as their anti-type. For example, many black South Africans and Ethiopians define themselves in contrast to, superior to, and not really part of "Africa." But Africa also represents the romance of escape from worn-out Western models, as it did for Picasso and Brancusi. For many African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans in particular, Africa is the source of our shame. But it is also a place where we can imagine people like us can be

exempt from the burden of enslavement, colonization and segregation, and from the toll they take on the spirit.

During the early 20th century, after the passing of Booker T. Washington, few, if any, black leaders were more internationally known than African American W.E.B. Du Bois and Jamaican Marcus Garvey. They did not agree about much. However, they did agree that black unity and the uplift of Africa were indispensable preconditions to the redemption of the African diaspora. Africa was the Jerusalem toward which her scattered sons and daughters prayed, but it was also known as the land irredeemably cursed by Ham's indiscretion. Our heaven is, at once, our hell, and the source of our salvation is also our tormentor.

The narrator of African-American Countee Cullen's poem—first published as the poet earned his master's degree in English from Harvard--recounts the ambiguous heritage of the colonized and the enslaved. Though "conversion came high-priced," the worship of the white man's god held out a promise. Though unfulfilled, that promise is not forgotten, so it leaves a gaping hole of longing for a black god—not just a black god that preceded white oppression, but one who embodies triumph over white-imposed suffering and self-alienation. It is no stretch to see in this poem a secular meaning, as well. The narrator's ambivalent regard of the white god is the obverse side of the embrace and distancing, the communitas and stratification that shape the behavior of the stigmatized toward their own. This ambivalence inspires the invention of new black gods, new fictions of a black idyll in some far-off place to rival the fictions of a white idyll that remains equally inaccessible. The heritage of the stigmatized is precariously bridged between heaven and hell, much like the "Africa" of the popular African-diaspora imagination. "Africa" is both the metonym of militant unity among those who face the stigma of blackness and the worst-case scenario from which we scatter in flight.

American-African Schadenfreude and Last-Place Anxiety

It is a reasonable hypothesis that all populations at the bottom—and perhaps all proximate groups in a hierarchy—stereotype each other with a fervor that can be explained only by existential fear. But Schadenfreude is an especially predictable response to the hell of suddenly being cast into last place. The irony is that Africans, the world's constituent other, immigrate to the US and, in their new context, find someone else to substitute for them in the role.

Speaking to me as one of her own, one Nigerian pediatrician with a private practice in eastern Massachusetts told me, "The problem with African children is that they identify excessively with African Americans." Her seemingly Olympian superiority complex recalled that of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and of many white Americans who stand in judgment on Black Americans. Indeed, one of her twins is brilliantly accomplished, but the pediatrician herself is twice divorced, the second time violently. Both of her daughters may have prevailed over the US racism partly because the bore the parentally-instilled psychological armor of believing themselves superior to the conventional victims of white American racism. I do not know what to make of it that, while her daughter attended Harvard Medical School, this same pediatrician urged her daughter to use my sister Yvedt—an African-American, ironically--as a role model. Thinking of my own repeated misdiagnoses by white physicians at the Harvard University Health Service, who had also witnessed mountains of Black American decency and accomplishment around them, I pitied the African-American children this pediatrician may have treated with her quick and stereotypical judgments about what ails them and how they deserved to be treated.

Illustrating the differences between Africans and African Americans, an Eritrean restaurateur on U St. expressed pity for African Americans in general and, demonstrating the nobility of his feeling, told me that he sometimes feeds the African-American derelicts who wander into his restaurant. Many Africans feel misrepresented by the virtually uninterrupted "wild animals-war-famine-dictatorship-and-AIDS" narrative about Africa in the US media, and some suspect that this antipodean representation of a whole continent serves a psychological function for Americans. The US Americans who relish this narrative like to wag their heads and furl their brows in pity for their American African interlocutors, re-assuring themselves of their collective superiority and noblesse. It cannot fit into their mental worlds that the African to whom they are speaking is far wealthier and more highly educated than they. All of this passed through my head as I was addressed similarly by this restaurateur from the Horn of Africa, which is the preeminent source of African refugees from famines, wars and murderous dictatorships. At such moments, I felt what Bunmi had felt throughout her first five years under the American gaze. People are quick to brand stigmatized populations with pitiful or unflattering generalizations, even when the observed think that diversity of their co-ethnics is self-evident.

I heard the "tough love" version of American-African Schadenfreude from a Nigerian Igbo security guard on Howard's campus, who lamented that African Americans "don't value education." In America, he advised, "all you need to get ahead is education." He seemed unaware of the trend among his own co-ethnics in Nigeria that might be described identically. School and university attendance have reportedly declined sharply among Igbo males.

Another frequent interlocutor of mine was a Ghanaian security guard at the local CVS pharmacy, who regularly gave me lessons in Twi. He is an Ashanti from Kumasi, but he spoke of having built a big, beautiful house in Takoradi, thus alerting me, in a typically West African

cultural idiom, that I should not measure his success by his currently low employment status. This 65-year-old security guard confided that he is frustrated with my African-Americans some of his "brothers" who come into the store. One tried to steal about $200 worth of merchandise, he said. While my interlocutor held the thief for the police, he complained, another man just stood there watching. In his view, such thieves--and he implied that unhelpful bystanders deserved the same fate--should be sent to Ghana or Nigeria. They would not survive, he said. They would be beaten to death, or rescued only in the unlikely event that the police arrived in time. "Some of your brothers do not want to work," he concluded, after asking me if I am from here. He repeatedly said, "This is a good country. You work hard, you get ahead."

As my son Adu and I emerged from CVS, we too could see what he saw: there, an apparently African-American junky stood nodding against a light pole. I am certain that my Ghanaian tutor had seen similar sights at the end of many a workday, but, unlike my son and me, this elderly Ghanaian sojourner believed that this junky typified—or at least embodied—what is wrong with the African-American population as a whole. I, on the other hand, thought of the unwashed and often-unclothed individuals who wander West African marketplaces and sleep by smoldering trash heaps. I did not think it would be useful or logical to give him advice about his "brothers" based upon their example.

As they address me, such interlocutors often ask--with some insistent verbal nudging—whether I am not really from someplace else, my speech and accomplishments providing, in their view, some pretty firm evidence. They smile as though I should feel flattered, welcomed into their brotherhood of non-African-American and, therefore, responsible citizenship. Such interlocutors often know my entire family and dozens of similar African-American families at

Howard. But they have a supra-empirical stake in insisting that the junky is more representative of African-Americanness than we are.

The stigmatized stratify their own because no one wants to be in last place.

Two of the Nigerian-born Yoruba contributors to *Problematizing Blackness: Self-Ethnographies by Black Immigrants to the United States* (2003) are philosopher Olufẹmi Taiwo and literary scholar Tẹjumọla Ọlaniyan, then professors at Seattle University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, respectively. They well illustrate the ethnological Schadenfreude that is the focus of this book. They are clearly and rightly critical of racism in the US, one of the most galling aspects of which is the degrading and homogenizing representation of Africa in the US media and popular culture. The defensive response that they document in their "self-ethnographies," however, is premised on an idealized and generalized representation of African life, based upon the selective citation of their own nationality-, ethnicity-, gender-, class-, and age-specific experience, which they contrast with an equally homogenizing, unsubtle, and perhaps unintentionally degrading portrait of African Americans.

This response has much in common with the argument by Yoruba-American sociologist Oyeronkẹ Oyewumi, who teaches at Stony Brook University, that, in contrast to Western society, where male-female difference allegedly determines and limits *every* role that a female can play in Western society, Yoruba culture and society are primordially and completely gender-free, such that there are *no* sex-specific role expectations beyond the immediate context of procreation (Oyewumi 1997). In all three of these arguments, the result is often a cartoonish contrast between Africans and Westerners, one that bears the marks of its diasporic origins, where the immigrant speaker must react defensively to the prejudices of the host population and, in making

counteractive assertions, counts on the likelihood that the audience knows little or nothing about his or her homeland.

Taiwo (2003) refutes the argument of African-American conservative Shelby Steele that, nowadays, African-American disadvantage results largely from "race-holding"—that is, blaming all of their failures upon racism and, consequently, failing to act like self-responsible individuals in order the get ahead. Taiwo does not deny that African Americans engage in "race-holding" but, instead, blames African-American failings largely on *white American* race-holding, which confines all blacks and Blacks to the same ceaseless, narrowly scripted, disadvantaged and race-specific tastes, opportunities and roles. Whites and Black Americans treat anyone who steps out of these roles as odd and "out of place." Even Black Americans demand that recently immigrated blacks join their type-cast "army" in the fight against whites, without appreciating that black immigrants, based upon the example of Taiwo himself, grew up middle-class and in societies free of racial type-casting. Taiwo's repeated describes himself as an "individual," because, during his Nigerian upbringing, he performed a varied set of roles irreducible to race.

> All my life in Nigeria, I lived as a Yoruba, a Nigerian, an African, and a human being. I occupied, by turns, several different roles… Boy Scout…. well-read African cultural nationalist…. Member of the Nigerian province of the worldwide communion of the Church of England who remains completely enamored of the well-crafted sermon and of church music, often given to impromptu chanting from memory of whole psalms, the *Te Deum* or the *Nunc Dimittis*…. student leader of national repute…. aspiring revolutionary…. frustrated journalist…. ardent football player of limited talent…. Budding spiritualist who has since stopped professing faith…. (Taiwo 2003:41).

Of course, this is a valid and valuable retort to some unnamed racist's assumption that Taiwo's life was simple and confined to some race-specific or Africa-specific script. But it is also intended to demonstrate the "individuality" that Taiwo regards as a norm in his country, a form of "individuality" that he says contrasts with the "black individuality" that characterizes African Americans. As he defines it, this "black individuality" is not individuality at all; it is actually living one's whole life confined to race-specific and subordinate roles and options, much like Oyewumi's representation of the role of women in Western societies.

This portrait in contrast is shaped by a deliberate *silence* about the powerful and often oppressive forms of type-casting and collectivist ethics that shape identity and opportunity in Nigeria, as well. They are less often racial than they are related to ethnicity, class, age, gender, religion and family obligations and expectations. For example, access to contracts and even to the most basic infrastructural services in Nigeria is filtered through clientelism, ethnic nepotism and exclusion (i.e., "tribalism"), and disproportionate male power in the decision-making of the state. Such phenomena indeed contribute to a conditional sort of individuality—that is, a nearly predatory use of state resources by state actors and collusion in such conduct by their citizen clients, all with the consequence of impoverishing the collective in one of the world's greatest oil-producing nations. However, these individually stolen collective resources must be redistributed among extended families and village communities, often under threat of mystical harm.

Taiwo's portrait of his Nigerian "individuality" is shaped by the same "logic of the trial" that drives southeastern Indian, Louisiana Creole and Caribbean "culture"-making. Portraits of the homeland and its "culture" that correct powerful outsiders' devaluation of the spokesperson selectively, strategically and often fictionally dramatize those ideals of the dominant class that

would facilitate opportunity for the spokesperson and then attribute those ideals to the spokesperson's group as a whole. However, Taiwo's selective portrait of opportunity and alleged freedom from collective constraints based upon a person's social category might also result from Taiwo's taking for granted the privileges enjoyed by people of his particular ethnic group, class, age, gender, religion and parentage—privileges that the bearers of some other collective identities in Nigeria may not be able to take for granted to the same degree. For example, a problem currently raging in Europe is the suffering of female prostitutes from Nigeria. They and their families, many of them from the Edo-speaking region, see the young women's gendered earning potential in Europe as a valuable source of support for the impoverished family. Many of these women and their families have knowingly agreed to enter into highly coercive, oath-bound relationships to sex traffickers. The young women feel a sense of obligation to their families and ambitions that they believe can be fulfilled in this gender-specific way. On the other hand, their families feel a need and judge people of that gender and age suitable fulfillers of that need.

As Oyewumi and many others have correctly pointed out, Yoruba society sharply subordinates younger people to older people. However, contrary to her "either-or" portrait, people's roles—even beyond the moment of procreation--are also profoundly shaped by gender (see Matory 2003). For example, a woman is treated as a junior to everyone who was born to or married into her husband's family before she married in. She must defer to them. In the 1980s, when my wife, who is Yoruba, first drove her new car through her village, young people exclaimed—"Look, a woman who is like a man!" During the time of my immersion in Nigerian life, people have long spoken of "bottom power," the ways in which women use or must use sexual favors in order to access state financial resources that are accessible to their male

counterparts without the requirement of a sexual exchange. Carole Boyce Davies points out that it may be her own class status—as, for example, the daughter of a prominent king—that enabled Oyewumi to underestimate the constraining force of gender in other Yoruba women's lives (Matory 2003). But it is equally clear that the "logic of the trial" is at work in her portrait of Yoruba society as "genderless." Such ideas are propagated far more credibly in TWIs, where Oyewumi's students and peers have fewer opportunities to evaluate the actual conduct, talk and in situ reputation of "Nigerian" (often Yoruba) boyfriends, than at Howard.

In my observation, it is far more difficult for a Yoruba person to think of him- or herself as an individual in relation to the birth family than it is for most English-speaking Americans to do so. Families pressure their offspring to pursue certain careers, rather than others, and once those offspring prosper, they are no longer fully free to spend their resources or even to conduct their marital or household affairs independently of the collective judgment, or material demands of their birth families. Under pressure from their birth families, people regularly marry or refuse to marry based upon ethnic stereotypes and, among Igbo people, based upon caste.

Taiwo's immigrant representation of African personhood and agency will surprise most anthropological students of sub-Saharan thinking about the person, as well as most Nigerian immigrants, whose families at home feel strongly entitled to the immigrant's income. In the face of demands from brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews and so forth, the virtue of individual self-responsibility is not a tenable counter-argument. The type-based roles that shape and constrain most Nigerian lives defy Taiwo's repeated assertions of his own individuality. Such roles are evident in the words of Uncle Badejọ's mother on the eve of his departure for the United States—"Remember whose child you are. Do not step outside your proper place in the world." Taiwo may indeed think and act like an individual, unconstrained by the role expectations and

prejudices of the Nigerian society in which he grew up, but he is, in that regard, hardly representative of Nigerians, and the sense of individuality that he asserts in the US is probably not an effect of his Africanness, his Nigerianness, or his Yorubaness. In my observation, for the Yoruba people who want to do so, it is extremely difficult to define one's status, control one's resources and apportion one's time independently of the demands of one's extended family, one's elders, and one's community. Conversely, these commitments often inspire socially unconstrained conduct in the national sphere and far away from home, resulting in phenomena—ranging from 419 scams to kleptocracy—of which few Nigerian-Americans I know are proud. Indeed, most would say that these individualist behaviors violate their "culture."

African Americans may face a different set of dilemmas, but they result in no less complex and internally contradictory a set of responses. As Mintz and Price (1992[1976]) point out, there is perhaps no more compelling drive in African-American life than the pursuit of individual self-expression in opposition to racist type-casting and confined opportunities. The varied results include some of the most creative and fast-changing expressive musical cultures on the planet, "badness" (i.e., deliberately exaggerated and often-death-defying performances of the stereotypes projected onto us), and "John Henryism" (James 1994). The failure to perceive such human diversity among the stigmatized results from trained selectivity of perception and contrastive self-aggrandizement, not the rarity or invisibility of any of these phenomena among African Americans.

Qlaniyan's diagnosis of African-American psychopathology demonstrates a contrast between Africans as a whole and African Americans as a whole even more cartoonish than Taiwo's. He argues that the reason that Africans and African Americans tend not to get along is

that African Americans are—on account of our long experience of racism and of being outnumbered—unassertive, complacent and deferential to whites.

By contrast, he says that Africans, who have grown up in predominantly black societies and have a "pragmatic" attitude toward the state, are essentially assertive. He gives the example that, even as an assistant professor in a TWI, Qlaniyan behaved with the confidence of a higher-ranking professor. This example surprised me because of the extreme importance that most Yoruba people, even in the setting of Nigerian universities, attach to seniority. For example, at the University of Ibadan, between the 1980s and the present century, I have observed a norm of extreme deference by junior to senior professors, including bowing, and enormous attention to whether a professor should be addressed as "Dr.," indicating a junior status, or "Professor," indicating a senior status. So intense is many Yoruba people's concern with seniority that a Yoruba professor who joined the Harvard faculty in the early 2000s balled me out for addressing him by his first name. At the time, he was a newcomer to my institution, and both of us were full professors. However, he is some fifteen years my senior, and, despite the fact that we met in the context of a Western university where even the most junior lecturer typically calls a full professor by his or her first name, he apparently considers me Yoruba, on account of my marriage to a Yoruba woman and my long immersion in his networks. (By contrast, I considered him to be the one entering into *my* networks.) I do not recognize the Nigerian or Yoruba cultural precedents that Qlaniyan identifies as the source of his confidence in violating seniority-based forms of social intercourse. However, there would be nothing intrinsically non-Nigerian or non-Yoruba about a person behaving as in Nigeria as Qlaniyan says that he behaved at Madison. Rather, most Yoruba people I know would recognize it as a shameless violation of local "cultural" ideals, the likes of which happen in every society all the time. In Yoruba, it is

called *şakará*. To declare abroad that such behavior would be normal in Nigeria—and even behaving that way in a US university department—might be described as further instances of *şakará*.

