
Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World: Experiences, Representations, and Legacies
An Introduction to Supplement 22

Atlantic Slavery and the Rise of the Capitalist Global Economy

The Slavery Business and the Making of “Race” in Britain and the Caribbean

Archaeology under the Blinding Light of Race

From Country Marks to DNA Markers: The Genomic Turn in the Reconstruction of African Identities

Diasporic Citizenship under Debate: Law, Body, and Soul

Slavery, Anthropological Knowledge, and the Racialization of Africans

Sovereignty after Slavery: Universal Liberty and the Practice of Authority in Postrevolutionary Haiti

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Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World

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Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World
Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 22
Danilyn Rutherford

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“The history of Atlantic slavery is tightly linked to that of European colonization of the rest of the world that went hand in hand with the production of Eurocentric knowledge” (Thiaw and Mack 2020). Deborah L. Mack and Ibrahima Thiaw include these words in the beginning of their erudite and penetrating introduction to this special issue. “Hence,” they go on, “it is critical to interrogate how these legacies infiltrated the core methodological and theoretical foundations of anthropological discourses.” And, I would add, it is critical to interrogate how these legacies have infiltrated the institutions that have sustained these discourses over the years.

The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, which sponsored the symposium that gave rise to the following essays, is one of these institutions. For the Foundation’s 75th anniversary, two science historians undertook a deep dive into the Foundation’s past (see Susan Lindee and Joanna Radin 2016). The Foundation originated in 1941 when Axel Wenner-Gren, a Swedish magnate and the founder of the Electrolux corporation, needed a way to evade scrutiny from the US Internal Revenue Service after selling one of his yachts in Florida (see Lindee and Radin 2016:S219). Paul Fejos, a Hungarian avant-garde film-maker, convinced Wenner-Gren to dedicate what was then known as the Viking Fund to anthropology. The two men traveled in the same circles of wealthy European globetrotters. They met in Singapore when Wenner-Gren invited Fejos to dine. Without any training, Fejos had just started trying his hand at archaeology and ethnography and was planning an expedition to Peru. Wenner-Gren was interested in investing in Latin American hydroelectric projects and mines. Wenner-Gren may or may not have been a Nazi spy, as the US government suspected, but he had Nazi friends, including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and dealings with German industrialists in the years leading up to the war (Lindee and Radin 2016:S238).

The fact that Wenner-Gren and Fejos found it so easy to get visited Göring once more in March 1940 after the Nazis invaded Poland, at the very moment when US Under Secretary Sumner Welles was in Germany on a peace mission at the request of President Roosevelt” (Lindee and Radin 2016:S239). Lindee and Radin go on to discuss how Wenner-Gren’s business dealings in Mexico and Peru were probably enough to prompt the US government to want to limit his scope of action. But that doesn’t exonerate him. “Full-blown Nazi sympathies—a commitment to the Nazi cause—might have been there, but they are not necessary to explain either the blacklisting or the probably financial ties to wartime Germany” (S239). In any event, it’s likely that race was on Wenner-Gren’s mind. “Wenner-Gren’s draft speech in 1955 (for the WGF-sponsored Princeton conference “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth”) stated that the book was primarily intended to encourage ‘Nordic solidarity.’ Nazi racial hygiene theory emphasized the superiority of the Nordic races. But in the interwar period, ‘Nordic solidarity’ could refer to cooperation between the Nordic states—Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Finland—as they tried to navigate ‘neutrality’ by the late 1930s” (S239).

1. “Wenner-Gren did sustain some business relationships and social ties that linked him to Nazi Germany (as did many other Swedish business owners). Most significantly, he did not speak out against Hitler. He probably did not sever his longstanding ties to German industry during the war. Wenner-Gren was also a self-appointed private emissary between Field Marshall Hermann Göring and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in the summer of 1939, which implicated him in the appeasement of Hitler. He

2. Mark Anderson reproduces a chart produced by the National Science Foundation “comparing the composition of 2015 anthropology PhDs to the overall makeup of the United States.” African Americans make up 13.3% of the US population. They made up only 4.3% of anthropology PhDs in that year. Anthropology compares unfavorably with its sister social sciences: sociology at 8.9%, psychology at 7.8%, and political science at 7.4%. The only social science in which Black Americans are more underrepresented is economics at 2.7%. See Anderson 2019, loc. 4165. See also http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17306/data/tab24.pdf.
who was always in the picture was the Foundation’s third president, Lita Osmundsen, who was Paul Fejos’s fifth wife and took over after he died. A major in mathematics and anthropology from Hunter College, Osmundsen studied for her PhD under Ruth Benedict at Columbia University. At Wenner-Gren, she started out as an office assistant and quickly rose through the ranks. From 1963 to 1987, she developed symposium themes, selected symposium participants, and presided over week-long meetings held in the Foundation’s castle in Austria. As Lindee and Radin make clear, she did this job extraordinarily well (Lindee and Radin 2016:S260).

As one participant recalled in his note to her, “I hope you are not embarrassed by compliments, but you run your magic mountain like a magus, manipulating the conference’s moods and sense of themselves in a manner which is most likely to get it down to profound business. You and the castle have been the most important participants in both of the conferences I have attended.” (Lindee and Radin 2016: S260)

Lindee and Radin also highlight a piece of information that would have surprised the scholars who attended these meetings: in the 1930 census, Lita Osmundsen (then Binns) is listed as Black (Lindee and Radin 2016:S272). Controlling the purse strings and setting the agenda, she was arguably the most powerful woman in anthropology. But she had to pass in order to succeed in her career.

From October 12 to 18, 2018, seventeen scholars gathered at the Palácio de Seteais in Sintra, Portugal, to explore a topic of deep significance for anthropology: how Atlantic slavery created the modern world (fig. 1). These scholars came from different settings and brought with them different commitments. They were based in universities, museums, and research institutes in Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Senegal, Sweden, and the United States. They were specialists in archaeology, biological anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, economic history, and art history. These scholars did not shy away from uncomfortable topics, nor did they hide the ways their positionality shaped their perspectives. The symposium was contentious, penetrating, and extremely productive, as the essays that follow make clear.

As Thiaw and Mack explain in their discussion of the essays, the participants took four approaches to the topic. Joseph E. Inikori and Catherine Hall considered Atlantic slavery’s role in the rise of modern capitalism and the expansion of European
empire. Inikori (2020) deployed the tools of economic history to show that the English regions that led the way in the Industrial Revolution were those most tightly integrated into the Atlantic trade. This detail matters: it means that England’s growth and imperial expansion was funded by capital amassed through the toil of enslaved Africans in the New World. Hall (2020) took the story forward by tracing the history of the Long family, whose fortunes derived from plantations in Jamaica. Part of their wealth derived from reparations made after abolition according to an obscene calculation that rewarded slave owners, and not their victims, by a government that continued to put a price on people’s lives.

Michael Blakey, Hannes Schroeder, Katharina Schramm, and Jenima Pierre dissected another crucial legacy of Atlantic slavery: the making and remaking of identities. Blakey (2020) recounted his experience leading the African Burial Ground Project in New York, which pioneered cutting-edge methods and an engaged approach to the relationship between researchers and the dead and their descendants. He also described how White supremacy dogged the initiative, from the obstacles thrown up by the city to the refusal of White archaeologists to recognize the innovations the project introduced. Schroeder (2020), who also spoke on behalf of his coauthor, Sarah Abel, considered commercial genetic testing. He highlighted both its possibilities and its limitations for people in the African diaspora, given how these enterprises obscure histories of human movement and mixing and project contemporary identity categories into the past. Schramm (2020) explored the predicaments faced by Black Americans who have made their homes in Ghana at a time when the government is seeking to profit from tourism and remittances. She explained how they challenge the limits of the nation-state as they navigate three dimensions of citizenship: affective, legal, and based on an embodied link. Pierre (2020) showed how the slave trade and colonialism continue to structure the very categories anthropologists use to describe African societies. The fact that scholars and pundits still see kinship and ethnicity when they should see racialization bears witness to the ongoing impact of Atlantic slavery on African lives.

Four other participants explored the production and contestation of inequality and injustice. Three of them used approaches that brought archaeology to the fore. Cameron Monroe (2020) drew on his ongoing excavation at Sans-Souci, the palace built by Henri Christophe, the self-proclaimed king of Haiti, in the wake of the successful slave rebellion of 1791. Henri Christophe deployed Enlightenment-era architecture to stake a claim for his polity to recognition as a powerful global actor. In their choice of household items, the Haitian elite both drew on the prestige of European imports and asserted a connection to Africa by evoking the precolonial state of Dahomey and the pleasures of African cuisine. Sovereignty resulted from materialized gestures aimed at foreign competitors and local constituents, including the poor peasants whose labor allowed Henri Christophe to maintain his grip on power.

Foodways also figured prominently in Liza Gijanto’s (2020) examination of how formerly enslaved Africans in Gambia pursued new identities and economic opportunities. Comparing two commercial centers, Gijanto tracked this community’s conversion into a powerful middle class during the period when Europeans consolidated colonial rule. Mark Leone (2020) told a story of domestication and refusal prompted by the discovery of a bundle of shoes and artifacts in the plantation house where Frederick Douglass grew up. As Leone read the evidence, whoever created the bundle was adhering to beliefs associated with Hoodoo, which Leone describes as a folk form of Protestantism dating back to the rise of European mercantilism in Africa. Hoodoo authorized a vision of salvation as something to be struggled for in the present by Black activists. It provided a counterpart to the Black church, which provided an institutional basis for community over the very long haul.

Moving closer to the present, Jean Rahier (2020) discussed how “race regulation customary law” keeps Afro-Ecuadorians from benefiting from Ecuador’s new antidiscrimination statutes. Rahier took up what look like open-and-shut cases: one stemming from racist media depictions of a Black national soccer star and the other from the extreme physical and mental abuse of a Black military recruit. But in a nation imagined as limited to a blend of the indigenous and the White, justice has remained out of reach.

The fourth and final set of papers focused on memorialization and remembrance. Charmaine Nelson (2020) drew on an archive of runaway slave advertisements to challenge the image of Canada as a race-blind nation. Before Canada was the end point on the Underground Railroad, it was a destination frequented by slave owners, who could count on the government to help recover people who had eluded their grip. In documents from this period, Nelson encountered the ghosts of singular individuals, whose “self-liberation” is registered in these texts. Nelson showed how research can be restorative even as it reveals the violence visited on captured Africans. By recovering a sense of their origins and biographies, Nelson honored their agency while acknowledging their own and their descendants’ pain.

Temi Odumosu (2020) focused on a single archival figure, that of a crying child, in a reflection on how digitization can both commemorate the dead and perpetuate the violence visited upon them. The child appeared on postcards plastered into the family albums of Danish colonizers before finding her way to Copenhagen, far from the Caribbean island where she lived. Her face is a mask of fear and sorrow occasioned by the intrusive act that produced the photograph. But it also indexes the pain of having one’s personhood wrested away and replaced by a denaturing trope. Odumosu ended her discussion with a meditation on art and the use of metadata as ethical strategies for shaping “the transit of an object from the past to the future” (Pantazatos 2016:197). Both summon witnesses able to regard the victims of Atlantic slavery with compassion and care.

Tania Andrade Lima (2020) described a fraught attempt at memorialization in her discussion of the excavation of Valongo Wharf, a site where many thousands of enslaved Africans entered Brazil. As a white Brazilian, she was unprepared for the
reaction of the Afro-Brazilian people living in the site’s vicinity. Lima assumed she would face opposition from government officials committed to the image of racial democracy the Brazilian government has long projected to the world. She did not expect to face it from the community she had designed the project to serve, who hesitated to draw attention to the history of slavery given the anti-Black racism they face every day. Lima also did not anticipate the ways in which the site would become meaningful. While they have hesitated to participate in large public events, community leaders have begun using it as a setting for more intimate rituals designed to honor and tap the powers of the dead.

Throughout the world, monuments to victims of atrocities have taken the form of walls of names. Ana Lucia Araujo (2020) considered this trend’s implications when it comes to commemorating the victims of Atlantic slavery. Memorials like those Araujo describes have the potential to communicate the plantation system’s violence. But at the same time, they also have the potential to reproduce it. As Araujo astutely noted, in form and contents these memorials call to mind inventories in which people were listed as chattel. Recalling a system that gave slave owners the right to “label” their slaves by replacing African names with English ones, the words on these walls betray the very people they are meant to recollect.

In these remarkable essays, one finds evidence of resistance—of agency in places where one might expect to find none. But one also finds evidence of fathomless loss. When Black Americans turn to genetic testing or immigration to repair broken bonds, they come up against the lasting effects of rupture. Temi Odumosu approaches the image she discusses with care, but she can never fully comfort the crying child. Henri Christophe may have used his enemies’ architectural tools against them, but he could not avoid depending on the capitalist system Atlantic slavery created. Multiplying on walls, the dead call out to be remembered. But can we really do them justice if we do not know their names? As I write this, protesters throughout the world are calling for a reckoning. So much of the world around us is implicated in these losses, in these wounds that will not easily be healed. This is a moment of possibility, but not of quick fixes, as the past and present examined in this special issue make clear.

This is the place in the preface where I should be describing previous Wenner-Gren symposia that touched on this theme. There aren’t any. The Wenner-Gren Foundation should have provided a platform for this conversation a very long time ago. It will take more than one symposium to make up for this omission. We have work to do.

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Atlantic Slavery and the Making of the Modern World: Experiences, Representations, and Legacies
An Introduction to Supplement 22

Ibrahima Thiaw and Deborah L. Mack

This introductory article outlines the general orientations of the Wenner-Gren Foundation’s 158th symposium held in Sintra, Portugal, in the autumn of 2018. It summarizes and reflects on the various communications and teases out how the entanglements of Atlantic slavery, knowledge production, and colonization shaped the modern world. It then contemplates a more equitable future through alternative problem-solving anthropology.

On October 12–18, 2018, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research hosted its 158th symposium at Tivoli Palácio de Seteais in Sintra, Portugal. The symposium gathered scholars from different disciplinary and geographical homes and was convened by Deborah L. Mack and Ibrahima Thiaw. It was designed to be an intellectual challenge to academic traditions within anthropology and offer models of what anthropology could become in order to have greater impact in policy, public culture, and action. It was intended to engage an uncomfortable and painful past whose buried memories continue to linger in the present. To do that, it was structured to accommodate a broad spectrum of cultural sensibilities and political subjectivities that lay bare the positionality of the researcher. The ultimate goal was to provoke, revisit, and redirect debates on Atlantic slavery and modernity across racial, cultural, class, and gender, as well as methodological and theoretical, boundaries for the twenty-first century and beyond. Following the statement of the goals and orientations of the symposium, all participants were asked to prepare papers that were circulated prior to the meeting. Paper presentations during the meeting were followed by thematic focus group discussions.

The history of Atlantic slavery is tightly linked to that of European colonization of the rest of the world that went hand in hand with the production of Eurocentric knowledge. European global voyages, ca. 1400, were largely motivated by commerce and later colonization that meant economic and political control over new resources, territories, and their inhabitants. That colonial expansion was built on unequal relations legitimized by Eurocentric views of the world in general, elevating European over different others, particularly Black Africans and Indigenous communities in the Western Hemisphere. Physiological, biological, and phenotypical differences were translated into discriminating racial, ethnic, and national distinctions that were naturalized first on the basis of religion and physical appearance and later by way of anthropological and historical knowledge that, by the nineteenth century, became a powerful medium for representing and controlling non-European others (Cooper 2005; McClintock 1995; O’Brien 2010; Pratt 1992; Schlanger and Taylor 2012; Stoler 2002a). Eurocentric knowledge was strategically mobilized to intrude, search, analyze, dissect, and ultimately consume Black bodies according to European demands, needs, and standards (Curran 2011). Anthropological gaze born of modernity is a direct outcome of that colonial history that continued to reproduce canonized discourses and representations that locked people of African descent and Indigenous communities of the Western Hemisphere into the imagination of others (Mudimbe 1988, 1994; O’Brien 2010; Trouillot 2003). Hence, it is critical to interrogate how these legacies infiltrated the core methodological and theoretical foundations of anthropological discourses (Allen and Jobson 2016; Blakey 2001; Hernández 2016; LaRoche and Blakey 1997; Mack and Blakey 2004; Pierre 2013; Thésée and Carr 2012).

The reverberations of Atlantic slavery are manifest in contemporary society in the form of racial, class, and economic disparities; the resurgence of White supremacist movements in the United States and Europe; the renewal of Black militancy and political activism (e.g., Black Lives Matter, les Indigènes de la République); claims for reparations for past wrongs; and modern human trafficking; and illegal migration (Hernández 2016; Thésée and Carr 2012). The challenges these legacies pose to modern governance defy anthropology’s credibility as a fair and reliable source of knowledge.

Atlantic slavery was a turbulent moment of global magnitude with varying modalities, tempos, and scales, marked by
complex fluxes of peoples, goods, ideas, etc., which ultimately set the foundation for our modernity in its many forms (Appadurai 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). In addition to people, it involved massive circulation of animals, plants, agricultural practices, technologies, art and artistic creations, germs, diseases, genes, and more (Carney 2001; Crosby 2003; Diamond 1997; Hawthorne 2003, 2010; Joyner 2003; Nunn and Qian 2010; Thornton 1992). These fluxes had considerable impacts on population admixture, urban development, landscapes, agricultural practices, cuisines, knowledge production, and belief systems worldwide (Thiaw and Richard 2013).

One of its most enduring effects was the creation of a global economy, deeply rooted in the operations of the Atlantic capitalist system that connected different world regions beginning in the fifteenth century. The production of sugar cane, tobacco, coffee, cacao, rubber, and cotton, alongside the exploitation of mineral ores (gold, iron, silver), and even cowrie shell harvesting, completely or partially transformed modern identities, tastes, human relations, and productive economies (Beckert 2014; Boodry 2013; Galloway 2000; Hersh and Voth 2009; Hobhouse 2003; Mintz 1985; Stahl 2015). As such, Atlantic global connections have had immense consequences on past and present human geographies and environmental histories, as well as geographies of power, wealth, and political subjectivities; they are fundamentally implicated in the multiplicity and complexity of intercultural experiences (Trouillot 2003).

The hallmark of Atlantic circulations is the massive forced exile of millions of people of African descent and their inhumane oppression and overexploitation and their negated humanity, citizenship, and sovereignty (Barry 1998; Bathily 1989; Curtin 1969; Lovejoy 2000; Manning 1990; Searing 1993). Many African diasporas were formed through these processes in multiple localities across the Atlantic world, torn apart as they were by dual and antagonistic cultural identities construed in Black and White by racialized slavery (Bennett 2009; Fennell 2007, 2017; Gomez 1998; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Opoku-Agyemang, Lovejoy, and Trotman 2008; Sansone, Soumonni, and Barry 2008; Singleton 1995; Vinson 2018; Whitten and Torres 1998). Their struggle and continued quest for freedom and cultural recognition remain “unfinished” business, still unfolding as parts of a past, a present, and a future that are unsettled and unfixed (Gilroy 1993).

Africa was no exception to these processes and cannot simply be regarded as a mere reservoir of human merchandise. Africans were active agents who, in certain times and places, even dictated the terms of the exchanges (Bailey 2005; DeCorse 2001b; Kelly 1997; Law 2004; Lovejoy 2012; Thornton 1992). Enslaved communities in Africa, too, experienced massive regional and inter-regional displacements, disruption of social and political life, dehumanization, impoverishment and economic marginalization and, above all, the confiscation of their freedom and dignity (Jones 2016; Klein 1989, 1998, 2001; Roberts and Klein 1980; Rodet 2013, 2015). Thus, while multiple communities of African descent experienced the trauma of exile, overexploitation, and gruesome killings, it is arguably complicated or impossible to generalize about the magnitude of that pain and deprivation of liberty.

The archives of Atlantic slavery and colonization are imbued with deep stains of historical pain, sometimes still perceptible in modern-day practices of power, politics, and memorialization (Apoh, Anquandah, and Amenyo-Xa 2018; Araujo 2014; Forte 2007; Lane and MacDonald 2013; Osei-Tutu 2006; Rice 2010; Richard 2015; Shaw 2002; Thésée and Carr 2012; Thiaw 2008, 2011; Trouillot 1995). The production and governance of such archives are critical to processes of history making and history teaching with immense consequences on the negotiation of identity in the present (Lauro 2018; Lombardi-Diop 2008; Stahl 2001, 2008, 2010; Trouillot 1995).

The first set of papers resulting from these discussions examines the historical linkages between capitalist expansion, Atlantic slavery, and empire making (Joseph Inikori; Catherine Hall). The second set of papers reflects on the interconnections between Atlantic slavery and the imagination and construction of identities (Michael Blakey; Sarah Abel and Hannes Schroeder; Katharina Schramm; and Jemima Pierre). The third set examines Atlantic experiences and the production, reproduction, and contestation of inequalities and injustice (Cameron Monroe; Jean Rahier; Liza Gijanto; Mark Leone). Finally, the fourth set is an exegesis of the governance of Atlantic slavery’s multiform archives and heritages through an exploration of processes of remembrance, memorialization, and affect (Temi Odumosu; Charmaine Nelson; Tania Lima; and Ana Lucia Araujo).

Historicizing Capitalist Expansion, Atlantic Slavery, and Empires

Historians and anthropologists have long recognized the intricate linkage between Atlantic slavery, the spread of the European capitalist system, and the making of empires (Blaut 1992; Rodney 1982; Wallerstein 1974; Williams 1944; Wolf 1982). This has profound consequences for understanding modern geopolitics, the Great Divergence, or what Eric Jones (1981) has called the “European miracle.” This characterizes the rise of Western Europe particularly in the nineteenth century with the Industrial Revolution and the colonization of the rest of the world. Assumptions of European singularity that have their roots in the Enlightenment and its later elaborations were popularized by twentieth-century scholars such as Max Weber, Eric Jones, Michael Mann, John Hall, David Land, Jared Diamond, Lynn White Jr., and Robert Brenner (Blaut 2000). However, as Eric Wolf (1982) seminally demonstrated, this Eurocentric perspective does not do justice to the formerly colonized and the enslaved who were key actors in the operations of the Atlantic system.

To understand the underpinnings of the interrelationships between colonization, capitalism, Atlantic slavery, and empire, it is important to gauge how trade networks, slave labor, and sociopolitical and economic organizations might have operated
before Columbian voyages in various world regions (Lightfoot 1995). As Stahl (2004) has suggested, Atlantic commerce did not develop ex nihilo but instead articulated in creative ways with preexisting economic and political spheres. These different spheres—whether they involved trade in slaves or coerced labor as in the trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean, Roman Empire, and Mediterranean trade networks—were part of processes articulating intricate networks of trade, politics, religion, family, and individual lives with profound consequences on capital accumulation and capital circulation, colonization, and empire building but also complex intercultural interactions (Alpers 2009; Austen 2010; Brooks 1993).

European civilizations prior to ca. 1500 were largely rural and displayed little evidence of superior levels of economic and technological advancement over other rural societies in China, India, and Africa (Blast 2000; Thornton 1992). The rapid growth of Western European empires can be traced to participation in the Atlantic commerce, slavery, and colonization in the New World, Asia, and Africa. This was achieved via guns and economic bludgeoning with the whip, particularly in the American plantations, to extract commodities (Beckert 2014). As Frederick Cooper (2005) has argued, the idealized European “nation-state” was itself a product of that violent imperial experience.

Eric Williams (1944) argued that Great Britain largely funded its Industrial Revolution through the fortunes accumulated via abundant use of slave labor. More specifically, early monopolistic commercial mercantilism based on slave labor helped Britain finance its Industrial Revolution (Swingen 2015). In the ante-bellum era, enslaved Africans were human capital for the slave owner. They were subjected to all sorts of dehumanizing practices that could not be applied to free laborers (Beckles 1989). The slave-based Atlantic economy of the eighteenth century drew its efficiency not from its work organization but instead from the property rights that legitimated its operations. The “efficiency” of enslavement has long been questioned, though not on moral grounds but instead on arguments that free wage labor better motivates worker productivity (Blackburn 2011). In parts of the world like the Caribbean where Atlantic slavery outlasted its profitability, this was in large part because of the system of White privilege and racial hierarchy that underpinned colonial worlds (see Hall 2020). Thus, the development of Atlantic slavery must be understood through the prism of European colonization and the strategies and sociopolitical institutions European colonizers put in place to maximize their profits. That emergent capitalist system was invented with and experimented with various exploitative strategies ranging from indentured labor to slavery and culminating with institutionalized racialized slavery of Black Africans in the eighteenth century. Thus, colonial expansion and Atlantic slavery were major drivers of the economic growth in Western Europe between 1500 and 1850. The emergence of political institutions providing secure property rights and economic innovations were the strongest stimulants for that development (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005). This explains the break between the North and the South of the United States in 1861–1865 that was founded on the choice between personhood and property rights (Wright 2006).

Two papers in this volume revisit the role and interrelationships between empire, slavery, and capitalist expansion in Great Britain. Inikori (2020) retracts the historical trajectory of the Atlantic global economy. He distinguishes two stages: the first characterized by an integrated Atlantic economy ca. 1500–1900 and the second by a more globalized capitalist economy expanding to Asia and the rest of the globe by the nineteenth century by way of military might and economic supremacy. Reassessing the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, Inikori insists that industrialization did not start in a high-wage economy but instead in an import-substitution process. It grew to protoindustrialization characterized by regional rural productions (e.g., commercial agriculture or artisanal crafts) for external markets, particularly centered on textiles and metallurgy in English Atlantic trading counties such as Lancashire and West Riding of Yorkshire, which were then some of the most economically marginal regions of England. These counties’ cheap labor attracted fast-growing Atlantic markets that provided incentives for technological innovations for factory manufacturing according to Inikori. The development of specialized plantation agriculture capitalizing on slave imports from Africa and coerced labor rapidly expanded the market sector to a global scale. The low labor cost of enslaved Africans throughout the Americas was the fuel for plantation economy that boosted commodity production and stimulated industrialization, colonialism, and capitalism. The making of the global capitalist economy in the nineteenth century was largely indebted to the military and economic might of Atlantic European nations and the United States’ industrial powers.

Looking specifically at slavery business and the making of “race” in Britain and the Caribbean, Hall (2020) starts her essay with a troubling historical question. She interrogates the significance of a reparatory project in which slave owners received compensation from the state while the enslaved did not. This happens to be the case in the 1833 act to abolish slavery in the British West Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape. How, then, to end the pain of the enslaved and their descendants in the present? How can we make history more therapeutic to attend to its wrongs and its enduring legacies that are still manifest in persistent poverty in the Caribbean? In response to such troubling questions, Hall revisits the collaborative work of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project that was a platform to reflect on the genealogies of slave-owning families and on their wealth. Through her analysis of Atlantic circulations and the political and economic peregrinations of members of the Long family and their wealth across the British colonial empire, she connects people, places, and their material wealth in ways that challenge modern geographical, racial, and economic polarization across the globe. In excavating the archives of slavery and the sinuous flow of wealth, power, ideology, and race, Hall sets the ground for a renewal of debates on Atlantic slavery, European imperial expansion, and reparative history.
Atlantic Slavery and the Diplomacy of Identity Making

The world of Atlantic slavery was an assemblage of capital, bodies, goods, and ideas put in motion by the multifaceted configurations of European capitalism and colonial expansion with various cultures worldwide by ca. 1400. One critical concern for the study of this global encounter is how to make sense of the myriad cultures, practices, worldviews, and identities brought into contact and fashioned by Atlantic oceanic circulations. The determination of belonging and citizenship for these multiple categories of differences (nations, races, ethnicities, tribes, etc.)—each with its own norms and forms of representation, sovereignty, standards, and structure—entailed inclusion, exclusion, and restrictions but also claims and contestations (Cooper 2018; McClintock 1995; Narayan 1995; Netz et al. 2019; Stoler 2002a). Cultural identification in these contexts of encounter was both an individual and a collective endeavor in which all parties participated according to their own cultural norms, experiences, and political subjectivities. Uncontestably, Africans as much as the Europeans constructed their own imagination and understanding of others on the basis of perceived differences (Quashie 2015; Shaw 2002).

In the midst of the Atlantic slavery in the eighteenth century, the articulation of human form and character became central to identification processes that resulted in the making of stereotypes with enduring consequences for intercultural and interracial relations. Although offensive and prejudiced and, too often, based on a “lazy kind of knowledge” (Hinchman 1999), stereotypes remain a mode of cognition with an enduring life span. This makes identity making an unending diplomatic process in the production and management of difference at various scales, characterized by constant negotiation and strategizing to secure political recognition (McClintock 1995; Ralph 2015; Stoler 2002a). The political economy of Atlantic slavery was built on the politics of this management of difference that was grounded in the massive use of power and violence to legitimize the enslavement, forced exile, commoditization, and exploitation of others, notably Black Africans (Curran 2011; Pierre 2013).

European perceptions of African people were subsequently calcified through writing and disseminated in Africa and across Atlantic contexts (Amselle and M’bokolo 1985; Hall 2005; Irvine 2008; Nelson 2020; Richard and MacDonald 2015). Some are intertwined with Atlantic and colonial histories, but others are rooted in precolonial time and continue to mutate and re-fashion identities in contemporary contexts (Chrétien and Prunier 1989; MacEachern 1994; McIntosh 1993; Sarr and Thiaw 2012; Tamari 1991). Bamanan or Bambara ethnic identity, for instance, was forged in precolonial times in the context of expanding Islam and trade to refer to non-Muslim peasants in the Inland Niger Delta. Later on, Bamanan took multiple, and often contradictory, meanings: “nonbeliever,” “barbarian looter,” “obedient slave,” “spiritual,” and “superstitious,” among many other characterizations in the context of Atlantic violence, colonization, and ethnographic stigmatization (Bazin 1985). In colonial and postcolonial intercultural diplomacy marked by asymmetrical relations, violence, and dispossession, people and place naming is a major source of the alienation of non-Western others (Bigon 2008; Thiaw and Ly 2019; Thiaw and Wait 2018).

Africans were active agents in debates on racialization, ethnicization, and practices of valuation, as well as the complex manipulation of material commodities, sovereignty, and religion that was constantly mobilized to redefine identity, place, and role in an increasingly global world (Baum 1999; Brooks 2003; DeCorse 2001a, 2001b; Kelly 2004; Lovejoy 2006; Mark 1999; Matory 2005; Norman 2009; Ogundiran 2002; Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988; Shaw 2002; Tall 2002). For instance, Ahmad Baba, a renowned seventeenth-century Muslim scholar from Timbuktu, distinguished ethnic groups fit for enslavement (e.g., Bambara, Mossi, Gurma, Borgu, Dangoba, Kotokoli, Yoruba, Tumbugu, Bobo, etc.) from those who should not be enslaved (e.g., Mandingo and Fulani). As Lovejoy (2006) poignantly pointed out, his arguments were inspired by Islamic law and resonated widely among many communities across West Africa.

Racialization and ethnicization have enduring effects on intergroup relationships (Nunn and Wantchekon 2011). In the Senegambia, for instance, the activities of the Wolof slave-hunting warlords and their role as brokers in the French colonial administration have created relations of mistrust among Sereer Safen decentralized communities (Searing 2002). The ethnonym to designate Safen communities is noon, which translates as “the enemy” in the Wolof language. However, among nearby Singadum Sereer communities, noon simply relates to the ancestral land, which suggests perhaps ethnic fragmentation, isolation, and linguistic drift as a result of slave raiding (Ciss 2001; Thiao 2001; Thiaw 2012, 2013). The rapidly changing physical landscapes unleashed by slave hunting had adverse effects on the ethnic cohesion and stability of communities that were constantly reshuffled and recomposed in complex and unique ways (Kroot and Gokee 2019; MacDonald 2015; MacDonald and Camara 2012; Mark 1999; Monroe and Ogundiran 2012; Richard 2019; Stahl 2008; Thiaw 2012).

However, although population admixture and gene flow meaningfully subverted the Black and White racial divide, the Black body continued to be a site for all sorts of intrusions, representations, fetishizations, fantasies, and violence (Ferreira da Silva 2014; Hernández 2016; Lauro 2018; Lombardi-Diop 2008). This is exemplified by global economic disparities, the flight of African youth from the continent, the treatment of illegal African migrants across the world, their continued enslavement in the present, police brutality, and a racialized cerebrospinal system directed against Black bodies.

African postcolonial states were built on a colonial model advocating national ethnic homogeneity for the purpose of nation building through a negation of ethnicity (Southall 1970). Ironically, European states were at the same time themselves striving for this negation of ethnicity at home (Anderson 1991; Cooper 2018). Intriguingly, though, the recent surge in genetic ancestry testing among the African diasporic people works at
putting back on the table Africa’s diverse ethnicities in order to reconnect diaspora with African pre-Atlantic identities. Ironically, the categories produced by genetic ancestry testing are considered as more real than socially constructed identities despite the fact that its conceptualization and units of analysis are deeply enshrined in colonial archives (MacEachern 2000; Reardon and TallBear 2012). However, as Wendy D. Roth and Biorn Ivermark (2018) remarked, many consumers of genetic ancestry testing do not accept the test results at face value but instead make choices according to their real or imagined identity aspirations and social appraisals (Abel 2018; Abel and Sandoval-Velasco 2016). Because race and ethnicity are so deeply enshrined in the fabrics of modernity and colonial science, any attempt to redefine them in a way that might obscure the historical and socioeconomic contexts through which they were produced and given significance remains a potential source of dissonance and tensions (Bolick et al. 2007; MacEachern 2000; Reardon and TallBear 2012).

Four papers in this volume take on these various aspects of identity making and negotiating. First, Blakey (2020) revisits New York City’s African Burial Ground bioarchaeological project (1992–2009) that pioneered new practices of “publicly engaged anthropology,” sensitive to the concerns of an “ethical client” embodied by the culturally affiliated groups or “descendant communities.” Some critical aspects of the project included a dignified reburial of the remains of an enslaved African population and the erection of a US National Monument and a visitor center at the site. Atlantic slavery is a shared history that concerns multiple identities. To abide by that, New York City’s African Burial Ground Project, although sensitive to the cause of African Americans, was racially and ethnically inclusive. It challenged old stereotypes and prejudices, introduced new vocabularies (e.g., “enslaved” versus “slave”), inaugurated new techniques such as the use of ancient DNA in the study of historical skeletal remains, and developed more sophisticated interpretations in line with the life experiences of Black bodies of the African diaspora. For instance, variation in musculoskeletal stress indicators was interpreted as a product of the excessive work imposed onto Black bodies. But foremost, it recognized the rights of descendant communities and their involvement in the formulation of relevant research questions and interpretation of the data.

Second, Abel and Schroeder (2020) take on the possibilities and limits of a DNA “biological archive” and of “direct-to-consumer” (DTC) genetic ancestry testing, which were stimulated by the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 and the introduction of microarray technologies and high-throughput sequencing. Genetic archives offer new possibilities for Black bodies to renegotiate status, place, and belonging and participate in the redefinition of kinship relationships and the recovery of geographical links to places. Challenges to such a project are multiple and include poor reference data, a dearth of genetic surveys from Africa, technological constraints due to short stretches of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), and complex migration histories within Africa since ca. 1500 that confuse distribution patterns between past and present mtDNA, among other issues. Direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry is a fast-growing industry that has brought to life new identity claims that further complicate the relationships between Africans and Africa’s diasporas, unearthing old ethnic and racial essentialisms inherited from colonial science and reinjected in present contexts. Although direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry does attend to a certain demand from African diasporas, those who promote it must also be aware of its potentially destabilizing force on contemporary African imagined identities and social cohesion. It produces apple pie identities that assert either multiple homelands and multiple ethnicities or the use of modern national labels as clusters of genetic ethnicities that link nations, genes, and geography. To what extent do these industrially created identities motivated by commercial interests and fabricated by machines reflect the complexity of African pre-Atlantic histories? Direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry grew in parallel with the development of heritage tourism and the commodification of culture, but in the end many test takers and homecoming “Roots” tourists are disoriented and disappointed with realities on the ground in Africa (Bellagamba 2009; Bruner 1996; Ebron 1999; Hartman 2007; Holsey 2004, 2008; Schramm 2009; Thiaw 2008; Tillet 2009). We worry, however, about political subjectivities imbedded in certain expectations concerning Africa and advocate for more thorough conversations among all people of African descent on past experiences, modern concerns, and future aspirations.

Third, Schramm (2020) reflects on the strategies deployed by members of the African diasporas to renegotiate their identity and citizenship in the context of growing genetic ancestry testing and of homecoming tourism in Ghana. Because the African diaspora has long been excluded from the national narrative in their lands of exile, Africa has remained for many of them a mythical home. The shared experience of slavery and its subjective memories and collective identity forged at the crossroads of the Atlantic Ocean coalesces with the commodification of culture, new technologies of identity production, the development of soul tourism, corporate marketing, and global consumerism. The new forms of citizenship emerging from such contexts, either affective, legalist, or biological, pose serious challenges and dilemmas for modern nation-states. Schramm scrutinizes Ghana’s immigration law, elusive as it is with its dual citizenship and the Right to Abode, which draws a distinction between two sets of diaspora citizens (slavery—those determined by histories of slavery—versus those configured by post-independence migration). She analyzes the rhetoric of African diaspora returnees who articulate their own identities and those of their broader community based on historical ties to a spiritual homeland defined as “soul citizenship” (Markowitz, Helman, and Shir-Vertesh 2003:302). This concept encapsulates the “dreamscape of slavery” (Holsey 2004) and the idea of a “memory citizenship” (Nayar 2013; Rothberg and Yildiz 2011) that defies the tyranny of the modern nation-state characterized as it is by a structure of inclusion and exclusion. Based on the principles of jus sanguinis, Ghanaian law is
largely built on a genealogical model that is exclusive and uniracial and rests on a pedestal of ethnicized bodies, which presents an intriguing resemblance to the British colonial state. Fourth, Pierre (2020) pursues a reflection on Atlantic slavery in Ghana but shifts gears to explore the politics and poetics of race and racialization processes in an African context. Pierre emphasizes the racialization process as a key framework to explain why cultural differences were racialized in the Americas but not in Africa, while both places were subject to Atlantic slavery and European colonial expansion. For her, the interrelationships between global and local processes in Africa have not received sufficient attention to display the connectedness of race, ethnicity, religion, and other forms of cultural identity. Pierre contends that concepts of race, ethnicity, tribe, nationality, etc., are all products of the same sociopolitical processes and that African communities were inescapably affected by the same ideologies of racial differentiation and racialization processes promoted by White supremacists. Taking the case of the Euro-Africans on the coast of Elmina and Cape Coast in Ghana in point, Pierre argues that during European colonial rule, they lost their distinct identity through what she calls a "process of racialization through nativization." That process, she argues, rendered them "African"—and "Black"—in an attempt to erase the long-term historical processes of hybridity that characterized African and European interactions within the framework of Atlantic slavery. For Pierre, there is need to dismantle essentialist concepts of Africa’s "tribal" identities to bridge Atlantic and colonial histories and break the mold of Africa’s isolation from global debates on race and racialization processes (Chakrabarty 2000).

Atlantic Experiences and the Production and Contestation of Inequality and Injustice

A decade after the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, the United Nations declared 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent. The celebration was intended to raise awareness concerning the long-standing legacies of Atlantic slavery, racism, and racial discrimination and to take actions against historical injustice and inequality against people of African descent (Thésée and Carr 2012:158). As Gill, Catriona, and Lightfoot (2019:33) observed, racial stigmatization, denied human rights, acute socioeconomic strains, and disrespect for African religions, cultural expressions, and languages highlight how "slavery lives on through black lives and identities in the present" (Hall 2000; Orser 1996).

Atlantic entanglements had broad spectrum impacts on various aspects of socioeconomic and political life with major consequences for notions of sovereignty, law and order, difference making, material access and consumption, and inequality (Ferreira da Silva 2014). Sovereignty weaves interactive webs between human bodies, ideas, places, landscapes, and material objects that were all manipulated through the practices of authorization and subjection that were so crucial to Atlantic slavery (Monroe 2020; Richard 2019; Smith 2011). Such practices were inscribed in habitus, rituals, laws, feasts, political spectacles, foodways, and everyday performances of governance (Argenti 2006). For Leone (2005), American ideologies of liberty, individual possessions, and capitalism are all part of the same project that paradoxically contradicted their lofty aspirations.

Twentieth-century American advertisements to sell industrial products such as baking products, syrups, cereals, and rice, for instance, use images of the "black cook" epitomized by Aunt Jemima, Rastus, and Uncle Ben (Deetz 2010). These advertisements are rooted in deep American South slavery and its institutionalized racism that stereotyped Blackness. In racialized planters’ society of the Atlantic, freedom and self-determination were perceived as the exclusive attributes of Whiteness, whose supposed superior ethical and judicial reason enabled control of Black bodies, minds, souls, activities, and space.

Archaeology provides important means for deconstructing racist and romanticized visions of Blackness in the Americas (Fennell 2007, 2011; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2002; Leone 2005; Orser 1994, 2007; Orser and Funari 2001; Shackel 2010; Singleton 1985, 2015; Weik 2012). The material residues of eighteenth-century life at the Dixon Plantation in Williamsburg, Virginia, highlight a different reality of a plantation community. The artifacts recovered there—crucibles, medicine bottles, coloware pottery, a modified African cowry shell, glass beads, and a pierced English coin (probably worn as a pendant or on a bracelet)—indicate instead a racially entangled community in which the enslaved Black cook fed the planter’s family and made serums to care for their ills, all of which were flavored with African heritage and know-how (Deetz 2010; Epperson 1999, 2001). Although the enslaved lived in an oppressive White-controlled space, they held genuine power through the food and medicine they manipulated. With the creolized cuisine, medicine, and other arts de vivre (art of living together), which they created, they committed themselves to transforming plantation society through their exercise of knowledge and skills in practical contexts. The end result of that transformation was not a world for themselves alone but instead for all mankind in the process of permanent liberation (Freire 1970). For the enslaved who sought to break with the plantation modus operandi embedded in practices of inequality and injustice, this was inclusive and transformative liberation praxis (Dussel 2013).

Material culture is an excellent barometer to gauge the complexity of Atlantic entanglements on African soil. It was manipulated in myriad ways and reflects the operations and practices of power, status, identity, taste, resistance, and religion, among other dimensions (Richard 2010, 2019; Stahl 2001, 2002). In the Sinn region in northern Senegambia, Richard (2019) has pointed out that, rather than mere supply and demand, material things highlight peculiar trajectories that articulate between production, consumption, and intersections, all of which were mediated by social actors in ways that reframed existence and habitus. Farther north in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, the chiefs of the kingdom of Waalo regulated the power of French colonists established in Saint Louis via material culture.
and food. They organized regular visits with large retinues to the French post, which had the obligation to host and feed them (Barry 1972). In doing so, they peacefully ransacked French supplies to affirm their sovereignty and authority over them and, at the same time, restrained French accumulation of wealth and power.

The legal justification of Atlantic slavery was founded on such ideologies of coercive power and strategies of capital accumulation based on racial or ethnic discrimination and the confiscation of liberty. From different angles and geographical regions, Monroe, Rahier, Gijanto, and Leone take on the issue of Atlantic slavery and the production and contestation of inequality and injustice.

Monroe (2020) is concerned with experiments in state sovereignty and the practice of authority in post-emancipation Haiti at a time when aspirations for freedom and equality were in full swing following the successful slave revolt of 1791–1804. What alternative forms of sovereignty and practices of governance existed outside of the parameters defined by the European imperial powers? This was Henry Christophe’s dilemma, torn as he was between the reality of the exercise of power and authority in post-emancipation Haiti and his people’s sheer thirst for emancipation from that very power that they contested, toppled, and now held through him. Postrevolutionary Haiti struggled to gain international recognition and to perpetuate its alternative political ideals to slave societies of the Atlantic world (Trouillot 1995). The new Haitian elite sought to broadcast power, status, and social distinction by acting performatively on landscape, architectural space, foodways, and material remains. Through a study of architectural space and archaeological material remains at the royal Palace Sans-Souci built in Milot by Henry Christophe, Monroe explores how nation building, practices of sovereignty, and elites’ fabrication of novel forms of sociopolitical distinction collided with aspirations for freedom and equality (Gonzalez 2019).

Gijanto (2020) makes linkages between foodways, identity, and status in the context of Atlantic slavery where race, ethnicity, status, and inequality were socially structuring. She critically examines archaeological remains from two distinct Gambian commercial centers, Juffure and Bathurst, to explore the ways in which foodstuffs, foodways, and material culture in general were used to mediate social mobility and change. Formerly enslaved freed Africans, or Aku, settled in nineteenth-century Bathurst in search of new identities and new economic opportunities. Initially marginalized and largely employed as indentured servants, they rose to become a prominent middle-class community by the mid-nineteenth century. Key to this change was Aku commitment to European religious and educational institutions at a time marked by emancipation, the development of a peanut-based cash crop economy, and the consolidation of European rule. Gijanto probes these major changes by comparing archaeological midden deposits in Juffure, dating to the late seventeenth to early nineteenth century, with those associated with the Williams family home in Bathurst, occupied from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. At both sites, access to and manipulations of material culture acquired from Atlantic markets supposedly conveyed aspirations for the civility and modernity of African elites in colonial society and opened possibilities for social and political mobility. It is through that process that the Aku were able to redefine their identity, place, and role in African colonial and postcolonial societies.

Leone (2020), drawing from Orlando Patterson’s analysis of early Christianity to Saint Paul, argues that both Hoodoo (i.e., folk African American religion) and the Black church (Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Churches) developed out of plantation slavery in the Americas after 1720. The fundamental dilemma for Christianity then was the enduring tensions between freedom, slavery, and salvation. Afro-Protestantism resulted in a unique culture, mode of life, language, and ideological connections to cope with inequality, racial discrimination, injustice, and other harsh conditions of enslavement to maintain African descendant communities’ cohesion and stability in the Americas. Leone reflects on the significance of spirituality and religion in his effort to decipher a bundle found in Wye House on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, a house associated with Frederick Douglass. This feature is described as “a collection of boots, shoes, iron objects, cloths, and a capped bottle, as well as a carved wooden head with two faces back-to-back on each side of the head,” probably dating to the mid- to later nineteenth century. For Leone, such practices were likely intended to counter the effects of exploitative capitalism, which, in the eyes of Hoodoo practitioners, could be thwarted and contained. Curing and caring by way of religious healing, protection, prophesying, and worshipping were essential to plantation Black churches across the Americas, from the Caribbean and Brazil to North America.

Rahier (2020) analyzes the sociopolitical and legal contexts of two recent high-profile litigation cases to reflect on anti-Black racism in Ecuador. The first concerns Tin Delgado, a renowned Afro-descendant retired soccer player turned politician. His poor reading performance and low education were ridiculed via caricature to highlight his “deficiencies” to lead. This prompted the filing of a lawsuit by various organizations against the White-mestizo political caricaturist Xavier Bonilla. Michael Arce, a former Ecuadoran Afro-descendant military cadet whose dreams of making it through the military hierarchy were stifled by his White-mestizo instructor, Lieutenant Fernando Encalada, filed the second case. The latter used his power to discriminate against Arce and discourage him, forcing an end to his dream career. For Rahier, “Ecuadorian national identity” is articulated within a particular frame and understandings of multiculturalism that exclude Afro-descendants. National identity and multiculturalism, as in other places in Latin America, are embedded in mestizaje, a “race-mixing” ideology, rooted in biology but whose makeup was solely constituted of White and Indigenous. In this exclusive perspective of hybridity, structural racism is entertained through “race regulation customary law” (Hernández 2013) embedded in unwritten legal traditions in which racism is present in everyday practices and language. Until the late twentieth century, with the “Latin American multicultural
turn,” customary law silenced ethnoracial diversity in most of Latin America.

Atlantic Slavery, Remembrance, Memorialization, and Affect

The modern world is an extraordinary palimpsest filled with oral memories, documentary archives, memory objects, places, sites, and monuments through which diverse others navigate selectively between past, present, and future via processes of erasure, recording, and preservation (Olivier 2008). These varied archives carry forward traces of past experience and testimonies in the present and in the future and offer guidance for decision-making, strategies, and actions to the living (Richards 1992; Stoler 2002; Webber-Heffernan 2018). Atlantic slavery has imprinted deep scars in landscapes, architecture, archaeological ruins, material objects, dead bodies, images, texts, and memories.

Although enslaved Africans participated in the Atlantic experience with their blood, tears, and sweat, their presence in the archives was involuntary, their voices muted, and their bodies imprisoned. They were featured in the archives but had no control of the narrative about themselves and their work, nor was their agency recognized as producer of economic value or of the knowledge embedded in the archive—or even more, the ownership of the archives (Agostinho 2018, 2019; Gikandi 2015). The archives, because they represent enslaved Black bodies in inhumane and undignified ways without their consent, constantly exude pain that challenges our humanity generation after generation.

As Navaro-Yashin (2009) argues, our relations with the assemblages of objects and memories that form archives are not neutral. They are qualified through language and must be contextualized politically and historically. Different generations have different historical experiences and memories as they are situated in different temporal frameworks within a given political present. However, in this era of high-speed accessibility, the risk of seeing violence reproduce itself in the archival process of “digital architecture” is concerning (Agostinho 2019; Gikandi 2015). Since contextualization is not sufficient to soothe the pain and discomfort encrusted in the archives, one possible way out is perhaps to recognize and honor the humanity and dignity of those whose actions, experience, and voices were archived without their consent. Hence, there is need to open space for discourse and reparative justice that is always an unfinished business, but one that emphasizes relationality, compensation, repair, and restoration of balance (Bell and Scott 2016).

Building on Paulo Freire (1970), we would like to emphasize education as a practice of freedom and reconciliation rather than domination. The African Caribbean Reparations and Resettlement Alliance (ACCCA), for instance, bet on education, notably at the “client community” level, to reassess our shared history and a commitment to truth telling for more balanced reparative memorialization (Andersen 2018; see also Blakey 2020; Douglass et al. 2019; Lima 2020). Thus, encounter is reimagined with a new sense of mutual affective and ethical responsibility that endorses other people’s lingering pain and demands for accountability across generations (see also Deloria 1995). McLaughlan (2018) even ponders the idea of an ethic of reciprocity that considers voices from the archives that critically shape the knowledge we produce as co-creators. This implies that the archives are not merely passive fossils and subjects but instead knowledge and its producers in hibernation, and on which we intervene to revive the voices and actions of past human subjects who then must be given full credit of authorship.

There has been much philosophizing on the visibility or invisibility of Black bodies, gender, and racialization and representations in the archives of Atlantic slavery, colonization, and modernity (Browne 2015; Edwards 2016; Graham 2007; Webhelye 2014; see also Araujo 2020; Odumosu 2020). Advances in the technologies of “surveillance capitalism” and its gaze in all aspects of modern social life have given new configurations to notions of visibility, appearance, and other forms of perceptions defined and acted on by human ocular senses, machines, data, or algorithms (Agostinho 2018; Zuboff 2019). Visibility is a political stance for identity making and contestation, or a claim for justice (Johnson 2019). For Edward Glissant (2010), opacity characterized by illegible appearance is a remedy against commonsense radical transparent visibility. Similarly, aphasia, or the difficulty to articulate words and things through speech, shows the limits of radical utterance (Stoler 2011). Both opacity and aphasia then appear as major challenges to commonsense forms of recognition, identification, representation, and judgment by way of sight and speech that constitute the basis for classifying, discriminating, and oppressing, too often, on the basis of false perceptions of difference.

Addressing this theme using different archives, Odumosu (photography), Nelson (print press), Lima (archaeology), and Araujo (monuments and museum exhibitions) disentangle the intricacies of commemorative practices, the pain buried in the archives, and tensions over affect and care. Modern landscapes of the Atlantic—including sites of raiding and trafficking (Africa), lands of exile and exploitation of African captives (Americas and the Caribbean), and sites of departure and return of slave ships, sailors, and profits (Europe)—are filled with archives and buried memories of pain that, like ghosts, constantly reemerge to haunt our present (Valognes 2013). Webber-Heffernan (2018:77) suggests that to appease these “ghostly reverberations” that come and go like revenants may require interventionist performances with the archives in order to speak and render justice for the dead, rebalance historical possessions of power, and make memory unstable.

Odumosu (2020) is concerned with the sensitive visual archives of slavery and colonization. Concerned with “emotional justice,” she explores, through a "speculative ethics of care" (Cifor 2016), the admittance, usability, circulation, consumption, and caretaking of archives in the digital commons to democratize access and offer possibilities of remembrance and solutions to decay and loss. She also raises issues relating to the consent of the represented subjects, tensions over representation,
and unmediated access to sensitive images. She uses the photograph of a crying black child taken in late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Saint Croix to offer a glimpse of these multiple problems. The silent photograph of a crying body, even more so from an enslaved or dispossessed child, exudes a call for care that urges mitigative actions. For Odumosu caretaking, more so from an enslaved or dispossessed child, exudes a call for care that urges mitigative actions. For Odumosu caretaking of collections must be reformulated, through the prism of hospitality, accountability, trusteeship, and care in an inclusive and transformative way that makes room for multiple stakeholders to “shape the transit of an object from past to future” (Pantzazatos 2016). Digitization and online databases of colonial archives and photographs, she argues, maintain a colonial episteme with its vocabularies intact, making it as traumatizing and humiliating an experience as ever for some viewers. Perhaps one way out is to enable the public to encounter and challenge histories and eventually lend bodies to the dead to attend to its pain and bring comfort and care.

Nelson (2020) excavates colonial archives to unravel the myth of racial tolerance that underpins Canadian multiculturalism. For Nelson narratives of a “race-blind” nation, created and disseminated through education and the media, largely shape Canadian national memory about Atlantic slavery. These dwell on Canada’s role as liberator of enslaved African Americans via the Underground Railroad of 1833–1865, rather than as a perpetrator and an active participant in the post-1500 Atlantic slave economy. This has resulted in a national amnesia that founds the homogenization of Afro-descendants as a “visible minority” of Blacks in Canada.

Nelson explores the linkages between Atlantic slavery and the use of print technology by white Canadian colonists who sought to maintain their control and ownership over Black bodies. She examines advertisements on enslaved fugitives who, elsewhere in the “Freedom on the Move” database, are referred to as “self-liberating” to give due credit to their agency and challenge stigmatizing classification in ways that acknowledge their dignity (Agostinho 2019). Nelson brings to light the complex racial, ethnic, and geographical origins of Black Canadians in these colonial archives. She challenges memorialization that silences Canada’s deep involvement in Atlantic slavery and capitalist appropriation and exploitation of enslaved Black bodies. The gamut of criteria used by White Canadian slave owners to categorize and identify Black bodies on the basis of physical attributes (either racial or ethnic), language, dress, skills, etc., exposes deep injuries and pain that still linger in the archives and calls for each generation to take responsibility and seek the best ways to subdue that pain (see also Odumosu 2020). Examining the archives of these advertisements and the complex strategies of resistance deployed by the enslaved, Nelson asks what is their role in the timing, significance, and processes of diasporization and creolization.

Lima (2020) in her archaeological study of Valongo Wharf, a nineteenth-century Brazilian port in Rio de Janeiro where enslaved Africans were processed, probes the material violence of Atlantic slavery as well as the discomfort of Afro-descendants and White Brazilians alike in dealing with such a difficult past. Work at this site was prompted by the urban revival of the Port of Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Olympic Games. The port remained active until gentrification in the early 1840s drastically transformed the landscape, reallocated lands, renamed places (in a process of re-memory), and ultimately muted the violent transactions involving human merchandise at the site.

Valongo Wharf then offers a unique opportunity to challenge the social amnesia that surrounds memories of slavery today and that can be used as an antidote against the racial discrimination, inequality, and injustice that still linger in modern Brazilian society. Sustained community engagement and a sense of care seem to animate Lima, a White Brazilian archaeologist who set herself up in an avant garde position to reach out to Afro-Brazilian communities. She urges the latter to appropriate the history of Valongo Wharf, which, in her view, is potentially usable to denounce and fight back against racial inequality, injustice, and discrimination and their enduring legacies in the present. Although many Afro-Brazilians continue to distance themselves from it, Valongo Wharf is today an official cultural landmark recognized by many others. This indicates collisions between differential notions of value and perceptions of heritage by different segments of the Afro-Brazilian population.

Araujo (2020) reflects on the commemoration of slavery, a process that gained traction in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the United States of America. Although commemorating the dead is a practice deeply rooted in the history of mankind, slave-owning societies are characterized by a reluctance to give due dignity to Black bodies, alive or dead. Such practices sensibly changed with the US civil rights movement that brought to light enslaved resistance and resilience. This was epitomized by the increase of slavery memorials, which parallel the development of Jewish Holocaust memorials after World War II. The erection of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem by Israel in 1957 to commemorate and restore the humanity of the victims via naming and displaying their biographies subverted the destructive nature of human life during the Holocaust. This concept of a wall of names later spreads across the globe to honor and remember victims of human atrocities. However, for Araujo, in the case of Atlantic slavery naming can be dehumanizing as well because many enslaved Africans were stripped of their original names and forced to adopt a Christian or European name (see Nelson 2020).

Conclusion

European incursions into the lives of non-Western others produced and shaped a global knowledge society in the service of European capitalist ambitions that, via enslavement and colonization, worked at stripping dignity from Black bodies and Indigenous communities. Atlantic circulations, colonization, and the production of a global knowledge society were central to the legitimization of slavery by way of racist ideologies, coercive practices of sovereignty, and violent techniques of economic extraction. The authority of anthropological knowledge worked at legitimizing European colonial practices of
governance which raises ethical and methodological concerns. Today, anthropology is compelled to mitigate its legacy as a colonial science.

This is reflected in four overarching themes that dominated the debates. First, because of the big racial, cultural, geographic, and economic antagonisms created by Atlantic slavery, knowledge production about it is entangled with steep political subjectivities that pose the question of the belonging and positionality of the researcher. Second, and related to the first, is the need for a renewed engagement of anthropology with the public. Rather than just its traditional elitist Western audience, it is critical for anthropology to attend also to the experiences and demands of the historically silenced and disenfranchised voices of the Atlantic world. Third, the multiform archives of Atlantic slavery and colonization are too often sites of passionate tensions and a clash between differing identities, which raises concerns of care that pose major challenges to modern governance and *vivre ensemble*. Fourth, the legacies of Atlantic slavery are entangled with concerns over privilege, injustice, and inequity that require reparative actions. These various themes pose macrostructural concerns that are today amenable to anthropological scrutiny, with the aim of building bridges between past and present academic traditions and engaging in more effective and reflexive practices for the twenty-first century and beyond (Stahl 2020).

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, some anthropologists diagnosed a profound crisis of representation and of reception in the field (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus 2002; Marcus and Fischer 1999). However, when framed in more discursive terms and with reference to fieldwork practices, we lose sight of the deep wounds such ideologies and practices of power have created in the life experiences of non-Western others and their enduring legacies in the present (Allen and Jobson 2016; Nyamnjoh 2012; Trouillot 2003). As such, these academic reflections offer slim comfort and insufficient and unsettled impact on quotidian life experiences.

There is a long tradition of contesting and subverting the Enlightenment and its ideologies of power (Chakrabarty 2000). Such counter-narratives carved out alternative possibilities to do justice to encounters with difference. Sylvia Wynter (2002, 2003) proposes alternative epistemologies and ontologies that break with parameters of inequality and injustice established by the Enlightenment and its dominant regime of knowledge, which denigrates Africans and people of African descent (Bogues 2006; Santos 2018). These later deployed multiple strategies to resist all forms of alienation and representations that deformed their self-conceived identities (Allen and Jobson 2016; Harrison 2012; Merry 2006). Toussaint L’Ouverture, Harriet Tubman, Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, and Bob Marley, among many others, worked at cultivating a Black aesthetic and expressive culture that challenged the debased image of the enslaved Black in Western culture (Bernier 2013; Bogues 2003; Ogundiran 2013; Youngquist 2005).

As Harrison (2012) suggests, it is time to decenter canonical academic discourses, languages, practices, and modes of representation at the community level, as fractious as they might be, for dialogic cross-fertilization to build a “coalition of knowledge” to cultivate a different world order than the one created by Atlantic slavery and the Enlightenment (Restrepo and Escobar 2005; Santos 2018). Unlike the received commonsense world order that produces knowledge to extend the self, the new world order advocated here cultivates knowledge. For Kamola (2017), unlike production, which is concerned with prolonging the self, cultivation involves processes of tilling, turning around, and folding back matter on itself to rebuild and encourage growth on renovated ground. This project is foregrounded not in academic discourse but instead in the knowledge, experiences, and habitus of formerly enslaved and colonized people who are hungry for “epistemic justice,” political freedom, human emancipation, and reparative history. Re-grounding anthropology in community and in the palimpsest of shared cultural experiences and connections that marked the history of mankind offers new possibilities for what Shilliam (2015:13) called a “decolonial science of ‘deep relation’” that draws out moments of connectivity. Ideas of alternatives to the society created by Atlantic slavery offer us myriad horizons and possibilities that might help us intervene in the present (Kamola 2017). By participating in such conversations, anthropology is poised to mitigate its historical association with colonization and slavery and its legacy of inequality and injustice as thought and theorized by an Enlightenment that exclusively served a White audience.

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Atlantic Slavery and the Rise of the Capitalist Global Economy

Joseph E. Inikori

This article traces the long-run contribution of the employment of enslaved Africans in large-scale commodity production in the Americas to the rise of the capitalist global economy. It demonstrates the two-stage evolution of the global economy—the rise of the nineteenth-century capitalist Atlantic economic system (the nucleus of the global economy), the first stage, and the extension of that system to Asia and the rest of the world, the second stage. It shows that the establishment of the integrated nineteenth-century Atlantic economy was a function of the growth of multilateral trade in the Atlantic basin that resulted from the employment of enslaved Africans in large-scale commodity production in the Americas, on which basis the major economies of the Americas, especially the US economy, and Western European economies, especially the British economy, achieved structural transformation, which included the British Industrial Revolution and its new technologies. Led by Great Britain, the advanced economies of the Atlantic world employed the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution, economically and politically, to extend the Atlantic capitalist economic order to Asia and the rest of the world to constitute the hierarchically structured capitalist global economic order.

The critical role of Atlantic slavery in the emergence of the capitalist global economy was obscured in the literature for decades by the debate provoked by the opposing arguments of Reginald Coupland and Eric Williams concerning the morality and economics of abolition (Coupland 1964 [1933]; Williams 1944). As a testament to the long-lasting debate, the 1938 Oxford University doctoral dissertation by Eric Williams, “The Economic Aspect of Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery,” was published in full recently, edited by Dale Tomich, with an introduction by William Darity Jr. (Tomich 2014). The more recent literature has moved on beyond these earlier debates. The main focus is now on long-run economic development—the contribution of enslaved Africans in the Americas to the long-run development of the major economies of the Atlantic world that led to the creation of the capitalist global economy. This article examines the disagreements and the emerging consensus in the literature. The central argument of the article derives from the idea that the global capitalist economy developed historically in two stages: the first stage was the rise of the integrated nineteenth-century Atlantic economy—the nucleus of the capitalist global economy—and the second was characterized by the extension of the Atlantic economic order to Asia and the rest of the world to constitute the global capitalist economy. I demonstrate the critical role of Atlantic slavery in the rise of the Atlantic economy. The central argument is developed sequentially in five sections. Because the British Industrial Revolution was critical to the formation of the capitalist global economy, in the first section I discuss the more recent literature on the subject. The second section focuses on the role of the Americas in the rise of Western Europe, with emphasis on the British Industrial Revolution. The third section shows the contribution of Atlantic slavery to the rise of the integrated nineteenth-century Atlantic economy. The extension of the Atlantic economic system to Asia and the rest of the world, through the sheer economic and military superiority of the major economies of the Atlantic world, is the subject of the fourth section. The conclusion of the article is drawn up in the fifth section. To comprehend how the arguments in these sections relate one to another and to the article’s central subject, the section that follows discusses pertinent conceptual issues.

Conceptual Issues

It is important to note from the outset that this article deals with long-run economic development—what is sometimes called development economic history. There are important conceptual issues involved in tracing the evolution of the integrated capitalist Atlantic economic order from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and its extension to the rest of the world to constitute the integrated capitalist global economy. First, there is the conceptual problem of identifying the central feature that unambiguously distinguishes a capitalist socioeconomic formation from other forms of socioeconomic organization. Second, there is the conceptual problem of accurately identifying the defining elements of an integrated regional, national, or global/world economy. What is common to both conceptual problems is the development of price-making markets and market-based economies. It is the price-making market mechanism that integrates economies through the integration of their markets, thereby compelling division of labor among...
them. Non-market-based economies cannot be integrated, because there is no price-making market mechanism to compel division of labor. Hence, the development of price-making markets (local, regional, national) constitutes an important part of the long-run process of creating integrated economies. An important contribution of enslaved Africans employed in large-scale, specialized production of commodities in the Americas is the development of price-making markets across the Atlantic basin in regions (including Western Europe) that had long been dominated by non-market-oriented production. The development of price-making markets is also central to the origins of the distinguishing feature of a capitalist socioeconomic formation—legally free wage labor as the numerically dominant form of labor in the production of goods and services for the market. In this article I trace the rise of the capitalist global economy and the contribution of enslaved Africans in the Americas by identifying and analyzing the factors central to the development of price-making markets and their integration to produce global division of labor among the major economies of the world. Because the integrated world economies have not been equal, another defining feature of the integrated global economy is hierarchy: the global economy is hierarchically structured. It is important to emphasize from the onset that the citing and discussion of literature in the article is strictly limited to publications (old and new) directly related to the issues on which the article focuses.

I. Recent Literature on the British Industrial Revolution

The observable trend in the more recent literature on the British Industrial Revolution is a movement away from the inward looking of the earlier mainstream literature (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005; Allen 2009; Findlay and O’Rourke 2007; Inikori 2002:89–155; Pomeranz 2000). The inward-looking literature, with emphasis on cultural explanations, no longer occupies the center stage (Clark 2007; McCloskey 2010; Mokyr 2009; Pomeranz 2008:775–779, review of Clark 2007). But there is one confusing feature of some of the contributions to the more recent literature that compels some detailed comment to straighten up the confusion. The literature in question claims there is a major difference between the industrialization process in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and later industrialization processes in the periphery (southern and eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa); the process in England is said to have been driven by a high-wage economy that compelled the application of labor-saving technology (hence, a capital-intensive as opposed to a labor-intensive process), and the process in Asia and the rest of the periphery was based on cheap labor (low wages) that compelled labor-intensive industrialization processes. Various chapters in two edited volumes are representative of the identified feature (Austin and Sugihara 2013; O’Rourke and Williamson 2017). The introductions to both volumes stress this difference:

The traditional perception of industrialization was founded on the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, which was driven by the introduction of machinery and steam power. In contrast, the experience of the global diffusion of industrialization suggests the significance of both the deployment of the abundant resources of labour and the improvement of the quality of labour (human resource development) as major determinants of change. (Austin and Sugihara 2013:1)

Modern industry first emerged in high-wage economies: Britain, Northwest Europe, and North America. According to Allen (2009), this is not a coincidence: high wages, cheap capital, and abundant energy gave entrepreneurs the incentive to search for and adopt modern, labour-saving, and capital and energy-using technologies. Initially, these new technologies were only economical in regions whose factor endowments corresponded with what the technologies had been designed for. But over time, the technologies improved to such an extent that it made sense to adopt them even where factor endowments were quite different. (O’Rourke and Williamson 2017:4)

These claims mischaracterize the British industrialization process and introduce confusion in identifying the main causal factors that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution. Left uncorrected, the contribution of enslaved Africans in the Americas to the central factor in the rise of the capitalist global economy could be difficult to demonstrate. The process of industrialization in Great Britain did not begin in a high-wage economy. It was largely an import substitution process that went through protoindustrialization, with the concentration over time of the textile and metallurgical industries in the main Atlantic trading English counties, particularly Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire that had been the most socially and economically backward regions of England. The initial over time concentration of protoindustrial cotton textile manufacturing in Lancashire, and woolen in the West Riding of Yorkshire, was due largely to their exploitation of their cheap labor to capture a large share of the fast-growing Atlantic
markets that created the conditions for the inventive activities and the adoption of the invented new technologies in these counties (Inikori 2002:56–88, 140–155, 2015:224–268). Presenting high wages as the cause of the Industrial Revolution makes this portion of the recent literature look confusingly like the old inward-looking literature. If high wages were the prime mover of the Industrial Revolution, it would have occurred in the southern counties of England, especially the counties of East Anglia, that had the highest wages in England for decades up to the 1760s, during which time Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire were among the counties with the lowest wages (Hunt 1986). Yet, the Industrial Revolution and industrial capitalism originated in the latter counties. It is significant that the writer usually cited for the high wage argument makes it clear British high wages were caused, in the first instance, by British success in the international economy, aided by mercantilism and imperialism (Allen 2009, 2011:357). The section that follows shows the full details of the foregoing points in the discussion of the role of the Americas in the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Western Europe.

II. The Role of the Americas in the Industrial Revolution and the Rise of Western Europe

The main argument in this section of the article can be reduced to one question: If it is realistic to study the Atlantic world as a unit of economic historical analysis in the period 1500–1850, how do we incorporate the economies of Western Europe into that analysis? In this article I contend that it is realistic to study the Atlantic world as a unit of economic historical analysis in the period 1500–1850 because an integrated Atlantic economy emerged during the period before integrated national economies emerged in the Atlantic basin. Long before the emergence of integrated national economies on either side of the Atlantic, the most dynamic regions on both sides of the Atlantic were more strongly connected to the evolving Atlantic economy than they were to the other regions within the political boundaries of their respective countries. A more realistic approach to the study of Western European economic history of the period, I argue, is to combine Atlantic perspectives with detailed studies of development processes at the micro-regional level. This approach is illustrated in the article with a discussion of the development process in the major regions of England during the period. Particularly important in the English example is the comparative discussion of the development process in north-west England (comprising Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire) and East Anglia (comprising Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk).

The framework by Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2005), comparing Atlantic trading countries in Europe with the non-Atlantic trading countries, is perfectly applicable to micro-regional studies. In England’s example, Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire (to a somewhat lesser extent, the West Midlands also) are the Atlantic traders and East Anglia is a non-Atlantic trader. Ultimately, the Industrial Revolution occurred in Lancashire and the West Riding, while East Anglia stagnated, very much like Pomeranz’s Yangzi Delta in China (Pomeranz 2000). The industrialization of the Atlantic trading counties provided the basis for the emergence of an integrated national economy in England in the nineteenth century and the integration of the national economy into the Atlantic economy. Although the English economy is unique to some degree, the same process is generally true for the rest of Western Europe.