Equally surprising is Qlaniyan's extraordinary unawareness, or self-flattering denial, of the coordinated African-American self-assertion that has transformed US democracy over the past century and a half. Qlaniyan's observations about African-American professors at the University of Wisconsin at Madison are quite different from my observations of their counterparts at Harvard, where, through excellent scholarship and bold strategy, African Americans have built one of the richest and most powerful departments on any US college campus. African-American professors there—including Cornell West, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Reverend Peter Gomes and I—were among the most outspoken professors on campus. At Duke, African-American professors are anything but deferential to whites. Indeed, we are found at virtually every level of the administrative hierarchy, and, for better or worse, at least two of us reportedly shout in the faces of our white colleagues and senior administrators regularly. Even if Qlaniyan is correct about his colleagues and University of Wisconsin at Madison, his quickness to generalize, like that of anyone engaged in ethnological or racial Schadenfreude, appears to flow less from a project of careful observation than from a project of self-promotion in a setting of racial hierarchy.

What I also wish to highlight in Taiwo's and Qlaniyan's contrastive representations of African and African-American conduct is not just their supra-empirical content but also their striking—but not absolute—contrast to the representations of black self and black other that I heard in the self-presentations of my three fathers. Both Taiwo and Qlaniyan know me, and my wife is close friends with Taiwo. Yet people like me and the enormous diversity of the African-

American population are invisible in Taiwo's and Qlaniyan's most thoughtful moments of public self-construction. Perhaps Taiwo's and Qlaniyan's self-ethnographies are signs of the times, an era different in both demography and ethos from the days of my three fathers. But the sort of ethnological Schadenfreude these self-ethnographies represent is hardly unprecedented or unique to black America.

Taiwo's observation of his own individualism in contrast with what he perceives as African-American collectivist "race-holding" has a grounding in reality, if not in the factors that Taiwo uses to explain this contrast. Immigration and the struggle of immigrants to evade the exorbitant demands for remittances is a process of individualization, and this process is compounded by the experience of being an "exotic" (Manyika 2003:74-5) or middle-class black. And, as Stephen C. Wright and others (1997; 1990) have pointed out, any degree of openness in the dominant group to upward mobility by the disadvantaged offers great encouragement to individual striving. Such tokenism works as a means of stabilizing existing social hierarchies that still rest on unequal opportunities for different population groups. By contrast, the virtually complete closure of the elite ranks to the disadvantaged (the likes of which preceded the Civil Rights Movement and is remembered by most adult African Americans) encourages collective action against the system. Such non-normative collective action also peaks when some members of the disadvantaged group find the courage to announce their experience of discrimination and express anger about it. Not all situations are equally favorable to such announcements. One way of discouraging dissent among the discredited is promoting a token of the sort that African Americans call the "HNIC," for "Head Nigger in Charge." When one of our own has been appointed by the powerful to rule on our behalf, we don't want to embarrass him by complaining. Moreover, delighted by his own power, he is often even less constrained in his

cruelty and less responsive to the hardships of the subordinated than the head white man had been.

Taiwo's and Qlaniyan's accounts assume the hyperreal infallibility of white performances and values. Taiwo appropriates the oft-stated white American ideal of "individualism," taking it for granted as an accurate description of white American conduct and as a value system morally preferable to collectivism. For his part, Qlaniyan (2003:60) says that as a source of great antagonism between himself and African Americans is that Black Americans as a whole are worse at understanding his accent and pronouncing his name than are white Americans as a whole. Yet, most of the African-American examples he gives are "middle school kids," servers at "Burger King or McDonald's," and clients at the legal aid clinic where his wife works. As a professor in one of the finest African studies programs in the country, Qlaniyan would certainly encounter a disproportionate number of whites who are more than casually acquainted with African languages and with the decoding of African orthographies, which is hardly a representative sample of white Americans. The sample available to my wife and me is hardly unbiased, either, but in our east-coast environs, we have noticed no difference between white and Black Americans' competency at understanding Nigerian speech or reproducing Nigerian names. In fact, in our environment, we have greater occasion to speak of the frequency with which African-Americans not only pronounce but adopt African names. And, although Qlaniyan is aware of the Afrocentrism movement, he believes that African Americans in general think negatively about Africa and avoid identifying with it (2003:61-2). What I perceive is mainly a widespread and growing, but romantic, identification with Africa. There is clearly deep ambivalence among African Americans about Africa: to us, it is both heaven and hell. Qlaniyan is not the only Nigerian, however, who fails to notice the frequency with which African

Americans worship Africa, and particularly Yoruba culture, partly because the "Africa" they worship is either unrecognizable or odious to these Nigerians themselves. It is a pagan, oppositional Africa—almost the opposite of the urban, Western-educated Africa that produced the Yoruba-American professoriat and of the ideal Africa pursued by their Pentecostalized countrymen. In other words, African immigrants and their urban peers "back home" also tend to feel deeply ambivalent about Africa. The ideal to which they aspire and find African Americans wanting is a hyperreal white America, whose real-world imperfections have been disappeared.

Equally important is the rise of anti-African-American identity among American Africans, which, logically, coincides with the rise in the number of black immigrants who have come to stay. Particularly among Nigerian immigrants and professors, the prospect of returning permanently to a viable homeland has, to a great extent, died. A series of northern, non-Yoruba-dominated dictatorships starved the universities and presided over the cancerous growth of kleptocracy, a decline in health-care, and an epidemic of home invasions, in which armed robbers break down the walls of elite homes and, while holding the homeowners at gunpoint, clear out all of the valuables. Taiwo and Qlaniyan illustrate process of ethnogenesis in a time when a previously temporary migrant population has laid down stakes in North America. Under these conditions, many high-SES African Americans and high-SES American Africans have become proximate rivals, rather than the long-distance cheerleaders and role models that they were for each other in my fathers' day.

For prosperous immigrants, who can afford to travel home often, these stakes do not necessarily mean that ties with the homeland are cut. Prosperous transnationals can afford to take advantage of the structural conditions of life in the home country and the country of origin—for example, sending unruly children "back home" for schooling and discipline, when

necessary (Shani 2013). But, in their family decision-making, such transnational migrants are highly aware of the limited opportunities, social complications, and disconcerting value orientations found in both the origin and the host societies. Stories of perfection and of a superior culture "back home" are fictional and strategic, though the effective performance of ethnological Schadenfreude relies on forgetfulness about this fact.

While these narratives of immigrant cultural superiority literally focus on native Black incompetency or incapacity, they occur against the backdrop of competition from highly competent and powerful African Americans at every level professional level. While some down-on-their-luck Yoruba immigrants gratefully report the generosity and kindness of African Americans toward them, more such immigrants report cases in which African Americans in predominantly white settings "played the native game" and intervened to close an opportunity that the black immigrant deserved. Others simply report sadness about how difficult it has been to make African-American friends. Ethnological Schadenfreude can express last-place anxiety, the consciousness of a formidable rival, or a disappointment over the failure of an expected solidarity.

A Way Out

With their high concentration of African immigrants, Washington, DC, and Howard University host another genre of rethinking, debating and organizing of the alternatives to hell. This genre critically addresses the conditions of home and of the diaspora. It is equally reflective and activist, eschewing idealism about the homeland. The following vignette examines another Yoruba philosopher's take on "culture," one articulated in the very different setting of its genesis—Howard University and Washington, DC.

Changes in the population of Nigerians at Howard have followed the changes in Nigeria's political and economic fortunes. Our Oil Crisis of 1973 and 1974, when US Americans lined up for gas, was for Nigerians an Oil Boom, which funded the study of thousands of Nigerian students in the US. They were expected to return home eventually, but the ultimate story is more complicated. They brought with them both government money and national pride, which, in addition to their intelligence, greatly impressed their peers at Howard. Then, strikingly, the African-born outnumbered the Caribbean-born students, a situation that has reversed since then. In 1987-1988, 41.6%, or 839, of Howards "international students" came from Africa, and the plurality of these from Nigeria. Only 36%, or 760, of the international students then came from the nearby Caribbean region (Diallo 1989; Feinberg 1988). One of the reasons that certain black immigrant populations, on average, perform well economically is that many members of those populations have come to the US specifically in order to seek education and have remained after graduation.

The number of African-born students in Howard's College of Arts and Sciences never recovered from the collapse of oil prices, the massive theft of public resources by Nigerian military dictators and other public officials, and the post-1989 tuition surcharge. In 2002, the spring party of the Howard University African Students Association (HASA) was virtually empty, the small crowd dwarfed by the cavernous ballroom of the Blackburn Center. Most guests were supporters from the Caribbean Students Association. Adding insult to injury, the deejay was reportedly forced by complaints to reduce the amount of African music played.

By contrast, the generation of Nigerians who benefited from government-funded educations and who were pushed out of Nigeria by crime and the northern military dictators' strangulation of the universities has become a significant presence at Howard and in DC's

professional class. Their American-born children are an equally significant presence in elite TWIs and in the professional schools at Howard. In 2002, the annual convention of the North American chapter of the *Ẹgbẹ Omo[dots under both O's] Odudua*—a Yoruba nationalist organization—filled the Blackburn Center auditorium, wall to wall.

This organization was founded in the 1940s by Nigerian independence leader Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ before he and his diasporic companions returned to lead Nigeria into independent nationhood. In Yoruba, its name means "The Club of Odudua's Children," and refers to the mythic first king and progenitor of all of the Yoruba monarchies and sub-ethnic groups. Called "Odua" in Cuba, he is also one of the highest gods in the Afro-Cuban pantheon. The lead branch of this organization, *Ẹgbẹ Iṣọkan Yoruba*— or "The Club of Yoruba Unity"—is located in Washington, DC.

During my sojourn at Howard, the Washington-area branch led the American diaspora of this Nigerian ethnic group in its Yoruba-nationalist struggle. The club fought against the northern Nigerian-, Muslim-, and Hausa-dominated military's rapacious grip on the state and what many Yoruba people, from the south, regarded as the proclivity of this northern class to murder the opposition, including Nigeria's democratically Yoruba president-elect, Moshood Abiọla, in 1998. The meetings of the Washington branch alternated between the auditorium of Howard's School of Engineering and that of the University of the District of Columbia, on upper Connecticut Avenue. I often attended on- and off-campus meetings with Nigerian Yoruba professors, several of them major leaders of Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua.

Candidates in Nigerian elections came to Washington and attended these meetings in order to solicit the club's endorsement, and the club sent delegates to Yorubaland to facilitate unity across the diverse political organizations at home, such as the Odudua People's Congress, Afẹnifẹre ("We Want What Is Good for People), *Ẹgbẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua*, the Odudua Group, and so forth. These groups unite Christian and Muslim Yoruba people, and they advocate for the security, political unity, and self-determination of Yorubaland. However, virtually all of the meetings that I attended began and ended with Christian prayers. *Ẹgbẹ Iṣọkan Yoruba* sponsored a Saturday-morning Yoruba language class on the Howard campus for the children of members. Like many immigrant and transmigrant communities, these Yoruba organizers are focused on the finances of their transnational families and on the politics of the homeland. However, a sense of ongoing turmoil and ethnic grievance in their homeland made Yoruba intellectuals even more attentive to these issues than most immigrant ethnic groups.

It was not in Ibadan or Igboho (where a spent several years of study and field research in Nigeria) but in Washington that I first encountered the national flag of the Yoruba nation and the "Yoruba anthem," which was sung at the beginning and at the end of every meeting.

[@@@ Photo TTT, from Envelope 9131: The 2002 annual convention of the North American chapter of the Yoruba nationalist organization Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua, held in Howard University's Blackburn Auditorium. Note the Yoruba national flag on the banner. It is a recent invention. Photograph by the author.]

Red, black and green (after the colors of Marcus Garvey's Black nationalist flag), the Yoruba national flag bore at its center an image of the world-famous bronze bust, apparently

representing a monarch, excavated in the early 20th century by German art historian Leo Frobenius and accessioned by the British Museum.

I was connected to this crowd of highly educated Nigerians at multiple levels, as my parents had been introduced to each other by a Yoruba man—Uncle Badejọ--who had attended college with both of my parents and medical school with my father. I was also connected to them through my wife, who was active in the diasporic opposition to General Sani Abacha, a Hausa man who was then the military ruler of Nigeria. At the multiple meetings, the club would call together, from the entire mid-Atlantic seaboard, the most highly educated sector of the global Nigerian community. They planned their peaceful strategies against not only their northern Nigerian oppressors but also their Yoruba compatriots who, for better or worse, failed to defend the rights of their co-ethnics. Amid the latter challenge, graft was the suspected cause of much disloyalty.

I was also connected to them by the fact that the then-president of *Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua* had grown up near Igboho, in Ọyọ North, where I had conducted my pre-dissertation field research. And as if that were not enough, I had administered the Yoruba-language competency test—in fulfillment of the University's foreign-language requirement--to his daughter at Harvard. This international leader of Yoruba politics and culture was also the chair of the Philosophy Department at Howard. Though he led an organization concerned largely, at that point in time, with ethnic separatism at home, the greater part of his scholarly opus is devoted to pondering the possible terms of African and Black unity. He combines a vision of "traditional" African religion as heritage with an unabashed modern secularism rare among his followers. Nonetheless, his publications might profitably be read against the backdrop of his changing political projects—first in Nigeria and then in the US. I offer this account of our multiple layers

of connection for two reasons. First, it gives flesh to the argument that "culture" and ethnicity unfold in cosmopolitan settings. Second, it offers a further counterpoint to the premise of Taiwo's auto-ethnography (that African Americans are more parochial than he is) and Qlaniyan's auto-ethnographic report of social isolation between African Americans and American Africans). Ours is elite company, to be sure. But there experience of the intersection between African-American and American-African lives is no more representative than mine. Perhaps the difference between Taiwo and Qlaniyan, on the one hand, and the Yoruba Howard philosopher and me, on the other, is the length of our exposure to the HBCU.

Our Howard colleague's first book, published while he was on the faculty of a prestigious Nigerian university, was an effort, after the fashion of British Empiricism, to systematize the African conceptions of the person, destiny and ethics through the analysis of the NigerianYoruba and Ghanaian Twi languages, and of the related precolonial religious practices. The former happens also to be, in principle, the sacred language of Cuban-inspired Ocha and of African-American Yoruba religion, while the latter is the sacred language of African-American practitioners of Akan religion. The best-known African speakers of the Akan language group are of the Ashanti ethnic group in Ghana. His book and its title are intended to reconstruct the shared features of an "ultimate reality and meaning" that characterize "the Yoruba conception" of the world and, by extension, the African conception generally. In this philosopher's work, influences from Arab and Hausa cultures are treated as authentic, while Western influences are excluded as exogenous.

Ironically, the exemplars of African culture invoked by African-American and Yoruba ethnicity entrepreneurs, like those employed in Lorenzo Dow Turner's research on the roots of Gullah/Geechee language, are selected from the catalogues of Anglophone scholarship and

mediated by the Anglophone university system. Both colonized chiefly by the British and both, like the British, royalist in their forms of government, the Yoruba and the Akan play starring roles in the English-language ethnography and in the collections of the British Museum. The elevation and the pairing of the Yoruba and the Akan in university-African and African-diaspora identity-making are, in sum, tandem results of British imperialism. The Yoruba and the Akan are now authoritative references in the Anglophone African and African-diaspora cultural nationalisms that have taken shape in Howard's shadow. There is nothing natural about such "syncretic" culture-making, either.

The second half of this Yoruba-American philosopher's book addresses the "contemporary African realities" that, in the professor's view, an authentically African "ultimate reality and meaning" must be mobilized to improve. He blames bourgeois Africans' selfish appropriation of their nations' wealth on a Western-style materialism that defies the authentically African premises of communalism and egalitarianism. He regards Africans of diverse ethnic groups as fundamentally alike with respect to this system of "ultimate reality and meaning" and therefore regards ethnicity itself as a smokescreen thrown up by the bourgeoisie in order to draw the people's attentions away from the bourgeoisie's theft of the African nations' communal wealth. Following Fanon, he regards culture as inherently dynamic and generated by collective struggle, rather than a thing of the past that justifies its own static retention. The upshot of this philosophical argument is that all Nigerians must unite in the service of national unity, self-determination, and communal uplift. The author is preoccupied ultimately with saving Nigeria and Africa from the exogenous values that have made Africans divide themselves up ethnically and destroy their own continent. In sum, while working and living in Africa, this professor

retooled the religious ethnography of the British imperialists in the service of pan-Africanism and a critique of contemporary African class hierarchies.

After a series of brief appointments at predominantly white universities and colleges in the US, this professor received a senior and tenured appointment at Howard. At the time that I knew him, his activism remained centered on fixing Nigeria, though the fix seemed to focus less on pan-Africanism than on the Nigerian dictatorship's unfairness to Yoruba people in particular and on the consequent need for Yoruba autonomy.

At the same time that his political activism sought to divide Nigeria into ethnic parts, his scholarship rationalized an expansion of his pan-Africanist program to the African diaspora. The prior emphasis of his opus—on the unity of diverse African and Nigerian ethnic groups--gave way to a focus on the unity of Africa with its diaspora. Once at Howard, his academic publications came to focus consistently on issues affecting Africans and African-diaspora people alike, such as sickle-cell anemia (a perennial focus of scientific and clinical work in Howard's medical complex), the compatibility of pan-African solidarity and anti-racism, and the "kinship" among the intellectual heroes of Africa, the Caribbean and the Black US. He addresses and refutes the position of another African philosopher that "African continental elites" who visit the West have an experience and political interests entirely different from those of "the diaspora African." Their shared interests become obvious, argues the Howard philosopher, when those "African continental elites"—like this professor himself—come to the West and are forced to ask, "Why should I be treated this way?"