The central focus of Atlantic world economic history is the long-run integrative process, 1500–1850, which created the nineteenth-century Atlantic economy (Bailyn 2005:61; O’Rourke and Williamson 1999). Economic historians on the western part of the Atlantic have been studying that process for several decades—the movement of people, capital, and products across the Atlantic, especially the flow of people, capital, and products centered on the transatlantic slave trade and African slavery in the Americas that linked together Western Europe, western Africa, and the Americas (Sheridan 1987; Williams 1944). Directly related to the subject of this article are studies of economic development processes in the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil centered on the growth of the Atlantic economy.

Douglass North’s seminal work *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790–1860* (1966 [1961]) provided the lead. North’s analysis, like others that followed in the Americas, focused on the development of price-making markets, the growth of regional specialization, and the spread and intensification of the market economy in regions that had been overwhelmingly dominated by subsistence (non-market-oriented) production for centuries before Columbus and continued so for many decades thereafter. For North, the growth of Atlantic commerce, based on large-scale, specialized plantation agriculture (cotton plantations, in particular), was the critical factor in the process that expanded the market sector of the domestic economy of the United States and slowly reduced the predominance of the subsistence sector over time: “An analysis of the United States economic development must necessarily be put into the context of the expansion of the Atlantic economy” (North 1966 [1961]:66). North recognized that the economy’s long-term development depended on factors that stimulated the expansion of its initially small market sector. Given the initial overwhelming dominance of subsistence production, it is to be expected that any market-based production capable of stimulating the growth of the market sector over time would be a small ratio of the GNP, with its huge subsistence component. As North put it (North 1966 [1961]:68–69):4

In this period of rapid growth [1830s], it was cotton that initiated the concomitant expansion in income, in the size of domestic markets, and creation of the social overhead investment (in the course of its role in the marketing of cotton)

4. See also Beckert (2014).
in the Northeast which were to facilitate the subsequent rapid growth of manufactures. . . . when income from cotton exports, including shipments to textile mills in our own Northeast, grew from $25 million in 1831 to $70 million in 1836, it set in motion the whole process of accelerated expansion which culminated in 1839.

Shepherd and Walton pushed back temporally North’s framework to the analysis of the development process in colonial North America (Shepherd and Walton 1972:25):

We argue that while subsistence agriculture provided an important base to colonial incomes and was a substantial part of average per capita income, changes in incomes and improvements in welfare came largely through overseas trade and other market activities. Not only did improvements in productivity occur primarily through market activity, but the pattern of settlement and production was determined by market forces. This pattern changed slowly and unevenly, spreading from the waterways and distribution centers along the Atlantic seaboard into the interior.

Kenneth Sokoloff’s extensive empirical study of inventors and inventive activities during early industrialization in the United States (1790–1846) also builds firmly on, and further advances, North’s earlier study (Khan and Sokoloff 1993:289–307; North 1965:673–705, 1966 [1961]; Sokoloff 1988:813–850; Sokoloff and Khan 1990:363–378). Based on the detailed study of patent records and other evidence showing the characteristics of the inventors, the timing of major bursts in inventive activities, and the strong positive correlation between the regional distribution of extensive markets and the density of inventive activities, Sokoloff concludes: “The findings suggest that the growth of markets during the early stages of industrialization diffused a powerful and long-term inducement to inventive activity, and in so doing, helped raise the realization of economic gains into a self-sustaining process” (Sokoloff 1988:846–847).

Other scholars in the Americas have grounded, in varying ways, their analyses of the development process in the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil on the expansion of the Atlantic economy. Three edited volumes (Coclanis 2005; Eltis, Lewis, and Sokoloff 2004; McCusker and Morgan 2000) that deal with the Americas and the Atlantic economy in general contain contributions focused specifically on the United States. The development processes in Spanish America and Brazil have been analyzed in ways very similar to North’s study of the United States, with emphasis on the role of the evolving Atlantic economy in the growth of domestic markets and the geographical spread of the market economy in regions previously dominated by subsistence production (Bakewell 1971, 1984; Brading 1971; Burkholder and Johnson 2004; Hoberman 1991; Lockhart 1972; Lockhart and Schwartz 1983). In general, it is fair to say that scholars on the western side of the Atlantic have strongly founded their study of the development process in the Americas on the growth of the Atlantic economy.

It is a different matter on the eastern shores of the Atlantic. Most studies of European economic history pay little attention to the role of multilateral Atlantic trade in the critical centuries of European development from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The early works of Ralph Davis (1954, 1962a, 1962b, 1966, 1967) and François Crouzet (1964), two eminent students of European economic history of the period, provided a strong foundation for connecting European economic history to the evolution of the Atlantic economy, similar to what Douglass North did for the United States. But both scholars later retreated under the strong tide of the inward-looking scholarship of the 1950–1980 historiographical epoch (Inikori 2002:89–155). Davis argued in The Rise of the Atlantic Economies (1973:xi), contrary to his well-informed position in the 1950s and 1960s, that “the main influences on European economic development arose within the countries of Europe themselves,” thus encouraging isolated national narratives in the study of European economic history. In a similar turnaround, Crouzet had stated eloquently in his 1964 article (Crouzet 1964:568):

The eighteenth century can be truly called the Atlantic stage of European economic development. Foreign trade, and especially trade with the Americas, was the most dynamic sector of the whole economy. . . . Owing to the superiority of sea transport over land transport, the eighteenth-century European economy was organized around a number of big seaports, the most prosperous being those with the largest share in the growing colonial trade, such as Bordeaux or Nantes; each of these had, not only its own industries, but also its industrial hinterland in the river base of which it was the outlet.

In the 1985 reprinted collection of his essays, Crouzet thought it necessary to insert a postscript that he may “have somewhat over-estimated the role of seaborne trade (and especially colonial trade) in the eighteenth-century European economy” (Crouzet 1990:316). Hence, although there are outstanding contributions to European economic history that employ Atlantic perspectives (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005:546–579; Cuenca-Esteban 1997:879–905, 2004:35–66; Deane 1979 [1965]; Deane and Habakkuk 1963; Hobson 1954:33–53, 1954b:44–65, 1969; Inikori 2002; O’Brien and Engerman 1991), the mainstream European economic history literature shows little interest in that framework. A recent collection of essays even calls Atlantic perspectives on European economic history a deus ex machina (Emmer, Petre-Grenouilleau, and Roitman 2006). I argue in the next part of this section of the article that the growth of the Atlantic economy was a major
factor in the development process in Western Europe during the critical period 1500–1850.

“In the lone houses and very small villages which are scattered about in so desert a country as the Highlands of Scotland,” wrote Adam Smith in Wealth of Nations (Smith 1994 [1776]:19), “every farmer must be butcher, baker and brewer for his own family. . . . The scattered families . . . must learn to perform themselves a great number of little pieces of work.” These were the observations that compelled Smith to place much emphasis on the development of markets and the geographical spread of the market economy as the central issue in the development process, given economies overwhelmingly dominated by subsistence production. The question is how much of what Smith observed in the highlands of Scotland existed in the economies of Western Europe in 1500. The evidence suggests it was dominant. As late as the French Revolution (1789), “rural inhabitants made up 90 percent of the population in Europe, 92 percent in Mexico, and 95 percent in the United States” (Moya 2007:197, n. 21). “This would suggest that the subsistence sector was very large and dominant in the economies of Western Europe in 1500. The development of domestic markets and the geographical spread of the market economy was, therefore, a critical element in the Western European development process between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries as was the case in the Americas during the same period. The employment of Atlantic perspectives enables us to ask questions about the factors that mattered most in the development of domestic markets in Europe during the period, questions that isolated national narratives preclude. It is significant that the collection of essays, which characterizes Atlantic perspectives as a deus ex machina, focuses discussion exclusively on merchandise exports of the European economies, on the ground that their imports are not relevant in the assessment of the role of the Americas in European development. Yet transatlantic imports were critical elements in the development of domestic markets and the market economy in Western Europe during the period.

As we know too well, the production and distribution of silver and gold in Spanish America powered the commercializing process in both Spanish America and Western Europe for more than a hundred years from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. With treasure pouring in from their American colonies, Spanish elites and their government were encouraged to rely on other Western European economies to supply their needs and those of their Spanish colonies in manufactures and commercial services. As those needs expanded enormously because of an ambitious imperial enterprise, which American treasure also inspired, the silver and gold from Spanish America moved quickly out of Spain to the developing economies of Western Europe to pay for their supplies:

“Half of Europe, from Genoa to Hamburg,” was involved in the “big business” of exploiting America through Spain’s Indies trade. Some 94 percent of the value of all goods shipped to America in Spain’s famous convoys of flotas and galeones in the late seventeenth century consisted of non-Spanish goods; 40 percent of the exports via Cadiz were French in origin. It was a self-intensifying system. As the goods of Europe’s advanced economies flooded Spain’s American markets, capital increasingly drained from lower Andalusia to England, France, Italy, and the Low countries, and the returns in silver from Mexico and Peru flowed back through the foreign branch houses in Seville and Cadiz to irrigate the whole of Europe’s economy. (Bailyn 2005:87–88)

The impact of Spanish American treasure on European economies has been debated in terms of the sixteenth-century price revolution in Europe (Gould 1964:249–266; Hamilton 1929:338–357). The main issue is whether American treasure or population growth was the main factor in the price revolution. What has not been seriously examined is the contribution of Spanish American bullion to the development of domestic markets and the market economy in Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, both through the mechanism of the sheer quantity of currency in circulation and via the multiplier effects of intra-European trade stimulated by the import and export trade of Spain in Europe. For all practical purposes, the bulk of Spanish trade with the rest of Europe during the period was part of Atlantic commerce (Inikori 2002:201–210, 2007:74–75). As Stanley Stein and Barbara Stein put it: “We now recognize that American silver was a major (perhaps even the determining) factor in the development of commercial capitalism in western Europe and that silver represented sales returns on the products of Europe’s protoindustrialization: textile manufactures of Holland and Flanders, England, France, Italy, and Germany” (Stein and Stein 2000:71, 77).

Similarly, Portugal’s export and import trade with other European economies from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century depended on the Brazilian economy, especially during the gold boom in the first half of the eighteenth century. Even in the late eighteenth century (1796–1806), Brazilian products made up about 60% of the value of all exports from Portugal to other European countries, while goods produced in Portugal were about 25% (Inikori 2002:207). Portugal’s exports to Brazil were largely produced in other European countries, mostly England. To secure England’s military protection against Spanish threats, “Portugal conceded a commercial monopoly to English manufactures in her territories, at the same time agreeing not to establish her own competing industries” (Merrick and Graham 1979:12). Thus, again, Portugal’s import and export trade with other European countries during the period was part of Atlantic commerce in the main.

The reexport of French American products was also largely responsible for the growth of French trade with other European countries in the eighteenth century. Apart from direct reexport of French American colonial products from France to European countries, the Dutch bought them in France and

distributed them in Europe, particularly in the Baltic. In the middle decades of the eighteenth century, reexport of French Caribbean products made up more than 50% of French exports to the Netherlands (Butel 1990:159–160).

Particularly remarkable is English trade with Continental European countries. In the medieval period England was a peripheral country, trading raw materials (especially raw wool) for manufactures from the Continent. By the seventeenth century, woolen textiles had become England’s main export to other European countries. But as these European countries developed their own industries under mercantilist policies, England lost much of the Continental markets for its manufactures. Hence, between 1699–1701 and 1772–1774, English domestic exports to northwestern and northern Europe declined absolutely from £2,114,000 a year to £1,769,000. During this period, reexports more than made up the absolute decline in domestic exports to increase total exports by 48.7% instead of the 16.3% decrease that would have occurred without reexports (Davis 1962a:120; percentages are my own computation from Davis’s data). Two-thirds of the reexports were British American products; others were Asian products whose imports were made possible by the reexport of American bullion by the English East India Company. Not only did incomes from the reexport trade create markets in England for European imports, but also reexport of European manufactures to the Americas by British merchants was an important element in British imports from Europe.

There can be no doubt that trade in American products and Asian goods purchased with American bullion was central to the growth of intra-European trade and the development of domestic markets and the spread of the market economy in Europe in the formative years 1500–1800. Much of what is treated as intra-European exports during the period ought to be assigned to Atlantic trade.

Probably the strongest evidence supporting the argument that Atlantic perspectives offer the most realistic framework for the study of European economic history during our period comes from European regional, as opposed to national, history. As Crouzet noted in his 1964 article (Crouzet 1964:568), “The eighteenth-century European economy was organized around a number of big seaports . . . each of these had, not only its own industries, but also its industrial hinterland in the river base of which it was the outlet.” These industrial regions provided the dynamics for the long-run development of the national economies of Western Europe, similar to what scholars have shown for the US economy. For much of our period, before the inland transportation networks of the railway age in the nineteenth century, these dynamic regions, which included Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the West Midlands (all in England), were more tightly linked to the evolving Atlantic economy than to the rest of their respective national economies. The mainstream literature on European economic history, with its unrealistic exclusive focus on national narratives at a time when integrated national economies did not exist, contains elements of distortion of reality. The rest of this section of the paper is devoted to a more detailed comparative discussion of England’s major regions for illustration purposes.

The assessment of wealth in England’s 40 counties for tax purposes, ranking from 1 down in order of merit, shows that from 1086 to 1660, Lancashire was almost at the very bottom, ranking 35 as late as 1660, while two of the three counties that make up East Anglia, Suffolk and Essex, ranked 2 and 6, respectively, in the same year (Inikori 2002:64). It remained comparatively backward in all aspects of economic and social organization up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Because of the generally poor quality of its agricultural land and the prevalence of smallholdings and subdivided plots, household incomes were very low, as reflected in “the staple diet of oatmeal and offal” (Farnie 1979:46; Walton 1987:66–67).

As would be expected, these conditions meant that wages were generally low in the county. Evidence on regional wage differentials in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shows that as late as 1767–1770, Lancashire was still among 11 counties (out of the total of 40) with the lowest wages in England (Hunt 1986:965–966). Among other things, low wages gave Lancashire a competitive edge in labor-intensive protoindustry in maritime commerce and shipping relative to other regions in England. While this advantage was not large enough for Lancashire to capture markets in other regions of England or Europe in the early decades of its development, it was large enough to make it quite competitive in Atlantic markets: 80%–94% of total export sales of English cotton textiles went to western Africa and the Americas between 1701 and 1774, and 52%–69% between 1784 and 1806. Lancashire’s dominance in Atlantic markets helped to concentrate the labor-intensive protoindustrial production of cotton textiles in the county. Several decades before mechanization and factory organization, the protoindustry sold the bulk of its output in Atlantic markets. It was on the basis of expanding demand from Atlantic markets and competition with Indian cotton textiles in those markets that the technology and organization of the industry were transformed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; it was after the transformation that markets in Europe and Asia became important (Broadberry and Gupta 2009:279–305; Inikori 2002). By 1794–1795, Lancashire had become one of the 11 counties with the highest wages in England, and in 1833–1845, it had the third-highest wages among the English counties (Hunt 1986:965–966). No doubt, this fast movement from a relatively low-wage to a high-wage region in England was due largely to the rapid expansion of Lancashire’s export-oriented industrial production during the period. In their 2009 article, Broadberry and Gupta linked the technological breakthrough in Lancashire from the last quarter of the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century directly to the fast increases in wages as the producers competed on the global market with cotton exporters in India, but they failed to show the connection between the rising wages (from their low levels initially) and expanding exports to Atlantic markets (Broadberry and Gupta 2009).7

7. The authors’ analysis, however, does not include Lancashire’s low-wage period and its role in the early development of the English cotton industry, especially its concentration in Lancashire.
It is clear from the evidence that Lancashire industrialization followed a common pattern of import-substitution industrialization, with initial emphasis on the exploitation of cheap labor in labor-intensive manufacturing. Broad national and Continental comparisons, claiming differences between European industrialization based on “large-scale firms and factories” and Asian industrialization based on the exploitation of cheap labor in labor-intensive manufacturing (Austin and Sugihara 2013; de Vries 2008:81; O’Rourke and Williamson 2017), are not accurate representation of historical reality as far as industrialization in Lancashire is concerned. Yet Lancashire was the main center of the Industrial Revolution in England. The bulk of the major technological developments of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries occurred there. The nearest rival was its geographically contiguous neighbor, the West Riding of Yorkshire, whose history, tied up with the growth of the woolen textile industry in England, is also particularly pertinent to the subject of this article.

For my current purpose, it is important to place the rise of the West Riding in the broader context of the regional history of the woolen textile industry in England from the Middle Ages to the mid-nineteenth century. From the medieval period to 1500, when the main operating factors in the development of European regional economies were located within Europe, the wool trade with northern and northwest Europe, from raw wool to woven textiles, was the critical element in the development process in England. Naturally, the southern regions, such as East Anglia, the West Country, and Devon, with the proper natural resource endowment and advantageous geographical location, were the most socioeconomically developed regions of England. As previously mentioned, the northern regions, particularly Lancashire and Yorkshire, remained extremely backward. The gap between the southern and northern regions of England persisted up to the seventeenth century (Bowden 1962; Bridbury 1962; Coleman 1962:115–117; Lloyd 1977; Mann 1971; Pollard and Crossley 1968; Power 1941).

Things began to change from the late seventeenth century because of two developments in opposite directions. English Atlantic trade expanded considerably from the late seventeenth century, while the markets for England’s protoindustrial products in northern and northwest Europe declined absolutely as the latter regions developed their own protoindustries under mercantilist policy. The woolen textile industry in the southern regions, producing heavy cloths for northern and northwest Europe, was the hardest hit. English woolen exports to northwest and northern Europe declined absolutely by 35% between 1701 and 1806. During the same period, exports to the Americas and western Africa grew by a factor of 18.45, from £185,000 to £3.4 million (Inikori 2002:412–421).

Like Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire exploited its relatively cheap labor to capture the expanding Atlantic markets for the lighter woolen fabrics. Meanwhile, having lost much of the markets for its manufactures in northern and northwest Europe, and unable to compete in the rapidly expanding Atlantic markets and the growing markets in Portugal and Spain (part of the rapidly growing Atlantic economy as demonstrated earlier in the article), East Anglia stagnated industrially. By the mid-eighteenth century, several decades before the Industrial Revolution was underway, East Anglia, which had maintained its position as one of England’s leading regions in socioeconomic progress for centuries, had lost its dynamism; much of its industrial and commercial life was in decay. In the first half of the nineteenth century, industrial decline in the region gave rise to unemployment, wages fell, and the rate of population growth in its three counties (Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk) was consistently below the national average (Coleman 1962:117, 119, 125; Inikori 2015:247).

Evidence from the 1831 census offers a clear view of the foregoing comparative development trajectory of the major regions of England and points to the factors that mattered most in the successful industrialization process in England from 1650 to 1850. As the evidence shows, in 1831, 314,106 adult males were employed in factory manufacturing in England, 964,177 in retail trade and handicraft, and 980,750 in agriculture. For England as a whole, the ratio of adult males employed in retail trade and handicraft to those employed in factory manufacturing is 3.07, while the agricultural to factory ratio is 3.12. These national figures changed in favor of factory employment in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century, but in 1831 the English economy was yet to become a fully developed manufacturing economy.

Comparing the aggregate national figures with those of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire shows a striking contrast. For Lancashire, the ratio of adult males employed in retail trade and handicraft (86,079) to those employed in factory manufacturing (97,517) in 1831 is 0.88, and the agricultural to factory ratio (37,321 : 97,517) is 0.38. The comparable figures for the West Riding are 0.81 (60,109 : 74,669) and 0.57.

9. The factory figures probably include some protoindustrial (semifactory) employment. Here is what the reporting census officials pointed out in the 1841 census: “Although we have in our general classification combined under one head trade and manufacture, yet in the following table we have attempted to separate them in order to show the numbers they respectively embrace. In going through every occupation contained in our list for this purpose, we have felt the great difficulty of making such a division satisfactorily; we have therefore given (at p. 58) the names of all occupations included under each division exhibited in the following Abstract, in order to leave the opportunity of correction to those who differ from the view taken by us” (1841 Census, Occupation Abstract, Parliamentary Papers, 1844, XXVII, Preface, p. 26).
10. To provide a complete view, total employment in retail trade and handicraft (including all adult males and females and males and females under 20 years of age) was 1,712,699 in England and Wales in 1841, and 924,096 in factory manufacturing, while figures for adult males only were 1,282,128 and 479,774, respectively (1841 Census, Preface, p. 26; see n. 9).
11. Adult males employed in factory manufacturing in England and Wales increased from 320,324 in 1831 to 479,774 in 1841 (49.8%), in retail trade and handicraft from 1,007,403 to 1,282,120 (27.3%), and in agriculture declined absolutely from 1,075,912 to 1,041,980 (3.2%) (1831 Census, Enumeration Abstract, II, pp. 832–833; and 1841 Census, Occupation Abstract, Preface, p. 26; see n. 9).
(42,234 : 74,669), respectively. The 1831 census data show unmistakably that the economies of Lancashire and the West Riding were the only fully developed manufacturing economies in England in 1831. These two contiguous northern regions had together approximately 55% of adult males employed in factory manufacturing in England in 1831 (Lancashire 31% and West Riding 24%). Apart from Stafford in the West Midlands, where factory employment in 1831 (26,755) was slightly more than employment in retail trade and handicraft (24,766), as well as in agriculture (24,242), Lancashire and the West Riding were the only regions in England where factory employment was substantially greater than employment in either agriculture or retail trade and handicraft. The Home Counties (Kent, Surrey, and Middlesex) were dominated overwhelmingly by retail trade and handicraft; they had very little factory manufacturing.

The case of East Anglia is particularly striking. Here we have a region whose three counties (Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex) at various times before the Industrial Revolution had been the center of major industrial and commercial activity (Coleman 1962:115–117). By 1831 the three counties of East Anglia, with 10% of England’s geographical space, had just 2.0% (6,287) of adult males employed in factory manufacturing in England. Like a large majority of regions in England at the time, employment in East Anglia was dominated overwhelmingly by agriculture, while industrial production remained locked in a handicraft cul-de-sac. As a result, the region experienced high unemployment and stagnant population (Coleman 1962:117, 119, 125).12 While the geographical area of East Anglia (3,190,069 acres) was almost three times that of Lancashire (1,117,260), its population in 1831 (1,003,968) was less than that of Lancashire (1,336,854) by 33%.

The concentration of factory manufacturing in Lancashire and the West Riding (and to a lesser extent in the West Midlands) is significant, particularly because it shows where the major technological developments of the Industrial Revolution occurred and points to the main causal factors. Simply put, retail trade and handicraft did not foster technological development, nor did agriculture. Factory manufacturing was the lever of technological change during the Industrial Revolution, as Wrigley rightly argued (Wrigley 1986:335–336).

It is, therefore, understandable why the major technological developments of the Industrial Revolution occurred in the dominant textile regions of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire and the major metal regions of the West Midlands. As mentioned previously in the article, these regions were the main beneficiaries of the rapid expansion of Atlantic markets for manufactures in the 200 years from 1650 to 1850. Before they were effectively linked to the other regions of England by the railways in the nineteenth century, these regions, especially Lancashire and the West Riding, were more firmly connected to markets in the Atlantic world where they sold the bulk of their manufacturing output. Factory organization of production and the invention and adoption of new technologies were induced by the extent and pace of growth of the markets accessible to producers in these regions.

How much light does the English regional evidence shed on the causal relationship between developments in the Atlantic world and the economic development processes in the rest of Western Europe during the period in question? To some degree, the place of the Atlantic world in the development process in England during the period is somewhat unique. For reasons explained elaborately elsewhere (Inikori 2002:156–214, 2007:70–79), England secured a disproportionate share of the expanding Atlantic commerce of the period—from 1781 to 1850, between 50% and 61% of commodity production for Atlantic commerce in the Americas was carried out in British America (Inikori 2002:181, table 4.4); through privileges secured from treaties, and the dominant role of mainland British America in intra-American trade, the colonial common markets of the other Atlantic imperial powers in Western Europe were integrated de facto into the British colonial common market (Inikori 2007:76–79). That the direct benefits of the disproportionate share secured by England went to a few regions in the country, in the first instance, as I have shown, largely explains the far-reaching impact on the economies of those regions demonstrated in the article. For all practical purposes, as the 1831 evidence presented shows, the Industrial Revolution occurred in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire (and to a much lesser degree in the West Midlands), from where its impact spread to the rest of England after a national railway network was constructed in the nineteenth century.

Once we account for the distribution of gains from Atlantic commerce among the Atlantic trading nations of Europe, the areas of similarity fall into place. Crouzet’s point about the initial regional concentration of the economic benefits of Atlantic trading in Continental Europe, mentioned earlier, represents a fair summary: “Owing to the superiority of sea transport over land transport, the eighteenth-century European economy was organized around a number of big seaports, the most prosperous being those with the largest share in the growing colonial trade” (Crouzet 1964:568).

Thus England’s case is unique only in terms of the initial magnitude of the direct Atlantic trading impact. In the long run, the economies of Western Europe were all significantly affected by Atlantic commerce and were ultimately integrated into the nineteenth-century Atlantic economy.

III. Atlantic Slavery and the Emergence of the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy

It is now well known to professional economic historians that the employment of enslaved Africans in large-scale commodity

12. As mentioned previously, East Anglia’s industrial and commercial vitality was already in decline by the mid-eighteenth century and this continued into the nineteenth century.
production in the Americas, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, was central to the rise of the nineteenth-century Atlantic economy. The starting point is the nature of economies and societies in the Americas when Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492. Even though there is some disagreement among specialists, there is general agreement that there were about 57.3 million people in the Americas at the time. These were mostly located in two regions of present-day Latin America and the Caribbean: central Mexico, with 37.3% of the total, and the Andean region, with 20.1%. The most sparsely populated regions of the Americas at the time included present-day United States and Canada, with a total of 7 million (5 million for the United States and 2 million for Canada) spread over their combined geographical area of 7 million square miles, a density of about one person per square mile. Brazil was similarly sparsely populated. Within a few decades of the European arrival, more than three-quarters of the native population died off, further reducing densities radically across the Americas (Denevan 1992:xxiix; Escosura 2006:463–504, table 13.3, 476–477; Newson 2006:143–184, table 5.1, 148). Given these demographic conditions, with unlimited supplies of land relative to population, it is understandable the economies and societies were overwhelmingly dominated by subsistence production (i.e., production for the immediate consumption of the households with very little market exchange, if any). The long-run development of these economies and societies from the sixteenth century involved, first and foremost, the development of price-making markets and the market-based economy. This all-important development centered on large-scale commodity production for export in the Americas, giving rise to interregional division of labor, the growth of domestic markets, and the geographical spread of the market economy. The availability of low-cost labor of enslaved Africans was a critical factor in large-scale commodity production in the Americas, especially Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States.

The labor of enslaved Africans was critical for two basic reasons. First, the available markets for bulky export commodities from the Americas were in Europe, initially. Given the high cost of trans-Atlantic transportation in the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries, production costs for those commodities had to be very low for them to have sufficiently large markets overseas. This meant large-scale production, with extensive economies of scale, as opposed to high-cost, small-scale production. Second, with unlimited supplies of agricultural land in the Americas, large-scale production that required legally free wage laborers was virtually impossible. In Brazil and the United States, the enslavement of the Indigenous people was tried unsuccessfully. In the United States, indentured servants from Europe were tried, also unsuccessfully. In the end, the long-term solution to the difficult problem was found in the importation of captives from Africa for enslavement in Spanish America, Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. This experiment was so successful that production costs for sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee, and several other commodities were drastically reduced, bringing their prices in Europe within the reach of even the common people.

As the European markets for these commodities grew over time, so, too, did their production expand in Spanish America, Brazil, the Caribbean, and, ultimately, the United States (see table 1). Expanding production was accompanied by increasing specialization that created domestic market opportunities for other producers in the Americas. Cotton plantations in the United States, very much like sugar, gold, and coffee in Brazil and plantation commodities in the Caribbean, depended almost entirely on the labor of enslaved Africans before the Civil War. Douglass North’s strong statement concerning the importance of the cotton economy in the early development of the United States, cited earlier in the article, is borne out by the data in table 2.

Thus, it is clear from the evidence that the rise, by the mid-nineteenth century, of the major capitalist economies of the Atlantic world—Western Europe led by Industrial Revolution Britain and the rising power of the Americas, the United States—and their integration to constitute the nineteenth-century Atlantic economy depended greatly on the growth of the Atlantic economy that was largely the product of the labor of enslaved Africans. For purposes of logical clarity, the implications of this point should be made abundantly clear. First, the analysis in this section of the article connects directly to the analysis in Section II. This means that the role of enslaved Africans elaborated in this section largely explains the developments elaborated in the preceding section, especially the British Industrial Revolution and its new technologies. The Industrial Revolution and its new technologies were, in turn, central to the integration of the major economies of the Atlantic world in the nineteenth century through its imposition of division of labor among these economies. Second, and by extension, the analysis in the section that follows, largely based on the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution, is connected (albeit indirectly) to the

### Table 1. Share of export commodities produced by Africans in the Americas, 1501–1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Average annual value of export commodities produced in the Americas (£000)</th>
<th>Value of share produced by Africans (£000)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1501–1550</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>694.4</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1551–1600</td>
<td>3,764</td>
<td>2,090.6</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601–1650</td>
<td>6,268</td>
<td>4,327.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651–1670</td>
<td>7,970</td>
<td>5,504.4</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1711–1760</td>
<td>14,142</td>
<td>11,397.5</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761–1780</td>
<td>21,903</td>
<td>18,073.2</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781–1800</td>
<td>39,119</td>
<td>31,247.0</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848–1850</td>
<td>89,204</td>
<td>61,368.7</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note. The share of exports produced by Africans in Spanish America is 40% in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 50% in the eighteenth, and one-third in 1848–1850. The plantation commodities (sugar, tobacco, cotton, rice, etc.) in all of the Americas were produced almost entirely by enslaved Africans; so, too, was gold in Brazil and Spanish America. For more details, see Inikori (2002:183–210).
Table 2. Cotton export and regional distribution of US population, 1820–1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cotton export (US$million)</th>
<th>% total export</th>
<th>Population (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>22,308.7</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>2,918.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>29,674.9</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>3,774.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>63,870.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>4,749.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>71,984.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>6,271.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note. California gold production and export expanded from the late 1840s; in 1850 total production was $41,273,106, of which $27,676,346 (or 67.1%) was exported (North [1966 (1961), table H-IX, p. 255]). This explains the slight decrease in the percentage contribution of cotton exports in 1850.

role of enslaved Africans in the Americas elaborated in this section.

IV. Extension of the Capitalist Atlantic Economic System to Asia and the Rest of the World

The British Industrial Revolution created the instruments—new technologies employed in manufacturing, transportation (over land and seas), transmission of information (the telegraph), and military hardware—with which the nineteenth-century Atlantic capitalist economic order was extended to Asia and the rest of the world by Great Britain, its Western European rivals (France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium, Germany), and the United States. The new technologies of the Industrial Revolution and the factory system of organization brought down manifold the cost of manufacturing mass consumer goods; the application of steam power to sea transportation (steel and steamship) and land transportation (railways) reduced transportation costs to small fractions of what they had been for centuries; refrigeration technology allowed the transportation of perishable foodstuffs and animal products over long distances—all this meant no economies anywhere in the world could be protected by distance from the onslaught of mechanized, factory-produced goods of the British Industrial Revolution and Western European and American countries that successfully transplanted the new technologies. The only protection economies in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East could get had to be provided by the state, in other words, by governments—state restriction of imports and other forms of state intervention. Then, of course, the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution also provided the military hardware that could crush resisting governments.

The first major victim was India. In 1821, the parliamentary committee investigating the condition of India’s foreign trade asked Charles Grant, a prominent member of the East India Company Directorate and a former chairman of the East India Company, whether the entire clothing needs of India could not be supplied much more cheaply through exports of British textiles, adding that India would be amply compensated for the loss of her manufacturing industry by the encouragement given in the British markets for the export of “raw articles, the produce of India.” Here, in part, is Grant’s response to the question:

But with respect to that very large question, I take the liberty to offer one remark; we have, by protecting duties at home, and our improvements in machinery, almost entirely excluded from this country the cotton fabrics of India, which were formerly their great staple; and if we use the power we have over that country now, to introduce into it the fabrics of this country, so as to exclude their own, it may be questioned how far we act justly with respect to our Indian subjects; for it may be taken for granted, that if they were under an Indian government they would impose protecting duties upon their own fabrics, in their own markets, as we have done in ours. (Cited by Chaundhuri 1983:810)

This well-informed opinion mattered very little. In the second half of the nineteenth century, when Great Britain had become the champion of free trade, British India became the most important single market for British cotton textiles. The export of cotton manufactures from the United Kingdom to India in 1851 is shown in table 3.14

The official values are at 1699–1701 prices and the real values are at 1851 current prices; both are f.o.b. values.15 The difference represents the magnitude of cost and price reduction following the Industrial Revolution (the 1851 current price being 20.4% of the 1699–1701 price). Given the reduction in shipping cost, it is understandable why distance no longer mattered. In 1894, British cotton manufactures exported to India’s Bengal Province alone was approximately 1.2 billion yards, valued at £9,040,395 (current prices); cotton yarns, 10,207,200 pounds weight valued at £423,436 (current prices).16 By this time, as the Indian economy was integrated into the evolving global economy under British free trade.

14. Customs 8/73, 1851, National Archives, Kew Gardens, England. Eight minor items are left out; total British cotton exports to all regions of the world, annual average, 1844–1846, £25.8 million (55% of total British cotton output). See table 3.
15. f.o.b. (free on board) values are the total cost of goods up to the point of their being loaded on board the exporting vessels. The counterpart expression is c.i.f. (cost, insurance, freight) values, which are the total cost of goods up to the port of import; c = f.o.b. (adding insurance and freight to f.o.b. gives c.i.f.).
policy, the global division of labor imposed by the world market price mechanism had transformed the Indian economy from a major exporter of cotton textiles to predominantly an exporter of primary commodities; in 1811–1812, cotton textiles still made up 33% of the total value of Indian exports and raw cotton 4.9%; by 1870–1871, cotton textiles were 2.5% and raw cotton 35.2% (Chaudhuri 1983:842, 844, tables 10.10, 10.11).

China in the second half of the nineteenth century was a case of imperialism without colonization. The imperial countries of the Atlantic world, with Great Britain playing the lead role, employed their military superiority to seize China’s major port cities that were placed in a Treaty Ports System. In 1900, there were 90 such cities with 350,000 foreign residents over whom China had no legal control (Inkster 1991:227–247, 205–226 [on India]). The persistent external interference was so great that China’s government could not formulate state policies and mobilize the resources needed for long run economic development. For all practical purposes, China operated an open economy that was integrated into the global economy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The situation in the Middle East was somewhat similar. With the Industrial Revolution, Great Britain combined its military power and manufacturing supremacy to replace France as the protector of the Ottoman Empire from Austrian and Russian encroachment. This was the context for the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838 between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, under which import duties on British goods entering all parts of the empire were reduced to 3%, a virtual free trade duty. What is more, British assistance kept rebelling provinces, such as Egypt, within the empire, and the terms of the treaty were forced on them. The outcome was similar to that of India, discussed earlier (Inalcik 1987:374–455, 1993:264–306; Wallerstein 1989:176–177).

V. Conclusion

For the individuals and families forced to labor under slave conditions in the Americas, Atlantic slavery was a horrendous crime against humanity. It is, therefore, understandable that much has been written about this inhumanity. The speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams during the 2007 British government commemoration of the 1807 British abolition of the transatlantic slave trade is instructive:

We are born into a world already scarred by the internationalizing and industrializing of slavery . . . and our human inheritance is shadowed by it. We who are heirs of the slave-owning and slave-trading nations of the past have to face the fact that our historic prosperity was built in large part on this atrocity; those who are heirs of the communities ravaged by the slave trade know very well that much of their present suffering and struggling is the result of centuries of abuse. Today it is for us to face our history; the Atlantic [slave] trade was our contribution to this universal sinfulness. (Dickinson 2007)

This statement highlights what is popularly known about Atlantic slavery. Historiographically, emphasis on its evilness has tended to crowd out from the literature studies focused on demonstrating the significant contribution of Atlantic slavery to the rise of the capitalist global economy, a far more difficult subject to deal with conceptually and empirically than its morality. The moral question has also tended to create an ideological problem. As articulated by Rowan Williams, there has been a compulsive tendency for some to resist the idea that their “historic prosperity was built in large part on this atrocity.”

This article has tried to deal with this difficult problem by focusing first on the rise of the nineteenth-century capitalist Atlantic economic order. The evidence accumulated by recent research shows beyond reasonable doubt that the employment of enslaved Africans in large-scale commodity production in the Americas phenomenally expanded the Atlantic economy. The major economies of Western Europe and the Americas (especially the United States) benefited considerably from the expansion. But with the use of its naval power, mercantilist Britain dominated the rapidly growing Atlantic markets, which ultimately created the conditions for the Industrial Revolution. Comparative analysis of the long-run development of English counties makes this argument extremely compelling. The United States and Britain’s Western European rivals soon followed. By the mid-nineteenth century, an integrated and flourishing capitalist Atlantic economic order had been established. The article has shown that the Atlantic economic system became the nucleus of the capitalist global economy. The major economies of the Atlantic world, with Britain at the lead, employed the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution to extend, through sheer economic and military superiority, the Atlantic economic

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In Table 3. Cotton manufactures exported to India from the United Kingdom in 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cotton product</th>
<th>Quantity (yards)</th>
<th>Official value (£ sterling)</th>
<th>Real value (£ sterling)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calicoes, white or plain</td>
<td>248,868,936</td>
<td>15,554,300</td>
<td>2,568,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calicoes, printed, stained, etc.</td>
<td>1,535,066</td>
<td>2,060,644</td>
<td>431,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslins, white or plain</td>
<td>1,232,701</td>
<td>102,725</td>
<td>15,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lace and patent net</td>
<td>921,518</td>
<td>30,717</td>
<td>27,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton twist and yarns (pounds weight)</td>
<td>21,455,862</td>
<td>1,915,702</td>
<td>965,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,664,088</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,009,477</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. £ sterling = pounds sterling.*
order to Asia and the rest of the world to constitute the hierarchically structured capitalist global economy.

Acknowledgments

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The Slavery Business and the Making of “Race” in Britain and the Caribbean

Catherine Hall

This paper discusses the work of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project, which has focused on the significance of British slave owners between the mid-eighteenth century and the time of emancipation (1834) as a way of countering the erasure of the slavery business in popular memory. Slave owners were granted 20 million pounds in 1834 in compensation for the loss of “their property.” The documentation of this has made it possible to create a prosopography, and further research has been done on the economic, political, and cultural activities of those slave owners who were resident in Britain. Case studies of particular families can enrich this “big data.” The Long family is the focus of the second part of the paper. The activities of the three branches of the family, planters in Jamaica, merchants in London, and landowners in Suffolk, are sketched alongside a discussion of the different ways in which they contributed to “race making” in both metropole and colony. The hope is that such work can contribute to a changed understanding of Britain’s history and its relation to empire.

The Legacies of British Slave-Ownership:
A Reparatory Project

The 1833 act to abolish slavery in the British West Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape granted 20 million pounds sterling to the owners of “slave property” as compensation for the loss of their human property.1 Claims for reparations for slavery have entered public discourse in the United Kingdom in recent decades but have met with no support from government. In the wider public sphere, however, teachers, artists, writers, curators, community groups, activists, and historians have worked hard at what can be described as reparatory projects: attempts to right some of the wrongs that have been done by the slavery business in all its ramifications. In this article I consider the work of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project over the last 10 years and reflect on the relation between a detailed case study, that of the family of Edward Long, and the wider prosopographical (collective studies of those who received compensation) work. The Long family were slave owners in Jamaica across generations and provide an example of the ways in which colonists not only benefited in numerous ways from their ownership of enslaved people but contributed to the making of a racialized culture in Britain. What happened can never be undone, and intergenerational trauma continues. But the acknowledgment and full recognition of British responsibilities for the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery both in the Caribbean and beyond can both help to reshape historical memory and contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the legacies of that past live on in the present. Thinking about reparations, as David Scott argues, might have the potential to “redescribe the past’s relation to the present . . . to foreground the sense in which Caribbean debt is the other side of European theft—that the ‘persistent poverty’ of the Caribbean has been a constituting condition for ill-gotten European prosperity . . . . This is not the story of a mere episode in a marginal history; it is the integrated story of the making of the modern world itself” (Scott 2014:1–4).

More than 47,000 individuals made claims on the compensation money, and all claims have been digitized by the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project at University College London.2 Work was then done on the 3,000-plus slave owners resident in Britain, the so-called absenteees, to explore their multiple legacies: economic, cultural, and political.3 We aimed

1. All subsequent monies are in sterling unless otherwise stated. In addition, the act imposed a period of forced labor known as “apprenticeship,” binding the enslaved to work for their former “owners” for either 4 or 6 years without pay—compelling those who had been freed to contribute further.

2. More information about the work of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project is here: www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs.

3. The initial team (2009–2012), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and University College London (UCL), comprised Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Rachel Lang, and Katie Donington. The project built on Nicholas Draper’s (2010) analysis of the slave compensation records. The main output from this work was the database. A collective book was also produced, Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain (Hall et al. 2014), and we have engaged in many workshops, educational projects, TV programs, etc. A second phase of the project, “The Structure and Significance of British Caribbean Slave-Ownership, 1763–1833” ran from 2013 to 2016, funded by the ESRC, Arts and Humanities Research Council, and UCL. The second team was expanded to include Kristy Warren, James Dawkins, and Hannah Young. We have enjoyed the support of many other people, for which we are very grateful, and to date 1,000

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to tackle the question as to how representative earlier case histories of slave-owning families might be and demonstrate the capacity of “big data” to offer reinterpretations. The focus on the slave owners, the compensation, and the legacies was a way of demonstrating how the slavery business “came home” to Britain and countering the popular understanding that Britons had nothing to do with slavery. The dominant historical narrative since both abolition and emancipation has represented Britons as the givers of liberty and freedom. This myth of “the golden thread of liberty” that characterizes British exceptionalism, manifested in Magna Carta, abolition and emancipation, the 1832 Reform Act, the growth of democracy and the struggle against the Nazis, continues to occupy a powerful place in the national imaginary and is still regularly drawn upon by politicians of all persuasions keen to assert the special nature of British claims to act as the bringers of freedom to less fortunate others. One of the effects of this myth has been to minimize, if not erase, British involvement in the slavery business and the historic connections between Britain and the Caribbean. African-Caribbean people who have been living and working in the metropole for decades can still be seen as not British, as the recent scandal over the treatment of members of the so-called Windrush generation has exposed. Black Britons, brought here as children by their parents and living and working in the United Kingdom for decades, have been denied their rights, detained, and even deported on the grounds that they were “illegals.”

Since the 1980s and the United Kingdom’s postcolonial moment, many efforts have been made, to date with only partial success, to put slavery back into the mainstream of British history and understand its central place in the construction of modern society. The Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project has been and continues to be part of that much bigger collaborative effort, an effort of reparatory history.

In 1944 Eric Williams published *Capitalism and Slavery* (Williams 1944). Building on the analysis of the relation between metropole and colony that C. L. R. James (1938) had developed in *The Black Jacobins*, Williams explored the connections between slavery in the British Caribbean and the development of modern Britain. “The triangular trade,” as he put it, “gave a triple stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England; while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners provided another market for British industry.” But, he insisted, “It must not be inferred that the triangular trade was solely and entirely responsible for the economic development” (Williams 1944:52, 105–106). The wealth derived from slavery, he demonstrated, was embedded in the social, cultural, and political fabric of eighteenth-century Britain: in public schools and Oxbridge colleges, in the town and country houses with their connoisseurs’ collections, among the landed and in the membership of the financial and commercial elite, the aldermen of the city, and Parliament. But after 1783, he believed, the West Indian slave economy was in decline, and by the 1830s the slave owners had become a regressive and archaic fraction.

Evaluating the continued relevance of Williams has been one of the inspirations for the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership work. Nicholas Draper (2010) in the first tranche of his work on the compensation records explored the structure of British slave ownership, establishing that it was more widespread than had previously been thought in metropolitan Britain and that rentier-owners (absentees) received a substantial share as well as merchants. He also documented the distinction between the old and new colonies: “modern capitalists” were investing in Trinidad and Guyana, while the old territories were dominated by long-standing owners and mercantile dynasties. The Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project aimed to build on this work and investigate the legacies of the absentees. Our questions drew on Williams and the new scholarship of economic historians such as Inikori (2002), Pomeranz (2000), Hudson (2014), and Beck Ryden (2009). But we also adopted the approaches of the “new imperial history,” insisting on the entanglement of metropole and colony. This work, inspired by feminist and postcolonial thinking, refused the splitting between the domestic and the imperial that had characterized British historiography and argued for their mutual constitution. Ideas of racial difference have been demonstrated to be part of the makeup of English/British identities. Indeed, as Linton Kwesi Johnson recently put it, “racism is very much part of the cultural DNA of this country, and most probably has been so from imperial times” (Atikhenhead 2018).

As historians of Britain, our major concern has been with the more than 3,000 absentees (roughly 6% of the overall population of slave owners) who received money. We have not followed the legacies of the residents, nor have we prioritized the experience of the enslaved. Our aim has been to demonstrate
White British involvement in this history. Identifying the slave owners provided a lens through which to investigate what wealth they transmitted to the metropole and what kinds of impact they had.

The compensation that was awarded was for the people; it represented part of what was defined as the value of the enslaved men and women who had now been freed, but it was not associated with the land that the owners kept. The absentees, those resident in Britain, got between 40% and 50% of the 20 million pounds—about 8.2 million pounds—equivalent to about 16% of total state expenditure in 1834. Some of the absentees received very large amounts. Others, especially women, “owned” much smaller numbers of enslaved people. Among the absentees, over 20% of the claims came from women (in the Caribbean that figure was more than doubled), and very few of these claims were for large numbers of enslaved people. Exploring the gendering of slave ownership and the significance of patterns of marriage and inheritance has been an important part of our continuing work. Marriage was a key route to ownership for many men, since married women could only legally own property if there had been a settlement in the court of equity. Some aristocratic women in England who had inherited from their fathers, husbands, or brothers were able to sustain a personal interest in their plantations and enslaved people, as, for example, Anna Eliza Elletson. But in the last analysis her husband held the property, and she accepted that it was family property and liable for the debts of her husband and son. The majority of the claims from women in the metropole were small scale, their ownership often in the form of annuities based on the hiring out of enslaved people in the Caribbean.

We have found incidents of slave ownership across Britain.1 There was a heavy concentration in the great slaving cities of London, Liverpool, and Bristol—but there were also absentee gentry in the home counties, clergy across the country, retired West Indians in spa towns such as Cheltenham and Leamington, the sons of military men living in such unlikely places as Sheffield, merchants in Newcastle, widows and daughters living in small towns. There was a disproportionate number of claimants in Scotland, the direct legacy of those Scots who went to the Caribbean seeking their fortunes.

It is clear from the evidence of the financial and commercial legacies that the slave economy was not trivial to Britain. The proportion of the elites in Britain derived from “West Indians” in the 1830s, the 1850s, and the 1870s demonstrates the continuity and resilience of former slave owners and their continuing importance to the fabric of metropolitan British society. According to Nick Draper:

The data suggest that between 8 and 8.5% of all individuals dying in Britain between 1809 and 1874 and leaving at least £100,000 in personalty were slave-owners (or mortgagees of enslaved people), married into the families of slave-owners (or mortgagees) or were direct heirs of slave-owners (or mortgagees). Second, a further 7 to 10% in total were not slave-owners but derived their wealth from activities directly related to the slave-economy. Hence, around one in six of the wealthiest non-landed Britons of the first three quarters of the nineteenth century had been embroiled in the slave-economy. (Hall et al. 2014:38, 48–49)

Williams thought that the West Indians were an “outworn interest” by the 1830s, but we have established a complicated picture of decaying fortunes and huge debts, alongside old wealth maintained and new money. Sugar was a notoriously risky business: war, hurricanes, rebellions, drought, losses at sea all played their part in the shifting fortunes of slave owners. Trinidad and Guyana were the site of new fortunes as well as the consolidation of old. But only some succeeded. The Beckfords provided a dramatic story of decline, but others survived and invested in cotton, railways, and shipping. Capital derived from the slavery business contributed to the Glasgow textile industry. There were banking and marine insurance, the new joint stock companies, and the financial infrastructure of the City of London. “Slave-ownership was one component of many in the consolidation of Britain, and specifically the City, as the centre of global capital in the mid- and late-nineteenth century” (Hall et al. 2014:23).

The slave owners played an important part in the shaping of modern British society, not least in their contribution to the culture of racial capitalism. “The veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal,” wrote Karl Marx, “slavery pure and simple in the new world. . . . Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (Marx 1961, vol. 1:759–760). The blood was the bloodlines of familial capitalism as well as the blood of the enslaved. The dirt was the dirt of the plantations as well as of the textile factories. Racial capitalism, a term first used by Cedric Robinson, was a complex and hybrid system developed across the Atlantic, transforming African slave societies and the mercantile capitalism of early modern Britain in its wake (Robinson 1983). It was a form of combined and uneven development. It linked the slave traders of Bristol, London, Liverpool, Lancaster, and Leith, often partnerships of modest investors who took shares in a voyage, with the networks of Africans on the West Coast who captured and then traded with Europeans in people, the first stages in the commoditization of men, women, and children. The terrors of the Middle Passage marked the next stage, followed by sale on arrival in the Caribbean, to the factors who became key agents in selling to the planters. The plantation system, as is well known, was a modern system linking African slave societies with mercantile practices and with industrial capitalism. Establishing a plantation was an expensive business requiring significant capital, both for the “works”—the mills, boiling houses, and stills—and for the purchase of “Negroes.” Dependence on long-term credit tied the planters into cycles of debt, the majority of which was owed to metropolitan merchant houses. The entire system rested on the labor of the

5. See the maps in the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project database.
enslaved: this was racial capitalism. Enslaved people were both the labor and the capital; indeed, they were the most expensive part of the capital investment. This was a form of capitalism dependent on the elaboration, reproduction, and exploitation of notions of racial difference.

The system also depended on the patriarchal ordering of relations both among and between colonizers and colonized. White colonists reconfigured the familial practices of early modern Britain, adapting them to the new order of things. Their own high levels of mortality, the frequent absence of male heirs, and the presence of widows with property meant that daughters and widows played a significant part in the metropolitan and colonial marriage markets. A West Indian heiress was a thing of value, even if she carried those tell-tale traces. These children of mixed heritage disturbed any fantasy of a simple Black/White binary. Concubinage was widespread, but White men also wanted legitimate families. Those with sufficient resources returned to England/Scotland for the second “proper” family, in the hope of heirs and a lasting dynasty, the fruit of their colonial enterprise. The early modern colonists took little interest in the regulation of reproduction on their plantations. Until the late eighteenth century the constant supply of cheap labor combined with the “ownership” of the babies of enslaved women, the rule of partus sequitur ventrem, meant that they showed little concern with the extremely high incidence of mortality and low levels of infant survival. African people were “disposable bodies.” It was only the specter of the ending of the slave trade that initiated serious attempts to regulate reproduction and ameliorate the conditions for pregnant women, making sexual politics a site of struggle for the abolitionists.

The transmission of the culture of racial capitalism to the metropole could take many forms. Assumptions about the laboring capacities of those with dark skin, fears of pollution and degeneration associated with mixed populations, or the conviction of White capacity to rule over others: these were and degeneration associated with mixed populations, or the African as inferior, other legitimations for his or her subordination had to be found. In the debates over race in the mid-nineteenth century and the shift from the ascendancy of abolitionist humanitarian discourse to a harsher version of stadial theory, envisioning the civilizational process as glacially slow, much of the wealth derived from the labor of the enslaved, and the payment from British taxpayers went into conspicuous consumption of varied kinds: the building and enlargement of country houses and gardens, the buying of books and art works, lavish hospitality. Take the neo-Gothic castle built by Baron Penrhyn next to the slate quarries that he had inherited in North Wales. His predecessor Richard Pennant, a leading pro-slaver, had utilized his colonial spoils to develop the quarries, one of the examples of capital from slavery going into industrial development. For the quarry workers, sweet tea was a crucial part of their meager diet. Sugar produced by the enslaved, as Sidney Mintz (1985) famously wrote, sustained the productivity of the British working class. Welsh slate roofed the houses of the expanding populations of the Western world. The organization of labor in the quarries mirrored the plantation: English managers and overseers, Welsh workers.

Some descendants of the slave owners were convinced that their family inheritances had been ruined by emancipation. Charles Kingsley, for example, was driven to explore new avenues, becoming a successful novelist and travel writer, praising the work of “docile coolies” in contrast to Africans. His younger brother Henry emigrated to New South Wales, failed to establish himself as a sheep farmer, but wrote two novels, celebrated as Australia’s first colonial novels, that communicated a vision of aboriginal savagery and the need for purifying Whiteness to British readerships. Both the Kingsleys were strong supporters of Governor Eyre in 1866. Archibald Alison, known as that “most unbending Conservative,” received compensation as a trustee for his brother-in-law. He made a name for himself writing proslavery articles for Blackstones prior to 1833 but then turned to history writing. His dramatic rendition of the rebellion in Saint Domingue, replete with horrific detail of the cruelties, left his readers in no doubt as to the savage nature of “the African.” Once slavery no longer fixed the African as inferior, other legitimations for his or her subordination had to be found. In the debates over race in the mid-nineteenth century and the shift from the ascendancy of abolitionist humanitarian discourse to a harsher version of stadial theory, envisioning the civilizational process as glacially slow, those with slave-owning origins played a significant part. They “knew” the real character of “the African.”

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The second phase of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project work, still ongoing, investigates the British slave owners and their legacies between 1763 and 1833. We focus on individuals, families, and estates to illuminate private wealth and its generation, transmission, and usages. We demonstrate the development of racial capitalism in the context of integrated plantations. We emphasize the success of this system over a lengthy period and the centrality of White familial

6. I am drawing here on our team discussions and our unpublished papers that begin to discuss some of the yields of the new material.
engagement with slavery. It is clear that the wealth of individual slave owners mattered in Britain and that substantial investments were being made in the infrastructure of financial, commercial, agrarian, and industrial capitalism. A focus on industrial investment alone misses the importance of developments in agriculture, shipping, transport, and banking, not to speak of writing and direct political interventions. The Dawkins family, for example, owners of four estates in Jamaica, had established sufficient capital to move to England in the mid-eighteenth century and begin the long process of establishing themselves as landed gentry. They bought property in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire, carefully managed their marriage alliances and inheritance practices, and used their position in the House of Commons to steer through private enclosure bills allowing them to develop their landed estates. Others invested in canals, lighthouses, coal, and iron. Bryan Edwards, who was to become well known as a historian of the West Indies, inherited six estates and over 1,000 enslaved men and women in Jamaica from his uncle Zachary Bayly, who had initially made his fortune as a merchant in Kingston. Edwards was active as a slave owner in Jamaica before settling permanently in England and gaining a parliamentary seat. He became a partner in a Southampton bank, one of the country banks that became Lloyds. His five-volume The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies (1793), together with his political interventions, meant that he was a significant figure in the debates over the slave trade and a strong voice on behalf of the planter interest.

We are tracking agrarian, commercial, financial, political, and cultural legacies across the period and attempting to gauge the flow of wealth and of a racialized culture into the metropole. Much analysis remains to be done.

The Long Family: A Case Study

The findings from the “big data” can be explored in more depth in detailed case studies. My own qualitative research has focused on the Long family, a family heavily invested in the slavery business across generations.7 The development of racial capitalism was a process taking place over time and space. The specific form explored here is sugar-based plantation slavery organized within a mercantilist system. The Longs were engaged in making “race,” both Whiteness and Blackness. The material basis of the Long family was in slave ownership, mercantile activity, and land. They were modern capitalists but not part of the new world of the industrial revolution in textiles. The most famous member of the family was Edward Long, author of the three-volume The History of Jamaica (2010 [1774]), which remains the standard source on eighteenth-century Jamaica. Heavily used by all scholars of Jamaica, it has extensive detail on a range of topics from history and topography to demography, sugar, health, flora, and fauna. A section of the History is well known to those interested in “race” since Long was at pains to explicate the essential, natural character of racial difference as he understood it.

By the 1730s there were three branches of the family, tied together by their slave-owning and sugar interests in Jamaica, in what was indeed a family project (see fig. 1). Family was at the heart of the organization of the White Atlantic world, while such ties were denied to their enslaved. Strategic marriages and inheritance practices secured not just their survival but, over time, a modest place for themselves in English landed society. They enjoyed Whig political patronage and shared artistic and scientific interests, being men—and they were primarily men—of the English enlightenment. They were planters and merchants, parliamentarians, soldiers and clergymen, living off their Jamaican property in people. They belonged to the English/colonial ruling class in a time of transition from mercantilism to the dominance of industrial capitalism and free trade. They were men whose practice was deeply bound up with the development of a specific form of racial capitalism. The family had their roots in the minor Wiltshire gentry. The three branches were the Jamaican active slave owners, the merchants based in London dealing with the sugar and managing the credit, and the landowners in Suffolk. They had a continuous presence in slave ownership and the West India trade from the mid-seventeenth into the nineteenth centuries. It was a White dynasty whose control over land, goods, and the labor of both Black and White workers secured their positions of privilege.

The Founders

Samuel Long (1638–1683), Edward’s great-grandfather, was on the original Cromwellian expedition and acquired land in Clarendon, in the center of the island. The two plantations Longville and Lucky Valley were key to the family property. The colonists needed military and naval support from the Crown but they were also determined to get recognition of their rights as “freeborn Englishmen.” The purpose of government as they saw it was the protection of property, and their property was distinctive: it included people. Their first charter of rights as White men was to be free in a society already built on slavery. By 1662 a governor had been appointed by the Crown, with nominated council and representative assembly drawn from the men of property. By 1664 the Jamaican House of Assembly had passed its first laws on slavery and on servants, categorizing the distinctions between propertied man, servant, and slave. “Free-born Englishmen” were to enjoy the laws and liberties of their mother country, trial by jury, habeas corpus, and security of property. Africans were “an heathenish brutish and uncertain dangerous pride of people subject to a quite different legal system and regime of punishment” (Engerman, Drescher, and Paquette 2001:105–113).

Samuel Long was quick to see the importance of the plantations. The flow of enslaved Africans into the Caribbean was steadily increasing, and he could secure Black labor. By the time

7. For some of the first fruits of the research, see Hall (2016, 2017) and Hall and Pick (2017).
of his death in 1683 he was a wealthy man with a house in the capital Spanish Town and an estate worth 7,273 pounds. His inventory recorded the source of his wealth: the ownership of 90 enslaved men, 99 women, and 99 children. His son Charles inherited the estate. His bequest to his loving wife, Elizabeth, included "ten Negroes . . . and their Increase during her life" (Howard 1925, vol. 1:41–42). Samuel was appropriating the reproductive lives of these women, leaving prospects of future wealth. Enslaved women could replace several times the capital outlay involved in their purchase, and as they aged their value declined while that of their children increased. In their efforts to secure their own dynasties, the slave owners were securing, as Orlando Patterson has demonstrated, the "natal alienation," the "kinlessness" of the enslaved (Patterson 1982). African men were denied what Englishmen saw as the essence of full masculinity—the capacity to own their own labor, order their families and households, know their ancestors, and provide for their dependents. White men owned the bodies of enslaved women; African men could not be heads of households or patriarchal fathers. The project of "race making" was to subject both men and women to the power of their masters at every level of life. They were defined as chattels, things, yet their human capacity to labor and to reproduce was central to the wealth they produced for their owners.

Samuel was in the forefront of the defense of the "rights of freeborn Englishmen" against any attempt by the Crown to limit such rights. Many of the first colonists had been republicans, carrying the legacies of the civil war, extremely wary of the power of the Crown. A protracted dispute over the House of Assembly’s control over legislation in exchange for revenue to the Crown resulted in the imprisonment of Long, then acting as speaker of the House of Assembly, and his fellow assemblyman and ally William Beeston. They were both taken as prisoners to London but successfully presented their case to Charles II and his Privy Council.

William Beeston, the younger son of a minor gentry family, had set sail for Jamaica in 1660. He established himself in Port Royal and proved adept at trading in prized goods and commodities. By 1670 he had accumulated 878 acres in St. Andrew and enough capital to begin the expensive business of planting. By 1680 he had resettled in London with his wife, Anne Hopegood, a merchant’s daughter, and was soon established as one of the 60 leading West India traders. He returned as lieutenant governor to Jamaica in 1692 and found many ways of making money, including trading in the enslaved. At his death in 1702 he left approximately 30,000 pounds in Jamaican currency and property in England. The alliance between Samuel Long and William Beeston marked the beginning of the fortunes of their combined families and the creation of a White dynasty.

Charles (1679–1723), Samuel’s son and Edward Long’s grandfather, was born in Jamaica. His first marriage was to Amy, the daughter of then governor Sir Nicholas Lawes. His second wife was Jane Modyford, the heiress of William Beeston, who
had been knighted in 1692. Both marriages confirmed his place in the White Jamaican elite. The couple moved to England soon after the marriage, for the dream of the colonists was to make enough money from sugar to return to the “mother country” and live in style: the plantations could be managed by attorneys. A serious property dispute with Beeston’s widow eventually resulted in a settlement, and Charles became immensely wealthy after his mother-in-law’s death. His properties in Jamaica extended beyond Clarendon to a plantation at Norbrook, close to Kingston. The town was fast developing into the hub of slave trading for South America. He bought a country house in Suffolk, Hurts Hall, and “a splendid house” in Queens Square in London. He represented Dunwich in the House of Commons and was part of the prime minister Robert Walpole’s extensive East Anglian patronage system. In the 1720s, however, Long overreached himself. He dreamed of gold and silver, waiting to be mined in Jamaica, and set up a mining company. Seduced by the excitement over what was represented as the unlimited potential of the South Sea Company, however, Long invested his money and that of his shareholders in it, only to see the bubble burst and to be left with huge debts and legal claims.

The Jamaica Branch

Samuel (1700–1758), Charles’s son by his first wife, found himself saddled with the payment of debts, a very substantial annuity to his stepmother, and legacies to his eight half-siblings. His marriage to Mary Tate, a woman with no significant property, was “certainly not a suitable one in point of fortune” in his son’s estimation (Howard 1925, vol. 1:76). Samuel sailed for Jamaica, hoping to recover the family finances, but soon returned to England with his growing family. Walpole secured for him the position of the keeper of the king’s house at Newmarket together with a post in the customs. Newmarket, however, involved heavy expenses, with large parties gathering for the races and expecting hospitality. Samuel decided that costs must be cut. He bought a property at Tredudwell in Cornwall, aiming for a more modest life, and established himself as a gentleman farmer. By 1746, however, his finances were once again in crisis and he returned to Jamaica hoping that attention to the plantations would beget returns.

Robert, Samuel’s eldest son, accompanied his father to the island in 1746. They were joined by brother Charles who had been destined for the East India Company but preferred the military. “My father bought him a commission in the 49th Regiment of Foot then in Garrison there,” Edward later wrote, “and he was afterwards appointed Engineer general of the island” (Howard 1925, vol. 1:97). Charles died suddenly, however, in 1757. When Samuel died the following year, Robert inherited the majority of his father’s properties together with those of Charles. Robert was in Jamaica for some years managing Longville and Lucky Valley. He had a serious interest in botany and worked alongside his friend Anthony Robinson, one of the early colonial botanists, who left a collection of drawings of flora and fauna. Robert seems to have taken no interest in politics either on the island or later when he moved to England and settled in Chichester. He and his wife, Lucia Cooke, had three daughters, all born in Jamaica. Their descendants received compensation payments. 8

Catherine Maria and Susanna Charlotte, two of Samuel’s daughters, also married in Jamaica. Catherine Maria married her first cousin, Sir Henry Moore, in 1751. He became the acting governor of the island and was greatly admired by his brother-in-law Edward, especially for his success in dealing with the great rebellion of 1760. Their son John Henry inherited the Jamaican family property and enjoyed its income as an absentee. 9 Susanna Charlotte arrived in Jamaica in the late 1740s with her mother and sister Catherine. In Edward’s account, Charlotte, as they all called her, was speedily married by her father to “George Ellis, Esq., the eldest son and heir of a very ample estate” (Howard 1925, vol. 1:109). Ellis died while Charlotte was pregnant with their son George. He had made a will in which he bequeathed her dowry of £1,200pa but no provision for a child. His brother John immediately claimed the whole of the property bar the annuity: friends and relations were divided. A difficult negotiation followed between the Ellis and Long families as to the possible expectations of a child. There was a lot at stake. 10 “At length my sister,” Edward recounted, “by advice of my Father, consented to a

8. The details of the inheritances are vital to the story but can only be reproduced very briefly. For further information, follow the names on the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project database. Jane and her husband, John Oliver, of Greys Inn and Hoole Hall Cheshire received a share of the compensation for Longville Park (£1,046/1/4d for 51 enslaved) and for Longville (£1,093/0/1d for 81 enslaved). Lucy Ann married the lawyer and editor Thomas Bayley Howell of Pinknash Park in Surrey, who became a joint owner of Longville as a result, but he had mortgaged his share in 1798. Mary Charlotte, the third daughter, married Samuel Scudamore Heming, her first cousin. He was the son of Amelia Elizabeth Long, Robert’s youngest sister, who had married Samuel Heming from Seville on the north coast of Jamaica.

9. A minor poet, he died in England, leaving his estates and enslaved people to his sister Susanna Jane Dickson, provided her husband had predeceased her. If not, the property was left in trust with Edward Long and Jacob Wilkinson acting as trustees. Edward’s eldest son, Edward Beeston Long, left it in trust at his death in 1825 with instructions that it should be sold, with half the proceeds going to his son Frederick Beckford Long and the rest to the mortgagees Rutherford and Jegon. George Rutherford received compensation of £2,736/7/1d for 153 enslaved men and women.

10. The estate was probated in Jamaica in 1754 and included 536 enslaved people, of whom 302 were listed as male and 234 as female; 107 were listed as boys, girls, or children. The total value of estate at probate: £30,347.24 Jamaican currency, of which £21,249 was the value of enslaved people. George Ellis, deceased, was listed in the Jamaican Quit Rent books for 1754 as the owner of 3,568 acres of land in St. Catherine, 1,630 acres in St. George, 2,379 acres in St. Mary, 1,120 acres in St. John, and 940 acres in St. Thomas-in-the-Vale, totaling 9,637 acres.
The settlement was drawn up by Mr. Richard Beckford (the Alderman’s brother) the tenor of which was, that she should peaceably suffer John Ellis to go into possession, and that she should give up £500 p. annum of her Dower, pending her child’s minority; and it was stipulated on the part of John Ellis, that if the child proved a Boy, it should be under his care and be educated as the Crown, its Constitution, as their Inheritance. This birthright was the chief bulwark against oppressive ministers and courts: political slavery, they insisted, must be sharply delineated from chattel slavery (Bourke 1810 [1766]:19).

In 1769 Long returned with his family to England, expecting to be able to live comfortably on the proceeds of his properties. He had raised levels of productivity by a variety of “improvements” associated with labor management and careful investment in people and equipment. He hoped to pursue his literary endeavors and write a history of the island. The atmosphere in England, however, had changed, and opponents of slavery were gaining ground. The case of James Somerset, a formerly enslaved man who had lived freely in London for a period but had been kidnapped by his erstwhile master with the intention of returning him to enslavement in the Caribbean, became a test case for abolitionists and pro-slavers. Lord Mansfield’s judgment in favor of Somerset enraged the pro-slavers. Somerset had been able to claim habeas corpus, a right that belonged to “free-born Englishmen” and was denied to the enslaved. Long wrote a vicious polemic attacking Mansfield for “washing the black-a-moor white” (Long 1772:iii). Mansfield’s judgment was a serious blow for the pro-slavers and undermined their belief in the law as the cornerstone of their right to enslave others. They had to turn their attention to other legitimations of slavery. There was a new urgency to the history Long would write. He rejected the contemporary assumptions about climate as the key to differences in skin color and insisted that Black and White were fundamentally different. Difference was natural: Whites were born to order, Blacks to obey. “Two tinctures,” he insisted, “which nature has dissociated, like oil and vinegar” (Long 2010 [1774], vol. 2:332). Africans were born to be subjected to the White man. His ideal society was one in which people knew their classed, gendered, and raced positions.

The general order, since the whole began, Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.
Order is heaven’s first law; and, this confest, Some are, and, must be, greater than the rest.
(Long 2010 [1774], vol. 2:485)

The History of Jamaica (2010 [1774]) was published anonymously, but Long was soon recognized as the author, the authority on Jamaica in the debates on the slave trade. Key political figures consulted him, he presented important evidence to parliamentary committees, and he wrote pamphlets to put the West Indian case. He carried his racial thinking into the heartlands of the metropolis, making dire warnings as to the savage nature of Africans and their need for the “civilizing” hand of the planters, the dangers of “swamping” as increasing numbers of Black people entered England, the pernicious effects of miscegenation, and the disgusting habits of White working-class women. Sugar was to him the source of the family income; sitting comfortably in England, the labor and grief of those who produced it was ever more distant in his mind, disavowed, erased from and through the columns of his writing that explicated
prices, duties, and profits and told stories of grateful Africans who preferred Jamaica to their homeland.

Edward Beeston Long, Edward and Mary’s oldest son, was a child of six when the family left Jamaica. He never returned to the island but was sustained by the labor of the enslaved for the rest of his life. After Harrow and Cambridge he married Mary Thomlinson, who had property and was able to buy a country estate, Hampton Lodge, which remained in the family for several generations. He lived as a landed gentleman. His children received compensation money.13

His brothers were twins: Charles Beckford married a Jamaican heiress and lived as a comfortable absentee, and his son Charles Edward was possessed of an ample fortune and devoted himself to historical and genealogical studies, including collecting the papers of his grandfather; the second twin, Robert Ballard, became a moderately successful professional soldier.

Edward Long had three daughters, all successfully absorbed into the English gentry. Catherine married Richard Dawkins, of the wealthy Jamaican absentee family; Charlotte married Sir George Peacock, and Elizabeth married Lord Henry Howard. None of them ever returned to Jamaica.