Thus, even the work of university scholars illustrates the contextuality of ethnic identity and of its performance. But the African scholar at the HBCU is, in fact, in two places at once. On the one hand, he is conscious of the Realpolitik of interethnic division and hierarchy at home,

and he longs for his own ethnic group to be free of domination by others. On the other, he is in America, where Hausa, Yoruba, and African Americans are all vulnerable to being "treated this way." He is at once in the diaspora, far away from the country of his birth and longing for its wellbeing, and in Black America, a place of unavoidable stigma, misrecognition and ultimately common struggle, a place where a common "culture" and reason for cooperation are not given but must dynamically and creatively be established. In his opus, indigenous religion is an ideal vector of both sentiments. Odudua, for example, is at once a symbol of Yoruba nationalism, transcending the Christian/Muslim divide in Nigeria, and a god in the sub-Saharan African religion with the most globally dispersed set of adherents. Treated as a secular hero, this god gives his name to the organization that this philosopher led, Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua—the "Association of Odudua's Children."

Yet the Yoruba scholars I met at Howard seemed unaware of the fervor of many African-diaspora people's pursuit of redemption through Africa and, particularly, through Yoruba "culture" and identity, which have now become an alternative standard of dignity and virtue for millions at the dark end of the global hierarchy.

Ethiopian and ethnic Amhara Haile Gerima is legendary in the pan-African arts community for his film "Sankofa" (1993 [Washington, DC: Myphedus Films]), which arguably clothes Gerima's own northeast African struggles for African-descended people's dignity in the attire of "black Atlantic" spirituality—the same cultural foundations articulated by the head of Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Odudua. However, Gerima does so with a more explicit awareness of his popular counterparts. Though I interviewed him at his film studio, just across and a block up Georgia Avenue from Howard, I did not ask him about his films. I simply told him of my interest in black ethnic diversity at Howard. It was not difficult to perceive the connection between his

filmic vindication of Black pride and the biographical story that he spontaneously offered. He told me that, while his parents approved of his marriage to his classy African-American bride, some of his countrymen did not approve. They complained, "Ah, he married a Negro [baria]," a term that these fellow Amharas, says Gerima, falsely conflate with "slave" and use to describe both darker-skinned Ethiopians and African Americans of any shade, much as many Arabs use the term ʻabd for both "slave" and "black people."[i]

In support of Gerima's observation, a Sudanese colleague told me that, during a visit to New York, the wife of the Emperor Haile Selassie—himself an Amhara descended from another Ethiopian ethnic group, the Oromos--was once asked about the size of Ethiopia's population. When she replied, "About 5,000," the journalist replied with incredulity. She was then forced to acknowledge that the country was actually home to tens of millions, but "that's only if you count the Negroes." Yet, Gerima told me, even the phenotypically blackest of Ethiopians will say, "'Oh, he's married to a black woman,' as if she [the speaker] herself weren't black." Gerima seems to hint at the use of color references in women's competition for desirable mates.

He went on to add that, if he had married a Somali-speaker—a sometime-referent of the ethnonym "Habesha"--they would have said, "He married a nomad [zel'lan]," implying that she is uncivilized and derived from a people lacking a constitution and historical continuity. If he had married a Nigerian, they would have said, "He married an African." For them, Africa is a "symbol of crucifixion, demonized." He observes that black South Africans similarly demonize other Africans, and that, in the past, African Americans, too, used the term "African" as an expletive intended to terrorize the African-looking members of their own community. Although the Afrocentric movement of the 1980s greatly diminished it, this phenomenon is not dead. Gerima's own words vividly illustrate the imagination and creativity with which the stigmatized

"stratify their own." They are highly aware of the alleged characteristics that stigmatize them in the eyes of the dominant, ethnically unmarked audience, and they are anxious to distinguish themselves from populations that can be represented as more fully embodying those traits. Marx's anti-Semitic and anti-African tirade against Ferdinand Lassalle (Sperber 2013) is another vivid example. This zero-sum flight from dishonor is the hell in which the stigmatized live their daily lives.

Yet symbolic inversion is an equally available and tempting reaction to stigma. For example, when they celebrate their historic expulsion of the invading Italians in the early 1940s, Ethiopians describe their nation as "the Black Lion" and declare metaphorically, "The black snake will kill you more surely than the white snake." Though it is sometimes derogatory, Gerima regards the term for "black" in this context, tukwur, as an indication of a chink in Ethiopia's otherwise anti-Negro ethos, a symbol of Ethiopia's African pride in having resisted white conquest. Such an interpretation accords with the motivation behind African Americans' vociferous devotion to the Ethiopian cause during that period. As in Latin America, so at these other cultural crossroads, references to blackness can justify the egalitarian embrace of one's oppressed fellows or, alternatively, a distancing from those who seem, on racial grounds, to deserve their oppression and marginalization more than the speaker does.

However, an Ethiopian student of mine at Duke and her parents view the matter differently. They emphasize that no Ethiopian would call him- or herself tukwur. For them, the more common symbolic inversion of Western assumptions is that

> … many Ethiopians, particularly those immigrants of the royal or aristocratic families, would not only consider themselves as better than other Blacks and Africans, but Whites as well. Here, I would like to mention an old and very racist joke told by Ethiopians that

> goes as follows: God was cooking bread. The first batch he undercooked and threw it into Europe. The second batch he burned and placed it in West Africa. Finally, the third batch was just right and God placed it in Ethiopia (student email, 2 December 2013)

Outside of the context of its telling, it is difficult to interpret the implications of this "joke." Whether is demonstrates that Ethiopians feel superior to whites or instantiates how the stigmatized deflect dishonor onto both the constituent other and the normally unmarked, dominant party, it amplifies our grasp of how the stigmatized stratify their own.

In the end, Gerima seems to have regretted his candor. After our interview, he privately told my African-American research assistant that he thought my project on black ethnic diversity was divisive. There is no point in highlighting inter-ethnic conflict among African and African-descended peoples, which he mistakenly thought was my goal, when, in his view, "we Ethiopians don't even like each other." Every African people on the planet is, at this historical juncture, suspended painfully between the hope of its own sense of dignity and humanity and the hell of black people's collective symbolic role in the global self-aggrandizement of the white race.

Gerima's master work is as much an act of "culture" making as are Qlaniyan's and Taiwo's "self-ethnographies." Yet, rather than stratifying the stigmatized, he selectively highlights potential idioms of Black unity in Habesha culture, marries and African American, and employs Afro-Atlantic religion as an allegory of Black unity, both naturalizing his marriage and de-naturalizing the forms of ethnological Schadenfreude that are common in northeast Africa. Plutarch's "syncretism" is no less plausible a strategy of "culture"-making than is Schadenfreude.

Gerima's widely celebrated film "Sankofa" (1993) tells the story of an alienated African-American fashion model's surreal re-discovery of her West African past and of her power to overthrow racist oppression and its religious vehicle—Christianity. During her mystical journey into the slavery-ridden past, she is led by a fellow slave called Shango, who shares his name with the famous Yoruba-Atlantic god of lightning, royalty and justice. The film's title refers to an ideograph used in the Adinkra funerary cloth of Ghana's Akan peoples, another African ethnic group celebrated by the British for their royal traditions and, in the influential Boasian and Herskovitsian ethnography, falsely but influentially canonized, along with the Yoruba and the Fon, as the chief demographic and cultural "roots" of black American civilization. The ideograph represents a mythical bird that looks backward while flying forward, serving as a visual proverb that reminds its viewers and wearers always to learn from the past. The eponymous film is perhaps the most celebrated and widely cited artistic expression of pan-Africanism of all time.

Heaven

A range of Howard intellectuals and activists have embraced Booker T. Washington's, Du Bois' and Garvey's secular logic that redeeming Africa is a precondition to the redemption of the African diaspora, as well. The will to unity among the stigmatized is exceptional and is more common among the most elite rank of the stigmatized, whose lives are more dominated by immediate competition with the non-stigmatized than by immediate competition with other members of the stigmatized group. By speaking with authority about the unity of the stigmatized group, that elite reifies and dignifies a large constituency and burnishes its authority to speak for that constituency. The will to unity is least likely to appear where stigmatized populations with

similar occupational skills and skill levels live and work near each other and therefore compete for the same resources, opportunities, and honors.

However, low-ranking people also often take pride in the accomplishments of similar-looking people at high ranks and are willing to overlook ethnic or other hereditary differences. Sometimes they anticipate a broader trickle-down of resources, as when my father endorsed the priority given to light-skinned Howardites in the earliest assignments to medical residences at TWIs. And sometimes the common interests of the stigmatized loom larger than their differences of interest, as when the majority of Latinos voted for President Obama in 2007 and 2011.

This research has taught me that unity among the stigmatized is not a default. Rather, it is a project with which the present chapter section is concerned. Here I will discuss Black projects of interethnic unity. Here I affirm that the chief de facto index of ethnic unity is not "cultural" unanimity or political consensus but a place at the table where the diacritica of group membership are debated before an implicitly present white, or ethno-racially unmarked, audience. Any given declaration of a single correct norm of group membership or behavior is an interested and competitive assertion of authority over the constituency, which is bound to be contested by rival claimants to speak for the group, and vigorous debate is perhaps the most important proof and realization of collective identity.

Historically, Howard has hosted great advocates for and connoisseurs of Africa. For example, in 1928 Harvard Ph.D. and US diplomat Ralph Bunche founded Howard's Department of Political Science. Initially interested in comparing Brazilian and US race relations, he ultimately wrote a prize-winning Harvard dissertation on French colonial administration in Togoland (which is now called simply Togo) and Dahomey (now called Benin Republic). He

did so at a time before anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits had reportedly made it difficult for African Americans, including Caribbean American Elliot Skinner, to conduct research in Africa. Bunche is most famous for winning the Nobel Peace Prize, which he received for negotiating an armistice between Israel and the Arab states in 1949. (Again, I shake my head in wonder at the usual black ethnic premise that African Americans are lazy, parochial and unaccomplished.)

Bunche was also a fiery critic of colonialism in Africa. In an article derived from his dissertation, he wrote, "This great continent and its sweltering population are mere sacrific[i]al offerings on the altar of world imperialism."[2] Elsewhere, he articulated his faith in Western education as the solution to African problems, though he could just as well have been speaking about the aspirations of Howard University for all Black people. He wrote, "When the natives acquire more educ. in Western methods & a greater understanding of their latent powers, they should be able to wrench control of their country from the ruthless & greedy hands of the white exploiters. That day may not be as far distant as some imperialistic nations like to think."[3] Indeed, Bunche taught at Howard under the University's first Black president. In Bunche's honor, Howard established the Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center in 1993.

Graham-colored himself, Bunche spoke of his white-looking and formerly enslaved grandmother much as he could have spoken of that Black president, who made a similar choice amid the heaven and hell of race in the Atlantic world. Like President Mordechai Johnson, Bunche's grandmother appeared Caucasian "on the outside," said Bunche, but she was "all black fervor inside."[4]

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[2] (UCLA Library Ralph Bunche Exhibit, "'…the great good that is in us': a Centenary Celebration of Ralph J. Bunche," http://www.library.ucla.edu/bunche/howard.html, downloaded 4/3/10).
[3] (UCLA Library Ralph Bunche Exhibit, "'…the great good that is in us': a Centenary Celebration of Ralph J. Bunche," http://www.library.ucla.edu/bunche/howard.html, downloaded 4/3/10).
[4] ("Ralph Bunche: The Nobel Prize 1950," Nobelprize.org, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1950/bunche-bio.html, downloaded 4/3/10).

At Howard, other leaders with multiple identity choices also chose unity with the stigmatized, making Africa its touchstone. For example, Trinidadian-born and Harlem-raised, the late Howard alumnus Stokely Carmichael is most famous for having popularized the slogan "Black Power." After moving to Guinea-Conakry in 1969, he changed his name to Kwame Turé—in honor of his pan-Africanist benefactors President Sékou Touré of Guinea-Conakry and President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. However, he frequently returned to the US as the spokesman for the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, founded by Nkrumah. For years, he led the African Liberation Day rally every summer in Washington, DC's Malcolm X Park—in the shadow of Howard's Meridian Hill Apartments dormitory, where Arnzie had lived. As a teenager, I often sat alongside the Park's sculpted shrubbery, cascading fountains, streamers of incense, and a sea of African-clad Black Americans, absorbing Ture's rhythmic exhortations to transnational Black unity and "scientific socialism." It was here that my long-distance love for African animals, clothing and art (a received combination that I only later recognized a problematic) morphed into a political pan-Africanism, which I preached to anyone who would listen, including my white classmates at Maret.

Until recently, Dr. Rick Kittles was the director of the Molecular Genetics Unit at the Howard-based National Human Genome Center. The vision statement of the Center is non-reductive and intellectually sound.

> The National Human Genome Center at Howard University is a comprehensive resource center for genomic research on African Americans and other African Diasporic populations, distinguished by a diverse social context for framing biology as well as the ethical, legal, and social implications of knowledge gained from the human genome

project and research on genome.[5]

However, Kittles, along with Henry Louis Gates Jr., are among the principal promoters of the idea that African Americans can discover, by means of a genetic test, the African ethnic group from which their ancestors originated. Many scientists regard the evidence for such interpretations dubious, but it is no surprise that this project spun off from Howard (see Bolnick et al 2007).

Though Howard's prize library collection focuses on the Black world, the African art collection of early-20th-century philosophy professor Alain Locke has, over the years, suffered cycles of disappearance and intermittent re-appearance in the public galleries of the Fine Arts Building. On the other hand, since the 1960s, Howard has employed numerous fine arts professors—such as Ethiopian Skunder Boghossian, African Americans Lois Mailou Jones and Delilah Pierce, and Louisiana Creole Raymond Dobard—and trained numerous students who placed pan-African political sentiments and African ritual motifs at the center of their canvasses and wall-mounted carvings.[6] The scions of these great teachers are central to the art establishment in Trinidad. It should be noted, however, that, while Howard's Ethiopian artists tended to favor abstract motifs and figurative images associated with the Ethiopian Coptic Church, the African diasporans tended to represent Africa and its ancestral powers through images of West and West-Central African-style masks.

In the late 1960s, my mother organized a public exhibition of their work on behalf of the Med Wives—the Women's Auxiliary of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of the District of Columbia. This may have been the moment when her own tastes in collecting shifted toward Africa and Haiti.

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[5] variation ("Vision Statement," National Human Genome Center, http://www.genomecenter.howard.edu/intro.htm).
[6](Howard University Gallery of Art, A Proud Continuum: Eight Decades of art At Howard University, Washington, DC: HU Gallery of Art, Division of Fine Arts, College of Arts and Sciences, 2005).

After Asians, African immigrants are the second most highly educated continent-of-origin group in the US (McCabe 2011; Batalova 2011). As recently as 1994, they were the most highly educated (Speer 1994). After WWII, Uncle Badejǫ came among a flood of Nigerians, Kenyans, Ghanaians, and others who pursued an education and access to the tools with which to return to and re-build a beleaguered continent. Like the Kenyan father of Barack Obama and Lorraine Hansberry's fictional character Asagai in "A Raisin in the Sun," Uncle Badejǫ was princely, dignified and ambitious—a walking balm to the racial shame of African Americans. Black America and Howard University in particular vicariously dreamt the dreams that these scholars and nation-builders brought with them.

By then, Howard had already hosted generations of individual scholars committed to careful scholarship about Africa, building a bridge of respect and respectability between Africa and its diaspora across the morass of "Little Black Sambo," "Tarzan" and similar white lies. Among them were linguist and literary scholar Lorenzo Turner and Africanist historian William Leo Hansberry. The latter taught at Howard until 1959. Uncle Badejǫ said that he found Hansberry inspiring.

This bridge had a strong footing in Western universities and museums, but the traffic in ideas that crossed that it moved far beyond the shore. Lorraine Hansberry was William Leo's niece. She penned the first drama by a black woman to be staged on Broadway. It then became a popular 1961 film, and a perennial favorite of high-school drama clubs. The play tells the story of a poor urban Black family's struggle to retain its dignity and ethics in a system where racism, sexism, and class elitism seem to prevent even their most consistent efforts from paying off.

Amid the struggle between an education-oriented sister and a brother too upset by the system's denial of his manhood to think straight, there arises a cool character never before seen

in North American drama—a sophisticated Nigerian Yoruba student who gave the lie to the half-naked, bug-eyed, and cowardly "Ubangis" whose invention served to highlight Tarzan's racially inherent bravery, intelligence, agility and virility. Though casually dismissive of American feminism and insufficiently worried about his own potential for corruption when he returns to lead his people to nationhood, Joseph Asagai (whose suggestive name means "spear" in several southern Bantu languages and nothing at all in the West African Yoruba language) gives the sister, Beneatha Younger, the new confidence to wear her hair natural and to dream of a self and a life greater than integration into the white suburbs (Gascoigne 2011). My son Adu played the role of Asagai in the 2011 production of "Raisin in the Sun" at the Durham School of the Arts.

Like me, Lorraine Hansberry had grown up in the shadow of Howard University and away from the privations of the ghetto. Indeed, critics of the play later described her real-estate broker father as a slum lord. My father served many poor patients. From an early age, I, like Lorraine, dreamt a pan-African and African-American-style "Africa," where the Zulu and the Yoruba shared a common role in my own pursuit of black gods. I still have the tattered *Illustrated Book of Africa* (1959) that had been my teddy bear as I learned to read. Hansberry had the benefit of an Africanist historian for an uncle, so her eyes were presciently open to the unromantic realities of African slave-traders and official corruption, but, with a change of pronouns, she could easily have been writing about me in her unfinished, partly autobiographical novel:

> In her emotions she was sprung from the Southern Zulu and the Central Pygmy, the Eastern Watusi and the treacherous slave-trading Western Ashanti themselves. She was Kikuyu and Masai; ancient cousins of hers had made the exquisite forge[d] sculpture at

> Benin, while surely even more ancient relatives sat upon the throne at Abu Simbel watching over the Nile (Gascoigne 2011).

The extraordinary literacy of her references notwithstanding, she and I are both complicit in the circum-Atlantic project by which long-distance imaginations of the continental other—whether those visions are starry-eyed or opprobrious—serve in the making of the self (Roach 1996). We certainly imagine ourselves one with the human objects of our fantasy of a better self, but, as Edwards (2003) points out regarding African Americans' use of France and the French colonial empire as an object lesson in preachments against US racism, one people's use of another as an object lesson can accidentally affirm the sanctimony of oppressors abroad. During the 1920s and '30s, black Antilleans and Africans in France had to remind the likes of Howard University professor Alain Locke that racism remained alive and well in France and its empire.

Edward Said (1978) observed the self-aggrandizing motive behind Western stereotypes about "Orientals," as well as their politically oppressive quality. William Pietz (1985) and Valentin Mudimbe (1988) have made similar points about Western representations of Africa. Equally important, then, is the more proximate mutual gaze through which Africans and African Americans—in many ways the symbolic anchors of a global system of Western racism and non-Western resistance—lovingly distort and re-invent each other in projects of self-making. For example, the Gullah/Geechees have reinvented themselves in the image and service of Africa. But not every re-invention has been so congenial. Nonetheless, the form of this uncongeniality is perhaps diagnostic of the structural reality of all ethnicity in an age of long-distance, de-sensualized collective identity—where people fight out the authentic cultural definition of their

peoples less and less through face-to-face performances and more and more through print media, the internet and film.

The ‘60s were a transitional period in the consciousness of my family. When Black people were rare on television, the appearance of one of us on the little screen prompted a flurry of phone calls among the homes of my mother, her sisters and their friends. “Turn to Channel Four, quickly! There’s a *Negro* on television!” They were both proud and afraid of the possibility of being embarrassed. On one occasion, I remember my Aunt Marilyn’s exclaiming, “Oh, no! Why did they have to put on someone so *dark*?” She had been a product of Virginia Union College and Howard’s School of Medicine in the 1940s. Later Marilyn and her family lived temporarily in Liberia, an experience that may have done little to challenge the framework of US racism. At that point in history, the descendants of US slaves still contemptuously dominated their African neighbors, much as refugees from the Shoah dominate their neighbors in Palestine. On the other hand, during the late ‘60s, my youngest aunt, Arnzie, became a Black nationalist at Howard, bringing home to me nationalist slogans along with Hostess Twinkies and chocolate cupcakes. She herself often wore “African”-style paisley print blouses and gowns. By the early 1970s, Benin bronzes (which are typically cast, not forged), ebony carvings from Kenya, ivory busts from Nigeria, and Haitian teakwood statues had begun to compete with Japanese prints and Abstract Expressionism in their houses. During the same period, President Richard Nixon’s journey to China and the traveling exhibition of Tutankhamun’s riches turned the eyes and the travel itineraries of our African-American neighbors to China and Egypt, as well. But the overwhelming new influence on our home décor was African or Haitian, which meant something similar to us.

Yale undergraduates in the early 1970s, Marilyn's children Gloria and Thomas assembled gospel choirs from our grandfather's Church of God in Christ to perform in a concert benefiting famine-relief efforts in the Sahel. Having found her calling, in the late 1970s, Gloria organized a for-profit Reggae concert tour in Lagos and Ife, Nigeria. During the planning, she borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars from Arnzie and her husband, from Aunt Bundy, and from various friends of her parents. Arnzie was moved by the fervor of her love for Africa to accompany Gloria on this visit the continent. She and her husband John, both nephrologists, funded the concert tour with $200,000 from their savings.

Apparently hundreds of counterfeit tickets to the concert were in circulation, so there was no profit. Furthermore, my squeamish Aunt Arnzie encountered flying tropical roaches in the luxurious Eko Hotel, the likes of which, I must admit, also disturbed me far beyond my future Nigerian wife's comprehension during my first year in Nigeria. For us, roaches were a viscerally frightening symbol of the ghetto. Arnzie and John lost all of their money--which Gloria then insisted was an investment, rather than a loan. As new furnishings simultaneously appeared all around Marilyn's house, Arnzie had to sell the beautiful oceanfront plot where she and her husband had already, in their minds, built their dream house. Neither Arnzie's marriage nor her pan-African identity survived the debacle. Almost comically, she promptly re-focused her identity on her Americanness and on her mother's alleged Native American ancestry. On a trip to the southwest, she bought a papoose, which she hung above the fireplace in Mother Dear and Granddaddy's sunken waterfront living room. It remained there throughout the subsequent decades that the house remained in the family.

From the time that he bought the Embassy of the People's Republic of Benin (Many African nations had chosen to place their embassies and ambassadors' residences in our

neighborhood), my father flew the US flag from the monumental hollow-metal flagpole that came with the house. To my father, the flag mostly represented his connection to his own father, a veteran, whose coffin had been draped with such a flag before his burial. Somehow, my mother could not, or would not, find the original flag to return it to him after the divorce. In defiance, he bought a new one and displayed it atop the enormous flagpole left by the Beninese.

To me, his display represented a betrayal of all of the Black people who had been enslaved, hamstrung, and murdered under that flag, and of African-American attorney Ted Landsmark, who, in 1976, was stabbed with a flagpole by anti-busing rioters in front of Boston City Hall. From the mid-'70s onward, I have often worn African clothes, some of them brought to me by my sister from her art- and art history-inspired tours of Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria. At my high-school graduation party in 1978, I wore a handwoven robe that my father had received from a patient at Howard University Hospital—probably a Liberian, judging by the handweave and the tailoring. Dad would not wear it, but he was content to let me do so, at least inside the yard or the house. On the other hand, out of fear for our safety, he forbade me to wear even the simplest African attire as we drove south toward Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. On that occasion, we were bound for a medical conference and retreat, completely unaware that the hosting island had been, before the resort developers displaced its owners, a capital of Gullah/Geechee society, and that nearby Sheldon, SC, had become the site of Oyotunji, the Yoruba-revivalist village. African attire might not have been so out-of-place there.

As a Yale undergraduate and "Scholar of the House" at her Morse College dormitory, my sister received African travel funding that enabled her to acquire African textiles, photograph art and performance in West Africa, and create African-inspired, multi-media art that she displayed at the college and in our home. Over the years of her career as a surgical oncologist and of her

marriage to a husband less interested in unconventional travel, her Japanese art and my mother's extensive collection of antique fine china displaced her African art from the living room to the sun porch, and her own African-inspired art disappeared into the storage room. Some of the latter has since migrated to Duke's and my collection of African and African-inspired sacred art.

In the mid-1970s, Trinidadian-American Howard alumnus Stokely Carmichael had drawn the connection, for me, between Black American liberation and anti-colonialism. My subsequent years in Nigeria also helped to make me feel more American, but no less African. During my first sojourn to Nigeria, in 1982-83, the sudden insignificance of my blackness lifted off of my chest a boulder that I had never even known was there. But a number of experiences made me feel very American: among them, having to speak in a different language or a different accent all day, of having my cursive handwriting questioned, of encountering a doctor who judged my hepatitis A normal rather than terrifying, of missing ice cream sundaes and Mars bars, and of having "CIA" scrawled across my campaign poster when I ran, albeit successfully, for Public Relations Officer of the post-graduate student organization. One female socialite, apparently assessing my potential as a toy boy, announced to the crowd at a high-society party in Ibadan, "African-American men are so sexy, but so irresponsible!"

My Urhobo friend Andy found the remark as hilarious as I found it offensive. I doubted that she had ever had a relationship with an African-American man. Even if she had received this information from Nigerian transmigrants, its ultimate source was clearly white American. And neither source had been present when my divorced mother and father accompanied me to Washington National Airport, when Dad promptly paid my unexpected $500 overweight luggage charge, or when he called me in Ibadan every Sunday at Ms. Fabiyi's house. It dawns on me in hindsight that white American and European women encounter similar false assumptions about

themselves abroad. In the end, I came to feel that my combination of being American (including its crazy components), of being Nigerian (with all of its crazy components), and, ultimately, of being Brazilian (with its craziness, too) were all equally o.k. Each family of cultural and residential options provided me with its own forms of strength and reassurance. Most of the time, I can blend in with my hosts, and, by and large, the farther I am from white America, the less insulting and consequential the dominant local stereotypes about African Americans are.

Over the years of my pestering him with my pan-Africanism, my father recalls having told me repeatedly, "I didn't leave anything in Africa, and I'm not going back to Africa." Only once do I recall him having uttered these words as a statement of conviction. But, in the intervening years, he quoted himself several times per year in contrition. He eventually traveled to post-apartheid South Africa in connection with the National Medical Association's efforts to contribute knowledge to the improvement of African health care and to eastern Nigeria, where Igbo colleagues at Howard have annually led weeks-long junkets of Howard physicians to provide surgical care to underserved populations there. He was vocally proud of his South African involvements. And, in his waning years, he repeatedly sought my help in designing potential National Medical Association programs to make a further impact on public health in Africa.

During my teaching stint at Howard in 2002, I met several African-American women—such as self-described "black Indian" Sarah Johnson Page--who vocally admired African men for their dignity and beauty. Such women were usually dark. In conversations about the period from the 1950s until the present, it became clear to me that dark African-American women told me they felt more appreciated by African and Caribbean men than by their African-American male peers (though color discrimination is common in the Caribbean). More than a few such

attractions ended in marriage. During medical school and an internship at Howard, my sister had dated a Kenyan man, who treated me very deferentially, as though he were—I recognize in hindsight—dealing with a potential African in-law. I liked him. I do not know why my sister, in the end, did not. My somewhat idealistic but by no means naïve regard of Africa is an enduring legacy of my upbringing among the Howard-centered intelligentsia. That regard exists only by virtue of a conscious and scholarly struggle against the massive degradation of Africa in European intellectual history and in the mass media. Among the other lessons of this tale are that the cultural repertoire of the African-American bourgeoisie is cosmopolitan and that ethnic identities—among immigrants and natives alike—have a history far more complex than the inheritance of a frozen past.

Yale showed my sister the way to Africa, and my search as a Harvard undergraduate for what made me African led me to the work of Roger Bastide and through Brazil to Nigeria in search of the Yoruba gods. Had she not met me, my wife says that she, like most Western-educated Yoruba people, would have continued to fear and avoid these beings and their priests. My continued research on Nigerian and Afro-Brazilian religions rewarded me with tenure at Harvard and rewarded her with a new appreciation of gods that the American missionary Baptist church and her first-rate Western education had taught her to despise. She now maintains an altar for the goddess Oṣun, who, now world-famous, came originally from Bunmi's hometown of Igede-Ekiti.

Fellowship and Debate: the Gods of the Stigmatized

For me and for many others, this regard has a sacred dimension, and my interest in the sacred is biographical. It relates partly to childhood memories from my maternal grandfather's

church, which, thanks to Melville J. Herskovits and Roger Bastide, I have transmuted into symbols of my own Africanness and proof of independence from white people's definitions of me. Proximately, it also results from the preeminence of religion in TWIs' investigation of what African Americans and our culture have to do with Africa. For the "ethnicity entrepreneurs," the advantage of the sacred—at least in the iterations that arise from the religions of "discontinuous revelation" (Thornton 1998), such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam—is its deep frozenness. Thornton distinguishes these religions from those of "continuous revelation," such as African-inspired religions of spirit possession, in which the divination or a god manifest in his or her priest can reveal new and authoritative truths at any moment. On the other hand, the anachronism of Abrahamic sacred symbols is proof of the revelation's antiquity and, indeed, its primordiality, and primordiality is the defining quality of the god of these religions. To declare that this god, its rules, and its signs change is normally also to run the risk of being killed for apostasy. Religion, at least after its dominant Western forms, is the preeminent form of "culture," a fact that still does not exempt it from extensive debate.

For Fanon (2004[1961]), "culture" is the writing and painting by which elites express and shape the consciousness of the surrounding society. On the other hand, he believes that people's actual lifeways are essentially dynamic and constituted by the relations of domination and exchange that the political and economic system induce. For him, what anthropologists generally call "culture" is the set of customs, conceptions, and social arrangements that have been artificially frozen and reified by colonialists, sentimentalized by indigenous intellectuals, and embraced defensively in its frozen form by psychologically assaulted locals. Indeed, it follows that being convinced of the frozenness of one's culture and the boundedness of one's group is diagnostic of a dominated state. Fanon argues that the changing patterns of collective

life among the dominated are shaped by long-term ambivalence and debate over the degree to which the dominated should imitate or revile the manners and the accomplishments of their oppressors. There is much truth in his observations.

For many of Howard's scholars and neighbors, "Africa" is the argument for trying something different—namely Black unity and dignity--and the debate over the defining standards of unified and dignified comportment. That "Africa" does take its form in elite writing and painting, but it also takes the form of culinary and religious reinterpretations that elites appropriate as material embodiments of their deliberations about the boundaries and cultural diacritica of social groups. Cross-culturally, religions and sects are also commensal groups—people who can or must eat together and who are, at times, forbidden to eat with outsiders. For example, kosher dietary laws make it difficult for observant Jews to eat in the homes of non-Jews and of non-observant Jews; they also prohibit non-Jewish contact with certain kosher consumables, such as the Passover wine, such that the outsider status of a non-Jew at the seder is highlighted. Religions and sects all over the world obey prohibitions on certain foods and demand certain conditions of food-preparation, such that it is difficult to socialize with, marry, or even eat worry-free with outsiders. And it has historically been a convention in many African societies for specific organs and limbs of any hunted or sacrificed animal to go to specific relatives, officials, genders, or age groups, and for those body parts to be forbidden to other classes of people. Eating rehearses, at once, a people's social and cosmological order.

Durkheim (1915) argued that gods are the apotheoses of society and of its internal divisions. So, for him, God is the overwhelming experience of human solidarity and interdependency, like a grand conscience that feels, to the average person, as real, as inescapable, and as indispensable to the human condition as is social cooperation itself. The following

discussion takes up the question of what God and the gods look like to those who are driven by stigma both to stratify themselves and to see one a collective as the most reliable source of consolation and defense. In this study, however, there is ample reason to doubt the Durkheimian premise that "culture" and "religion" rest on long-term consensus. In my observation, debate is the substance of both. Such debate is often inspired by the tension between larger social groups and the groups nested within them. While the unity of larger groups depends on Plutarchian syncretism, secession depends on the articulation of rival standards and symbols. Hierarchy inspires constant jockeying for position and, therefore, a further aspect of the debate--ethnological and class Schadenfreude and retorts to it. This analysis focuses on the heaven and the hell embodied—among Africans and diasporans alike—in the God and gods of Africa.

The following is a discussion of African-inspired and especially "Yoruba"-identified religions around Howard's campus and the very different interpretation given to them by Yoruba-American, African-American and Latino intellectuals on the campuses of the TWIs. Like the forms of Louisiana Creoleness articulated at TWIs, the "Yoruba religion" articulated and debated at TWIs is detached from the political realities of the homeland but full of implications for the standards of supra-ethnic unity and leadership in the broader population that employs Yoruba culture and religion as the preeminent signs and proof of Black and African worth. Far more than the Yoruba scholars at Howard, those at the TWIs are driven by the consciousness of a white, or ethno-racially unmarked, audience and by the motive to establish and reinforce the image of Yoruba dignity, beauty and orderliness. As usual, the "logic of the trial" generates an image of this religion resembling those values of the dominant host society that will favor the progress of the speaker. The Latino and the African-American organic intellectuals who participate in this debate struggle over whose leadership is legitimate. I, on the

other hand, tend to highlight whose sectional interests are being sidelined by any authoritative definition of these religions and to question whether it is the duty of scholars to endorse any of the selective and frozen visions of our interlocutors. For me, the careful documentation of the drama and diversity of these religions, as well as the humanness of the priests' motives, is the greatest possible vindication of Black humanity.

The African-inspired religions that I have studied for decades are well represented on and around Howard's campus. Indeed, like African art, they have, over the past half-century, become been a focus of African-Americans', Afro-Caribbeans', Afro-Latin Americans' and Afro-Latinos' pursuit of racial self-esteem. At the same time, both African art and religion are often a source of division, shame and fear among large classes of people, especially among Africans and American Africans.

The Orthodox Easter service of my dormitory's Eritrean housekeeping supervisor clarifies her difference from Ethiopians, but it could just as easily have proven the claim that Eritrean-Ethiopian unity is the more sacred and fundamental truth. On May 4th, 2002, Adu and I attended the jam-packed all-night Orthodox Easter Eve service at the Universalist Church building at 16th and S Streets, Northwest. The ritual might easily have demonstrated Habesha unity, since most of the service was, as it should be, in Ge'ez, the ancient liturgical language of the shared Orthodox church of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

[@@@ Photo T: An Habesha graduate of Howard with his family, 2002. The dress of the women at the center is the *Habesha kemis*. Photograph by the author.]