The Mercantile Branch

William Beeston Long (1710–1785; Samuel Long’s [1700–1758] half-brother) was named for his grandfather Sir William Beeston. Around 1730 he established a partnership with Roger Drake (a director of the East India Company), who had married his sister Jane. Drake and Long became one of the major London West India merchant houses, acting as signees for the other branch of the family in Jamaica. By the early 1740s he was in a position to marry Susanna, the daughter of a substantial London merchant, Abraham Crop. “Uncle Beeston,” as he was known to Edward Long, became the head of the London branch of the Long family, acting as adviser, executor, and trustee: he was the mercantile capitalist. A city man, he was wealthy enough to establish a country house in Surrey, Carshalton Park, in addition to his lavish residence in Bishopsgate. He served as chair of the Society of West India Merchants, the lobbying group that adopted a formal organization in the late 1760s to protect the special interests of those trading in the Caribbean.

Beeston and Susanna had many children who flourished as merchants and landowners in politics, the church, and the army, all suitable careers for the sons of the well-to-do. The oldest, Samuel (1746–1807), became a member of Parliament and married into the gentry. He served as treasurer both to the Society of West India Merchants and the Society of Merchants and Planters. The third son, also Beeston (1757–1826), was the head of the house dealing with the sugar and rum produced on the family estates in Jamaica. This was always a business as well as a familial relationship, and the merchants were more prosperous than the planters. He married Frances Louisa, the daughter of Sir Richard Neave, a demonstration of his entry into the highest levels of the city elite.14 He chaired the Society of West India Merchants and was active in establishing the London Dock Company at Wapping, which he went on to chair. Together with other family members he served on a number of critical committees organized by the West India lobby, which made the proslavery case. He was appointed governor of the Bank of England between 1806 and 1808. Both Beeston and Neave were vice-presidents of the London Institution, an enterprise founded in 1805 by the city’s mercantile and banking elite. Both pro-slavers and abolitionists were involved in it. The institution was intended to diffuse useful knowledge in the arts and sciences, and its magnificent building in Finsbury Circus, where public lectures were held, housed a library and reading rooms. Patronage of this kind showcased the public spiritedness of city men and their serious interest in encouraging commercial and scientific innovation as well as making money.

Beeston’s brother Charles (1760–1838) studied in Cambridge and was entered at the Inner Temple. As a young man from a wealthy family, he set out on the Grand Tour (1768–1770) and studied in Rome under James Byres. His abiding passion became the arts. He had a political career, while brother George went into the army and William into the church. Charles became a friend and supporter of Pitt, an unusual alliance since the majority of the family were Whigs. He sat in Parliament for varied boroughs and enjoyed positions at the Treasury. His wife, Amelia Hume, was the daughter of the prominent art collector Sir Abraham Hume, and she herself was a distinguished watercolorist and horticulturalist. Charles, created Baron Farnborough in 1826, was a passionate connoisseur and used his political influence to further artistic causes, most notably the purchase of the Elgin marbles and the establishment of the National Gallery. He was a trustee of both the British Museum and the National Gallery. He left paintings by Rubens, Van Dyke, Canaletto, and others to the National Gallery. His entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, like so many others, ignores his slavery connections, one of the ways in which this history has been forgotten.15

13. Their oldest son, Henry Lawes (who had married into the Walpoles), received compensation for both Norbrook and Longville, which had been held in trust by both Edward Long and Edward Beeston Long. The second son, Frederick Beckford Long, shared the compensation for Lucky Valley with his sister Charlotte’s husband, a member of Parliament, Grenville Piggott, and lawyers who held mortgages on the property.

14. Neave was a very successful merchant and slave owner who built up properties in Antigua, St. Vincent, and Dominica. He chaired the Society of West India Merchants and the London Dock Company at various times and was for 40 years a director of the Bank of England, serving as governor from 1783 to 1785.

The Landed Branch

Samuel Long’s oldest half-brother Charles (1705–1778) benefited from the Beeston inheritance, which came through his mother. He was able to claim the Suffolk property, saved from the general collapse of the family finances, and to draw an income from the Jamaican plantations. Uncle Charles’s first son, also Charles (1748–1813), married his cousin, Jane Long, from the Beeston Long side of the family. His brother, Dudley (1748–1829), married into the Pelhams and took on his wife’s name of North. This branch of the family seems to have managed to live as minor English gentry while continuing to draw income from Jamaica. The compensation money from the plantations eventually passed to connected branches of the family through Jane Long’s inheritance.

Conclusion

The Long family retained their slave-owning and West Indian mercantile interests across six generations, from the 1650s into the 1830s. By the 1830s they were secure in their positions as substantial English gentry, with several of the fifth and sixth generations having married into the lesser aristocracy. They were knights and baronets, members of Parliament and sheriffs, governors of the Bank of England and patrons of the arts, botanists and historians, lawyers and senior officials, colonels and clerics. Many advantageous marriages had been made, marriage settlements carefully constructed, family property protected. Sons had gone to Harrow and Cambridge, daughters directed to the right husbands. Only one segment of the compensation money, for a part of Lucky Valley, went to mortgages. Family members received compensation for 447 enslaved men and women. The family had properties across the home counties and in Marylebone, that most favored area for the West Indians. They were buried in city churches or family mausoleums. The men acted as trustees and executors for each other, were in loco parentis for children whose parents were in Jamaica. There were cousin marriages, a classic means of forming of marriages, and deaths of others. Racial capitalism depended on constructions of Blackness quite as much as constructions of Whiteness.

As Edward Long explained in his History of Jamaica (2010 [1774]), White men were uniquely suited to authority. The naturalist Buffon was wrong; the most important distinction was not between the animal and the human but between the “Negro” and the White man. He drew on the travel writer Le Pluche’s account of the characteristics of men to explicate “the pre-eminence of man over brutes, and shew him born to govern them.” What makes man “master of all,” Long maintained, was the particular way in which man’s legs supported him and kept him upright, how his muscles “which support a multitude of actions” were “adapted to the several exigencies of his government.” But these capacities were unique to White bodies, “denied to his slaves, the inferior animals.” It was the balance of the White body, the particular relation between hand and arm, that confirmed “the authority of the man.” And then there was his speech, proper speech, a form of speech impossible for “brutes.” Man’s dignity, Long concluded, “arises from the right use to which his reason enables him to apply his corporeal powers and senses” (Long 2010 [1774], vol. 2:365–368). In Long’s understanding only White men had the capacity to reason. His was a voice the registers of which have been repeated across generations and into the present.

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Archaeology under the Blinding Light of Race

Michael L. Blakey

Racism is defined as a modern system of inequity emergent in Atlantic slavery in which “Whiteness” is born and embedded. This essay describes its transformation. The operation of racist Whiteness in current archaeology and related anthropological practices is demonstrated in the denigration and exclusion of Black voices and the denial of racism and its diverse appropriations afforded the White authorial voice. The story of New York’s African Burial Ground offers a case in point.

Conception and Birth of White Supremacy

The American school of polygeny fully establishes the biologically determined, ranked definition of human groups (i.e., race) to justify societal inequity (therefore becoming racism) as North American slavery (Nott and Gliddon, after Morton [1854], responded to by Douglass [1950 (1854)], elucidated by Gould [1996 (1981)] and Smedley and Smedley [2012]). Such qualitative origins always succeed cumulative events in a fertile context. In science and society, the events that led to such origins always succeed cumulative events in a fertile context. In science and society, the events that led to such origins always succeed cumulative events in a fertile context. In science and society, the events that led to such origins always succeed cumulative events in a fertile context. In science and society, the events that led to such origins always succeed cumulative events in a fertile context. 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they severed Judeo-Christian identity at its hyphen (Jennings 2010). But these cultural elements would not comprise racism if they are ethnocentric until biology replaces a faltering Christian moralization of American slavery (see Jea 1998 [1811]; Koo 2007) with a secular ideology of nature during the Enlightenment and following the first use of “White” as a legal identity (vs. “Christian”) forbidding intermarriage in 1691 Virginia at the origin of “racial slavery” (Epperson 1999b; Smedley and Smedley 2012:115–116). Christian justifications for chattel slavery (the savage had no soul or if so it needed saving) met their ultimate demise upon the rack of their own contradictions (Jea 1998 [1811]; Jefferson 1785:162–163; Koo 2007) with the conversion of African Americans after the end of the Anglophone transatlantic trade (1807–1808). The ideological effect (ancillary to those of rebellions and economic forces) is exemplified by the expansion of Northern abolitionism (Blight 2018; Kendi 2016:29–248) with more effective use of the two best-selling contemporary books, the Holy Bible and Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Stowe 1852), leading to Civil War.

Mainstream (White) American anthropology (Northern or Southern) legitimized slavery and gave it moral cover. Blacks uniquely used ethnology to contest natural inequality extolled by polygenists and continued to be the most definite advocates of the equality of all humans (Douglass 1850 [1854]; Du Bois 1897; Firmin 2000 [1885]; Patterson 2013). US physical anthropology, founded at the Smithsonian, was definitively eugenicist (Hrdlicka 1918), patriarchal, and White supremacist (Hrdlicka 1925, 1927) in the first half of the twentieth century (Blakey 1996). Franz Boas critiqued race during Jim Crow (Stocking 1968), but he and his successors were mainly concerned about the acculturation versus racialization of marginalized Southern and Eastern Europeans in the United States (see Baker 1998; Blakey 1996; Boas 1911; Montague 1951; Willis 1969). Indeed, Whites’ postwar objections to Nazism were mainly focused on the newly racialized denigration of marginal Whites (Cesaire 2000 [1955]) prior to the demonstrated effectiveness...
of anticolonial and civil rights movements led by peoples of color. According to Painter (2010:359–374), these non-Western Europeans benefited from the Third Enlargement of American Whiteness after the Irish.

By 1968–1980 there would be won a “second Reconstruction” (my revision of Bell [1987]; Marable [2007]) of governmental programs (including affirmative action) to rectify continuing consequences of prolonged White privilege. It would be curtailed after a dozen years (like the first Reconstruction) by a mythology that White privilege had suddenly ceased (the “level playing field”) enabling the fallacious logic that efforts to end White discrimination and privilege (whose notice was delegitimized as “playing the race card”) constituted racism (“reverse racism”) (see Haney-Lopez 2010). Now, falsely anchored in the new imperator of anti-racism, all racial discourse (including race-based correctives) was stymied by Whites (and their intellectual allies like economist William Julius Wilson [Kendi 2016:427–428]). They returned to Blumenbach’s handle as the sole exemplars of normal, individual people, racially unmarked (in their own imaginary), American, universal, objective, unhypenated “Caucasians” (see Frankenberg 1994; Mukhopadhyay 2008) irrelevant to structural racism. Thus, a new White supremacy rose against the presumed ethnically and racially marked, subjective, hypenated (African-American, Native-American, Mexican-American, etc.), abnormal other, of questionable rational endowments (Herrnstein and Murray 1994) and national entitlement. Most Whites (including the Republican Party) insisted, metaphorically, on continuing an identity as entitled occupiers—distinguishable from, rather than part of, national “diversity”—protecting their structurally ill-gotten “ranches” with propagandistic ideology, police force, and military at “the wall.” American archaeology was created in this White society. The following anthropology of anthropology shows how archaeology joints the unmarked White voice to muffle critical Black voices and impose pseudopublic engagement to preserve an ethical guise over adamant White authority to marginalize the other and elevate themselves.

Social Origins of African American Archaeology and Africana Studies in the United States

Apart from Herbert Aptheker on the left (1937) and an apologetic Southern historiography to damn the Reconstruction and defend Jim Crow on the right (see discussion by Foner [2014]), Whites rarely read or wrote African American history before World War II. African Americans accelerated the production of their own historiography during World War I (Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, e.g.). In the wake of the Second World War rise of antifascism, the US civil rights movement, and international colonial independence movements, broader literatures on peoples of color, White supremacy, and colonialism emerged (Marable 2000). A market for that literature would grow, and African American studies departments accompanied the desegregation of formerly all-White institutions of higher learning, beginning in the late 1960s. Archaeologist Leland Ferguson attributes the rise of African American archaeology to this societal moment (Ferguson 2012).

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act fostered by an environmentalist movement will mitigate the destruction of cultural resources (archaeological sites) requiring contractual work for federally funded development projects. African American archaeology will partly result from the random identification of sites in the path of highways and building construction that would become the bread and butter of American archaeologists. Let it be clear that American archaeologists were almost exclusively White people who studied native “prehistory” and a growing number of historic sites (Blakey 1983, 1990; Schuyler 1971).

As these researchers began to study African American sites, they rarely attended African American studies programs at their universities. The situation reminds me of Zora Neale Hurston’s quip about Boas’s expectations of her anthropological training, saying she was unclear how “Pawnee” would assist her in the study of Blacks in Alabama (Mikell 1999). These departments and Black colleges where one could achieve a sophisticated understanding of the history and culture of the African diaspora were the segregated domain and desegregated intellectual and affective choices of Black students. The New Archaeology in which Whites were trained in the United States between the 1960s and 1970s, like a continuing objectifying physical anthropology, was deeply naturalistic in its theoretical orientation (Blakey 2001). Yet, as historical archaeology of the European colonial and industrial periods grew, humanistic training became more appropriate for North American archaeologists. But rarely would African American historians and anthropologists be read by those involved in the archaeological construction of the African American past. Many archaeologists simply borrowed the Boasian emphasis on acculturation (see Singleton and Bograd [1995] for review), superficially constructing Blacks as exotic primitives or Westernized recipients, deaf to their historical articulations. As late as 1989, Black scholars Theresa Singleton and Ronald Bailey held “Digging the Afro-American Past,” a conference in Oxford, Mississippi, to introduce archaeologists and African American studies to one another. Archaeological interests have begun to broaden at long last (Battle-Baptist 2011; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Singleton 2009).

Other theorists, often neo-Marxian but not the Black Marxists (who emphasized racism), were employed. Here, again, it is the authoritative White voice and vantage these White archaeologists sought for their historically thin analysis of the African American and slavery’s past. Archaeological “critical theory” (Leone, Potter, and Shackel 1987) is too much of a parlor game, I think, similar to Harrison’s critique of postmodernism as an elite White man’s toy (Harrison 1991). As Marxesque theory, it claimed science could be apolitical and neutral as the opposite of ideology, narrowly defined as religion. Unlike Marxism itself in this way, it might fall under Hurston’s term “bourgeoisification” for transforming the authentic into something more politically palatable (Mikell 1999).
Highly theoretical and devoid of the historiography of African Americans they intended to study, it may have been intellectually engaging among themselves but was of little note among disinterested Black intellectuals and the Black public. This was comfortable neoliberalism. Public archaeology stood aloft public participation in historical construction other than as occasional informants and supporters (e.g., McKee and Thomas’s “conversations,” resembling marketing in intent [1998]).

Initially, Douglass, Firmin, Du Bois, Woodson, Leo Hansberry, Hurston, and Cobb and later African and diasporic intellectuals (Diop, Fanon, Cesaire, Eric Williams, Willis, Drake, and Johnnetta Cole, as examples) constructed a critical epistemology of racism, accumulation, and power (often incorporating Marxist and womanist critiques) that challenged historical and anthropological “objectivity” (as neutrality). Their activist scholarship “vindicated” the race (Drake 1980) with an accurate social history beyond that derived from Whites, who they knew preferred to talk and listen to themselves. After all, Blacks knew Whites’ worldview, having always served in their most public and intimate paroles (Gwaltney 1980:1–27, e.g.). African diasporic intellectuals recognized human responsibility (not nature’s) both for historical interpretations and the material organization of society, while adhering to the authority of evidence and experience. They innovated activist scholarship as they invented the nurture argument against the earliest anthropological biocentrism (Douglass 1950 [1854]).

Whites, on the other hand, had little knowledge of their own deep subjectivity (of the existence of other truths across Du Boisian veils) because they rarely read and listened to others. The “other’s” voice was either silenced (as Frederick Douglass described the sanctioning of the enslaver’s criticism in his 1845 autobiography [2001 (1845)]) or delegitimized as lacking the authority of the objective and universal truth that Whites exclusively arrogated to themselves (see Blight [2018] on abolitionists) against the inconvenient and uncomfortable vantages (“biased” voices) of others.

Antenor Firmin’s advanced 526-page tome The Equality of the Human Races (666 pages in the original 1885 De l’égalité des Races Humaines [2000 (1885)]) was simply ignored by the Gobinist Anthropological Society of Paris who could not have understood him to be a human being (Fluehr-Lobban 2000). Cobb (1981) recognized Black science contributors had been considered “nonpersons.” Despite high honors and 1,100 publications on both sides of “the veil,” he, uncited by Whites for his core work on the biological effects of Jim Crow racial segregation, joined them (Rankin-Hill and Blakey 1994). Instead, polygenic and eugenic fantasies were embraced by most Whites, and not by Blacks.

Anthropology departments spread rapidly at twentieth-century White universities. The postwar years offered Boasian primitivism as the fix for the previous exclusion of people of color entirely from curricula. In 1969 a Black graduate of Columbia and perhaps the best-informed anthropologist on Franz Boas (Sanday 1999), William Willis, explained and objected to this problem. The Boasian cultural environmental antithesis that coexisted with Jim Crow was itself a form of cultural reductionism that defined anthropology as the study of the primitive experiments of people of color, not the urban industrial and anticolonial struggle in which most were increasingly engaged (Willis 1969). It is the selective exclusion of Whites and non-White modernity, despite the epistemic value cultural reductionism might have had in bringing into print an objectified but heretofore unexamined humanity, that made the Boasian project racist (see Anderson’s [2019], King’s [2019], and Thomas’s [2019] critiques of Boasian liberal racism). They failed to turn a critical lens on the oppressive cultural institutions of Whiteness. Nor did Boasians incorporate or credit non-White anthropologists’ viewpoints and interests in their canonical conversations. More in disinterested than defense, Black colleges (HBCUs) have chosen to hire the occasional anthropologist without self-governing anthropology departments within their walls.

**Senility**

The world of White Americans post-1970s, pivoting on the Bakke anti-affirmative action case (Takagi 1994), is the peculiar crucible of a continuing deafness and numbness. The finding that races do not exist in nature (Livingstone 1962) was twisted to the idea that anti-racism was simply the denial of races rather than opposing discrimination. Rather than turning the attention of social policy or anthropology toward the problem and correctives of racial inequity (as Mullings [2005] recommended), White Americans imaginatively maintained their sense of meritized entitlement by increasingly denying racism existed at all (Blakey 1994). Racism, then conveniently defined as uncivil or uncomfortable language (including reference to racism itself) was nominally swept under the rug (DiAngelos’s “White fragility” [2011, 2018]). The false notion that American opportunity existed on a “level playing field”

1. Collaborative Black and White non-Boasian social anthropologists joined sociologists at the University of Chicago (see Harrison and Nonini 1992) to critique institutional racism in Myrdal’s American Dilemma (1944), while Herskovits, Boas’s student, contributed African survivals (1941). Gene Welfish (1902–1980), who was an exceptional Boasian critic of racism and class (Benedict and Welfish 1946), was denied tenure by Boasians at Columbia as a progressive and a woman. Boasians used the few African American students they accepted for access to data to be incorporated into their White conversation about the other (Drake 1980; Willis 1969), and Zora Neale Hurston like other Black Columbia graduates (Vera Greene, William Willis, and John Gwaltney) accommodated only strategically as they turned their lenses on Black America, inclusive of effects of White racism (Harrison and Harrison 1999; Harrison, Johnson-Somon, and Williams 2018). With few exceptions, such as the White authors of Decolonizing Anthropology (Harrison 1991), Kevin Velvington (2006), Schmidt and Patterson (1996), and Robert Paynter (1990), Blacks’ works continue to be tokenized or ignored in the intellectually gated White community of American anthropologists (Béliso-de Jesús and Pierre 2019).
would mislead to notions of a "post-racial" America in the wake of a unique Black presidency in the twenty-first century, immediately contradicted by continuing White backlash. Throughout this period Blackness was stigmatized, indeed vilified, by a criminal justice system that incarcerated and disfranchised millions of African Americans while making them a source of racial animus and profit (Haney-Lopez 2010). White backlash against an equalizing affirmative action (with aspersions specific to Blacks but shedding from White women) hid racism openly beneath the notion that it violated individual merit and benefited the undeserving. Yet, the sustained momentum of Whites' material advantages already built on the backs of Blacks who created national wealth with no wages, or low wages, and inheritance accruing instead to Whites' family economies (see Hall 2020) and exclusive access to property and power (Sacks [1994] shows this by comparisons to the effect of re-Whitening Jews) makes the idea of White individual merit relative to non-Whites fraudulent. Affirmative action becomes "reverse racism" in the fictitious absence of White supremacy that, in fact, continues to greatly bias job opportunity (Panger, Webster, and Bonikowski 2009; Turner, Fix, and Struyk 1991). At the turn of the twenty-first century a Race Initiative led by the first Black American Anthropological Association president, Yolanda Moses, created traveling exhibitions (Race: Are We So Different?) and a website (https://www.understandingrace.org) to place an anthropological discussion of "race" (though truly of racism) back on the table.

Yet White bias in anthropology’s canon, hiring, and teaching remains extensive in the United States (see Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology 2010; Deborah Thomas 2018). When subaltern anthropologists speak, many White anthropologists apparently cover their ears. A recent publication advocating that anthropologists turn their ears in service to the public (Borofsky 2019) fails to cite any African diasporic anthropologists (rarely anyone of color) who long heralded that goal (see Jones 1970; Allen and Jobson 2016; Harrison and Harrison 1999; Harrison, Johnson-Somon, and Williams 2018), omitting even the flagship article of the second Black president of the American Anthropological Association who argued for such public engagement citing that legacy (Mullings 2015; see also Beliso-de Jesús and Pierre [2019] on such deafness as the “mundane” White supremacy of anthropology). A 2019 Society for American Archaeology presidential plenary on ethics lamented archaeologists’ superficial public engagements while completely ignoring the successful alternative model used by Blacks at New York’s African Burial Ground. Are our ideas only for Blacks to consider and perform?

New York City’s African Burial Ground Project (1992–2009) and its aftermath showed that some White archaeologists and bioarchaeologists continued to believe in the dehistoricized natural objectification of Africans in America, past and present, as they pursued appropriation of archaeological resources. Their expressed entitlement continues at other sites, even as they espouse “public archaeology” or “civic engagement” in an ostensibly ethical or democratic vein. These White archaeologists demonstrate race-evasive complicity with White privilege, equivocating still, avoiding acknowledgment and redress of White racism, blinded to their own deep subjectivity and deaf to critiques of those who are not of their own White likeness and presumed neutral voice.

African American and Native Origins of Archaeological Public Engagement

African diasporic archaeologists and biological anthropologists broke the Enlightenment mold at the African Burial Ground to innovate publicly engaged archaeology in the activist and interdisciplinary vein begun by Equiano (1794) and explicitly framed by Douglass (1854) to confront slavery’s justifications with fact. At the end of the 1960s, Black anthropologist Delmos Jones advocates “native anthropology” in this tradition of activist scholarship (1970). Our approach was also influenced by ethical discussions of indigenous leaders at the First World Archaeological Congress in 1986 (Blakey 1986, 1987; Ucko 1987) and its 1989 Inter-Congress (organized by Larry Zimmerman) that produced the Vermillion Accord, and also discussions with cultural anthropologists proposing “publicly engaged anthropology” in the field (Blakey et al. 1994). Lesley Rankin-Hill and I, working at the Smithsonian in 1984–1986, joined John Milner Associates in the museum’s first mass rebural (Rankin-Hill 2016). African American remains from Philadelphia’s nineteenth-century First African Baptist Church cemetery (Rankin-Hill 1997) were taken to Eden Cemetery when our research was completed, while some Smithsonian anthropologists resisted native reburial and viewed ours as a dangerous precedent. Moved by World Archaeological Congress conversations, I tried an approach to making paleopathology useful under the assumption that “descendant communities” had the right to determine the disposition of their dead (Blakey [1989] before the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act [NAGPRA]) by offering to follow their questions. The Pawnee for whom I worked under the Native American Rights Fund simply wished biological data to confirm or deny the accuracy of assessments of antagonistic Smithsonian anthropologists associated with named individuals. At that time only skeletons identifiable by name could be legally claimed for the purposes of rebural. I did so with requested ritual. The crux of New York allowed the idea of bioarchaeology in service to culturally affiliated groups or “descendant communities” (an empowering term I found to be consistent with language in the National Historic Preservation Act, first entering our research design and popular usage in New York) to be refined and implemented for the first time in 1992–1994 (La Roche and Blakey 1997). The site’s press coverage from discovery in 1991 until the opening of the visitor center in 2009 remains unparalleled in American archaeology, and its presence in anthropological literature has been robust.2 Thus its subsequent

2. This includes multiple textbooks in multiple languages (e.g., Haviland et al. 2005; Johnson 1999; Thomas 2005), our discussions of engagement in scholarly books and journals (e.g., Blakey 1998a, 2001, 2008, 2010, 2014; Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2016; La Roche and Blakey...
appropriation, distortion, and dismissal become evident as responses of White colleagues to that which they see and not as an accidental oversight.

New York City’s African Burial Ground was faced with a challenge immediately following NAGPRA that left African American sacred sites vulnerable to objectifying bioarchaeologists looking for remains of non-Whites upon which to work. African Americans—knowing that place as their monument—were determined to dignify it as they did themselves, and they transformed the site from a national secret to a national monument. Whites who could empathize joined them. Others “sympathized” and/or obstructed.

The African Burial Ground and the Struggle for Human Rights

The foundational language of memorial begins the story of Homo sapiens, as archaics marked a protracted symbolic presence. Burials adorned with items of care for ancestors is the first archaeologically observed symbolic behavior, as specific as food sharing, technology, and language. Burials are also material evidence of the origin of cosmology, perhaps of all religion and perhaps of none in particular. Is this the wisdom for which Linnaeus meant the term sapiens, or might Homo reminiscens (the memorializer) be more specific to our ultimate evolved distinction? As with anything of such great value as to communicate “human dignity” among all people and shared by no other species, mortuary behavior also serves to communicate deeply cutting insult, as Homer’s legend The Iliad would have it. No such far-flung examples are necessary to describe the human feelings and societal commitment to memorializing “loved ones” and “heroes” on the great landscape of material signifiers in the language of memorial, long-standing and desecrated at great risk.

Africans of the diaspora would not be denied their humanity, despite every desecrating attempt to do so, which was in the very definition of chattel slavery and their resistance to it. At New York’s eighteenth-century African Burial Ground the careful burial of the dead is obvious evidence of Africans’ continued belief in their own humanity against European objections. They usually interred in shrouds and coffins (as were being used among the Asante and others) in common and unique burial positions (nullification), with artifacts as offerings of reciprocity despite their utter impoverishment. The memorial evidence of their successful autonomous agency is abundant (Medford 2009; Perry, Howson, and Bianco 2009).

On the other hand, kiln wasters and other furniture of the Croleus and Remy potteries were found strewn among the graves, showing that the new social class of “Whites” imagined they could deny African humanity. An African and poor White Doctors Riot of 1788 was preceded by a letter from free Blacks threatening “doctors of physic” should they continue to loot graves for anatomical cadavers at night (Medford 2009).

Dutch New Yorkers would build houses on the African Burial Ground in the 1790s. When uncovered by archaeologists serving human curiosity (H. sapiens) ahead of the federal government’s construction of a 34-story office building on the site in 1991, the immediate and powerful outcry of H. reminiscens halted desecration. But by that time, a team of White archaeologists (Historic Conservation and Interpretation) and forensic anthropologists (Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team, Lehman College, CUNY), unqualified for the excavation and analysis of the African Burial Ground, had removed nearly all potential surface artifacts by backhoe. Their objectifying focus on race assessments and their devaluing prioritization of the European story they could tell from the pottery trash revealed ignorance of the humanity and culture of those whose burials were the cemetery’s primary purpose. Where was empathy with descendants? Faye Harrison (2008) has posited that one has an epistemological advantage if one “loves” the studied people, often distinguishing African diasporic and “ex-centric” anthropologies from a White mainstream. Black activists insisted on an empathetic and competent project, if any. Our new Black-led project’s laboratories passed Congressional sole source criteria as superior, as did all our PhD directors’ resumés. The former White principal investigator had a high school diploma.

Our project took the position of discarding the biological concept of race. Biological evidence was drafted to identify peoples and places in order to characterize their histories and cultures. Old genetics methodologies of dental and cranial morphometrics and new methodologies of mitochondrial DNA and dental chemistry (identifying regional birthplaces by the chemical signatures of the geologic environments in which people were nurtured), together with artifactual data, pointed to peoples and places whose fragmentary American chronicle was usually reported as one would property. Genetics clearly trumped nothing, as we often found it misleading when held against the most credible humanistic data (Mack and Blakey 2004). But together these different lines of evidence allowed a biocultural conversation about the complex human histories of captured people buried in colonial New York City, by which we addressed the question of origins, transformation, physical quality of life, and resistance with which we were charged by our ethical client, the African American descendant community (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009 [2004]; Medford 2009; Perry, Howson, and Bianco 2009).

As an example, the linea aspera, a long muscle attachment in the back of the thigh bone (femur), like all muscle attachments grows in living bone to accommodate its work stresses. My racializing colleagues might simply compare average sizes of such biological indicators in men and women to show reduced sexual dimorphism in Blacks as a confirming characteristic of race. Our difference was to examine change in the frequency of hypertrophy (enlargement) and enthesopathy (enlargement of muscle attachment hillocks) in a sample of White men and women.

1997; Mack and Blakey 2004; Perry and Blakey 1997), and our hard copy and online volumes (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009; Medford 2009; and Perry, Howson, and Bianco 2009). Our exceptional visibility nonetheless requires what legal scholar Derrick Bell (1992:140, 145) terms “special pleading” by Black witnesses (or under-cited Black scholars). I argue our metatheoretical contribution to archaeology, being obvious, is discredited by racism.
with ossification of connective tissue) demonstrative of strain on the linea aspera (a group of muscle attachments on the posterior femur). Changing frequencies over successive temporal phases (from the late seventeenth century, or “early,” to end of the eighteenth century, or “late”) show excessive work, more in men than women, yet women’s labor appears to have closed on that of men over the course of the eighteenth century (fig. 1). We incorporated this finding (Blakey, Lasisi, and Bittner 2019) in a story of African resistance when many more men than women populated the colony, followed by a shift to the disproportionate importation of women and children in the European attempt at social control within a changing, more domestic but not less arduous, arrangement of labor in the Northeast, increasingly placed on the backs and thighs of women (Blakey 2014; Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2016; Blakey et al. 2009 [2004]; Wilczak et al. 2009; also see Barrett and Blakey [2011] on stress throughout their life cycles). Biocultural anthropology recognizes the body as plastic (Goodman and Leatherman 1998), influenced by its “circumstances” (as Douglass [1950 (1854)] said, “a man is worked upon by what he works upon”) and part of the history we, ourselves make (according to Antenor Firmin [2000 (1885)])).

European American archaeologist Terrence Epperson understood the difference we insisted on by disregarding natural and objectified race (Epperson 1999a). He also understood (Epperson 2004) that we were surrounded by White archaeologists and city and national preservation bureaucracies that sought to contain us at every turn. We had long departed from a political arena in which MFAT thought it would have the contract for analysis of the site, long from its attempt to have me and my expert team work under them, now long from their inclusion at all. We prevailed over city (debates among the Professional Archaeologists of New York City, the City University of New York, and the New York Landmarks

Figure 1. Line graphs showing late seventeenth- to late eighteenth-century change in frequency of individuals with “clearly present” enthesopathic (A) and hypertrophic (B) linea aspera relative to (as a percentage of) those with nonhypertrophic, observable, femora among men and women 15 years of age and older in New York’s African Burial Ground (from Blakey, Lasisi, and Bittner [2019], replacing previous data in Blakey [2014] and Blakey and Rankin-Hill [2016]).
Preservation Commission) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation archaeologists who grabbed for the project claiming, in response to the 1993 draft research design, it to be “American history” rather than African American history (in which New York’s anthropologists had invested little since Robert Schuyler’s departure). They thus claimed “community” rights, or that we should have referred to the project’s significance as “multiculturalism” rather than as a problem for African diasporic activist scholarship to correct (in which vein it proceeded), as though somehow that represented reverse racism. The Black community saw this clearly as an assertion of White entitlement over their stewardship, rejecting it. The project ignored the suggestion of “reverse racism” that presumed there were no academic and bureaucratic White racism that our scholarship deliberately opposed to correct continuing Eurocentric distortions of the past. No reverse discriminatory effect was shown (see Cook [1993]; Harrington [1993]; Katz [2006] on public debate).

For the first few years our technical work proceeded efficiently as a large (nearly $6 million) multidisciplinary project. As complex as were the technical requirements alone—full recordation of 419 human remains, first to be conducted under the new standards (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994), and interdisciplinary work at eight labs and institutions—portions of the work already under contract were under control. The rest was not. We would have to completely remove the Harpers Ferry National Park Service (NPS) from its management of the first interpretive (visiting) center competition. Input (a list of goals for interpretation) from an expert panel of African American scholars and the formal descendant community goals reported by the Federal Advisory (Steering) Committee were discussed at meetings with NPS’s White representatives for more than a year. But both components were completely ignored and omitted from the boilerplate requests for qualifications (RFQ) that the NPS advertised to solicit proposals from bidders for the interpretive center design and build project. They would have had no guidance as to what Blacks (or scholarly experts) wanted the center to interpret. And that was the second time the NPS had ignored us as though we (the PhD experts as Blacks) had no credibility. The expert panel made the General Services Administration (GSA) withdraw the RFQ and sent the NPS home, to be replaced by a Black architect, Peggy King Jorde, who was highly effective in bringing in bids for the visitor center and monument until overwhelmed by GSA’s rude halt to all our efforts (except for our Office of Public Education and Interpretation) in 1999. We battled the GSA in public as they worked to end our funding before the completion of the project’s publicly approved plan (Howard University and John Milner Associates 1993). Only when work resumed after a four-year standoff between GSA and community and scientific activism would the NPS be able to return with a more collegial and professional staff to restart bidding and to administer the US National Monument and Visitor Center.

Denied our final report, the GSA could not comply with their legal requirements. Found without justification, the GSA was joined after the four-year "rope-a-dope" hiatus (when we continued working and exposing the GSA in public) by the other agencies who brought them back to the table to provide us with much of the funding and data access that had been agreed to in the first instance. We did not receive funding for further DNA studies that had been promised when found “feasible” by an amino acid study, however.

The Army Corps of Engineers Center of Expertise for Archaeological Curation and Collections Management was recruited by the GSA to inventory our collections and restart management of the site when GSA’s token Black placeholders hired in the hiatus failed to bring sufficient public confusion about the source of conflict to end the project. The Army Corps’ management was contemporaneous with spates of rumor in the archaeological community about our mismanagement of samples, even their destruction. We were vulnerable, I believe, to stereotypical racist doubt. At one meeting we shared our belief that the Army Corps’ explicit desire to bar us even from access to these samples was meant “to distribute them among their friends” with all the professional reciprocity entailed in the control of samples they could no longer obtain without community permission, and Native people were not giving it. They only showed a discrepancy of three skeletal fragments in our more than 1,000 samples at varied labs (more than the “adequate” tracking they reported when pressed). We were able to secure access to all our samples for continued study (Jones 2015; Wedel 2006) and curated them at the Cobb Laboratory at Howard designated for stewardship by the community. Funds for an authorless volume summarizing our reported data were, however, expropriated to Statistical Research, Inc. (2009) of Tucson, Arizona, without the principal investigator’s permission or the involvement of project researchers. Importantly, we would negotiate adequate funds for final analysis and preparation of our 2,500-page academic volumes as final reports—not everything, but the professional preparation of the most sophisticated bioarchaeological reports ever produced would have to be enough.