However, my hostess and her many friends spent a good part of the evening—between hours of standing, sitting, call-and-response singing, kissing the Bible, and, for the morally pure, taking communion—teaching me Tigrinya, which is spoken by millions of Ethiopians but is the primary language of Eritrea.

A Haitian spiritualist advertised consultations in a storefront near campus, but a Haitian medical school student in my building remained very discreet about his practice until assured of my respect for it. The nephew of a *manbo*, or initiated priestess of the Haitian religion known as Vodou, he was knowledgeable about herbs, sacred rituals, and the songs that activate their healing power. Practitioners regard the source of their deepest knowledge and the origin of their gods as *Ginen*, which is simultaneously the geographical Africa and a sacred underwater transmutation of that continent that encompasses the best of both Africa and Europe. He promised to bring me books and recordings of his practice that he normally kept far away in his family home in New York City.

He had chosen to attend Howard, even though his mother had endeavored to keep him away from what she regarded as the negative influence of his African-American neighbors. Around Howard's campus, parlance signaling one's Christian faith is common, particularly among African Americans. "Have a blessed day!" was a common way of saying good-bye, and the wearing of watches and pendants with the inscription "WWJD" (for "What Would Jesus Do?") was common in 2002. My Haitian dormitory mate had undoubtedly grown up around people who regarded Vodou as comparable to AIDS in its stigmatizing character, but at Howard he had not felt marked out negatively for his Haitianness. Both of us, though, were aware of the half-joking, half-antagonistic accusation that New Orleans Creoles practice "Voodoo." In the context of Christian Protestant hegemony and outspokenness on campus, my Haitian

interlocutor's usual silence about his convictions and practices was deeply meaningful. The most maligned of the African-inspired religions, Haitian Vodou is a source of shame for many Haitians and a prominent referent of ethnological Schadenfreude among African Americans, who tend to pass the racial contempt that we receive on to Haitians.

Yet, around the Atlantic perimeter, Yoruba religion is one of the preeminent symbols of black people's collective dignity and divinity. Consequently, the standards of its practice are among the most debated. That reality has its roots in a little-known elite struggle against racial stigma in British colonial West Africa. But that struggle, and the "Yoruba" collective identity itself emerged from a startlingly circum-Atlantic and Euro-African symbolic resources and alliances, which is a major reason for its uniquely enduring and widespread persuasiveness in efforts to rally and reform the stigmatized. Since the late 19th century, it has become a way of worshiping African writ large and the sacred embodiment of a supra-territorial African super-ethnicity, but one with greater purchase in the diaspora than in Yorubaland.

As I have argued elsewhere (Matory 1999), the Yoruba ethnic identity is not a survival of some primordial African past that made Yoruba religion the diacritic of such a widely debated and therefore powerfully centripetal super-ethnicity. It was the timing and the ingenious ethnicity entrepreneurship of a Western-assimilated black class elite struggling, in the "logic of the trial," against racial stigmatization in 19th-century British colonial West Africa. A Western-educated population of Africans who had served as loyal functionaries to the empire during much of the 19th century built it like a mighty fortress against the rising tide of British colonial racism in the 1890s.

And this struggle was not merely local. It was one part and product of a trans-Atlantic dialogue involving Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban "returnees" to Lagos, missionary-educated

Saro returnees from the British abolitionist colony of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and African-American activists and journalists. The Lagosian Cultural Renaissance of the 1890s established an unprecedented documentary canon of "Yoruba" history and theology, which Anglophone Afro-Latin merchants translated for the founder of Afro-Brazilian studies, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, and the founder of Afro-Cuban studies, Fernando Ortiz. In turn, these scholars established the unique dignity of the "Yoruba" and their religion among the diverse African-inspired practices of the Americas and, indeed, made this ethnic group and its religions into symbols of national dignity in Brazil and Cuba. Consequently, they have thrived to this day among Brazilians and Cubans of all colors, expanded as symbols of healing and dignity among Latin Americans and Latino Americans, and occupied a unique place of dignity in the Western academy's representation of sub-Saharan African "cultures." The later work of Melville J. Herskovits, Oseijeman Adefunmi I, and Robert Farris Thompson enshrined Yoruba religion as a classic among English-speaking African Americans, as well.

There was no ethnic group that called itself "Yoruba" before the mid-19th-century, and it probably did not become a *popular* self-identity until the beginning of the 20th century. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, the decline of the Ọyọ Empire and the ascent of Dahomey threw tens of thousands of Ọyọ, Ijeṣa, Ẹgba, Ẹgbado Ijẹbu, and Okitipupa people and so forth into the trans-Atlantic slave trade. At that time, none of these groups had shared a homogeneous lifestyle and none had called themselves "Yoruba." Their language varieties were diverse and sometimes mutually incomprehensible. And, despite the historical connections among their language varieties—like those among Spanish, Portuguese and Italian—they had never considered themselves one people. Before the middle of the 19th

century, the term “Yarriba” seems to have been the name that the Hausa and other northern peoples applied specifically to the subjects of the Ọyọ Kingdom

In this way, just like many groups of Africans who embarked at the same port, this range of peoples was grouped together under the what Gerhard Kubik calls a “trademark,” a common label first applied by the people who bought and sold them. The Spanish called these and other related peoples the “Lucumí” (after the expression, in some dialects of what is now called “Yoruba,” *oluku mi*, meaning “my friend”), while the Portuguese called them “Nagôs” (after the term preferred by the slave-trading Fon rulers of the Kingdom of Dahomey). The buyers in each American country tended to prefer one African nation or another in any given occupation, and the Roman Catholic Church organized its efforts to assemble and proselytize African converts through these categories.

Few people today are aware that, from 1830 onward, thousands of emancipated Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cubans returned to the multi-cultural cities of the West African coast, introducing collective neo-African identity configurations without precedents in the daily lives of the Ọyọ, Ijeṣa, Ẹgba, Ẹgbado, Ijẹbu and Okitipupa peoples. In the West African city of Porto-Novo, such Afro-Latin American returnees were they patrons of and interpreters for the French missionary Noel Baudin, whose extensive and fantastical documentation of “Yorouba” religion became fundamental to Raimundo Nina Rodrigues’ and Fernando Ortiz’ understanding of the “African origins” of Brazilian Candomble and Cuban Ocha.

The second major foundation in the construction of Yoruba culture and identity, from the middle of the 19th century, was the missionary activity of the rescued and returned captives from Freetown. Located in what is now Sierra Leone, Freetown was founded by the British at the end

of the 18th century. From its beginning, it became the home of exiled Jamaican maroons, Black loyalists to the British monarchy who fled from the US war of independence, and the Black Poor from England. After 1808, when the Royal British Navy began to enforce British legislation against the slave trade, the Africans rescued from the slave ships, called "recaptives," were resettled in Freetown. A disproportionate number of these had come from Ọyọ and neighboring states. Together, the recaptives, the Jamaican Maroons, the Black American loyalists, and the Black Poor from England were called the "Krios." They were converted and schooled by German, English and African-American missionaries. By the middle of the 19th century, the Krios had themselves produced a great number of missionaries, physicians, lawyers, Western-trained artisans, and successful merchants.

The Black Krio missionaries generated a standard language—designed to be understood in common by all of the potential Ọyọ, Ijeṣa, Ẹgbado, Ẹgba, Okitipupa and Ijẹbu converts. These Krio missionaries also invented an orthographic standard that would become the foundation of the Yoruba literary canon, between the middle and the end of the 19th century. It was Ọyọ-descended, Black Krio missionary Samuel Ajayi Crowther who created this new, hybrid language and called it "Yoruba." The first publications in this language were a Bible and a dictionary, which were later employed as sources of orthography and of sacred information by orisha priests in Brazil and Cuba in the writing of catechisms and explanations of their religions.

Though intensely westernized in their religion, behavior and occupations, many Krios integrated into their Anglo-Yoruba culture some non-Christian religious institutions of Ọyọ inspiration, such as Egungun and the hunters' societies. Owing to their colonial education, which gave them opportunities that the indigenous Sierra Leoneans lacked, this emergent

"Yoruba" ethnic group developed a clear sense of their collective superiority, and their hybrid culture became an object of imitation by neighboring African groups.

Many such Krios ultimately returned to or reestablished their ties with their hometowns in what would later become "Yorubaland." And many more "returned" to Lagos, where they joined the Afro-Latin American returnees as major sources of support to the British colonial enterprise in that future capital. Lagos came to be not only a capital of British colonialism in West Africa but also the capital of the emergent "Yoruba" identity. Note that this city lies far away from, and had never been subject to the rule of, the original referent of the term Hausa term "Yarriba"—that is, the inland kingdom of Ọyọ.

The roots of the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance—the third major foundation of Yoruba identity and "culture"--lay in a disaster that befell this culturally hybrid elite. The massive construction of railroads in the US flooded the global market with US farm products, sharply decreasing food prices, and creating a global economic crisis in the 1880s. The small-capital businesses of this Anglo-African and Latin American elite could no longer survive the competition with better-capitalized European firms. Moreover, improvements in British tropical medicine enabled white British missionaries, physicians and administrators to replace these loyal Anglo-African servants of British colonial interests. The economic interests of the white newcomers supported a tide of anti-African racism in Lagos, a new local hatred of whites, and, most important to our story, the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance—a revival (and culturally hybrid invention) of "African" clothes, names, marriage, historical accounts, and documentation of practices that came to be reified and known collectively as "Yoruba traditional religion." Through word and deed, the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance declared, "No, we are not inferior versions of you but Africans with a superior legacy."

Back-and-forth Afro-Brazilian traveler Martiniano do Bonfim conveyed the literature of the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance to Bahia, Brazil, and interpreted it for Nina Rodrigues, whose work is also cited by Fernando Ortiz amid his conversion to the cause of "Yoruba" dignity. Since then, without knowing it, the researchers, the patrons and the selective protectors of African-inspired religion in the Americas have been unable to escape the transformative influence of the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance of the 1890s.

The sacred imagination of the Yoruba-Atlantic world and of Howard University remains indebted to the cultural nationalism of the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance and the powerful impact that this defensive display of "Yoruba" dignity had on Latin American scholars and political elites, who have elevated and protected "Yoruba" religion, and the Afro-Latin American traditions recognized as its cognates, above all other African-inspired religious practices. These practices have thrived and expanded where Kongo, Cross-River and Fon practices have suffered state persecution, marginalization and near-extinction.

On 18th Street, surrounded by Ethiopian and Eritrean restaurants, *Botánica Yemayá y Ochún* is half a block south from Heaven and Hell. *Botánicas* are stores that sell healing herbs and sacred paraphernalia for practice of popular Latino religious practices, especially ones that are shaped by the profound African influences on Caribbean religions, such as Caribbean Spiritism and for the Cuban-inspired and Yoruba-affiliated Ocha religion, which is also called *Santería*. *Botánica Yemayá y Ochún* takes its name from two goddesses. Yemayá is the goddess of the ocean and the Cuban interpretation of the West African Yoruba goddess Yemọja, goddess of the River Ògùn. Ochún is the goddess of fresh water, gold and honey. She is the Cuban interpretation of the Yoruba goddess of the River ọṣun [ọ should be upper-case]. Just beyond where 18th Street curves and turns into Calvert Road, was *Botánica San Francisco de Asís*,

named after a Roman Catholic saint equated, in the syncretic iconography of these Caribbean religions with the Ocha and Nigerian Yoruba god of divination, Ifá.[ii] These shops owe their generic name and their storefront format to the "botanical" shops that served the folk medicinal and spiritual needs of African-American migrants from the South amid the blossoming of heterodox spirituality in the Harlem of the 1930s. When Latin American migrants to US cities adapted this institution to their own needs, the stores came to be called *botánicas*

Botánica Yemayá y Ochún was owned by a Guatemalan man and Botánica San Francisco de Asís by a black Puerto Rican woman who had been initiated in Nigeria as a *babalawo*, or divination priest, much to the chagrin of her Caribbean Hispanic counterparts in that divinatory priesthood. In the Cuban tradition of orisha-worship, which dominates in Spanish-speaking Latin America and the US, women cannot typically become *babalawos*, and they only rarely perform even the simpler forms of orisha divination for others. Among all of these African-inspired priests, only this Afro-Puerto Rican babalawo professed to know and work with people from Howard. However, her *botánica* closed around 2005.

Nevertheless, the Central American owner of the first *botánica* remains in good company. Numerous shops of this sort dot Georgia Avenue, Park Road, and the nearby Maryland suburbs, serving, in Africanized fashion, the spiritual, health-related, financial and legal needs of Washington's large Central American population. I would not be surprised if some of Howard's heavily Central American janitorial staff employ the services of these establishments.

I also spent a good deal of time with a high-ranking African-American professor and administrator at the School of Pharmacy. He took a kindly interest in my son and me, introducing us to a world of African-American Yoruba and Akan devotees, who, in the largely

Black middle-class precincts of upper Northwest Washington and during the celebration we attended, were more conspicuously concerned about Black gender relations and parenting than about race per se. In addressing my research questions, he observed that women and of non-US black people predominate on the faculty and in the student body of the School of Pharmacy. But he emphasized their right to be there. No one should be excluded from the community and its full benefits on account of his or her national origins. His religiosity appeared to embody his cosmopolitan sense of Blackness and its membership.

He invited my son and me one evening to "A Celebration of Our Fathers." The aim of this gathering was to address current worries about the African-American family by highlighting models of good fathering in multiple strands of the African-American cultural heritage—both African and black Indian. The fact is that parenting by divorced or never-married mothers is increasingly common across all races in the US and particularly among the poor. But African-Americans—only partly for demographic reasons—have been the focus of the national anxiety about this issue. This sacred project is directed equally against some Black fathers' choice not to participate actively in rearing their children and against the false premise that this phenomenon is universal or traditional among Black men. Many African Americans have sought solutions in the form of cultural and religious reform. In the auditorium of the People's Congregational Church, a progressive African-American congregation in upper-northwest Washington, an African-American priestess of Yoruba religion invited other priests of her religion and of Ghanaian-inspired Akan, or Ashanti, religion to preside over a dance ceremony, poetry recitation, and prayers celebrating Black fathers. At the center of the gathering was an altar to the Yoruba river goddess Oshun.

[@@@@ Photo V: Altar of the Yoruba goddess Oshun at "A Celebration of Our Fathers," at People's Congregational Church in Washington, DC, 2002. Photograph by the author.]

Half of the attendees and all of the priests wore West African clothing. One African-descended man, though, wore buckskin and Native American hair ornaments. The priests burned sagebrush and invoked Native American spiritual traditions, as well.

Yet the HBCU is not the only scholarly venue in which dignity and proper conduct are negotiated in Yoruba terms. Indeed, the heated struggles over the meaning of Yorubaness in the TWIs offer a further illustration that ethnic identity is not only situational, strategic and protean but also, by its nature, debated. An ethnic group is defined less by insiders' consensus about its definitional boundaries, or cultural diacritica, than by the vigor and the venues of debates about potential diacritica. Ethnicity is, to borrow Hebdige's felicitous phrase, a "struggle for the possession of the sign" (Hebdige 1979).

Howard's Chair of Philosophy articulated in writing a proposal for pan-African unity based upon Yoruba and Akan religion, an explicit alternative to Christianity and to the selfishness of African bourgeois elites. However, during this nadir of Nigerian military terror, even the Philosophy Chair's interest in Yoruba and Akan ancestral religions seemed abstract. Remarkable but peripheral to the agenda of the community he led. In 2002, these scholars and professionals were preoccupied with the Yoruba autonomy and struggle against decades of northern and Hausa military domination. Most meetings began and closed with Muslim or Christian prayers. There were no prayers to the *orişa*.

Yoruba-Atlantic Identity and the TWI

If I were Yoruba, I would feel proud of the proliferation of my ancestors' gods around the Atlantic perimeter, but the Yoruba people who welcomed me to their community meetings in Washington seemed a mix of unaware of, uninterested in, and amused by the phenomena.. They seemed to laugh with pride and camaraderie about my speaking Yoruba and being married to a Yoruba woman, but they never responded to my exciting talk about the millions of people, including Washingtonians, who imagine Yoruba people as inhabitants of an African Mount Olympus.

The opportunities and incentives for Yoruba scholars at the TWIs to profess expertise about the "Yoruba religion" and art are altogether different. Similarly, Louisiana Creole nationalism has also found its most fertile ground far away from home, in the TWIs. The liveliness with which Yoruba and non-Yoruba scholars debate the nature of this now-circum-Atlantic religious identity reveals important truths about the nature of "culture" and ethnicity generally. The TWIs offer honor and earnings for an expertise that Yoruba people embody, all the more so since Yale University professor Robert Farris Thompson, in the 1970s and '80s, enshrined the study of Yoruba "culture" at the center of African and African American studies. There is a TWI diaspora of Yoruba religious studies scholars, art historians, philosophers, literary critics and a sociologist at TWIs deeply engaged in debate with non-Yoruba scholars and an old, circum-Atlantic diaspora of priests over the nature of an extra-territorial Yoruba "culture."

What Thompson nominated as the "Yoruba Atlantic" is the set of ethnic groups, polities and religious practices around the Atlantic perimeter propagating traditions that began in what is now southwestern Nigeria. It includes Brazilian Candomblé, Cuban Ocha (or Santería) and

Trinidadian Shango. The Yoruba-Atlantic case illustrates the role of Western universities and other state-supported educational institutions, such as museums, in subsidizing the imagination of ethnic groupings rooted in faraway places and in subordinate classes.