We completed our extensive reports in 2004 (Blakey, Rankin-Hill, and Medford) and 2006 (Perry, Howson, and Bianco), followed by the same authors’ academic volumes in 2009 (available online at the African Burial Ground National Monument website). These described by critical interdisciplinary interpretation the African past in early New York and Atlantic world context rather than being a study of race estimation and pottery trash. An enormous two-day reburial ceremony was conducted in 2003, and the site became a US national monument in 2007 (not the plaque on the wall GSA had first insisted on) with a now popular visitor center,3 all of
which include data from our research (figs. 2, 3). African Americans were for the first time interested in their own national archaeology, although tours of ancient Egypt had long been favored by African Americans departing from Washington and New York City.

In this abbreviated story one will find evidence of White objectification of the African American past and living present, instrumental stereotyping, deafness and entitlement, and admant control and containment constituting avarice and blindness to the evidence of Black humanity and competence.

The African Burial Ground Project also shows the existence of anti-racist Whites who joined in our research and gave other kinds of support. These were White people capable of following those who do not look like themselves, which is uniquely exceptional for Whites. It is customary, on the other hand, for Blacks to be inclusive, as demonstrated by their racially integrated civil rights movements or housing patterns (Jaynes and Williams 1989:55–113, 140–148; Smelser, Wilson, and Mitchell 2001). Despite the false twisting of late-twentieth-century anti-racist racism to humor the project as “reverse racism,” the African Burial Ground Project of approximately 200 PhDs, MAs, students, and technicians remains the most ethnically and racially diverse anthropological project of any kind in the United States. In addition to its Black leadership, there was White participation at every level, along with Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and continental and diasporic Africans throughout our laboratories—and the ratio of women to men was almost exactly 1:1 as associate and laboratory directors, recruited by me.4

Jessica Bittner) found he completely omitted its multiple stamping on a pre-1825 cloth (Seeman 2010:113). Still, the absence of European evidence would not have constituted evidence of absence (see fig. 3).

4. Today, an aspersive self-published book, Sankofa?, is proffered to mischaracterize me and the project. The book’s author, David Zimmerman (2013), asserts that I operated as a messianic leader, do not understand science, and am not a skeletal biologist at all despite my impeccable credentials (consider Blakey and Armelagos [1985], Blakey et al. [1994], and my pedigree in Blakey [1996b]). The book claims our research, instead, depended entirely on a single White woman’s work (Blakey et al. [2009 (2004)] describes our collective analysis under my direction) and that I was sexist because I ended her employment for persistently trying to infringe on others’ laboratory work, believing only she was competent. He claimed I was fired from the project, while authorship of our volumes proves I remained its principal investigator until completion. My White students are occasionally confronted with Sankofa? by some White colleagues who should know better, attempting to dissuade their collaboration, through a swarming, entitled resentment of our success and disavowal of the racism we opposed. Sankofa? and its use is a study in racist disentitlement of Blacks, casting the blinding light of stereotype over fact, stubbornly performing common White perceptions of unmerited affirmative action (see “racist power relations routine” in Blakey [1997]).

An Ethical Epistemec

The African Burial Ground Project lent science to the restoration of the memory of those who were memorialized. In my view as director of that project, the most important product of that campaign, now nearly three decades old, is the expanding international commitment to the right of descendant communities to determine the disposition of the dead and their participation as clients (though more often as less empowered stakeholders and partners) in the formulation of research questions and interpretations of many kinds of historic sites. The watershed of public engagement and the plural democratization of science was successfully demonstrated in New York City. By operating consistently with principles of informed consent, the African Burial Ground Project, 1992–2009, was the first ethical bioarchaeological project in which scientific methods and human rights were made complementary. We followed, however, the similarly descendant-driven human rights forensics of Clyde Snow, who began community-engaged identification of the “disappeared” in Argentina by establishing the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense in 1984 in a similar spirit of service to a particular people’s interests.

Our original definition of descendant community bears stating. Like a culturally affiliated group used for NAGPRA, it is a descendant community whose social history preserves it with continuing common relationships with the broader society and shared meanings among its members. This is consistent with the definition of an ethnic group. Some, though not all, members of a descendant community are plausibly consanguineal relatives of the ancestral population. American slavery deliberately tore connections of genetic relations, and this should not be the high bar of plausible descendency, although it also opens up broadened possibilities for undocumented consanguines. It is, nonetheless, the social group that W. E. B. Du Bois said African American “honesty, knowledge and efficiency” were more feared by the White South than their opposites, as they ended the first Reconstruction (Du Bois 1915:218). In a racially integrated society, everyone will appear in every status, including Black intellectuals leadership.
recognizes ancestry like cultural affiliation under NAGPRA. Importantly, the descendant community is defined by those asserting stewardship because they care about the disposition of ancestors in question, thus making them vulnerable to harm by anthropological treatment. They therefore are subject to and empowered by professional ethics (an ethical client) with rights to some version of informed consent over the disposition of their ancestral remains and arguably even over the interpretation of their histories (see American Anthropological Association professional ethics and the World Archaeological Congress’s Vermillion Accord). The approach that holds these responsible for deciding whether research may be conducted or not holds these clients’ moral authority above that of the business client who pays for research. “Clientage” requires archaeologists to listen and follow descendants’ expressed interests. The standards of professional conduct (evidential fact must be adhered to), ethical obligations to descendant communities, and contracted business agreements must be reconciled in this clientage model of public engagement (fig. 4).

Projects since the 1990s watershed of NAGPRA and the New York African Burial Ground represent an ongoing struggle for such ethical practice against the objectifying tendencies of a dominant, but increasingly contested, naïve positivism. We prevailed in New York over the embodiment of White privilege and capitalism by anthropologists, bureaucracies, and developers claiming the authority of unobservable neutrality. So this pursuit of an ethical anthropology facilitates the plural democratization of knowledge (Blakey et al. [1994] white paper) enabling particular ethically justified descendant communities’ struggles for human rights to memorial and memory against a hegemonic majority (see also Guinier [1994] against majority-takes-all democracy).

Unapologetically Black women’s archaeology has come along this route, advocating descendant community clientage (Franklin 1997), theorizing womanist knowledge, and centering family “home places” archaeologically (Battle-Baptist 2011), and advancing Du Boisian and emic perspectives (Turner 2017), while acknowledging our project.

Humans are specific, individual, gendered, and grouped. Denial of culturally constructed group identity is simply to

Figure 3. 2007 opening of the African Burial Ground US National Monument, 290 Broadway, New York. Photo courtesy of Autumn Rain, IHB.

Figure 4. African Burial Ground clientage model of public engagement.
deny historical group vantages, rights, and responsibilities by reducing them to the presumably cultureless thoughts of individuals. Thus, broadening public sharing of science procedures by acknowledging situated group and individual perspectives seeks transparency and fairness in the application of science. Frederick Douglass made a similar critique of the earliest anthropologists whose “neutral” craniometry supported slavery, imploring scholars instead to make the other moral choice—to stand “for us” because “the neutral scholar is an ignoble man” (Douglass 1950 [1854]).

Progressively, James Madison’s Montpelier estate humanizes its now more honest exhibition of slavery (A Mere Matter of Colour) with descendant participation. Montpelier and the National Trust for Historic Preservation created a summit in 2018 that published high standards for public engagement with empowered descendants. After more than a decade of struggle, Richmond, Virginia’s, African Burial Ground has been largely restored from the former parking lot atop it; the human remains that had filled Richmond’s East Marshall Street Well as a nineteenth-century hiding place for Black bodies robed for dissection at the Medical College of Virginia has come under descendant community control (as a surrogate for family) and memorialization—they were returned from the Smithsonian’s anthropology department in 2019. A Black church in Bethesda, Maryland, has made tortuously slow headway against county bureaucracy, developers, and their evasive contract archaeologists to save Moses Cemetery from a second desecration—they have led sizable multiethnic rallies regularly over the past three years. In addition to these others, my Institute for Historical Biology has begun work with the National Park Service on the interpretation of Angela, one of the first African Americans in Jamestown (United States) in 1619, as an engagement of the African American public for whom this is an origin story.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, have adopted our model of public engagement for its Slave Wrecks Project; Archaeology of the Valongo Slave Wharf in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is led by advocates of similar engagement (Lima 2020), while the proper appointment of human remains of the nearby Cemeterio dos Pretos Novos is contested between culture center advocates for community control at the site and anthropologists who have possession of the remains (Barrett 2014).

Alternatively, University of Bristol’s excavation and analysis of 325 remains at St. Helena showed facile disregard for the involvement of descendants of Liberated Africans (Callaway 2016) and distributed skeletal samples for genetics and chemical sourcing studies whose methodologies were innovated by us (see below). In the wake of African American and indigenous people’s calls for ethical practice, many White archaeologists and site interpreters continue to insist on exploitative authority while adjusting only their moral tone. A variety of false engagements, a feigning tokenism, persists in calling itself either public or civic engagement but is no more than the old public archaeology that uses descendants for information about questions only the archaeologist him- or herself poses, and for marketing that archaeology to the public.

American bioarchaeology has steadily dwindled as its nearly exclusively European American participants face the requirement of asking permission of other culturally affiliated or descendant communities in order to conduct research. Yet, quietly, non-NAGPRA-protected archaeological remains like those of African Americans and state-recognized Indians are being mined between the cracks of the law in places like Maryland and Virginia (where new federal recognition and law may put an end to it) for collections at the National Museum of Natural History.

In fact, there at the Smithsonian lies the most prominent example of scientific obstruction to those human rights, contemporary with the African Burial Ground Project. The racialization of Kennewick Man/The Ancient One has somehow convinced members of the public that an ancient, generalized north Asian–looking skull cannot be ancestral to derived Northwest Coast Native Americans (Owsley and Jantz 2014). The skeleton’s racialization as Caucasian or Eurasian nominally

5. While I believe academic freedom is important, it is often used in precisely this way. For example, academic freedom became a rallying cry of American archaeologists (formally by the Society for American Archaeology) opposed to the 1986 first World Archaeological Congress’s imposition of the African National Congress ban, excluding South African and Namibian scholars. In so doing, many American archaeologists chose also to walk away from serious repatriation dialogue with indigenous peoples while the congress attracted remarkable Third World support (Ucko 1987). Professional ethics concern humane responsibilities, not our freedoms, and the use of academic freedom as a scholar’s ethical choice corrupts the meaning of ethics. Similarly, claims of neutrality abdicate responsibility for personal decisions and interpretations, just as Douglass said. But does neutrality define science? Science is materially defined as knowledge that relies on systematically collected, observed, recorded, and analyzed evidence (I call this objectivity no. 1). But neutrality (objectivity no. 2), which is often confounded with objectivity no. 1 (Lewis et al.’s [2011] mistake) is actually an unobservable science ideal. We cannot materially ascertain a permanent truth throughout all time and space (however large these may be). Objectivity no. 2—neutrality—is a belief rather than an empirical fact. Regular material observations of science itself demonstrate that science abounds with subjective biases and results based on false assumptions that are not self-correcting (Bernal 1987; Blakely 1987a; Gould 1996 [1981]; Keel 2018; Khun 1970 [1962]; and others). Subjectivity is most apparent in interpretations of material evidence (intraspecific head size reflects intelligence) without which proximate descriptive evidence (centimeters of cranial width) is meaningless. This paradox of objectivities no. 1 and no. 2 requires practitioners to take responsibility for our subjectivities rather than defaulting to denial. Public engagement is one means of taking open, ethical responsibility for the subjective choices of research questions we pursue while maintaining skeptical adherence to the plausible stories the material evidence (objectivity no. 1) tell regarding our and others’ research questions.

ovedous quantitative changes of evolutionary biology that bridge a qualitative morphological distinction of identity, the continuous society. After citing social theorists, they say the people to embrace civic responsibility as inclusive, multicultural citizen engagement in community and civic life. The goals of this . . . movement include

On the fragile edge of White archaeological progress, some archaeologists trained in its critical theoretical vein (Little and Shackel 2007) advocated “civic engagement” as public engagement, now dedicated to “[Participation] in the civic re- 

evaluation movement. The goals of this . . . movement include community building, the creation of social capital, and active citizen engagement in community and civic life” (Little 2007:1). The idea is to use archaeology as a forum to encourage people to embrace civic responsibility as inclusive, multicultural society. After citing social theorists, they say the “African Burial Ground project in New York City provides a dramatic case study of civic engagement” (Little 2007:12). Descendant community pressures are described that “changed the project completely and forced the continuing, public engagement aspects of the project, from research design through rein- 
termission through memorialization and ongoing public outreach” (Little 2007:13). Yet they omit Black scholars’ sympathy, diasporic intellectual influences, and our professional innova- 
tions (descendant community, ethical clientage, linguistic derivatives like “enslaved Africans” replacing “slave” in literature, methodological innovations already discussed, and findings) also distinguishing our engagement. The project’s stated significance is misconstrued to an effort to achieve multicultural citizenship by these authors. In fact, both Black scholars’ and the descendant African American community’s rejection of that characterization of their struggle caused the “reverse racism” fuss. They were defending the Black community’s dignity and history from the federal government and White archaeologists who brought racist disrespect by presuming authority over their past despite insultingly inadequate knowledge.

Although Little’s introduction does emphasize the value of “anti-racist” discussion through civic engagement around archaeological sites, White racism is never mentioned. “Anti-Black racism” is mentioned as a common experience of its authors’ case studies, which if reconsidered as White racism would be even more common among them. The introduction defining civic engagement and its case studies is replete with the evasive language of “cultural differences,” “to move beyond a history packaged to be of interest only to related groups” that never broach the specific position of Whites in American racism. In describing the most explicit case of White supremacist laws meant to bar Latinos from White communities in Manassas, Virginia, Little resolves that “such actions are not unique occurrences, nor is the feeling of established resi- 
dents . . . an isolated sentiment” (10–11). No. Whites are far more exclusive about neighborhoods than others, institution- 

This fits the contemporary condensation (James Thomas 2018) of anti-White supremacist efforts to a discourse on “diversity” inclusive of everything from regional, to political, gendered, religious, neurological, ethnic, and racial groups. Intolerance viewed as an omnidirectional phenomenon (like the unsophisticated reduction of historically constructed White supremacy to primordial xenophobia) serves to nullify the primacy of a robust institutional system of White supremacy. We have reached an era of customary evasion of accountability to substantial redress of White privilege by institutional pro- 

grams (at many universities like mine) that instead erect un- 
accountable “diversity regimes” (see James Thomas’s [2018] ethnographic expose). Like civic engagement, cultural and intellectual diversity is of course a very good thing, but it is not the same thing as overcoming White supremacy. Such civic engagement is to New York’s public engagement what All Lives Matter is to Black Lives Matter. The former is something we already know. The latter needed to be said. One sees at times advocacy of the former as an insistent moralizing
distraction from the point of the latter, which is that the management of White supremacy is particularly destructive to Black people and their history.

“Civic engagement” emerges from an evasive White worldview that denies their unmerited and harmful privilege over others, while reframing a benign anti-racism for moral high ground (like Zurara’s Christian charity) as cover. Archaeologists control the story inasmuch as the other’s voice is swamped by stakeholders, and decisions default to White-controlled bureaucracies. Legitimate White guilt is assuaged by denial of their singular role in institutional racism. The harmed can little afford to be blinded and resist. Activist scholarship serves resistance and uplift.

Finally, the article by Gadsby and Chidester (2007) in that volume uses a close approximation to our original approach (formal extensive meetings with community groups, mutual review and revisions of research designs, implementing that research and making it available to them in public and academic forums). But they made no mention of the African Burial Ground Project where this approach originates in their field. An entire anthology, *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities* by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson (2008), using the operative term “descendant community,” which we first coined for broad public and archaeological use (Howard University and John Milner Associates 1993; LaRoche and Blakey 1997; Blakey 1998a & 2001, and extensive media), does not reference us at all. In fact the project is not referenced by any of its 12 authors. We should assume they invented collaboration, or that Blacks have no intellectual property any White person need respect, left instead to be found in nature by humans. In Cuddy and Leone (2008) we are told:

> In 1990, then-associate director of the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Barbara Jackson (Nash), asked Leone: “What’s left from Africa?” (Cuddy 2005). In that question was born “a discursive relationship between past and present peoples and between researchers and community partners” (Wilkie and Bartoy 2000:747). This chapter describes some of the results of that partnership, looking at evidence for past spirituality and racial discourse in African American archaeology. (203–205)

We are told Mark Leone actually engaged in conversation with an African American woman and her family living at the Wye House in Annapolis. He asked her what she wanted to know about her history and received two questions and was given an artifact by her family (Cuddy and Leone 2008:215). Gadsby and Chidester (2007) mentioned the problem of choosing input only from selective community voices, which they realized at the end of their work. Leone does not seem to recognize the problem at all, nor the absence of formal accountability to public decision-making entailed in his use of an occasional personal conversation. Like Leone’s decision that Hoodoo is what Black Marylanders wanted to know about their African history based on a few personal exchanges, civic engagement may read as farce. This is not, in fact, public engagement at all.

This article shows archaeologists’ denial of the Black authorial voice (of scholars and the public) and accompanies disavowal of White subjectivity and institutional racism.7 The denial of racism is the new racism that protects White privilege as a wall against discovery. If the history of public engagement can be so whitened, hearing Blacks but not listening, looking at Blacks but not seeing, what truths can they find left alone with broken objects on the ground? Until archaeologists are willing to ask for things that do not belong to them, the current decline in African American and Native bioarchaeology (toward the level of European American bioarchaeology) might be best.

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7. By describing my 2008 article on the project’s African diaspora-informed philosophy as simply “Marxism” (Douglass preceded Marx) and labeling it as an example of a theory of “Pragmatism” that their anthropology is keen to promote, Preucel and Morozov (2010) instrumentally dismiss Black innovation and redefine it as the theories of White authors, then rename and claim it.


———. 1987b. The world meets to discuss the past. Notes from the ABA 13:2–3.


From Country Marks to DNA Markers
The Genomic Turn in the Reconstruction of African Identities

Sarah Abel and Hannes Schroeder

In molecular anthropology, DNA is regarded as a kind of biological “archive” that can provide unprecedented insights into human histories. More recently, genetic analysis has been used to explore the origins of African-descendant populations in the Americas. This idea has also been adopted by a burgeoning DNA ancestry testing industry that portrays these technologies as a means of restoring ethnic links effaced by slavery. Despite the popularity of these tests, critics have raised persistent scientific and ethical concerns about how far genomic data can, or should, be used to reconstruct social identities. In this paper, we take stock of these developments, assessing the combined influence of scientists, businesses, and members of the public in defining the scope of genetics for restoring ethnic links between African and African American populations. Drawing on perspectives from social and molecular anthropology, we examine the challenges of translating genetic findings into historically significant terms without reifying the correspondence between genetic and social identities, and we explore how personalized DNA ancestry results are being negotiated and mobilized by test takers “on the ground.” Finally, we consider the responsibilities of anthropologists in addressing ongoing biocolonial tendencies and power disparities in the production of genetic ancestry.

The idea of using anthropological tools to reconstruct the African identities and kinship connections that were forcibly effaced by the Middle Passage and American slavery is not new. As early as the 1930s, researchers such as Melville Herskovits (1933), Lorenzo Turner (1949), and Pierre Fatumbi Verger (1968) used cultural and linguistic approaches to suggest enduring connections between African American and West African populations. This work has also been taken up by historians who have drawn on the testimonies of enslaved Africans, as well as the writings of colonial administrators, in attempts to shed light on the geographic and ethnic origins of those displaced by the transatlantic trade (Eltis and Richardson 2008; Hall 2005; Higman 1984).

A recent turn, however, has placed the body at the center of these reconstructive efforts. In the field of molecular anthropology, DNA is regarded as a kind of biological “archive” that can provide unprecedented insights into human histories (Sommer 2008). The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 marked a watershed in researchers’ ability to access genomic information. Since, there has been an explosion of DNA studies mapping human genetic variation across the globe. While the vast majority of those studies have focused on people of European descent (Popejoy and Fullerton 2016; Sirugo, Williams, and Tishkoff 2019), researchers have also begun using these methods to investigate the population origins and demographic histories of African-descendant populations in the Americas (Bryc et al. 2010, 2015; Fortes-Lima et al. 2017). Whereas the cultural practices of inscribing the body with “country marks” (ritual scarifications used in some African societies to link individuals into kinship and social networks) were gradually abandoned in the New World (Gomez 1998), new genetic approaches hint that those biosocial connections may yet be recovered through DNA markers that have persisted to this day.

In a related development, a burgeoning direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry testing industry is attracting unprecedented numbers of customers, particularly from North America and Europe. Popular TV shows such as Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s African American Lives (Judd and Farrell 2006) hailed DNA as a new, revolutionary way for African Americans to trace their ancestral origins, reestablish links with distant homelands, and recover aspects of a past before slavery. The industry’s evolution has also been followed with interest by African governments and communities who are increasingly petitioned to consider DNA ancestry data as grounds for family reconnection projects, dual citizenship applications, and requests for apology concerning their historic role in the slave trade (Boyle 2013; Fellet 2016; Nelson 2016; Schramm 2020). Nonetheless, critics have raised a number of concerns regarding the science and interpretations of DNA ancestry tests (Abel and Sandoval-Velasco 2016; Nelson 2016; Rotimi 2003). These relate to broader epistemological problems regarding the relationship between genetic ancestry and social identities and the question of how far genomic data can be used to reconstruct historical identities.

1. Unless stated otherwise, in this piece we use the term “African American” to refer broadly to the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas and Caribbean, not just in the United States.

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Combining our backgrounds in social and molecular anthropology, we address these phenomena from a biocultural perspective, taking into account the influence of scientists and stakeholders alike in defining the scope of genetics for restoring ethnic links between African and African American populations. We start by outlining the possibilities for using genetic data to reconstruct historic ethnic identities, examining the ontological relationship between genetic and social identities and the challenges of translating genetic findings into historically significant terms while underlining the contingency of these results. We then go on to discuss the approaches of commercial DNA ancestry testing companies to reconstructing African “ethnicities,” as well as the practices of test takers and other stakeholders in negotiating and mobilizing the genetic identities and connections they produce. Finally, we examine the responsibilities of anthropologists in mediating future developments, including addressing systemic imbalances in the access to genomic data and ongoing biocolonial tendencies in the production of genetic ancestry.

Reconstructing Ethnic Identities: From Theory to Practice

In recent decades, research into the origins of enslaved Africans has been concerned with understanding how experiences of culture, kinship, and ethnic belonging shaped the subjectivities of enslaved individuals and their descendants in the Atlantic world. Recuperating knowledge of the cultural identities effaced by slavery is regarded as a way of restoring a sense of dignity and individuality to its victims. This work is portrayed as having important sociopolitical dimensions, in terms of redressing the psychological damage and cultural trauma inflicted by the imposition of dehumanizing racial identities and valorizing African American cultures and populations that resulted (Blakely 2001; Melo and Braga 2010).

Ethnicity is the concept most often used today to frame the preslavery identities of Africans forcibly displaced by the transatlantic trade (Chambers 2001; Hall 2005). A conventional definition of an ethnic group is “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members” (Hutchinson and Smith 1996:6). Here, the concept of “common ancestry” may also denote an element of genetic connectivity, given that some ethnic groups observe culturally instituted mating behaviors, including degrees of endogamy. Over time, cultural traditions that structure patterns of mate selection and reproduction, coupled with other factors such as geographic isolation, may cause the accumulation of particular genetic variants within a given human group. Thus, the finding that certain contemporary African and African American populations share common patterns of genetic variation can reasonably be taken as evidence of a shared ancestral link prior to slavery, barring episodes of more recent gene flow.

Yet to what extent is this genetic evidence useful for reconstructing historic ethnic identities? Historians and anthropologists have commented extensively on the limits of equating contemporary African ethnic identities to those that existed during or prior to the transatlantic slave trade. Scholars largely agree that a number of precolonial African societies comprised overlapping social networks that allowed for multiple group membership and flexible boundaries (Lentz 1995:319). The era of European colonization and the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans caused significant social disruption and demographic depletion, which likely altered West African conceptions of kinship in fundamental ways (Ekeh 1990). Some scholars have designated contemporary ethnic groups as colonial “inventions,” referring to the work of European administrators and anthropologists in mapping “native” peoples, depicting them as discrete, bounded entities rather than dynamic and interlocking networks (Southall 1970; Vail 1989).

Meanwhile, over time, African conceptions of ethnicity underwent far-reaching changes in the Americas. Historians of slavery have pointed to the differing ethnonyms used contemporaneously by Africans in the Americas versus in their African homelands as evidence of emergent modes of ethnic affiliation in plantation societies (Chambers 2001). Some historians have presented convincing evidence that African ethnic clusters were commonplace in the Americas, and that many Africans actively retained their ethnic identities during their lifetimes (Hall 2005; Thornton 1992). However, the long-term survival of these structures was challenged by cultural and biological processes of creolization and racialization, which (particularly in Latin America) offered colonial subjects the possibility of “Whitening” themselves, in the hopes of evading the stigma of African descent (Degler 1986; Twinam 2015). As Gomez (1998) suggests, losing one’s “country marks” was a corollary of the painful transition to imposed racial identities, but it could also constitute a survival strategy and an attempt to forge new forms of collective identity and kinship. All of this points to complex ethnic histories characterized by continuities and rupture on both sides of the Atlantic, which complicate the possibility of drawing a straight line between the identities of African and African-descendant groups today and those of their ancestors several centuries ago.

It should be recognized, too, that while characteristic genetic patterns may emerge from the particular cultural and environmental pressures on human groups, concepts of shared “blood” or DNA are not universally constitutive of ethnic belonging. Historians suggest that precolonial African societies were largely based around kinship, which was defined by consanguinity, affiliation, and adoption, including the ritualized assimilation of individuals from other groups in circumstances of slavery or conflict (Lovejoy 2012:12). Likewise, contemporary African ethnic groups designate affiliation through a range of mechanisms. In many cases, ethnic and clan affiliation relies on particular lineage rules, for example, matrilineality or matrilineality (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 2015), while practices such as property ownership, marriage, and naming conventions may
be essential to confirming an individual’s membership in an ethnic community. Overall, recent social science theories emphasize the ideological and mythical dimensions to claims that ethnic identities are underpinned by a shared biological essence and reject the notion that these collectivities are monolithic entities whose boundaries and content have remained stable throughout history (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2002).

At the same time, the insistence on social constructivist conceptions of ethnicity also risks producing ideal categories that are divorced from how ethnic groups and identities operate on the ground. Thus, Claude Ake has argued that in many African societies ethnic groups are no less real for existing intermittently, for having fluid boundaries, for having subjective or even arbitrary standards of membership. . . . The concreteness of ethnic groups is invariably affirmed by ethnic markings which society categorically pins on them, markings which underscore the social existence of ethnicity even when they are arbitrary or shifting. (Ake 1993:1)

Following this reasoning, such “markings” may be considered as not only social “constructs” but as biocultural nodes that bind their bearers into vertical and horizontal networks of relations. Traditionally, these markers have been both immaterial (language, personal names) and material; they can also be literally inscribed in the body, for instance, through ritual scarifications and dental modification. If we accept John L. Comaroff’s assertion that “identities are not ‘things’ but relations; . . . their content is wrought in the particularities of their ongoing historical construction” (Comaroff 1996:165–166), then it is altogether plausible that new biocultural artifacts like DNA ancestry reports may come to be considered as additional ethnic markers in their own right, by mapping onto existing idioms of kinship or producing altogether new ones.

Such practices are already emerging, notably in connection with the activities of companies who offer personalized DNA testing services to members of the public as a means of uncovering their “ethnic origins” (Nelson 2016; Schramm 2012). As we discuss further below, these businesses have received fervent critiques from both social scientists and geneticists. While the techniques used by some leading companies are state-of-the-art and are even driving method development in population genetics, the links these businesses establish between DNA and ethnic identity have been characterized by some scholars as pseudoscientific (Roberts 2011; TallBear 2013).

Nonetheless, companies play crucial roles in producing genetic population data, engaging with communities, setting research agendas, and establishing norms for how this knowledge can—or cannot—be used to inform understandings of ethnic identity, past or present. To place these phenomena in context, we first outline how genetics has been used by researchers to shed light on the histories of African-descendant populations, including the models of ethical and responsible engagement that have shaped research agendas and practices in this area.

Uses of Genetics to Reconstruct Histories of African-Descendant Populations

Starting in the 1980s, genetics studies have shown that genetic variation among human populations tends to be geographically structured as a consequence of isolation, genetic drift, and other factors (Jorde and Wooding 2004). Studying this variation has provided fundamentally new insights into the origins of anatomically modern humans, their spread around the globe, and adaptation to new environments. In addition, we have learned about the relationships among present-day populations and historical patterns of gene flow. Initially, genetic studies were limited to single markers, such as mitochondrial DNA, but since the early 2000s these studies have been replaced by genome-wide surveys of genetic variation (using microarray technologies targeting hundreds of thousands of markers or whole genome sequencing), which have provided unprecedented detail on human population structure at global and regional scales. Meanwhile, the study of ancient DNA extracted from archaeological remains has opened up an entirely new field and revolutionized the way we study our shared past (Pickrell and Reich 2014).

In the 1990s researchers on the New York African Burial Ground Project (NYABGP) were among the first to apply ancient DNA analysis to the study of historical skeletal populations (Blakey 1998, 2001; Mack and Blakey 2004).2 The project focused on human remains exhumed from a colonial-era burial ground in New York City, which is now the site of the African Burial Ground National Monument, located at the corners of Duane and Elk Streets in lower Manhattan. The research design was developed through systematic consultation with representatives of New York’s African-descendant community, following the African American tradition of scholar activism (Drake 1980) and developments in public engagement (Forman 1995). The NYABGP set many precedents in this respect as its scientists committed themselves to respecting and—to the greatest extent possible—fulfilling the interests of their “ethical client,” New York’s African-descendant community (Mack and Blakey 2004).

Following consultation with the local descendant community, the research team decided to focus on three major research questions regarding (1) the individual and ancestral origins, (2) the physical quality of life, and (3) the biocultural transformations experienced by the individuals interred at the site. A fourth question regarding possible modes of resistance to slavery was added later on (Mack and Blakey 2004). Throughout, the scientists on the project emphasized the potential for using DNA analysis, in conjunction with other lines of evidence, to build up complex portraits of the identities and experiences of enslaved Africans and their descendants in New York. The main reason for including DNA in the research design was the possibilities it offered for shedding light on

2. Further details on the NYABGP, including links to the full scientific report, can be found at www.gsa.gov/africanburialground (accessed April 30, 2019).
individual and population origins. However, the researchers acknowledged that social and biological conceptions of ancestry and belonging may not coincide. As one of the researchers on the project, Alan Goodman, put it, “ancestries are multiple and fluid and there is no need to assume that genetics maps onto geography or social identities. At the same time, there is no need to assume, Boasian-like, that there are no potentially interesting and even libidinous connections between genetics and ancestry or identity” (Goodman 2007:227–228).

The NYABGP raised high hopes for DNA analyses to bring new insights into the history of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans (Jackson and Borgelin 2010), but it also highlighted some of the limitations of available techniques at the time. Chief among those was a lack of reference data from Africa, which restricted the researchers’ ability to trace the ancestral origins of New York’s enslaved community with high specificity or resolution (Jackson et al. 2009). Another constraining factor was that the existing technologies were limited to the analysis of short stretches of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), an established population genetic marker that could be accessed with relative ease even in ancient samples, due to its high copy number. Using mtDNA analysis entailed particular constraints: one major problem was that many mtDNA lineages are shared among different African populations, limiting the researchers’ ability to trace individual origins (Ely et al. 2006); another issue was that, since mtDNA is inherited matrilineally, the analyses could only provide insights into a single lineage of each individual’s ancestry (Salas et al. 2004, 2005). Moreover, the researchers had to account for migration and increased mobility within and between African societies since the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, which means that the distribution of mtDNA lineages in Africa today does not necessarily reflect historic patterns (Jackson et al. 2009). Despite these limitations, the work on the NYABGP set a paradigm for future studies, pioneering new approaches and inspiring a generation of researchers.

Following the completion of the NYABGP, human genetics was revolutionized by the introduction of microarray technologies and high-throughput sequencing. This led to a rapid increase in the number of population-wide surveys of genetic variation in human populations, which demonstrated the existence of fine-scale genetic structure at regional and subregional levels and provided unprecedented insights into the demographic histories of human populations (Hellsenthal et al. 2014; Novembre et al. 2008). However, the vast majority of these genetic surveys have focused on individuals of European ancestry (Popejoy and Fullerton 2016; Sirugo, Williams, and Tishkoff 2019). A recent survey (Martin et al. 2019) found that individuals of European descent represent almost 80% of individuals included in genome-wide association studies, while they account for approximately 16% of the global population. By contrast, individuals of African descent only account for about 3% of the total individuals included in genome-wide association studies. While this imbalance is beginning to be addressed, progress has been slow and much more remains to be done to level the playing field (Bentley, Callier, and Rotimi 2017; Popejoy and Fullerton 2016; Sirugo, Williams, and Tishkoff 2019).

The paucity of both modern and historic genetic data for African populations limits scientists’ abilities to unravel the complex demographic histories of African-descendant populations in the Americas and identify source populations using genetic data (Schroeder et al. 2015). These problems are exacerbated by the fact that many of the existing arrays used to survey genetic variation in human populations were not designed to detect genetic structure in African populations. This means that some variation—especially rare variants—will go undetected, an issue known as ascertainment bias (Clark et al. 2005). Nonetheless, recent genome-wide studies have provided greater insights into the ways that genetic variation is structured among African and African-descendant populations and historical patterns of gene flow (Bryc et al. 2010, 2015; Busby et al. 2016; Fortes-Lima et al. 2017; Gurdasani et al. 2014, 2019; López et al. 2019; Montinaro et al. 2017). Many of these studies take regional approaches to surveying African genetic diversity, helping bring to the fore the richness and complexity of local African population histories.

While such studies have revealed population substructure at both local and regional levels, researchers should exercise caution when interpreting these patterns anthropologically. While genetic clusters can closely reflect geographical and even cultural groupings, this effect is often exaggerated by sampling strategies that generally only include individuals whose ancestors are known to have lived in the same location for several generations and who notionally correspond to the “ethnic” population under study. These strategies therefore have the effect of reinforcing an assumed connection between named peoples, genes, and land (Nash 2015). An additional issue is the fact that, in Africa as elsewhere, genetic sampling strategies have often relied on ethnographic mapping projects, which in turn are rooted in the “tribal” typologies established by colonial anthropologists (Braun and Hammonds 2008). As Scott MacEachern (2000) has argued, this approach risks treating African ethnic units as “bounded, homogeneous monoliths either frozen in place since before a.d. 1492 or caroming around the continent like culture-bearing billiard balls,” instead of “dynamic entities, manipulated in response to changes in the natural and social environment, [whose] composition can change very quickly indeed” (MacEachern 2000:370).

This discussion highlights the necessity for researchers to adopt a critical stance vis-à-vis genetic studies of ethnicity. As European researchers, our personal engagement in this area has largely been informed by the approaches and agendas laid out by African American researchers, such as the members of the NYABGP, who have focused on the potential of genetics for reconstructing identities effaced by slavery. As these researchers suggest, this approach requires taking a firm stance on the fact that genetics can never prove affinities to cultural identities; rather, these hypothetical links are best interpreted in conjunction with historical, linguistic, ethnographical, and
Impacts of the Commercialization of Genetic Ancestry

Since the turn of the millennium, direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry products have been offered to members of the public as a means of reconstructing personal histories. From an early stage, scientists and entrepreneurs identified African-descent populations as some of the main potential beneficiaries of these technologies, presenting the latter as a tool for recovering the ethnic links forcibly erased by slavery. Among the first DNA ancestry testing companies to emerge was African Ancestry, cofounded in 2003 by entrepreneur Gina Paige and geneticist Rick Kittles, who worked on the NYABGP. Their service offered uniparental (mtDNA and Y-chromosome) tests to connect clients to a contemporary African nation-state and ethnic group via their maternal and paternal lineages, respectively (Nelson 2016:60–63). As one of the most prominent businesses to market these products, African Ancestry helped ignite the public’s imagination about how genetics could contribute to reconstructing ancestral identities. By the same token, the company also fielded numerous critiques. The tests’ limitations, pointed out by geneticists and social scientists (including Kittles, the company’s scientific director), are now well known. Methodologically, critics pointed to possible regional gaps or biases in the coverage of the company’s proprietary “African lineages database,” and to the difficulty of finding unique matches between particular uniparental haplogroups and specific ethnic groups (Ely et al. 2006). They also underlined the limited genealogical scope of the results, which survey only mtDNA and Y-chromosome markers, each corresponding to a single lineage in the test taker’s family tree (Shriver and Kittles 2004). Others raised questions about the interpretation of these results: could a shared genetic haplotype be regarded as a sufficient basis for claiming a common ethnic identity (Rotimi 2003)? To what extent would such genetic affiliations be recognized and validated in different social contexts (Nelson 2008), and could these identities avoid the risks of racial or ethnic essentialism (Palmié 2007; Roberts 2011)?

Following the introduction of microarray technologies, companies like 23andMe, AncestryDNA, and others have attempted to overcome some of these limitations. These companies specialize in autosomal analyses that survey hundreds of thousands of genetic markers from across the genome, representing a broad sampling of the DNA inherited from both parents. They make use of fine-scale structure underlying genetic variation to link test takers to various geographically defined “ancestral populations” around the world, including several in Africa. Many also offer “DNA relative-matching” services, which estimate the genealogical relationships between participating customers, based on the quantity of identical segments of DNA they share. By aiming for a broad genomic coverage, these new autosomal admixture tests are able to provide more comprehensive ancestry estimates than uniparental analyses, reflecting the fact that most African Americans are descended from numerous populations (including diverse groups within Africa), rather than a single ethnic lineage. Companies have also attempted to increase the transparency of their methods by publishing white papers and listing the reference populations used in their analyses on their websites. Instead of providing customers with a static “ancestry certificate,” results are updated periodically online, to reflect improvements in the testing methodology. Thus, clients become accustomed to the idea that their DNA ancestry results are not definitive but a “best estimate” based on current techniques.

Nonetheless, there are still important limitations to these analyses. The first is that “genetic ethnicity” or “ancestry” estimates are based on comparisons with living, rather than historic, human populations and therefore cannot fully account for the way that these groups may have changed demographically and genetically over the past 500 or 1,000 years (the time depth usually attributed to these tests). The ahistorical character of the results is reflected in the way genetic clusters are categorized, often using national labels (e.g., “Ivory Coast/Ghana,” “Senegal”), sometimes referring to states that have existed for less than a century. Despite being called “ethnicity estimates” by some companies, for the most part these tests do not provide customers with links to culturally defined ethnic groups, which may be unsatisfying to those seeking to recover connections to specific African groups. Most tests are still far from offering a comprehensive coverage of African populations, with reference data sets focusing largely on West Africa. Although this is coherent with the demographics of the slave trade to North America, results may prove less accurate for African descendants from other parts of the Americas and the Caribbean, which also received substantial migrations from Central and East Africa. Finally, while “relative-matching” features provide potentially more precise tools for exploring personal ancestry, so far African and African-descendant users from outside the United States are drastically underrepresented within companies’ customer databases, thus restricting the

chances of finding close genealogical matches among these groups.

*Genetic Identities "on the Ground"

What of the personal experiences of roots seekers? Studies into the impacts of DNA ancestry testing among African-descendant communities have focused notably on the United States (Nelson 2016; Ohrt Fehler 2011), which continues to be the world’s largest commercial producer and consumer of these technologies. While commercial ancestry testing has not taken root to the same extent in Latin American and Caribbean societies, personalized DNA ancestry data have been disseminated in other ways in these regions, particularly through large-scale population studies and other scientific projects (Santos et al. 2009; Schwartz-Marín and Wade 2015; Wade 2017).

The reasons for taking a genetic ancestry test are varied. For some, taking a DNA ancestry test can be a way of claiming a symbolic link to other cultures and communities, enabling test takers and their family members to move beyond an ethnically “unmarked” Black identity (Abel 2018a). In more radical cases, taking a DNA test may be seen as a step toward recovering an original African cultural identity (Nelson 2008, 2016). Some users are less interested in the “ethnicity testing” function of commercial DNA analyses than in their relative-matching services: genealogists in particular prize these features as a means of getting beyond the “brick walls” in their family history research (Abel 2018a). Meanwhile, DNA test takers in racially mixed Latin American societies often express a curiosity to know how much African genomic inheritance they have, vis-à-vis their European and Indigenous American ancestry (Schwartz-Marín and Wade 2015; Wade 2017:223–257). Such interests may relate to a desire to “Whiten” oneself racially by drawing attention to one’s European genomic ancestry—an ideological residue of the region’s eugenic policies of the early twentieth century, aimed at eradicating societies’ Black and Indigenous populations through processes of mixture (*mestiçagem*) and European immigration (Skidmore 1974; Stepan 1991). Alternatively, they may be rooted in attempts to render visible the genetic contributions of Indigenous and African groups to Latin American nations, in support of recent multicultural policies aimed at countering states’ historical efforts to exclude and eradicate these populations from the national body (Rahier 2012; Wade 2017).

In their publicity materials, many DNA ancestry companies build the expectation that genetic tests may contradict users’ preexisting notions about their race and family origins, using slogans such as “Amaze yourself. Uncover your ethnic origins” (MyHeritage DNA) and “Connect to a deeper family story” (AncestryDNA).4 In fact, it appears to be rather uncommon for individuals to undergo a complete shift in their racial identity based on their DNA ancestry results. In a recent study involving 100 US-based DNA test takers of various racial backgrounds, self-identifying African American participants mostly expressed that their genomic ancestry results did not challenge their existing racial identity, and those that *did* incorporate a new racial identity based on their DNA results did *so in addition to* their existing Black racial identity (Roth and Ivemark 2018). This reflects the fact that for many African Americans, racial identity is perceived not as a mere social fiction but as an ancestral heritage, political affirmation, and lived reality, which cannot—or should not—easily be displaced by genetic data. Similarly, in a 2005 DNA study, 90 Brazilian students at a high school in Rio de Janeiro were presented with information about their African, European, and Indigenous American genomic ancestry (Santos et al. 2009). While many participants felt their DNA ancestry results contradicted their expectations about their ancestry, almost none believed these data would have relevance for their personal lives, including their racial designation. On the contrary, many perceived “color” (a concept encompassing racialized physical traits including skin tone, hair texture and facial morphology) to be more determining of their social experiences, due to the way that color prejudice has historically structured Brazilian society (Silva and Paixão 2014).

While DNA ancestry tests may not have a strong impact on modes of racial identification, ethnicity is somewhat different. In the United States, ethnic identities are typically perceived as separate from, and supplementary to, racial designations.5 Among White Americans, for instance, ethnic identifications are constructed based on ancestral knowledge passed down within families, a process that involves a degree of tacit choice: some ancestries are remembered and affirmed and others forgotten or minimized (Waters 1990). For Black Americans, DNA ancestry testing is presented as a means to recuperate this lost ancestral knowledge and appropriate one or more African ethnic identities. As Alondra Nelson (2008) has observed, this process also involves a degree of choice on the part of root seekers: rather than uncritically accepting all categories presented in their DNA results, test takers gravitate toward those that appeal to them for cultural reasons or that resonate with aspects of their family’s oral history. Alternatively, they may question the validity of their genetic results or seek a “second opinion” by testing with another company (Abel and Sandoval-Velasco 2016:170).

Verifying the historical validity of DNA ethnicity results can be difficult for African descendants due to the lack of reliable archival information dating from slavery. Root seekers often pursue social confirmation of their results by consulting the opinions of close relatives or African acquaintances (Ohrt

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4. The slogans are displayed on these companies’ homepages: https://www.myheritage.com/dna/ and https://www.ancestry.co.uk/dna/ (accessed February 17, 2020).

5. In Brazil and other parts of Latin America, ethnic designations are more frequently associated with populations (e.g., Indigenous groups, descendants of marooned slaves) who have been accorded specific legal “protections” under multicultural policies as a result of histories of racism and exclusion (French 2002; Ng’weno 2007).
of West Africa to help African descendants trace their genealogies back to the region (Schramm 2012:181). The government of Sierra Leone has awarded dual citizenship to African descendants who can present genetic evidence of their ancestry to members of the African diaspora has already raised concerns that such schemes may allow beneficiaries to buy up African land without forging a deeper engagement with their adoptive society. It is also unclear what kind of genetic result might be considered sufficient grounds for a citizenship claim. Most autosomal DNA tests now link clients to numerous ancestral regions within Africa: would any proportion of genetic ancestry count, or would claimants be required to demonstrate a majority of ancestry from a given country or a genealogical link to a specific ancestor?

Meanwhile, various nongovernmental initiatives have sprung up with the aim of fostering links directly between members of the diaspora and African citizens. The volunteer-led community DNA Tested African Descendants, for example, has collected DNA samples from “African royals, village chieftains and clan leaders” and uploaded them to commercial DNA ancestry platforms to help generate “relative matches” for diasporan roots seekers. This approach underscores the power dynamics and political interests at play in these processes of ancestral “reconnection.” Saidiya Hartman, for instance, has argued that African monarchs were often beneficiaries of the slave trade and that enslaved people were unlikely to hail from royal lineages (Hartman 2007:164). Yet the prohibitive cost of DNA testing, shipment fees, and limited internet access mean that these distinguished lineages are likely to become over-represented in relative-matching databases. The encounters that result from these genetic connections, however, can be unpredictable. For instance, some roots seekers have leveraged their DNA results to elicit formal apologies from African dignitaries for their historical role in the enslavement of their ancestors (Boyle 2013; Fellet 2016). As Gaetano Garcia (2016) has argued, such gestures of apology are becoming a common currency in slave trade heritage tourism and may be mobilized pragmatically to secure economic ties with African American visitors that can benefit the region. Against this complex and shifting political backdrop, the social meanings of DNA ancestry data remain in constant negotiation.

The Politics of DNA and the Role of Anthropologists

The proposal that genetic analysis can serve as a tool for reverting the dehumanizing effects of racialization presents a new role for anthropologists as well as new dilemmas. Historic anthropological approaches that linked racial and ethnic categories to quantifiable physical traits have proved effective tools for oppression and genocide; yet today, DNA is regarded as a possible route to repairing some of this damage, by helping reconstruct relationships obscured by colonial violence and slavery (Véran 2012). For a field that has focused for many years on deconstructing such categories and on signaling how

colonial projects contributed to forging contemporary ethnic, racial, and "tribal" identities, this turn presents an uncomfortable paradox. Knowing the history of our discipline, it is incumbent on anthropologists to emphasize the epistemic limits of these genetic approaches and the disjunctions between social systems and biological markers of ancestry, to prevent abuses of these data. Yet, as Jean-François Véran points out, these ethical stances may be at odds with the desires of descendant communities for concrete, usable data that can underpin their personal and political projects. In his words, "how does one build power with the idea that identity is relational and situational? How does one delimitate a territory with a deconstructive conception of ethnicity?" (Véran 2012:S251).

The warm reception of DNA ancestry tests among some African Americans in the United States is largely due to the work of African American scientists such as the members of the NYABGP in cultivating trust with descendant communities and designing research agendas and services to meet the latter’s needs. Part of the appeal of African Ancestry has been the confidence its clientele places in the company’s scientific director, Rick Kittles—a relationship that has helped assuage a long-standing mistrust of biomedical research within these communities caused by multiple cases of abuse and exploitative conduct toward African American participants (Nelson 2008:769; Reverby 2009). Yet the results produced by genetic ancestry testing may be mobilized against the political interests of African descendants. For instance, in 2007 a DNA ancestry testing project led by BBC Brasil caused controversy due to its publication in the midst of a heated national debate over the introduction of racial quotas at Brazilian public universities. The genetic ancestry reports of the nine Afro-Brazilian celebrity guests depicted substantial heterogeneity in their levels of European, Amerindian, and African ancestry, with some participants found to have higher levels of European than African genomic ancestry. These results were used by some critics to denounce plans to instate affirmative action policies for Black Brazilians as a form of reparation for slavery and its legacies, since the tests showed that all Brazilians, regardless of skin color, are descended from both victims and beneficiaries of this system (Neto and Santos 2011; Kent and Wade 2015).

This case highlights the importance of both political context and historical paradigms of race in shaping the social impacts of genetic ancestry data. Although the genomic profiles of African descendants in the United States are similarly heterogeneous, the continuing social salience of the "one-drop rule"—which historically dictated that individuals with any known African ancestry be categorized as "non-White" (Davis 1991)—means that these results are not seen as contradicting commonsense notions about who is considered Black. In Brazil and other Latin American societies the content and borders of these categories remain much more fluid, which makes them potentially more vulnerable to redefinition in the light of new scientific data (Wade 2017). African-descendant groups in these contexts may therefore choose to be cautious about turning to genetics to inform their understandings of their origins (Kent and Wade 2015). Meanwhile, activists in the Caribbean have focused on the possibility of using genetic testing to substantiate their Indigenous ancestry as grounds for postcolonial reparation claims (Benn Torres 2018)—a reminder that claiming an African ethnic affiliation is not necessarily the primary goal of all people of African descent (Abel 2018a).

The BBC Brasil example also underscores the prominent role that scientists can play in guiding public interpretations of genomic ancestry data and denouncing potentially repressive applications of these technologies. To paraphrase Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2006), with regard to historically oppressed groups the role of the anthropologist should be to “create the theoretical and political conditions necessary to allow interested communities to articulate [their] identity,” without weighing in on the “authenticity” of public claims to ethnic affiliation. More concerning are reports of DNA tests being used by governmental and law enforcement agencies to determine subjects’ ethnic or national origins, for instance, in irregular migration cases (Abel 2018b). Here, we must be clear that while DNA ancestry data may help inform personal conceptions of ancestry, they cannot offer ultimate proof of an individual’s ethnic affiliations, legal identity, or family origins.

Science at the Service of Society

The politics of DNA ancestry go beyond controversies surrounding identity claims, encompassing the conditions under which samples are obtained and the ways in which they are inserted into flows of capital and networks of knowledge production. The NYABGP researchers were aware of these ethical dimensions: one of the project’s ambitions was to found a human DNA biobank in Africa that would provide the opportunity to train local technicians in data banking techniques and also enable African scientists to act as custodians of the data and their uses rather than channeling these resources toward American laboratories (Jackson et al. 2009; Keita and Stewart 2010).

This ethical stance is similar to that taken by Native American and Indigenous researchers in the United States and Canada who have set up laboratories and training initiatives for Indigenous scientists as a response to the ethical infringements, lack of transparency, and repeated instances of malpractice in dealings between scientists and Indigenous communities. Programs such as the “Summer internship for INdigenous peoples in Genomics (SING) Consortium” aim to equip Indigenous researchers to pursue the research goals of their own communities, with the assurance that these data will not be used beyond the explicit agreement of stakeholders (Claw et al. 2018). DNA ancestry testing companies are seen as representing a particular threat to Native American interests, and Indigenous scholars and activists have repeatedly criticized companies who commodify “Native American” genetic markers—often using unethically obtained DNA samples—thereby tacitly encouraging
the misappropriation of Indigenous identities based on the criterion of “blood” rather than cultural heritage and social experience (TallBear 2003, 2013).

However, the global and economic dimensions of genetics—as both a science and an industry—makes it extremely difficult for communities to retain control over their genomic heritage. This is exemplified by the trend for large genome sequencing projects, such as the African Genome Variation Project, to be hosted by laboratories in the Northern Hemisphere, particularly in Europe and the United States. In the age of open access, current data engagement structures tend to favor institutions that are already rich in resources and therefore disposed to take advantage of technological developments, while inadvertently perpetuating marginalization, exclusion and “data poverty” among others, typically affecting researchers’ ability to both use and exercise control over them. Generally, the perspectives and contributions of African scientists and communities are still sorely lacking. Beyond helping to redress the imbalance of power in the production and control over genetic data, their expertise can help guide research agendas while also informing ethical practices in the field.

Meanwhile, commercial companies have successfully stepped in to cater to a public appetite for reclaiming ancestral identities, offering up the certainty and the stamp of scientiﬁcity on these results that many scholars refuse. So far, many scholars have limited themselves to critiquing DNA ancestry testing businesses from a distance. However, as large-scale data sets are increasingly being generated by DNA ancestry testing companies for use among academic research communities (Harris, Wyatt, and Kelly 2013), part of an engaged ethical stance can involve wielding our influence as scientists on the behalf of those affected by these practices, for instance, by requiring companies to adhere to rigorous ethical standards regarding community consent, data collection and usage, and respecting the wishes of groups who prefer not to contribute their DNA to the ancestry testing industry (Abel and Tsosie 2019; Claw et al. 2018; Royal et al. 2010).

Conclusions
Research into human population histories and origins has always had political dimensions. In recent years, DNA has been portrayed as the ultimate source of knowledge about who we are and where we come from. Indeed, genetic analysis is one among a range of tools and sources currently used to piece together narratives about the past, and it is a powerful one, thanks to the quantity and resolution of the data it can yield. Yet genetic knowledge does not exist independently of the broader history of colonialism and exploitation in anthropological research; rather, it is rooted within it and has the potential to reproduce injustices and power imbalances shaped by genealogies of racism. As a result, the potential for recovering historic ethnic identities using DNA will—and should—always be hedged with important epistemic and ethical caveats.

Such is the cultural mystique that has become attached to DNA in many societies that genetic evidence is prone to being understood as clear-cut and definitive, particularly in matters relating to identification and identity (Nelkin and Lindee 1995). Anthropologists and geneticists have a privileged role in shaping how genomic data are presented to the public and other stakeholders and in defining their limitations for informing issues of identity. Like others before us (Benn Torres and Torres Colón 2015; Mack and Blakey 2004; Mukhopadhyay and Moses 1997), we argue that these debates must go beyond the social constructivist stance that identity is a cultural phenomenon and therefore has nothing to do with genetics, and instead engage seriously with the idea that certain forms of identity are shaped by biocultural processes and can therefore be analyzed fruitfully using a combination of biological and social anthropological approaches.

Scientifically, genetics has offered a novel lens for studying the demographic impacts of the transatlantic slave trade and American slaveries (Benn Torres, Stone, and Kittles 2013; Fortes-Lima et al. 2017; Salas et al. 2004; Sandoval-Velasco et al. 2019; Schablitsky et al. 2019; Schroeder et al. 2015). When put together with historical, archaeological, and anthropological knowledge, genetic data can also be used to shed light on the influence of racial ideologies and colonial structures on reproductive patterns in slave societies; the extent of admixture among African populations as well as with other groups in the New World; and the biogeographical origins of groups and individuals. In evaluating this information, scholars must resist the tendency to simply equate genetic categories to social identities and instead reflect on the reasons for the confluences and divergences between genetic patterns and other sources of evidence. Explanations must therefore take into account the existence of potentially overlapping but distinct cultural, linguistic, biological, and social systems, as well as the varying importance that each of these factors plays in different societies. They must also recognize the polyvalent and fluid nature of individual experiences of identity and belonging, as well as the cultural transformations that have taken place on both sides of the Atlantic since the period of the slave trade.

The direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry testing industry is rooted in the science and theory of population genetics; however, it follows a different economic logic. These businesses champion the idea that ethnic identities can be recuperated by unlocking the “stories in our genes,” portraying the act of taking a DNA test as one of self-empowerment. While this trope has struck a chord with many customers, it needs to be interrogated further. As with all types of identity, the confirmation of genetic ancestry “turns on the interrelated problems of self-recognition and recognition by others” (Callhoun 1994:20). Privileging genetic inheritance over lived experience as grounds for ethnic identity claims may lead to genealogical disorientation on the part of test takers and to unpredictable impacts for those whose identities are appropriated.
for commodification in Western-centric markets. Critics have argued that such interactions are often underscored by economic pressures on the part of the receiving communities, highlighting the uneven power dynamics between genetic test consumers and the groups petitioned to facilitate these identity quests (Keita and Stewart 2010; Schramm 2012).

Finally, an ethical and anti-racist approach to researching the history of transatlantic slavery also requires scrutinizing our role as scientists in reinforcing or challenging paradigms of knowledge production and access to resources that were cast in histories of racism and colonialism. Anthropology and genomics have yet to undergo a successful process of decolonization in this respect, and despite past efforts to cede control of genetic databases to African universities (Jackson et al. 2009), funding for more recent projects has been channeled toward more technologically equipped European and North American laboratories, or even taken over by commercial businesses, which become the new gatekeepers of these data. The examples set by African-descendant and Indigenous scientists suggest that sustained engagement with stakeholder communities can lead to the setting of informed research agendas and practices, which may mean breaking with a prevailing neoliberal tendency in science that emphasizes the free sharing of data and often ends up channeling resources away from the populations who are directly implicated in this research. A future challenge will therefore consist in addressing the widening disparities in access to genomic data and resources, in order to break the cycle of power imbalances and biocolonial practices in molecular anthropology.

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In her travelogue Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route, Saidiya Hartman engages the multiple memories of slavery and diaspora that connect her contemporary presence to Black history. Tracing the Atlantic slave route to the Ghanaian hinterland and back to the coast, she seeks to follow “the path of strangers impelled toward the sea” (Hartman 2007:7), trying to understand the subjectivities that were formed under the conditions of slavery and their afterlives.

Her choice of Ghana is deliberate: dozens of ancient forts are standing along the coastline as petrified reminders of the slave trade, a last continental outpost before the Middle Passage. But it is not only the shipping ports that mark the landscape of violence associated with the slave trade: Hartman counts nine slave routes traversing Ghana far into the interior (2007:6; see Perbi 2004, map III; Schramm 2011). These traces and remnants are important sites of memory, keeping the history and experience of slavery alive and stinging. Ghana was also once the hub of political Pan-Africanism, where W. E. B. Du Bois, on the invitation of Kwame Nkrumah, spent the final years of his life. Building on these various relations between Ghana and the African diaspora, Ghana has become one of the main destinations of diasporic tourism and repatriation. This movement has been accompanied by multiple demands and promises of citizenship. I discuss three dimensions of citizenship that speak to the problematics of inclusion and exclusion in the rhetoric and practice of diasporic homecoming. First, there is citizenship as an affective claim to belonging; second, there is citizenship as a legal status (and obligation); and third, there is the renegotiation of citizenship through genetic ancestry. Articulated in terms of soul, dual citizenship, and embodied link, these citizenship claims and practices transcend and challenge the strict limits of the nation-state, thereby pointing toward the “crisis of citizenship” as a larger problem.

In her contemplations about her journey along the Atlantic slave route, Hartman avoids the celebratory language of homecoming as a retrieval of ancient greatness or lost and found kin (as it is often branded in travel brochures and public speeches). Instead, she describes her journey as an engagement with rupture, a looping and painful search for strangers of whom she herself is one. In her view, what connects Ghana and the United States is not so much a narrative of reconciliation and joyful reunification but an ongoing and painful legacy of slavery and racism. The difficulties of diasporic return, that is, the silences, contrasting expectations, and forms of alienation it entails, are part of that legacy.

Hartman speaks of the haunting presence of the ghosts of slavery, but these are not confined to the space of the dungeons or former slave markets. They left a mark on the future that is our present, informing a complex politics of race and the different situated positionalities it evokes in global encounters. In Derrida’s (1994) sense, these specters continue to roam around, indicating “a relation to what is no longer or not yet” (Hagglund, quoted in Fisher 2012:18).

What Hartman (2017 [1997]) calls a crisis of citizenship is linked to the haunting presence of slavery in multiple ways. First, this notion of crisis draws attention to the problematic and exclusionary core of liberal citizenship that is always built on the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. As Ruth Lister writes, “Citizenship’s bogus universalism has meant that women, black and minority ethnic groups, lesbians and gays, disabled and older people have represented the ‘other’ unable . . . to attain the impersonal, rational and disembodied practices of the modal citizen” (Lister, citing Yeatman, 2000:99). The institution...
of chattel slavery carried this exclusionary logic to the extremes, denying enslaved people the recognition as social subjects and thereby excluding them from the very category of humanity (Patterson 1982; cf. racked & dispatched 2017). Second, the crisis of citizenship pertains to the “double bind of freedom” (Hartman 2017 [1997]:34–35) after emancipation and the dynamics of domination and subjugation that underlay the promise of citizenship. What kind of aspiration for the future was possible if the national framework of citizenship kept the deep-seated relationship of liberty, property, and Whiteness intact (Hartman 2017:19). Third, the crisis of citizenship also relates to the limitations and possibilities of what Carol Boyce Davies and Babacar M’Bow (2007) have called “African diaspora citizenship” and its ongoing negotiation in the praxis of diasporic return to the continent. In other words, the notion of crisis calls on us to address the profound ruptures, multiple pathways, and forms of becoming that make up citizenship in relation to the African diaspora.

In this paper I focus on the complex dynamics of memory, recognition, belonging, and status that underlie the articulations of African diaspora citizenship in Ghana. My discussion is based on 10 years of fieldwork around the layered memories of the slave trade and the discourse and practice of homecoming connected to it (Schramm 2010). The core period of my research (1998–2007) fell together with various efforts by the Ghanian state to call on people in the diaspora to come home—as tourists, as investors, but also as kin and political allies. Throughout this time, and up until today, the question of (dual) citizenship has been high on the agenda in the discursive space of homecoming: as a claim (by diasporans), a promise (by Ghanian politicians), and a symbolic point of reference (in public).

Obviously, many things have changed since I last visited Ghana in 2007. However, I want to reflect on this older material together with more recent developments in order to address the ways in which categories of difference and the legacies of slavery and colonialism are (re)produced and undone in the tangled space of African diaspora citizenship. In particular, I will discuss three dimensions in the negotiation of citizenship that speak to the problematics of inclusion and exclusion in the rhetoric and practice of diasporic homecoming. First, there is citizenship as an affective claim to belonging; second, there is citizenship as a legal status (and obligation); and third, there is the renegotiation of citizenship through genetic ancestry. Articulated in terms of soul, dual citizenship, and embodied link, these citizenship claims and practices transcend and challenge the strict limits of the nation-state—thereby pointing toward the “crisis of citizenship” as a larger problem.

I will start my paper by introducing the ways in which citizenship, homecoming, and diaspora have been debated in Ghana over the past 20 years. I will then address the articulation of citizenship along the expressions of affect or “soul,” legal status or “dual citizenship,” and genetic ancestry or “embodied link” in some detail. My anthropological intervention takes up Hartman’s (2007, 2017 [1997]) critical approach to show the intricate and historically layered problem of citizenship. Her Afro-pessimist emphasis on crisis lays bare the contestations and limitations of citizenship, but it also opens up new horizons and possibilities of becoming.

Situating African Diaspora Citizenship

In a widely cited essay, Carol Boyce Davies and Babacar M’Bow lay out the grounds for the possibilities of the political incorporation of the African diaspora into a broader concept of African diaspora citizenship. Such a framework would recognize the privilege of diasporic return; that is, it would allow people from the African diaspora to exercise their rights and obligations of citizenship “in a country of their choice,” while also maintaining their legal relationship with and rights in “the nation states in which they have been born or naturalized” (Davies and M’Bow 2007:23). In the authors’ view, this form of transnational citizenship would be a way to address “the sense of statelessness” (2007:19) shared by many people in the diaspora. Paying homage to the history and political ideals of Pan-Africanism, Boyce Davies and M’Bow link the articulation of citizenship claims to a broader history of the African diaspora and the denial of citizenship status and legal protection for people of African descent in the course of slavery and colonialism (Robo et al. 2012; Mamdani 1996). With African independence, the European model of national governance prevailed: state sovereignty reified colonial boundaries. The authors regard increasing regional integration (like the Economic Community of West African States) as well as cross-continental cooperation in the framework of the African Union as a sign for softening the contradiction between emancipation (i.e., overcoming the legacies of colonialism) and national independence (i.e., keeping colonial boundaries intact). Consequently, a broad and inclusive conception of African diaspora citizenship—as a claim to cultural and legal belonging—would be a step toward the eventual realization of “Pan-African citizenship” (Fergus 2010).

Boyce Davies and M’Bow (2007) cite the Ghana Immigration Act of 2000 (Act 573) as a major advancement in this respect. This law also contains a paragraph on the so-called Right of Abode (Sec. 17), which regulates permanent residency for noncitizens. Those eligible include (a) a Ghanian “who by reason of his acquisition of a foreign nationality has lost his

2. Here I do not have party politics in mind but a general reference to a shared Black identity and Pan-African solidarity. As Taylor (2019) has noted, in contrast to Nkrumah’s times there has been little involvement of diasporan returnees in concrete governmental affairs (cf. Williams 2015).
Ghanaian citizenship” and (b) “a person of African descent in the Diaspora.” The Immigration Act thus clearly distinguishes between two diasporas—a slavery-induced historical African diaspora and a postindependence national diaspora associated with recent migration. Boyce Davies and M’Bow view the apparent overlap of old and new diasporas in the trope of homecoming (cf. Falola and Sanchez 2015) as a new form of Pan-African political conversation. However, the underlying distinction between diasporas also implies a differentiated politics of citizenship that tones the vexed relationship between contemporary nation-states (in this case Ghana) and diaspora into sharp relief.

So how did this act come about? In Ghana, discussions about the citizenship status of people in the diaspora have a twofold trajectory. Nauja Kleist situates the position of the Ghanaian state in this configuration as following a “global trend of diaspora-development policies and their emphasis on contributions to national development” (2013:285). This call to linking oneself (as an individual or a group) to the homeland in Ghana addresses both the historical African diaspora and “non-resident Ghanaians” (Kleist 2013:297) abroad. In the 1990s, the government of President Jerry John Rawlings began to invite African Americans in particular to “come home (and invest),” thereby conjoining a strong Pan-African reference to a neoliberal political and economic leaning (Williams 2015). Quite a number of people followed this call, and Ghana continues to be a major destination for repatriation. When President Rawlings announced the Right of Abode initiative at a rally in Harlem in 1995, he referred specifically to an affective bond between African people on the continent and the descendants of those who had been enslaved. At the same time, the Ghanaian state also employed the emotional language of homecoming to call on a national diaspora and to tap into the economic potential of Ghanaians abroad.

The question remains how the Immigration Act of 2000 affected the situation of diasporan people on the ground, and especially those who had chosen to resettle in Ghana. How did the framework of immigration impact their understanding of belonging and their legal status? The episode I narrate below points to some of the tensions and difficulties that arise from the negotiation of homecoming in the framework of (national) citizenship.

Of Africans, Aliens, and Citizens

In the summer of 1999, I joined Adjoa, an African American woman who had recently come to settle in Ghana with some of her children and grandchildren, in a public recording of the Ghana Television (GTV) program Public Concern. Adjoa and I had first met at the W. E. B. Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture in Accra. We sometimes spent time together and spoke about the genealogies of slavery, about the ways in which we were situated in relation to that history of enslavement and White supremacy and about what it meant to be in Ghana—for her as a Black woman and repatriate and for me, a White, European anthropologist.

Adjoa was happy to be in Ghana, but she was also worried about her legal status and that of her family. The TV show to which she had invited me was a public discussion about the new Immigration Act (Act 573) that was to replace the so-called Aliens’ Act (Act 160) of 1963 and its various amendments. Act 573 was meant to condense these regulations and to simplify the administration of justice with regard to immigration. Apart from the much-discussed Right of Abode (Sec. 17), one of its main objectives was the effective control of foreigners, which included the obligation for all foreigners to register (Sec. 34), as well as regulations for the deportation of “prohibited immigrants” (Secs. 8, 35).

The goal of this particular edition of Public Concern was to educate the Ghanaian public about the new regulations. For Adjoa and some of her friends who had joined us at the venue, Act 573 was a source of insecurity—especially since they feared that the compulsory registration of foreigners would directly affect them and jeopardize their position as repatriates. Moreover, they saw themselves as Africans and thus objected to their classification as foreigners in the first place. They intended to stay in Ghana and were very worried. The TV show hosted a number of Ghanaian experts, mainly from the Ghana Immigration Service, who explained the new law to the public. Most of the discussion focused on technical matters of registration for “aliens” and the possibilities for renewed access to citizenship rights (through the Right of Abode) for those “Ghanaians abroad” who held foreign passports due to their naturalization elsewhere.

When the time came for questions from the audience, Adjoa eventually got the word—after the MC had ignored her agitated
hand waving for quite some time. She asked what would happen to her children and grandchildren who were going to school in Ghana if she would refuse to register them as foreigners. Would they be expelled? She said, “I consider myself as an African. I was taken from this soil by force—now I have returned, and you want to use force again to let me move out of the country!” Another woman supported her and protested vehemently against the term “alien” —this was how you referred to a being from outer space, not an African “sister.” The immigration officers who were present were obviously not prepared for such a reaction. They were much more concerned with the regulation of inner-African migration processes and not with the spiritually and emotionally loaded discourse of homecoming as diasporic return. All references that the officers had made to the “diaspora” were directed at “Ghanaians abroad” only. Before the two women had stood up, nobody in the audience or on the podium had mentioned their situation, even though they were called on as “brothers and sisters from the diaspora” on so many other occasions.

Despite the rhetoric of kinship ties prevailing in the public address of Black diasporans as brothers and sisters, their legal status remained that of foreigners. When now confronted with people who did not neatly fit into the categories of citizen, alien, African, or Ghanaian, the officers tried to calm down the situation by reassuring the audience that the aim was not to hurt or exclude people from the (old) diaspora but to develop workable and regulative immigration schemes that were comparable with international standards and protected the boundaries of the nation-state. Of course, so the immigration officers maintained, Adjoa and her friends were very welcome in Ghana, and their contribution was highly appreciated.

However, for people like Adjoa who decided to transfer the homecoming from idea to practice, this step entailed a number of serious challenges, for example, their opportunities to make a living. If they did not register, they could not obtain a work permit; if they could not provide that, it meant that they could never be sure of their future. Nevertheless, some people refused to comply with the legal procedures established in the Ghanaian state law. Addressing me directly, a man from our group who had joined the public concern debate, the Right of Abode was not an option—they did not even consider it because the conditions were not yet clear and neither was their eligibility. Moreover, it did not necessarily match their self-understanding as Africans—as Adjoa stated on our way home, “I don’t want dual citizenship! I am not American! I want world citizenship! I want to move freely everywhere in Africa!”