Academic debates have long helped to create working ethnic identities on the ground. The "invention of traditions" literature documents this phenomenon well during the late 19th century (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). Less widely examined is the role of bourgeois nationalist folklore in the ethnic self-recognition of subaltern populations within the nation-state (Matory 2005:149-187; 199-207). Boas's anthropology department at Columbia inspired Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre's influential *mestiço*-nationalist manifesto, The Masters and the Slaves (1986[1933]), at a time when the Brazilian establishment was still wedded to dreams of whitening the nation. Since Freyre organized the first Afro-Brazilian Congress in 1934, dozens of conferences have brought together priests and scholars intent on rethinking the role of Afro-Latin American religions in their host nation-states, reorganizing these religions internally, and establishing their relationship to communities beyond the nation-state. Several such conferences have had momentous effects, largely because they have helped to establish—by the standards of scholars and of the more powerful elites who fund them and take their counsel--which priests' practices are normal, which are best silenced, and who legitimately speaks for the group. The initially research-based and eventually Platonic relationships between specific Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Cuban, and Haitian priests and scholars have had parallel effects on the reproduction of Afro-Atlantic collective identities.

Sometimes the discussions in universities are distant from the current priorities of the general population, but, through their influence on the children of elites, the mass media, and forensic agencies, those discussions sometimes trickle down to the mainstream and have

implications in non-academic leadership struggles. That the audience affects the character of the discussion is evident in the difference between the debates at Howard and those at Harvard, Yale and Michigan. With the endorsement of elite TWIs and extravagantly illustrates catalogues of sacred art, the partisans of lofty debates about Yoruba religions have in many ways already become high priests of a new African super-ethnicity.

In this final section of the chapter, we document an important venue of ethnogenetic debates—the university-sponsored world conferences that convene priests and scholars from the entire Atlantic and Caribbean perimeter. The ultimate effects of these debates among diasporic intellectuals have yet to be systematically explored, though I make some initial observations in Matory 2005a (pp.219-23).

The liveliness of these TWI-based debates about the nature of Yorubaness made it the only African ethnic group in the yearlong 2011 Mellon-Sawyer Seminar series on Ethnicity in Africa that received a seminar all its own. However, this debated ethnicity exemplifies the broader principle that "cultures" arise more from conflict than from consensus (Matory 2005; 1994). Contrary to the view of Barth and Cohen that cultural diacritica clarify the boundaries between ethnic groups, I observe that, in real time, cultural diacritica are more often the subject of debate than of consensus. Ethnicity is less a fixed taxonomy than a situationally changing set of claims to prestige and prerogative. The cultural diacritica of any given ethnic identity are as diverse and changing as are the interests of the actors who use them to distinguish insiders from outsiders and to make interested demands for the distribution of resources and on the conduct of their fellows. Ethnicity is therefore structured less by consensus within the ethnic group about the intensionally defined differences between insiders and outsiders than by the debate among

insiders and outsiders and by the shared venues of that debate. An ethnic group is a translocal field of debate within a global field of debate.

The TWI, or the ethno-racially marked university is the authoritative venue for the debate and recognition of ethnic groups. Moreover, the loftiness of the venues—none being loftier than the conference rooms and lecture halls of the most ethnically unmarked universities—is a measure of the level of dignity achieved by an ethnic identity relative to its rivals in the race for distinction. The canonization of Yorubaness and its constituent debates have taken place not only at a series of regional universities but at the two most national universities in the world's greatest power—Harvard and Yale—and most recently at one of the most prestigious state universities—University of Michigan at Ann Arbor--all of which are predominantly white, and by a large margin. Even among the TWIs, the stratified nature of these venues shapeds the nature of the debates and their tentative outcomes.

Who Is Yoruba? Have

First, the temporal boundaries of Yorubaness are hotly contested. For example, the description "Yoruba art" is regularly applied to objects created by people who almost certainly never called or considered themselves "Yoruba," such as the pre-19th-century objects depicted in Drewal, Pemberton, and Abiọdun's *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (1989). In oral communications, some Nigerian Yoruba scholars, such as Wande Abimbọla and Oyeronkẹ Oyewumi, angrily dispute Robin Law's influential assertion that the Yoruba ethnic identity as we know it today was a mid-19th-century invention. They argue, for example, that the ancientness of Odudua and of the Ifa divination system demonstrates the primordialness of

Yoruba identity. I can only imagine what they think of J.D.Y. Peel's argument (2011) that Yoruba ethnogenesis is closely allied to Christianity.

In many ways, this debate is a struggle about who gets to speak for whom. Are the Edo-speakers descendants of the Yoruba or its progenitors, entitled to control over their own state and channel to oil revenues? Are Yoruba sub-regions or politicians who ally with northern political parties traitors to their ancestral family?

Nor is it clear to me that all of the contemporary human and divine populations that Robert Farris Thompson calls the "Yoruba Atlantic" belong to the same ethnic group. But that is the point. The criteria by which one would judge the matter are protean, situational, strategic, and, above all, continually debated. There is a rival claimant to the status of "nation" most influential in any given diaspora religion (e.g., Parés 2013[2006]). In Brazil, for example, the worshipers of the *vodum* gods, of the *inquice* gods, and of the *caboclo* Indian spirits experience the state-supported definition of Candomblé as a form of Yoruba religion as a form of imperialism. In Cuba, the *orichas* embody the economic and cultural dominance of Havana and Matanzas over El Oriente, where the *fodunes* held an earlier pride of place.

Race and Yoruba-Atlantic Ethnicity

Second, is race one of the qualifications of membership? And, if so, which races?

Black North American participation in orisha-worship is often traced to the 1959 pilgrimage of Walter Serge King, a Detroit-born dancer with the Katherine Dunham Company, and of his friend Chris Oliana to Matanzas, Cuba, where they were initiated in Lucumí religion, the names of whose gods (orichas) clearly share common cultural ancestors with the contemporary Nigerian oriṣa. King adopted the name Oseijiman Adefunmi I, founded an orisha

temple in New York City, and, eventually, founded a "Yoruba" kingdom called Oyotunji in Beaufort, South Carolina. For him and for many African-American orisha-worshipers, initiation in Cuban Ocha, or Santería, and especially in a North American adaptation of it that expurgated Roman Catholic "syncretism" represented a recovery of their African ancestral heritage and racial authenticity. Many such African Americans therefore consider the participation of whites in "the Religion" illegitimate. However, according to Kamari Maxine Clarke (2004), Oyotunji residents who undertook pilgrimages to Nigeria were often called *oyinbo* ("white people," "Westerners"). In turn, they branded Westernized and non-orişa-worshiping Nigerians "white black people" (1994:14).

Since the early 1990s, large numbers of Central American and Mexican immigrants to US Latino neighborhoods have also adopted Lucumí religion, or Cuban Ocha, from their Caribbean Latino predecessors in the US. Not only many white Cubans and Puerto Rican practitioners of Ocha, or *santeros*, but also many white and Indian-looking Mexican, Guatemalan and Salvadorean *santeros* propagate the idea that African Americans tend to lack the speakers' collectively shared Latino racial acumen for Ocha spirit possession.

By contrast, Nigerian participants in this field of debate articulate a very different racial logic of boundary and connection. That is, Nigerian Christians increasingly abhor the religious practices of their pre-colonial ancestors and endeavor to erase them as touchstones of collective identity. For example, many Pentecostal Yoruba people nowadays remove references to the orisha gods from their family names and replace them with Christian references. In a parallel cross-cutting of racial boundaries, internationally itinerant Nigerian priests, such as and Wande Abimbọla and the Epega dynasty, have served racially diverse western-hemisphere clienteles with the understanding that Yoruba cosmogony charts the creation of humankind, not just black

people. In the early 20th-century, a Yoruba Christian minister named David Ọnadele Epega founded a late-20th-century dynasty of priests of "Yoruba traditional religion." Citing the Black nationalist writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden among his sources of inspiration, Epega published several treatises on this religion. Several of his grandsons became orisha priests and have initiatied other priests in Chicago, Florida, São Paulo, and probably elsewhere. They continue their grandfather's publishing legacy, as well. Some African-American devotees criticize the late Afọlabi A. Epega, one of the grandsons, for his promotion of white American initiate Philip John Neimark (Matory 2005a:64). African-American orisha-worshipers and non-worshipers tend to regard whites' entry into the priesthood as a form of theft, made worse by the fact that, in the critics' view, the white-dominated society will reward white practitioners out of proportion with their talents and then marginalize the more deserving Black practitioners. Elvis Presley's lucrative adoption of a Black musical performance style is a frequent reference in these complaints. In Cuba, some people attribute the precedence of the Yoruba Cultural Association, with its junior legacy and lighter-skinned leadership, over the *Casa 10 de Octubre*, with its older legacy and darker-skinned leadership, to a similar phenomenon—Cuban government racism. It is partly against this backdrop that Cubans debate the relative legitimacy and authority of these two organizations' *letras del año*, or Ifá readings of the year.

Nigerians, Latin Americans. Latino immigrants, and African Americans, in sum, make rival claims about whose participation in Yoruba religion is legitimate and authentic.

African Purism and Yoruba-Atlantic Ethnicity

Third, is syncretism or anti-syncretism the normative grounds of Yoruba collective identity?

Most African and African-inspired sacred practices are proudly hybridizing, creating value and efficacy through cross-cultural imagery and the mimesis of connections, rather than divisions, between once-geographically or -socially separated populations. Self-described "cultures" or "religions," on the other hand, tend to be idioms of recalcitrant difference and separation, arising largely in contexts of hierarchy, where some populations are under suspicion of collective inferiority and the ambitious rationalize their escape. Like other debates, the debate over purity and syncretism has implications not only for the collective dignity of the group but for the competition among potential leaders and spokespeople.

The Latin American worshipers of African- or Native American-inspired gods have long used the iconography of similar Roman Catholic saints to hide, represent or embody and worship those gods. Arthur Ramos and his followers called this phenomenon "syncretism," a term that has come to encompass other types of cultural hybridity, as well. Some worshipers and scholars describe this Roman Catholic iconography as a "mask," while others take the correlation between the saints and African-inspired gods of Haitian Vodou, Cuban Ocha, and Brazilian Candomblé and Umbanda more seriously.

In my argument, I have used the term "syncretism" with a different emphases, which was earlier attributed to Plutarch—the unification of rival parties in response to a shared external threat and, by extension, to the elaboration or resignification of signs in the service of such unification. Afro-Atlantic priests' correlation of the similar gods of the various Yoruba kindgoms, the Fon, the BaKongo, the Cuban santeros, the Brazilian condomblecistas, the Trinidadian Shango-practitioners, and the Haitian vodouisants with each other is easily interpreted as another form of syncretism. And, with a hierarchical logic even exceeding that of Afro-Roman-Catholic syncretism, these intra-racial syncretisms tend to treat the Ọyọ pantheon

as the lingua-franca, or, as António Risério put it, the "metalanguage" (Risério 1981) of all these other Afro-Atlantic pantheons.

On the other hand, in the 1960s, African Americans like Oseijeman Adefunmi I spearheaded the effort to eliminate the Roman Catholic saints specifically from the Latin American traditions that they had adopted through interaction with Latino immigrants and travel to Cuba. Influential Afro-Brazilian Candomblé priestess Stella de Azevedo and white Cuban-American *santero* Ernesto Pichardo took up the same banner in the 1980s and '90s, respectively. As the occasion of her most widely cited declaration against syncretism, Mae Stella chose the Third Congress of Orişa Tradition and Culture, organized by the Caribbean Cultural Center and held at Hunter College in New York City.

Pichardo's greatest influence arose from his US Supreme Court case. In the early '90s, Pichardo opened up a public temple for the orichas in Hialeah, Florida, transforming a Cuban tradition that had favored domestic practice and a high degree of secrecy. When embarrassed Cuban members of the Hialeah City Council endeavored to prohibit animal sacrifice, which Pichardo also vowed to bring out of the shadows, Pichardo took the City Council all the way to the US Supreme Court and won his 1993 case for the Constitutionally-protected status of what he regards as a necessary and sacred practice. In the meantime, Nigerian *babalawo* diviner Wande Abimbọla has declared blood sacrifice a dispensable element of the religion that he and Pichardo putatively share. Hence, both secrecy and animal sacrifice have also become touchstones of debate among priests.

In the Americas, orixá-, oricha and orisha-worship is a highly competitive business. Both the Cuban-American Ernesto Pichardo and the Cuban-descended African-American John Mason are highly knowledgeable and celebrated *oriatés*, or non-*babalawo* divination priests. Both are

re-Africanizers, seeking an end to Roman Catholic iconography in their religion. Moreover, they appear to be of equal age and initiatic seniority. And the broad influence of Pichardo's Supreme Court victory is matched by the influence of the orisha hymnal and catechisms-cum-ethnographies published by Mason's archministry. Yet, at a 1999 conference at Florida International University, Mason assailed Pichardo's authority and, during the question-and-answer period following a panel in which Pichardo had participated, repeatedly addressed Pichardo as "son." The motive was not immediately clear, but in private conversations there were hints that Mason felt that his race gave him superior a claim to authority in this African-inspired religion.

The "syncretism/anti-syncretism" debate (Stewart and Shaw 1994; Palmié 1994) among worshipers has implications for both gerontocracy and Black dominance as diacritica of Yoruba-Atlantic identity. First, at the bridge between the 19th and the 20th centuries, Afro-Brazilian *babalawo* and trans-Atlantic merchant Martiniano Eliseu do Bonfim brought back from Lagos an image of "purely African" religious practice that many Bahians found convincing. Assertions that the practitioners were racially pure bolstered their claims about the purity of their African religious practices. These discourses were directly indebted to Lagosian reactions to British racism in the 1890s. Martiniano helped Eugênia Ana dos Santos, an initiate of the far older Casa Branca temple, to establish the towering reputation of the Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá temple. Though seniority is a strong principle of rank throughout the Yoruba Atlantic, Mãe Aninha—as dos Santos is affectionately called--and her new temple catapulted to first place, in prestige and influence, over the older Casa Branca, Gantois, and Ilê Maroiá Laji temples of the Quêto (or Yoruba-affiliated) nation by instituting Martiniano's program of "African purity." Orisha-worshipers from junior temples throughout the Americas—including the Italian converts from

Umbanda to Candomblé in São Paulo and black North Americans—have also found "African purity" (i.e., the alleged mastery of a more African and, therefore, older tradition, such as Nigerian Ifa) a convincing symbolic means of skipping ahead in the queue of seniority among temples.

Conversely, members of genealogically deeper temples or temples whose leadership is threatened by the authority of itinerant African priests have an interest in dignifying the distinctiveness of their national traditions, including their Catholic-inspired divergences from contemporary Nigerian orisha-worship. National or regional particularism buttresses their temples against contemporary Africans' claims of historical seniority in the overall Yoruba-Atlantic world. This strategic pattern helps us to understand the passionate but seemingly unfashionable celebration of syncretism in the autobiography of Afro-Puerto Rican *santera* Marta Moreno Vega (2000).

In 1981, she and Wande Abimbọla had organized at the University of Ifẹ the first World Conference of Orisha Tradition and Culture. Thus, for the first time in history, a conference brought together scholars and priests of orisha religion from Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, the US, and Nigeria. Nigerian Yoruba Christians, on the other hand, protested against the conference. A wave of US-influenced Pentecostalism has turned Yoruba Christians all the more radically against orisha-worship and -worshipers. A dozen such conferences have followed, albeit under increasingly factionalized leadership. As the leader of one series of conferences, Abimbọla is now regarded by some as the paramount leader, or pope, of the global orisha-worshiping community and by some Latin Americans as the head of all of the "Yorubas" globally. Such an understanding of Abimbọla's role is clearly contested, and he himself denies

any such personal pretensions. However, until now, no one else had to my knowledge ever been credited with such authority (Matory 2005:219-20).

At stake in the debate over the definition and the worth of purity in these religions are also debates about the breadth and boundaries of the new world religion, as well as the hierarchies implied by any given logic of inclusion. Vega blames her withdrawal from the alliance with Abimbọla on his sexism. I is difficult not to see her subsequently enthusiastic endorsement of syncretism as a symbolic declaration of independence.

Gender and Yoruba-Atlantic Ethnicity

Forth and finally, are women subordinate in Yoruba-Atlantic religion and "culture," and should they, by tradition, be so?

Anthropologist and feminist heroine Ruth Landes (1940) influentially described the orixá priesthoods of Bahia, Brazil, a "cult matriarchate," describing the ostensibly recent rise of male priests as a corruption of African tradition. Eminent Afro-Cuban folklorist Rogelio Martínez Furé says of the Cuban Ocha tradition, "there is a very well-defined gender structure: men carry out the most important responsibilities in the religion." He adds, "Women are subordinate at almost all levels of ritual life" (2001:193, translation mine). On the other hand, Yoruba-American sociologist Oyeronkẹ Oyewumi won brief but considerable recognition for declaring that there is no gender whatsoever in Yoruba culture or religion, except what was introduced to it by "colonialism." These conflicting positions about the role of gender in Yoruba-Atlantic "tradition" have been debated vigorously by hundreds of scholars and priests during a dozen conferences, numerous lectures, and an ever-multiplying set of publications—all with significant implications for the definition of belonging and the assignment of authority within this circum-

Atlantic community. Also at stake is the defense of the community's reputation under the white gaze and individual scholars' pursuit of honor and and evasion of stigma in the TWI (see also Matory 2003).

North American participants in these conferences tend to attribute the split between Vega and Abimbọla to Abimbọla's alleged sexism and to his putative inability to deal with a woman in an equal position of authority. The equally common view in Brazil is that he had trouble with the Americanness of Marta's authority and financial backing. The explicit manifestation of this division concerned the very nature of Yoruba-Atlantic identity and its internal hierarchies. The leadership of this series of conferences publicly split over whether Ile-Ifẹ, in Nigeria, is the Rome of the global orisha church or, instead, but one among seven equally holy sacred capitals. By the first logic, every other meeting of this World Conference would take place in Ile-Ifẹ. By the second logic, the meetings would take place in each of the six other capitals before returning to Ile-Ifẹ. The decision would have equal implications for the relative rank of Abimbọla, on the one hand, and the overwhelmingly female leadership of the "great" Bahian temples, on the other.

In Nigeria, *babalawo* diviners are almost all male, but a few, according to Abimbọla, are women. These women are eligible for this rank only after menopause, and they cannot "give birth to," or initiate, other *babalawo*. However, even this degree of gender flexibility disconcerts the large and highly organized community of Cuban *babalawos*, who declare that no woman or gay man can ever be a *babalawo*, the Nigerian difference providing further proof to them that Cuban practice is truer to its ancient origins than is contemporary Nigerian practice, and that contemporary Nigerians therefore have no right to assume seniority and corrective authority over the New-World traditions. A lengthy online debate documents this controversy and the collective conscience of the antagonists. The debate over the validity of the Nigerian initiation

of an Afro-Puerto Rican woman as a *babalawo* became a cause célèbre and the focus of a heated effervescence. The rivalry between the Nigerian and Nigerian-oriented *babalawos* and the Cuban and Cuban-oriented ones is manifest in the subtly different color combinations used in their necklaces. In turn, the prominence of gay people in Cuban Ocha/Santería and Brazilian Candomblé, and any discussion of it, are abhorrent to most of the Nigerian scholars contributing to these debates over the legitimate boundaries of Yorubaness. Some have written vituperatively of their objections (Oyewumi 1997:117; Olajubu 2003:14, 114; see also Matory 2008).

At a 2008 Harvard University conference on Ifa divination, which is the expertise of the *babalawo*, Yoruba-American sociologist Oyeronkẹ Oyewumi challenged what she regarded as male supremacist *interpretations* of Ifa, such as Abimbọla's view that all witches (*ajẹ*) are women (1997:403), by contrasting the authenticity of what Ifá itself says with the implicit unreliability of what the *babalawo* diviners say. This contrast was the source of her evidence that the Ifa divinatory texts, which some regard as the authoritative embodiment of Yoruba tradition and culture, do not avow that all witches are women. As with many of Oyewumi's assertions, debate could not proceed, as her position was premised on speculation about some plane of reality or moment in time to which no one had access. How, precisely, would one determine what Ifa says independently of what the babalawo and their intergenerationally transmitted oral recitations say? The strength of her rhetoric is that no one at a joint conference of priests and university scholars could refute her logic without appearing to question the existence of a disembodied and infallible spirit known as Ifa, which exists independently of its earthly interpretations.

With similar rhetorical craft, Oyewumi argued in *The Invention of Women* (1997) that the gender-neutrality of pronouns, of most personal names, and of many other words in Yoruba

proves that Yoruba culture once was and, in essence, still is free of both gender and power inequalities between males and females. Of course, any speaker of Yoruba could identify numerous terms in the language that do distinguish males from females—including ones that imply power asymmetry between the sexes: for example, *baalẹ* (nonroyal quarter or town chief [lit., "father of the land"], *iyale* ("eldest wife of the house") and *baale* (head of a residential compound [lit., "father of the house"]). It should be noted that female nonroyal quarter or town chiefs are so non-normative that they, too, are called *baalẹ* and that the terms *baale* and *iyale* are etymologically distinguished from each other only by the gender of the referent. Yet, in real social life, the persons described as "fathers of the house" rank far higher in the house than do the people called "mothers of the house" (Matory 2008:539).

Moreover, a whole range of assymetrical gender practices operates quite independently of the Yoruba lexicon. For example, polygyny has long been widely accepted and expected in Yoruba society. Polyandry is not. Furthermore, the amid the historical norm of viripatrilocal postmarital residence, every woman who marries junior in rank to a child born in her new, postmarital residence the day before her marriage. Yoruba men simply do not experience this sort of demotion during the normative life course. None of these phenomena is likely to be the product of Western colonial influences, but Oyewumi escapes the need to prove her point by declaring that all of the gendered terms and conduct currently present in Yoruba society must have emerged after "colonialism," a period that she dates variously—and confusingly—from the slave trade, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and from European colonization, the last of which did not take place in the Ọyọ region, which is the setting of her argument, until the end of the nineteenth century. Conveniently, this vague and implicitly unchanging "precolonial" period is one to which Oyewumi and her various audiences have no documentary access.

Naturally, though, her claims have provoked debate. An entire roundtable of Yoruba and non-Yoruba scholars of Yoruba life convened at the African Studies Association meeting in 2000 in order to dispute her conclusions.

Whether or not her argument is credible in a scholarly sense, Oyewumi is, as the daughter of an important Yoruba monarch, a politically well-placed actor in the Yoruba-Atlantic field, and she possesses the rhetorical power to shift the debate over the authentic standards and diacritica of belonging to this super-ethnic identity. Hers is a direct challenge to the equally interested cultural diacritica advanced by Abimbọla. Yet their disagreement binds them in obligatory mutual respect. For example, Abimbọla cannot deny the transcendent existence of Ifa.

Abimbọla has his own stake in some debatable postulates. For example, he views cowry-shell divination in Cuban Ocha and Brazilian Candomblé as lesser or poorly preserved forms of current West African forms of Ifa divination and as products of forgetfulness on the part of Cuban and Brazilian diviners (personal communication, 9 November 2010). At that 2008 conference at Harvard, several Nigerian male partisans of this view also told me that Ifa encompasses all Yoruba tradition and culture—in Africa and abroad—and is the authoritative version of Yoruba tradition and culture. These definitions of authentic Yoruba culture and ethnicity are highly empowering to Abimbọla and equally disempowering to the predominantly female and gay male leadership of many Western-Hemisphere orisha traditions. There have never been many *babalawos* in Brazil, and Candomblé temples have long operated and conducted divinations quite independently of that class of diviners. The respect accorded to *babalawos* like Felisberto Sowzer and Martiniano do Bonfim in the first third of the 20th century in Brazil is well known, and Braga (1988) reports a vague but enduring sense that male cowry-shell diviners in Brazil are regarded as superior to female cowry-shell diviners. He regards this

sense as an implicit memory of Ifa. Currently, there are a few *babalawos* in Brazil who underwent initiation in Cuba or at the hands of Cuban immigrants to Brazil. They are concentrated in Rio and São Paulo and have little or no presence in Bahia, the heartland of the Candomblé religion. The lack of controversy surrounding their presence is a measure of their marginality in current Afro-Brazilian religious networks.

Controversy over the proper gender of sacred leadership is central to the daily conversations and lively sociality of Cuban and US orisha-worshipers—even online. Priestesses of Santería/Ocha in Cuba and the US hardly seem to divine for anyone but themselves, though, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were several famous female Ocha diviners (*oriatés*). Nonetheless, Cuban *santeros* and *santeras* hotly contest the Cuban *babalaos'* androcentric claim to technical superiority over *santeros*. *Santeros* say that their own competency and that of the *oriaté* diviners are simply different from that of *babalaos*. The principle that no woman can ever be a *babalao* is grudgingly accepted but resented by many Cuban and US *santeros*, including *oriatés*, but it is rumored that gay men have secretly become *babalaos*. Some Cuban Santería/Ocha temples, in principle, never call upon *babalawos*, as their competency is considered dispensable, and the skills of the largely male *oriaté* diviners are considered sufficient.

There are also West African counterparts to the disregard of the *babalawo* diviners' assertion of superiority. In Ọyọ North, where I conducted extensive field research among the female worshipers of Yemọja and the male and female worshipers of Ṣango, I never witnessed any interaction between these possession priests and the local community of *babalawo* diviners. They did not even attend each other's festivals. The worshipers of Yemọja and of Ṣango conducted all of their own divination, even on the most important matters.

Peel (1990) shows that, among orisha devotees, the *babalawo* diviners in 19th-century West Africa enjoyed the best rapport with the Christian missionaries. The epistemological styles of the pastor and the *babalawo* were more compatible than either style was with that of the possession priests. This fact may help us to understand why the *babalawo* have thrived more than the orisha-worshipers in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria; why the *babalawo* have led the way in organizing the dwindling Nigerian *orişa* priesthoods in organizations such as Ijọ Ọrunmila and other church-like orisha-worshiping congregations; and perhaps even why the *babalawo* enjoy such prestige and state support in Havana. Indeed, the fact that Ifá and the *babalawo* have a weak and relatively recent presence in Cuba outside of the national capital causes me to think that Ifa's success—where it succeeds—is directly related to the forms of state-centered and/or Western power found most strongly in royal, national and imperial capitals. Indeed, *babalawo* in Nigeria consciously claim powers duplicating those of monarchs.

Despite its prestige and increasing dominance among orisha-worshipers in both Cuba and Nigeria, Ifa is not for everyone a diacritic of Yoruba-Atlantic identity. Indeed, its role in the definition of Yorubaness is either implicitly or passionately debated in both countries, as well as the US-based orisha-worshiping community. When I reported these facts at the Harvard conference on Ifa, the same attendees who had declared Ifa the exhaustive and authoritative account of Yoruba tradition and culture expressed incredulity and anger. It is our desire for each other's understanding and agreement, rather than our agreement, that indexes our degree of Yoruba-Atlantic belonging.

The controversial view that Ile-Ifẹ is the capital of this new world religion and that Ifa is its master text bears profound practical implications for the gender and complexion of leadership, as well as the validity of syncretism, in the Yoruba Atlantic community. Whereas Abimbọla's

interests lie in the lumping together of Yoruba-Atlantic identity, the leaders of old priestly lineages and the priestesses of the Western Hemisphere have a greater stake in territorial nationalism. Each position has a rationale based on its own definition of Yoruba culture.

Predictably, related opinions about the proper place of homosexuality also divide the Yoruba-Atlantic transnation in a debate that equally defines the group's social reality. I have argued that the metaphors in West African Qyọ-Yoruba religious parlance and attire represent the relationship between a god and a possession priest as similar to the relationship between a rider and a horse and between a husband and a wife. The Yoruba term gun ("to mount") can describe not only what a rider does to a horse and what a male animal does to a female animal in the sexual act but also what a god does to the possession priest. And the priest may be called a "wife" (*iyawo*), a "mount" (*ẹlẹgun*), or a "horse" (*ẹṣin*). These facts about the West African possession priesthood, which are duplicated in the parlance of Latin American orisha-worshipers, help me to understand why men who are described by Ruth Landes, for example, as "passive homosexuals" are so common in the possession priesthoods of Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban Santería. Indeed, in both of those traditions, males who are susceptible to spirit possession are regularly suspected of being "passive homosexuals" (*maricones* [Sp.]; *bichas* or *adés* [Port.]) (Matory 2005b[1994]). That is, in Brazil, Cuba and the Cuban diaspora, a set of West African metaphors has been *reinterpreted* to encompass Latin American conceptions of gender, resulting in a Latin American inference that the kind of males who submit to spiritual "mounting" are also usually the kind of males who submit to sexual penetration. In response, Oyewumi accused me of calling the West African possession priests "drag queens" and "symbolic if not actual homosexuals," arguing to the contrary that homosexuality is foreign to "the Yoruba conception" (Oyewumi 1997:117). I have never said that West African Yoruba

possession priests are any kind of homosexual, much less "drag queens." Oyewumi has played fast and loose with my argument for other reasons. First, she would like for it to be known in the TWI that her authority to speak of Yoruba culture is greater than mine, and, second, she wishes to defend her ethnic group against the pervasive suspicion that Africans are overly and inappropriately sexual. Similarly, Abimbọla has expressed to me in personal communications his offense at the idea of his religion being discussed in terms related to sex. Ọlajubu (2003:14, 114) and Okome (2001) have done so in writing. I reminded Abimbọla that virtually every religion on the planet is preoccupied with sex, and that the Nigerian Ṣango and Yemọja priests who mentored me talked about it openly and jocularly.

Sexual puritanism and especially the denial of indigenous homosexuality are nearly universal and defining features of the public self-representation of populations trying to prove their worth to their colonizers and former colonizers. Of course, these discourses have marginalizing and sometimes murderous implications for the same-sex-loving subpopulations of the nation. For example, in 1999, Yoruba cadets in the Nigerian Defence Academy were put on trial for alleged homosexual acts. This nationalist reaction to collective stigma also marginalizes the *wọwọ*, a refined class of male homosexual entertainers that once existed in Ijębu-Yoruba society and a more general class of anally penetrated men who were called *adodii* among the Ijębu-Yoruba as late as the mid-20th century. In 1989, I met a number of male-loving Yoruba men in London and now understand one of the reasons that they preferred to live there. An equally defensive, nostalgic and frozen view of "the Yoruba conception" might disqualify Oyewumi herself for her choice to cut her hair short and to wear pants suits, or disqualify Abimbọla on account of his willingness to forgo animal sacrifice as an element of ritual practice. But sovereignty in any population means deciding who needs to be excluded, while feeling

immune to exclusion by others. This is a lesson taught equally well by Native Americans who exclude their partly African-descended members from tribal citizenship.

The Non-Ethnic Audience and the Inducement to Ethnicity

In the end, these are not so much debates over the quality of the evidence or of it is syllogistic implications but social positioning responsive to stigma. The excluded always long for a space where they themselves can exclude and the stigmatized for a space where we can stigmatize. Some of the rhetorical positions in these debates are plausible only in the context of the diaspora and especially of the TWI, which is different in a number of ways from Howard. At Florida International, Hunter College, Seattle University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, there are fewer people with research and personal experience in these religions and lifeways with the potential to contradict even the most arbitrary assertions about them. Second, the ethnically unmarked but predominantly white audience constrains the dissent of insiders to the religion or lifeways and inspires a conspiracy of silence (Matory 2003). Unveiling the fraud of one's co-ethnic risks embarrassing the whole ethnically marked group. Moreover, if believed, some outlandish tales underline the "exotic" nature of the speaker's group and, thus, its collective exemption from the social constraints imposed upon similar-looking natives (see Manyika 2003). Third, by embodying just the right aspects of the dominant group's ideals, they pry the door open just wide enough to get themselves in. Finally, these debates concern values of little importance or credibility to the majority of Nigerians in Nigeria and in most of the diaspora. Like other debates in the academy, they correspond to a genealogy of positions taken within the Western academy about race, cultural authenticity, art history, gender, and what makes a people a people. Though they make selective reference to the "folk," they are framed

by the "habitus" (Bourdieu 1985), or the strategic dispositions, of the academy. They are positions by which people in particular disciplines strategically vie for leadership and articulate their dignity in an atmosphere of the most pervasive doubt. They vividly dream a future ideal in the terms of a hyperreal past, which sometimes has powerful reverberations beyond the walls of the academy.

In between Heaven and Hell

If you start out from Howard University Hospital, at the southwest corner of the campus, you go eleven blocks west on U Street and three blocks up 18th. There you find Heaven and Hell in one converted four-story Adams-Morgan townhouse. Within this bar, bright neon signs identify the upstairs terrace as "Heaven" and the basement as "Hell." From Heaven you get a good view of the Bukom Café across the street, where Senegalese, Cameroonians, Nigerians and Ghanaians together eat capsicum-lit meat and vegetable stews with rice and fried plaintain or with doughy starches like fermented corn-based kenke, cassava-based ẹba/fufu, pounded yam, and *amala*, made from re-hydrated yam or plantain flour. After the house opens at around 4 p.m., they also watch soccer together on the big screen, discuss boxing and baseball, drink Star, Gulder or Tusker beer, and, on weekends, listen to live bands. The upbeat Nigerian Juju and Congolese Soukous contrasts sharply with the melancholy minor chords and melisma of the Habesha music played at the parade of Ethiopian or Eritrean restaurants stretching back to Howard's campus and beyond.

My son Adu and I often dined at Bukom Café, in the midst of our circulation among of the Subway sandwich shop and the various purveyors of Trinidadian roti, Pakistani lamb dishes, Creole gumbo, and my own low-carb, high-vegetable concoctions at home. The Bukom requited

our longing for my wife Bunmi and daughter Ayo's company. It also reminded me of the sour kenke and peppery fried fish—a specialty of the Bukom neighborhood in Accra, Ghana—that I used to savor in the dark with the Ghanaian women street vendors on Victoria Island, Lagos, after my Uncle Badẹjọ and his "Brazilian" wife had gone to bed. Ghana and Nigeria had exchanged human and culinary diasporas, sometimes violently, for decades, just as Yorubaland and Brazil had done for centuries. Even Accra has a Brazilian returnee neighborhood called "Tabom," meaning "O.K." At Bukom's Washingtonian outpost, the televisions loudly broadcast several soccer games at once.

Bored by the on-screen action, I would chat with the Ghanaian Yoruba owner and his teenage son, who felt over-worked and over-disciplined on account of his parents being immigrants and business-owners. The father did not like his telling me so. I knew that Adu would have some comparable complaint about his African-American father, and I was right. He recently called me a "helicopter dad." However, the semester we returned to Cambridge, he did get a perfect score on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System examinations (Guha 2003). His success was made all the more remarkable because he was a year younger than the average student in his grade, since he had skipped the second year of Kindergarten.

Like my Panamanian friend and me, he and the son of the restaurateur may one day thank their parents for the kick-start. However, while the restaurateur's son will likely attribute his future successes to the advantages of having an immigrant and non-African-American upbringing, my son will attribute his advantages to my being a professor or some or some other non-ethnic category to which millions of other responsible African-American parents belong. While I worried that my worries would make him neurotic, both the continual news of Black boys being shot down in the street and of the "achievement gap," I saw no way around

helicoptering and no way around what all of my African-American forebears told me: “If you are Black, you have to be twice as good to get half as far.” White Americans, too, worry about their own achievement gap in relation to the higher average standardized test scores of selected groups of European, Asian and Asian-American students, but they seldom cognize this phenomenon in terms of collectively white incompetency, laziness and family dysfunction.

As I write, I worry even more about the fact that my son grew up in predominantly white communities, where his peers, whose opinions most preoccupied him unselfconsciously regurgitated white American narratives about the nature of human diversity and social order, where it was possible to receive his biracial friend’s unfavorable comparison of a Black man with a large cheese pizza as sociology, rather than irony. Unless he looks back like the Sankofa bird, he may forget about the lineage of African-American men and women whose love and commitment to parenting culminated in his own success. He may forget that Blackness includes not just the possibility of acting out imposed stereotypes but also a long legacy of struggling against stigma in pursuit of upward mobility.

Almost every time I am back in Washington I drive past Heaven and Hell, reminded of another Africa, and of another borderland of racial and ethnic ambiguity, where, instead of thriving, like my son, a young Dinka man lost his life. In 2002, the Arab-dominated government of the Islamic Republic of Sudan was still at war with the marginalized inhabitants of its southern provinces. Reports of rampant state-sponsored slave-catching, rape, murder and ethnic cleansing were common in the Western press but were denied by the government. Human rights advocates accused the government of racism, while the government denied that dark brown Arabs could logically be accused of racism toward the bitumen-black Christians and animists of the south. While they blamed the Zionists for the slander, I had no doubt that the northern

Sudanese Arabs were trying to excoriate a bit of their own stigmatized blackness. Years later, in 2011, the Republic of South Sudan would, through a bilateral treaty and a popular vote, receive its independence.

But I have no doubt that the stigmatized of South Sudan will not find a way to "stratify their own."

What I learned about the life and death of Anyong Kout Deng comes from my Shilluk friend Daag, three Dinka friends of Anyong's, and a northern Sudanese Arab named Ahmed Bashir whom I met at the funeral. Daag lived in a neat Capitol Hill apartment and earned his living as a nighttime security guard at the Howard Law School and at the Blackburn student center. This gentle and cosmopolitan man revealed an identity ecumene to which I had never before been exposed.

Anyong had left home optimistic at a time of war and had initially lived and studied pharmacy in Perugia, Italy, before moving to Washington, DC. There, in 1997 and 1998, he continued his studies for a year and a half at the Howard University School of Pharmacy. However, he ran out of money and needed to pay $2,000 before he could resume his studies.

In northern Virginia, Anyang shared an apartment with two other young Dinkas. My Shilluk friend Daag said that Anyong had no wife or child. And it was the lifestyle of some of these young and single men to get drunk and pick fights. Most of the southern Sudanese people in the Washington area, Daag said, are Dinka. When I asked why, he seemed perplexed by my guess that the Dinkas had been special victims of land grabs, enslavement, and even castration by Sudanese Arabs during two civil wars (1955-1972; 1983-2005). Rather than agreeing as such, he said, "Yes, because they are in the area with lots of the nomadic…." As he seemed unable to find a word that he thought I would understand, I asked, "Like the Baggara [Arabs]?"

"Yes, the Baggara," he replied.

Unlike me, Daag seemed not to blanket Arabs with the suspicion of abuse toward southern Sudanese or of insouciance about their suffering. Daag told me that his own wife, who works for the United Nations, had just finished a vacation in Syria. She had just returned to her job in Pakistan and might soon be sent to Afghanistan.

In a way, Ahmed taught me a great deal, too. He spoke with an affected, thuggish street accent and said that he is the kind of northern Sudanese person to whom southerners run for refuge during times of war. According to him, the southern and the northern Sudanese in Washington get along well, and he is a sort of intermediary between Washington-area southern Sudanese and the District of Columbia authorities. For example, he planned to talk with his friend, the chief detective in the DC police department, about Anyong's death. In the know, Ahmed identified the owner of Heaven and Hell as an Eritrean named Mahari.

On Saturday, May 11th, Anyong apparently went to Hell and got drunk. Then some sort of fight ensued. At first, he left Hell but then changed his mind and went back to look for his antagonist. However, when he found and hit the wrong man, his victim and the victim's companions beat Anyong severely. One of them struck him on the side of his head with a bottle. Daag touched his own face to indicate where. Anyong fell out but got up again, saying that he was o.k.

The bottle-wielding assailant left unidentified, though he was definitelya black man. The roommate of Anyong's who accompanied him to the club that night also took him home, where Anyong slept until afternoon and woke up wailing. Before long, his brain had drowned in blood.

The funeral was supposed to begin at one pm at the Evangelical Free Church on Gallows Road in Annandale, Virginia—a favorite of the southern Sudanese women in the Washington

area. Like most of the men, Daag doesn't go often, but, like most northern Shilluks, he ws missionized by American Presbyterians. Most northern Shilluks, on the other hand, are Catholics.

Daag, Adu and I did not reach the funeral until 2 pm, the same time that Anyong had died.

When we reached the church, a Ugandan minister from Baltimore named Pastor Mike was preaching that Christians of faith were promised resurrection. In heaven, they would "take off the corruptible and put on the incorruptible." He endlessly repeated the theme that the Christian could hope for eternal life in heaven, where he or she would see our dead loved ones again. A multi-ethnic southern Sudanese choir of a dozen people sang several songs in what Daag said was the colloquial Arabic spoken in southern Sudan. It is quite different from classical Arabic, which he and others had studied in the government schools in the south and in which one normally writes. The songs were call-and-response harmonies, with one female solo offering the brief call and the chorus responding. There was prayer with bowed heads, and a brief sermon by the white pastor of the local congregation, who arrived a 20 minutes later than we. Sudanese people streamed in until the end, at about 2:30. Anyong had lived so briefly and so unknown by the people appointed to speak for him that there was nothing to fill this farewell but formulae.

Their black polyester clothes had not been cut for their willowy bodies and looked especially shiny against their deep-matte skin. It looked bleached by misery and cold, in contrast to the ebony brilliance of Alek Wek or Leni Riefenstahl's Nuba. The one young man in khaki- and brown-toned hip-hop attire stood out. The one white woman sat in the middle of the

audience during the service and stood at the front toward the end, as though she were some kind of official.

Throughout, two young women kneeled in front of their chairs, three feet from the closed casket. The hefty sister of the deceased, who had come down from Connecticut, sat near them She had not seen Anyong in several years. At the end, the Pastor Mike organized a viewing of the body—family first and then section by section. Many cried. I saw that Anyong bore large, shiny scarifications along the sides of his face.

The funeral director was an African American with missing lower incisors, as though he had passed some 19th-century African test of bravery. He represented the W.H. Bacon Funeral Home, owned by Wanda C. Brown. On their card, a line in Spanish reflected the changing demographics of Washington's inner city.

Anyong was buried in a plot near busy Braddock Road West, the cheapest section of Fairfax Memorial Park. A collection had been taken up in "the community" to pay the $6,000 cost of the burial. The plot alone cost $1,500. Next to the grave was an awning with a row of chairs for the family underneath. Anyong's youthful photograph at first sat atop the casket and, after the wind blew it over, on the ground in front of it.

Pastor Samuel from Virginia reminded us about our not seeing Anyong again until we all get to heaven. And Mr. Piyo Tem Kuag (Anyong's "Uncle"—really his father's cousin; English translation of the highly specific terms of Sudanese kinship systems is difficult) gave remarks in English and Dinka on behalf of the family. Before the casket was lowered, each family member was guided by Pastor Samuel to drop pinches of sand from a dust pan into the grave, this after his explanation that God made us from ashes and returns us to ashes before, in the end, we all go to heaven. The words sounded recorded and as ill-fitting as most of the mourner's clothes. By

the third time I heard them, I wondered if even the pastors believed in this confusing postmortem itinerary. I did not hear the swell of weeping that usually follows this incantation in the Black American churches I know. So I looked for signs that these mourners had their own way of understanding this senseless waste of life. I longed to understand the graveside call-and-response songs, led by a woman who stood behind the first layer of the crowd.

Speechlessly, people milled around after the coffin was lowered, and then stepped back as a crane lowered a huge, flat black stone to cover the coffin and a truckload of red earth was tipped over into the hole. All I learned from Pastor Francis was that this new practice of lidding the grave served to prevent people from stealing the coffin, which was costly and could otherwise be resold.

Daag dismissed my suspicion that the family would seek vengeance against the killer; there are laws here that will take care of the matter. In cases that a Shilluk family at home agrees to have handled in the "native court," the bereaved family would be entitled to 10 cattle for the death, no matter what the dead person's gender, age or historical free/slave status. He says that similar payments exist to compensate for deaths in Sharia courts, which can be used to decide such cases in northern Sudan. This much I knew how to ask, and Daag was perhaps being kind in not dismissing my questions as foolishly anachronistic. But in no other moment during my field research did I feel so distant in class and culture from my interlocutors—not from the Gullah/Geechees, the Occaneechi-Saponis, the Louisiana Creoles, the Trinidadians, the Habesha or the Yoruba. I knew these populations as I was known, each of us an accustomed element in the others taxonomy of self and other. On the other hand, among these southern Sudanese, I had to fish to find the signs to which we felt a common emotional response or a matter of equal concern to debate over. Surely this was a matter of experience and familiarity. Thus, Anyong's

people reminded me of the deep family resemblances between me and all of these older Afro-Atlantic populations (some of them only *possibly* Afro) who were burning rubber to distinguish themselves from me.

[@@@ Photo X: Mourners at Anyong's funeral. Fairfax, Virginia. Photograph by the author.]

Fortunately, Yuomo's imagination about his connections to the Afro-Atlantic world and its dilemmas was richer than mine. After the funeral, at Daag's Capitol Hill apartment, Daag, Adu and I watched "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," a 1967 film in which Bahamian-American actor Sidney Poitier plays the perfect, well-groomed and unmistakably Black American fiancé—he is even a physician who leads innovative medical initiatives in Africa--and wins over the publicly liberal but hypocritically reluctant father of his white fiancée. Daag apparently likes the story enough to have bought a VHS copy. In the car on the way to his place, he had said that Sudanese frown upon one of their compatriots' marrying a white person, but everyone, he conceded, has to make his or her own decision. Daag also disapproves of the leading southern Sudanese figure in the US—a professor of political science. However, the professor's marriage to a white woman is not the main reason. Rather, Daag disapproved of this highly accomplished and educated man because an "elder" such as he should show an interest in the affairs of "the community" and, therefore, appear at funerals like this. People are judged not just by their educational accomplishments, said Daag, but also by their conduct.

On the bookshelf in Daag's apartment was a brush-topped helmeted Greek spearman with his possibly exposed privates facing the rear of the bookshelf. Also on the walls were an

ornately framed, French-looking gilt mirror, a Pakistani rug (brought by his wife from Pakistan), several model ships, and two clocks, one of them sharing a frame with a model ship. His artwork also included decorated ostrich eggs—one beaded with the then-current Sudanese national colors (red, green, black and white) and the other of variegated colors.

Daag blamed former President Jaafar Nimeiri for the major problems in Sudan. Treaties in 1972 had promised autonomy to the south, but Nimeiri abrogated them, saying the treaties "are not the Koran or the Bible." Thus the second civil war began. Nimeiri also changed the flag to imitate those of the Arab countries. Before 1970, the flag had been blue, yellow and green—much nicer, he said. The current flag, he agreed, was similar in color to the Palestinian flag. Daag also displayed on his apartment walls African masks, photos of a bronze Baule mask from Côte d'Ivoire, of male and female Bambara *tyi wara* antelope sculptures and of a carved Dogon horseman from Mali, of a Yoruba *egungun* ancestral masquerade from Nigeria, and of a Yombe caryatid stool from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Daag's usual armchair was draped with a length of cloth printed with ancient Egyptian gold ankhs. In the corner, there is a piano bench upholstered with elephant motifs and designs resembling the Yoruba god Eshu and the Pueblo Kokopelli—both tricksters who crosscut boundaries and muddy the border between the expected and the unexpected. Daag also kept a lamp on top of the bench.

Daag's bookshelves were full of books belonging to him and his cousin—books on Sudanese politics and on Palestine, Arabs and Israel, C.G. Seligman and Brenda Z. Seligman's *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932), and Bob Woodward's *The Choice* (1996), about Bill Clinton's first presidential election. Near the kitchen, Daag displayed the Smithsonian catalogue for the museum exhibition "Wrapped in Pride: Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity,"

which features on the cover Eliot Elisofon's photo of a gold- and kente-draped chief on the cover.

One of Daag's other books was *Feeling the Spirit* (1994), an anthology of the photos of *New York Times* photographer and HBCU graduate Chester Higgins. Most of these photos document west African-inspired religious phenomena in the Americas, though many of the photographed celebrants and priests looked white. On the cover is the image of a white Brazilian woman dressed for and apparently possessed by Oxum, the Brazilian version of a goddess who, according to her Nigerian praise poetry (*oriki*) originated from my wife's town of Igede-Ekiti, in Nigeria. Also featured in the book are photographs of Native Americans of partly African ancestry. This book appears to represent Higgins' own trans-oceanic super-ethnic self-construction as African, not just politically but also culturally and spiritually pan-African. In the post-script, Higgins honors his dead mother and, through her, proclaims himself a descendant of the Gullahs but is unashamed to call their original Gullah ancestor "thick-tongued"—a prejudicial but apparently affectionate reference to that ancestor's creole language variety.

Southern Sudanese identities and debates emerged historically at the interface of worlds that have been racialized as African and Arab. This fact, in addition to their distinctive appearance and their cattle culture, causes me to imagine them at a far remove from the Afro-Atlantic sources of my birth and of the dilemmas most central to my identities. To me, northeast Africans tend to look quite different from western Africans--their lifeways, like their bodies, having been shaped by the convergence of a different set of populations, cultigens and commercial networks. However, my imagination is clearly not the limit of Daag's or of filmmaker Haile Gerima's. And my own involuntary pursuit of what is frozen and fixed among them failed me. Howard's northeast African population reminds me that heaven and hell have

Afro-Byzantine, Afro-Ottoman and Afro-Arab axis, as well, with their own motives and means of embrace and distancing. However, Africans from these points of encounter find a convincing model for their own unsettled dilemmas in the icons and in the "literally defined world" of the Howard and of the Afro-Atlantic peoples.

Conclusion

American Africans are among the richest and best-educated Americans, but the come from the poorest and one of the most culturally diverse continents. They are thus an apt metaphor of the heaven and the hell that dwell in every black body on the planet—at once the slave and the spirit of hope, rebellion and freedom known best to the slave. Indeed, a person born to privilege could not imagine freedom without pondering the hope of the slave. The world's beacons of freedom—the United States and France—were, at the time that they propagated their most enduring noble ideals, major slaveholding nations. It is no surprise, then, that many elite American Africans—themselves cast by the world into symbolic abjection—are willing to redeem themselves at the expense of African Americans. Such is the nature of ethnological Schadenfreude.

But, as American Africans at Howard demonstrate, Plutarchian syncretism is an equally plausible mode of "culture"-making, and the choice is shaped by context. Yes, people often identify themselves and their "cultures" according to the largest group that includes them and excludes the antagonist, as Evans-Pritchard would predict, but some people make a different ethical choice. The "literally-defined world" of the university is rich in the raw materials of multiple identity configurations. Howard hosts much ethnological Schadenfreude, but both the loss of hope in the homeland, the precarious economic times in the host country, and the

predominantly white immediate audience create a very different set of motivations for American African professors at the TWIs, generating highly influential debates about the cultural diacritica of a supra-ethnic Yoruba identity but concerns far-removed from the realities of most West African Yoruba lives and often entail forms of self-exoticization that carry individual benefits for the scholar. On the other hand, these debates do serve as powerful allegories of reform African-diasporan and white people's lives. Above all, the intensity of these debates demonstrates the strength of the inter-ethnic community—American-African, African-American, Euro-American, Latin American and Latino—that participates in them. During my investigation of Afro-Atlantic ethnic diversity, my Sudanese mentors at first seemed to offer one lesson. Even as we appear to disagree diametrically, the common assumptions shared by antagonists become obvious when they encounter populations whose arguments are unfamiliar. Yet, under certain circumstances, such as their superior imagination or attention, such unfamiliar populations recognize themselves in our debates.

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[i] An Ethiopian graduate student at Duke and her parents tell me that *baria* is an insulting term that associates dark skin and characteristically sub-Saharan hair and "non-Arab-looking" facial features with enslavement, servitude and tenancy.

[ii] For simplicity's sake, I do not include tone marks in single Yoruba words or names that would be unambiguous without them. I do, however, include accents marking the vowel sounds and stress patterns in words used by Romance language-speakers, as the absence of these orthographic diacritica would actually misrepresent their pronunciation. It is the Cuban convention to transcribe the name of this god and of this divination system as Ifá, marking the stress on the last syllable. In Yoruba, the diacritic on Ifá marks the last syllable as high-tone. I dispense with this diacritic in the West African context.