Over the next 20 years from 2000 onward, the question of citizenship, homecoming, and belonging persisted. The Right of Abode, however, remained elusive for a long time, and no person who claimed a connection to Ghana through the history of enslavement was granted it. In 2014, Rita Marley was the first person from the diaspora to receive dual citizenship status in Ghana.11 In December 2016, 20 years after the Right of Abode had first been announced, then president John Dramani Mahama (National Democratic Congress [NDC]) chaired a ceremony that granted Ghanaian citizenship to “thirty-four members of the African-Caribbean diaspora” who were “made to swear an oath of allegiance to the country to that effect” (Andoh 2016). Most recently, in October 2018, Ghana’s current president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (National Patriotic Party [NPP]) renewed the promise of citizenship and the Right of Abode on the margins of the seventy-third United Nations General Assembly, when he launched the “Year of Return, Ghana 2019” to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the landing of the first slave ship in the Americas in 1619. Mirroring the gesture of his predecessor (and political opponent) Jerry John Rawlings (NDC) almost a quarter of a century earlier, he pledged to “open our arms even wider to welcome home our brothers and sisters in what will become a birthright journey home for the global African family,” so as to “ensure that our hard-won Pan African reputation is not lost” (Tairo 2019). Finally, on November 27,
2019, a significant number of 126 “African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans” received their citizenship certificate, thereby “reassuming [their] identity as Ghanaians,” as President Nana Akufo-Addo expressed it in his speech (Asiedu 2019). As a symbolic highlight of the “Year of Return” initiative, this ceremony, together with visa relaxations, was supposed to further boost the tourism and investment influx into the country, solidifying Ghana’s status as a prime destination for diasporic travel and transfer of skills.

Despite the importance of this legal act of recognition, the question of citizenship expands far beyond the realm of jurisdiction, since it is linked to modes of subjectification that speak to “a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power,” as Aihwa Ong put it in her discussion on cultural citizenship in the United States (1996:738).12 In order to unpack this complex configuration of power and subjectivity, I will discuss the layers of affect, status, and genealogical connections in relation to citizenship in some detail.

Citizenship as a Matter of Soul

One of the persons who received dual citizenship in the 2016 ceremony in Ghana was Imahküs Nzinga Okofu Ababio. Together with her husband, the late Nana Okofu, she had first come to Ghana in 1987, when they had visited the slave dungeons of Cape Coast and Elmina. For both of them, this experience was transformative—traumatic, but also healing, in the sense of survival and testimony. In 1990, they decided to repatriate to Ghana. “Ghana chose us”—this is how Nana Okofu described their decision, which was linked to the presence of so many edifices of the transatlantic slave trade along the Ghanaian coastline. In fact, they built their home in the village of Iture, in view of both Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. Here, they founded One Africa, a guesthouse and tour company that became known above all for its commemorative program “Thru the Door of No Return—the Return” inside the Cape Coast Castle dungeons (Bruner 1996).

On July 31, 2007, a Reverential Night in commemoration of the enslaved took place in the courtyard of Cape Coast Castle. It formed part of the annual Emancipation Day celebrations that Ghana had installed in 1999. In 2007, the event was dovetailed with the Joseph Project, through which the NPP government had renewed its invitation to people from the diaspora to come home—just like the prodigal Joseph who had been sold by his own brothers into slavery and then returned to rescue them (Schramm 2008). In the middle of the program, Imahküs Okofu mounted the steps above the male slave dungeon. She wore a red costume—a color of mourning and alert. Her husband had died a few weeks before in a hit-and-run road accident on his way from Cape Coast to Accra. As a Black Hebrew Israelite, Nana Okofu had always referred to his return as a biblical destiny and a birthright. Now, at his death, his wife Imahküs remembered how they had first come and how they had since then lived in the village of Iture. She recalled how her husband had been made Asafohene—the head of one of the military companies (Efutu Asafo Company #2) of this village. This enstoolment was not only a matter of symbolic acceptance, but for the Okofus it also indicated local incorporation, an acknowledgment of the seriousness of their return (see Bob-Mülliar 2009). However, such acceptance was not complete if it did not extend to an official recognition. Addressing the organizers of the Joseph and Emancipation events directly, Imahküs Okofu stated, “As you are calling us brother and sister, family, kith and kin, when are you going to restore our African citizenship?”

The broken linkage that she and others wanted to restore referred back to over 300 years, back to the time before their ancestors had been taken away in the transatlantic slave trade (and before the current order of nation-states had been in place). It was a linkage to Africa as the Motherland, with Ghana standing as a synecdoche for the entire continent. Thus, Imahküs Okofu did not talk about Ghanaian national citizenship but embraced the whole of Africa as a spiritual home. At the same time she established a very concrete connection to the land and the specific sites of Elmina, Cape Coast, and the slave dungeons. This she presented as an intrinsic link that needed no proof, as it was grounded deeply in diasporic memory.

In their analysis of the community of African Hebrew Israelites (to which the Okofus also belong) in the state of Israel, Markowitz, Helman, and Shir-Vertesh have come up with the term “soul citizenship” to describe “an alternate discourse of belonging, which emphasizes the right of individuals and groups to assert who they are by matching their self-defined identities with existing states” (2003:302). This concept, according to the authors, offers a “critique of existing national citizenship regimes” (2003:302), since it calls into question the exclusiveness by which the state and its legal apparatus determine the standards and symbolic markers for membership in the nation. Soul citizenship challenges the criteria of inclusion and exclusion by which nation-states, including Ghana, define citizenship. Instead of emphasizing the normative aspects of citizenship and the legal classification processes that go along with them, soul citizenship marks a more flexible arrangement that could accommodate the self-definitions and subjective choices of diasporan returnees.

But who is included in this sense of citizenship? In other words, how do the addresssee and the claimant of the demand, “When are you going to restore our African citizenship?” relate to one another? Imahküs Okofu expressed a sense of community that was closely linked to the dreamscape of slavery (Holsey 2004), a “memory citizenship” (Nayar 2013; Rothberg and Yildiz 2011) that joined the descendants of the enslaved and reached out to people in Africa who shared an understanding

12. In her “Modes of Subjection” Saidiya Hartman (2017 [1997]) addresses how this duality played out under the conditions of slavery. Elsewhere (Krause and Schramm 2011; Schramm, Krause, and Valley 2018) I have discussed the dynamics of classification and belonging in terms of political subjectivity.
of slavery as a profound rupture.13 She also articulated an entitlement; the quest for African citizenship was not a matter of asking but a demand. Repatriates like her did not regard themselves as “foreigners”; on the contrary, they saw themselves as the rightful heirs of their ancestors’ culture, projected into a past beyond slavery. They acknowledged that it was not always easy for them to fit into the Ghanaian society but explained this as the result of an adulteration of an African heritage both in the diaspora as well as in the postcolonial nation-state (Okofu 1999). This alienation, so Imahküs Okofu and others stated repeatedly, could be overcome through the return to one’s roots, for Africans on the continent as well as in the diaspora.

African citizenship understood in this broader sense of “soul” and historical birthright was a form of self-recognition that stood in clear opposition to the perceived misrecognition of Black subjectivities (and Black lives, for that matter) in the United States and other postslavery societies. However, such soul citizenship also needed to be enacted so as to gain momentum. The claim of belonging that Imahküs Okofu (and others) articulated was therefore not exclusively aimed at the nation-state of Ghana, yet was inextricably entangled with it since its state boundaries (territorial as well as political) constituted a contemporary reality that was inescapable.

Citizenship as Rights and Obligations: Negotiating Dual Citizenship and the Right of Abode

In order to become tangible, the demand for African (diaspora) citizenship had to be translated in a pragmatic way so that it could be matched with concrete legislation. For diasporan activists residing in Ghana, this meant that they formulated their concrete claims to the Ghanaian state in terms of dual citizenship. The Right of Abode was a piece of legislation onto which these claims of belonging and recognition could be projected. Yet, for a long time, it remained an insurmountable hurdle for people who were classified as “a person of African descent” in the scope of the law (Act 573, Sec. 17). The act specified who was eligible in the following way:

A person of African descent in the Diaspora qualifies to be considered for the status of a right of abode if he satisfies the Minister that he (a) is of good character as attested to by two Ghanaians who are notaries public, lawyers, senior public officers or other class of persons approved of by the Minister; (b) has not been convicted of any criminal offence and been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of twelve months or more; (c) is of independent means; (d) is in the opinion of the Minister capable of making a substantial contribution to the development of Ghana; (e) has attained the age of eighteen years.

In addition, the Right of Abode would only be granted to people who had already resided in Ghana for several years.14

Some of these criteria are quite arbitrary and thus particularly hard to match. For example, the law states that the applicant must not have committed any offense—yet what about those who already broke the law by overstaying their visa? It also states that the person who applies must be of “good character” and without any police record. Again, this makes it particularly difficult for political activists, including former members of the Black Panther Party, who have served long prison sentences for their political convictions. This requirement also ignores the racist system of mass incarceration in the United States, where a large percentage of Black men and women end up in jail, even for minor offenses (see Roberts 2004).

Finally, the act states that the applicant must prove his or her capability to “make a substantial contribution to the development of Ghana.” As the spectrum of returnees ranged widely, so did the scope of their contribution. And still, up until the recent mass ceremony, the Ghanaian state was reluctant to give legal status to African descendants. The bureaucratic hurdles remained high and the decision-making obscure.

In contrast, according to the then director of the Ghana Immigration Service, whom I interviewed in 2007, “thousands” of former Ghanaian citizens had taken advantage of the dual citizenship regulation. Those who could not acquire dual citizenship due to the regulations in their current countries of residence (e.g., Germany) were nevertheless entitled to the easy acquisition of the Right of Abode. The director explained:

They don’t even have to go through the conditions. Because for the Right of Abode a person must live here continuously for 24 months—this does not apply to Ghanaians. It is almost automatic. Because we cannot give you your Ghanaian passport [back], we give you this sticker [marking the Right of Abode] in your [current] passport. We want you to come anyway. So, we help you to acquire this.

Two things are remarkable in this explanation. First, it expresses the eagerness by which the Ghanaian state has reached out to its “national diaspora” so as to tap into its economic potential and to redirect the flow of remittances from private channels to governmental administration (cf. Nieswand 2009). Second, “Ghanaianness” was taken for granted: the loyalty of those who were counted as Ghanaians was exempted from all doubt. Their individual contribution was not assessed according to its volume, and they did not have to establish proof of their financial status before they were granted the Right of Abode.

When the immigration director spoke of the “almost automatic” procedure by which the legal status of dual citizenship

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13. Related to this understanding, Rahier (forthcoming) offers a synchronic conceptualization of diaspora that emphasizes shared experiences of racism and a joint struggle against White supremacy as firm grounds for commonality. For a literary engagement with this historical configuration, see Yaa Gyase’s award-winning novel Homegoing (2016).

14. Act 573 does not specify this criterion, but it appears in several online forums where this period is given as up to 10 years (see https://www.ghanahighcommission.co.za/consular/visa/abode.pdf, accessed April 17, 2019).
or Right of Abode was merged with a sense of national belonging and Ghanaianness, she left out the ways in which the status incentives were seconded by an emotional language of homecoming that was actually borrowed from the debates within the “old” diaspora. For example, since 2001, Ghana holds a biennial Ghana Diaspora Homecoming Summit that calls on Ghanaian expatriates to come home and “help the development of the Motherland” to “accelerate national development” (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre press release, 2001).\footnote{See http://www.ghanadiasporahs.org (accessed April 10, 2019).} At its installation in 2001, the marketing for this event was done by the same company that had previously organized festivals with a more Pan-African outlook, such as Panafest and Emancipation Day. These outreach programs to the broader African diaspora established symbolic kinship ties (the “African family”), a deep, nostalgic, historical connection (the “re-emergence of African civilization”), and the atonement for slavery and its ultimate overcoming (“Emancipation: Our heritage, our strength”) as the main points of reference. In contrast, the appeal to the “national diaspora” was more focused on patriotic duty and a sense of obligation—one should give something back to one’s nation that has facilitated one’s education and consequent success abroad.

However, this aspect of citizenship as an obligation was also shared by the community of repatriates in Ghana who emphasized their commitment to the development of Africa and Ghana, in particular, on many occasions. In a petition for dual citizenship that was signed by over 800 people in 2010, the claimants pointed out that “An indigenous person by the virtue of birth in Ghana is eligible for Dual Citizenship, as compared to us of African ascent/descent ripped away from the very shores of West Africa, who now return faithfully and loyally with skills, education, finances, and commitment but have not deemed worthy to receive Dual Citizenship or the Right of Abode.”\footnote{https://www.thepetitionsite.com/de-de/1/dual-citizenship—ghana/ (accessed May 10, 2019).} Legal status therefore becomes a matter of justice and historical recognition of the rupture of slavery and the crisis of citizenship connected to it. Dual citizenship (as compared to naturalization) would account for the layered historical experience of diaspora while at the same time binding people to the legal framework of contemporary nation-states. Because apart from being entitled to “remain indefinitely in Ghana” and from being exempted from the need for a work permit, the Immigration Act clearly states that holders of the Right of Abode or dual citizenship status would be “subject to the laws of Ghana” (Sec. 18). Moreover, the High Court may also revoke the Right of Abode.

The symbolic victory of the citizenship ceremony for 126 individuals in 2019 could not dissolve the tensions among notions of autochthony, nation, and diaspora that were underlying the debates on dual citizenship. In fact, it threw the arbitrary criteria for Ghanaianness and national belonging into sharp relief. In the following section, I will look into the ways in which these complicated logics of inclusion and exclusion were confirmed and challenged through practices of (genetic) genealogies.

Negotiating the Grounds of Citizenship through Genetic Ancestry: The Body as Genealogical Archive?

Since the Ghanaian citizenship law is built on the principles of jus sanguinis, the 2000 Ghana Immigration Act establishes criteria of Ghanaianness along a genealogical model. As Emmanuel Akyeampong has demonstrated in his analysis of the position of the Lebanese in Ghana, this notion of Ghanaianness conjoins ideas of ethnicity, race, identity, and citizenship. Akyeampong describes the underlying idea of citizenship as “exclusive and not inclusive, uniracial and not multiracial”—it constitutes an awkward mix of a British colonial legacy and the spirit of decolonization, where it became “conceptually difficult to envision a non-black citizen in Ghana” (2006:299). At the same time, membership to the polity “drew its inspiration from early nineteenth-century ideas of nationhood,” where national populations appeared to be bound together by “history, culture, language, faith and even biology” (2006:313). In other words, independent nationhood manifested the crisis of citizenship from its inception: it followed a colonial model where the burden of belonging and recognition is often placed on racialized and ethnicized bodies. It also produced a circular logic, as it took itself as the ultimate point of reference; that is, the date of independence marked the temporal baseline, the colonial territorial boundaries marked the spatial frame of reference, and the indigenous body marked the grounds of entitlement for Ghanaian citizenship. The ensuing definition of citizenship through descent from another citizen is quite exclusive and holds the danger of producing marginal (and potentially deportable) others within the shared space of the nation-state (Ngweno and Aloo 2019). Moreover, it brings the paradox of origins to the fore—because the citizen-ancestor who is the measure of national belonging comes into being only at the moment of independence, yet she or he is defined by racialized and ethnicized criteria that reach beyond this temporal horizon.

Genetic ancestry testing, which over the last 15 years has become especially popular among African American consumers, promises to bridge these temporal gaps and to establish an embodied connection between an individual, a historical ancestor, and a contemporary population. It thus follows a similar logic as jus sanguinis, yet it widens the principle of descent to such a degree that it no longer corresponds with the historical contingencies that mark national sovereignty.\footnote{There has been a lot of critical debate on genetic ancestry testing and its underlying politics of classification that I cannot rehearse here. See the contributors in Koenig, Lee, and Richardson (2008); Schramm, Skinner, and Rottenburg (2011); and Wailoo, Nelson, and Lee (2012).}
In Ghana, genetic ancestry became an issue in relation to diaspora citizenship when, in 2007, then Minister of Tourism and Diasporan Relations Jake Obetsebi-Lamptey announced the incorporation of a so-called gene map into the program of the Joseph Project, which had also brought the Right of Abode and the issue of a diasporan visa back on the political agenda. This gene map initiative, which never came to fruition, was projecting “to collect DNA samples from across the length and breadth of West and Central Africa” in order “to be able to establish for every returnee/pilgrim interested, a personal report on his/her antecedents: to be able to organize visits to the villages of the ancestors.” The stated goal was to “irrevocably establish the genetic link between our returnees/pilgrims and the homeland”—thus privileging shared ancestry (and not shared memories, experiences, or political goals) as the grounds of belonging. More recently, the services of African Ancestry, a private company with the largest marketing of genetic ancestry testing specifically for African diaspora audiences, have also been incorporated into the program of “The Year of Return: Ghana 2019”—the allure of the genetic link as a feasible, embodied connection to a specific locality in the homeland has not lost its power.19

In the framework of such programs, genetic ancestry testing appears as yet another marketing strategy for homecoming tourism. However, it has also opened up serious negotiations about membership, belonging, and, eventually, dual citizenship.20 In her ethnography The Social Life of DNA, Alondra Nelson (2016) describes the collaboration of African Ancestry with the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation in the promotion of genetic ancestry tests as a basis for dual citizenship. The Sullivan Foundation has organized a number of African–African American Summits, bringing together high-ranking representatives of African governments and eminent African American political and business leaders to discuss and negotiate mutual cooperation. During the Fifth African–African American Summit which took place in Ghana in 1999, dual citizenship and the Right of Abode were high on the agenda (cf. Schramm 2010:229–233). Nine years later, in preparation for the summit in Arusha, dual citizenship remained a prominent issue. This time, however, it went hand in hand with the recommendation of genetic ancestry testing as a proof for a “blood tie” that would meet the expectations of receiving nation-states (Nelson 2016:152). Expressing the same enthusiasm that had informed the announcement of a “gene map” during the Joseph Project, a report coauthored between the Sullivan Foundation and African Ancestry presented genetic ancestry testing as a solution to the specification of African diaspora citizenship in terms of national belonging. Citing Ghana as among the countries for which African Ancestry could provide “ethnic matches,” the report stated that, “for those African governments reluctant to provide dual citizenship to diasporans who cannot legally establish a line of descent, the African Ancestry test offers a means of providing scientific evidence of descent” (quoted in Nelson 2016:151).

In practice, individual consumers continue to be touched by the affective power of DNA as an embodied link to an ancestral time and a contemporary place. Alondra Nelson consequently points out the liberating potential of genetic ancestry testing as a form of self making. I would argue, however, that this power may unfold precisely because genetic ancestry testing circumvents the legal definitions of citizenship, and not because it allows people to tap into the evidentiary logic of bureaucratic rules. Nation-states, in general, have remained extremely reluctant to accept genetic ancestry tests as evidence of descent or to go as far as to translate symbolic belonging achieved through genetic ancestry into political rights.21 The principles of DNA testing, which are contingent on statistical ideas of population, selective lines of descent, and the vast temporal scope of molecular time, seem too vague to be incorporated into the framework of national belonging. More generally, however, they point to the arbitrariness of genealogy as a principle of citizenship, which also calls the distinctions between a “Ghanaian” and an “African” diaspora into question.

Finally, the idea of genetic ancestry testing as the ground of African diaspora citizenship can be criticized for being in line with a neoliberal tendency to throw the burden of the political onto individualized bodies (Holsey 2015). Like Saidiya Hartman, Bayo Holsey is skeptical of the genealogical model that has been favored in the homecoming rhetoric since Alex Haley’s Roots (Haley 1976) and that is pushed to the extreme in genetic ancestry testing. To her, this model indicates a return to biological notions of Blackness—a departure from the solidarity of Black Power and collective action. In Holsey’s view, the insistence on a genealogical linkage as the grounds for claiming one’s “ancestral birthright” builds on sentimental notions of belonging that actually confirm the exclusiveness of national citizenship and thus contradict the project of liberation. The focus on ethnicity and the individualized quest for ancestral roots runs counter to broader ideas of Pan-African unity and solidarity and thereby depoliticizes the question of African diaspora citizenship.

Conclusion

The discursive space of diaspora and homecoming sharply points toward the crisis of liberal citizenship that Saidiya

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20. For the complex politics of inclusion and exclusion in such claims of (genetic) belonging in other settings, see Johnston (2003), TallBear (2013), Tamarkin (2014), and MacGuigle and Herman (2015). For some discussion of the role of DNA in the discursive space of homecoming in Ghana, see Fehler (2011); for an analysis of DNA, diaspora, and political subjectivity in Ghana, see Delpino (2011).
21. An exception is the Hollywood actor Isaiah Washington, who traced his genetic ancestry to Sierra Leone and became a citizen in 2008. It should also be noted that genetic testing does play an increasing role in regulating migration in Europe, for example, as a means to prove or disprove asylum claims or family reunions (see Heinemann and Lemke 2014).
Hartman has identified as one of the defining effects of slavery and its afterlives. As a concrete practice, diasporic homecoming mirrors contradictory desires and practical needs. On the one hand, it is built on the refusal of a dominant order of citizenship and thus poses profound challenges to the governance model of the nation-state. On the other hand, it establishes a concrete relation with a specific locality that is shaped by the national order. For people who chose to return, citizenship remains the prevailing framework for the negotiation of rights and obligations. In this article, I have discussed some of the tensions arising from this conundrum.

In conclusion, I want to briefly reflect on the challenges posed by Hartman’s insistence that diasporic homecoming can never revert to a state of wholeness but needs to start from the moment of rupture instead. Her search for “strangers” (Hartman 2007:7) in the space between homeland and diaspora offers a radical critique of the exclusionary rationale of classical citizenship models. It implies a sense of political subjectivity that is built not so much on recognition as on refusal. This is a refusal to accept the conventional logic of citizenship that categorizes people as insiders or outsiders. The figure of the stranger is the one who is in the place but not necessarily of the place. It is a figure who carries the burden and the promise of an elsewhere in her. To identify with strangers (or as stranger) is a form of resistance that defies the status of not fully belonging that is allocated to strangers in territorial nation-states and citizenship regimes. This is an identification that does not follow a hierarchical model of genealogy but prioritizes historical situatedness instead. In Hartman’s travelogue, the search for strangers appears as a lonesome and painful journey. And yet, hers is not a position of paralysis in light of the violence of the past and the haunting specters of slavery and colonialism. The identification as stranger offers an alternative mode of self-making.

In a similar vein, Anh Hua (2011) speaks of a diaspora sense of home that is built not so much on rootedness but on dislocation. Home, then, becomes associated with “global soul” instead of a bounded community. It marks a relational process that links multiple places and times. In other words, home (and citizenship, for that matter) is not a state of being but a form of becoming. Keeping the memory of slavery and ruptures of the past open, the orientation of diasporic homecoming is toward the future. This apparent paradox offers a way in which the crisis of citizenship that formed the starting point of this paper can generate new critical conversations about the grounds of political voice. The complex negotiations of African diaspora citizenship are a reminder that who belongs (and who does not) cannot easily be determined by birth, territorial boundaries, DNA, or arbitrary notions of autochthony.

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Slavery, Anthropological Knowledge, and the Racialization of Africans

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This essay asks, If one of the legacies of slavery in the Americas was the racialization of enslaved Africans, and indeed the racialization of the modern world, did this legacy of race not also impact the communities on the African continent? The essay grapples with this question by insisting what should be a baseline understanding: that modern racial consciousness, and especially global racialization processes that emerge in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade, also impacted continental African communities. I focus specifically on the ways that the legacies of anthropological knowledge production in Africa depend on racializing tropes of Africans while simultaneously impeding this type of racial analysis. And I suggest a reconsideration of the ways we apprehend African community formation post-European contact. I argue for an understanding of the modern development of African societies that shifts from exclusive investments in local configurations to systematic approaches in which the histories and legacies of slavery and race are situated.

I

One of the commonly accepted legacies of the transatlantic slave trade in the Western Hemisphere is the establishment and consolidation of the modern idea of race and racial difference, as well as the practices of racialization, that uphold white supremacy. Racialization is the complex set of historical and sociopolitical processes of attributing superior or inferior status based on the presumption of biological difference. It involves, for Africans, the rendering of the various and distinctive political and sociocultural identities into a debased category through relationships of exploitation, control, and exclusion. For the Europeans on the other side of the trade, it is the simultaneous homogenizing of their group differences into “whiteness” along with claims of superiority (Horne 2020). In addition to capitalist needs, the racialization of slavery was soon buttressed by the rise of racial science and the ideological, political, and cultural construction of a “Black” Other. As such, racialization becomes one key site for understanding the lives of both the victims of slavery and its perpetrators. A classic view of this racialization-by-slavery comes from sociologist and historian Michael Omi and Howard Winant in their well-known theory of “racial formation,” when they state:

The racial category “black” evolved with the consolidation of racial slavery. By the end of the seventeenth century, Africans whose specific identity was Ibo, Yoruba, Fulani, etc., were rendered “black” by an ideology of exploitation based on racial logic—the establishment and maintenance of a “color line.” . . . With slavery . . . a racially based understanding of society was set in motion which resulted in the shaping of a specific racial identity. (Omi and Winant 1994)

This characterization of the historical process of racial identity making for descendants of enslaved Africans and their enslavers in the New World—the making and consolidation of

1. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of studies of “race” and racial processes in Africa. They fall into two main camps. One camp traces ideas of “race” to precolonial relationships—but specifically to internal processes of differentiation within African communities and as a result of Islam (see Glassman 2011; Hall 2011). The other camp traces ideas of race to the modern moment, which emerged with European expansion, the transatlantic slave trade, and colonialism (Mamdani 1996; Pierre 2013). I am in the latter camp and endorse Garuba’s (2008) argument on the acute distinction between preand postcontact notions of difference: “These premodern, precolonial instances of group self-identification and prejudice were not racial distinctions in the modern sense, for three basic reasons that define race as a category of modernity. First, they were more fluid and flexible than what race connotes today. Second, they were not concerned with constructing a homogeneous self against which a different other could be placed as binary opposite. Third, they were not embedded in a machinery of knowledge production that defined ways of knowing, ways of seeing and apprehending social reality and the world” (1642).

2. Following Omi and Winant (1994), I use the notion of “racialization” as opposed to “race,” to demonstrate the historically constructed nature of racial categorization. It bears repeating that race is not about biology but about the meanings we ascribe to presumed differences in culture, phenotype, etc. My examination explores the ways that the constitution of race and racial categories are, over time, continuously made and remade through ongoing processes of interpellation and self-making. Racialization explores the various sites—historical and contemporary—through which racial meanings are crafted, deployed, and articulated (see also Pierre 2013).

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was the racialization of enslaved Africans through the transatlantic slave trade in the Americas today. 

This essay is an attempt to confront another aspect of this configuration. If one of the legacies of slavery in the Americas was the racialization of enslaved Africans—and indeed the racialization of the modern world—did this legacy of race not also simultaneously impact the communities on the African continent? Did ideas of racial difference and identity, forged through the slave trade, not also impact the West and Central African communities of Fantes, Ibois, Wolof, Fulanis, and others? Indeed, it is clear that the Atlantic commercial trade in Africans created cultural, economic, and political aftershocks for affected communities on the continent—restructuring identities and allegiances, geographies, communities, and politics. Moreover, the trade’s direct aftermath was European colonial control of most of the African continent. The vast historical and anthropological literature on the slave trade’s legacy in Africa reflects the dramatic transformations of societies (Adjae 2018; Getz 2004; Inikori and Engermen 1992; Meillassoux 1991; Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Rodney 1966). But that same literature hardly includes systematic analyses of the emergence and continuing significance of race as another clear ongoing legacy of the trade (especially after the trade officially ended). The expansive corpus of the historical work on the impact of slavery on the African continent continues to provide detailed demographic and community-level political impact of the slave trade and slavery. Yet, with exceptions (Thiaw 2008) systematic analyses of race and racialization are hard to find in this scholarship. And when race is mentioned, it is often to reference a key difference between the impact of the slave trade and slavery in Africa and the Americas (Cooper 1979; Lovejoy 2011; also Keren Weitzberg and Alden Young’s unpublished manuscript “Globalizing Race in the History of Muslim Africa,” 2019). For anthropology in particular, this has impeded serious analysis of how, during and after the formal end of the slave trade, African societies were, over time and through complex processes, simultaneously (re)incorporated into both local and global sociopolitical units, of which racialized unequal relations with Europeans (and those near Europeans) also emerged an important aspect of community formation.

My modest aim in this essay is to make the case for the recognition of the racialization processes enacted through the emergence and consolidation of the transatlantic slave trade on the African continent. To do so, I ask, how is it that African “ethnic” identities and cultural difference are understood to have become racialized in the New World but not in Africa, when such identities were simultaneously impacted by the racialized world created through European colonial expansion, violence, and expropriation? My twofold answer to this question is also my hypothesis: (1) that the upheaval in the social and political structure of affected communities on the continent tends to conceal the intersection of local and global processes—particularly the interrelationship of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identities in the context of European empire making and (2) the intellectual frames through which post-transatlantic slave trade African social and political formations are explored, especially within anthropology, reflect this concealment. As a result, with exceptions (Holsey 2008, 2013), the terms of discussion for African community and politics often centered on localized relations of ethnic groupings, culture, and politics. I am arguing, however, that these intellectual practices present “racial distinctions” and “ethnic distinctions” as divergent forms of identity processes for Africans. A systematic approach to studying African phenomena should include the linked legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and formal European colonization of Africa, and reveal how, as Brackette Williams (1989:426) pointed out, the concepts and ideas of race, ethnicity or tribe, nationality, etc., are only labels for different aspects of the same broad sociopolitical process.

I begin the discussion below with a brief review of the ways that scholars (historians and anthropologists, in particular) have generally discussed the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade in Africa in terms that diminish the significance of race. I then focus on the singular role of anthropological studies of Africa, specifically the colonialist legacies of “kinship studies,”3 and examine the ways that such studies impede other types of analysis, particularly when it comes to understanding the impact of the transatlantic slave trade. Then, using a historical example from the Gold Coast (Ghana), I contend that the enduring legacy of the transatlantic slave trade is evident in the social, political, and racial structuring and ongoing restructuring of society as it transformed during the commercial trade in Africans, through abolition, racialized colonialism, and after. Here, I present an argument for thinking about race and racialization processes on the African continent by carrying out a systematic analysis that brings together the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and the establishment of formal colonial rule on the continent. The ultimate effort is to interrogate the relationships of slavery, colonialism, and race in Africa as part of a broader hegemonic process of European empire making.

II

Scholarship on the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on the African continent is relatively new compared to that on the impact of the trade in the Americas. Indeed, as late as 1979, Frederick Cooper (1979) was lamenting how “Africanists have profited little from two decades of extensive research and debate on slavery in the Americas” and that “Africanists and Americanists” were studying slavery “in isolation from one another” (103). For Cooper, the concern was with the ways

3. I am aware of the voluminous scholarship on “tribe” and “ethnicity.” The point here is not to focus on the lines of research on ethnicity (e.g., “primordialist” or “constructivist”). Rather, I aim to show how the concept of “ethnicity” (and its related terms of “tribe” and “kinship”) is built on an explicit racial foundation—and this legacy impacts the concept’s deployment today.
that Africanist historians were reluctant to acknowledge slavery as a long-term institution on the African continent, in part because they were “anxious to disassociate slavery in Africa from its bad image in the Americas” (103). It seems that, at first, scholars were concerned with establishing the difference between “African slavery” and “American slavery.” Since then, however, this concern has abated, and the scholarship on the impact of slavery on the African continent continues to proliferate. Some of the key points of focus have been on the long history of the institution of slavery on the African continent (Lovejoy 2006, 2011), the role of the enslaved within local and regional economics, politics, and culture (especially the “use of slaves as part of a process by which individuals and social groups tried to expand their wealth and power” (Cooper 1979:121), the different levels of the incorporation of the enslaved in societies, and the point of view and personal experiences of enslaved African groups (Bellagamba, Greene, and Klein 2013; Greene 2011, 2017; Miers and Kopytoff 1977). There are also the discussions of the transformations of “domestic slavery” in the context of the transatlantic slave trade and, with Curtin’s controversial publication of *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1972), a long and detailed focus on the demographics of that trade (using archival materials such as ship manifests, merchant ledgers, and so on). Anthropologists have also contributed to the scholarship on the institution of slavery in Africa generally, with localized studies of the experiences of the enslaved throughout the continent as well as discussions of various forms of trade—trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean (see Kopytoff [1982] for a good review of the literature). And most recently, historical archaeologists have been able to provide more information on the impact of the trade (DeCorse 2001; Goldberg 2018; Thiaw 2008, 2011). What we have learned from this detailed and engaged scholarship on slavery on the African continent is that the institution not only was complex but also was radically transformed over centuries. At the same time, there is a way that this scholarship on slavery in Africa tends not to address the uniqueness of the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on the continent. In this way, slavery in Africa gets engaged, in the words of Kopytoff, “not as an analytical concept but as an evocative one—much as we use ‘economics’ and ‘politics’” (1982:221). As such, slavery seems transhistorical, encompassing a wide range of political and social relationships in different contexts over time.

I am focusing specifically here on the transatlantic slave trade as significant for establishing the modern world we know. From this point of view, the institution of slavery in parts of the African continent, however old and ubiquitous, was drastically transformed with European contact and participation in the broader Atlantic trade. It should be pointed out that, despite the significance of powerful African governments and elites, by the time we get to the height of the slave trade, relations of power skewed drastically in favor of Europeans (Bennett 2019). Joseph Inikori (2002) demonstrates, for example, how England’s economic prominence came through the growth of Atlantic commerce that can only be explained “in terms of the employment of Africans as forced, specialized producers of commodities” (xvii). In his *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Boubacar Barry (1998) reminds us of the simple fact that, “From the latter half of the seventeenth century, the [transatlantic] slave trade became the keystone of the colonial mercantile system, which bound Africa, America, and Europe into a system built on domination” (305). In fact, even Cooper (1979) pointed to the reality that, at the height of the trade, no African agents and participants of slavery on the continent “had as full access to capital or as many alternative forms of capital accumulation within a more or less integrated economy” (121) as the European traders and dealers. This shift in power had economic as well as social and political significance.

What did this shift mean in terms of power relations between Africans and the Europeans on the continent? I am particularly interested in a consistent narrative around race, however implicit, that emerges in much of the scholarship on slavery in Africa: that race was only significant for communities in the Americas. Racialization processes, and especially racial prejudice, are discussed as a key difference in the incorporation of the enslaved in societies of the Americas in comparison to those of the African continent. It seems that, because Africans, however differentiated by “kinship,” class, and religion (particularly the ruling classes and African sovereigns), were at times key participants in the enslavement of other “African” groups, there could emerge no distinctions around race. Thus, in a recent interview, esteemed Africanist historian Sandra Greene describes slavery in the area currently known as Ghana in this way: “They didn’t have racial slavery,” explains Greene. “The distinction was, and is, by kinship. People there are very clear about an individual’s background, and they retain oral records of who is who within a family. In some families slave origins still matter, even today.” In the introduction to the influential book *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, editors Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (1977) make a similar claim in their explanation of why the incorporation of the enslaved into local communities was very much dissimilar to the incorporation of the enslaved in the Americas: “In the New World, however, almost all slaves entered the society as the chattels of private persons, acquired for economic ends, and further formal limitations on their mobility were often imposed by society at large on the basis of

4. My argument is not to say that racialization processes were overdeterminant in the formation of identity and communities. Rather, my point is that racialization processes were also part of these formations, and in significant ways. Indeed, it is a truism in race scholarship that race never works alone; sometimes it is the modality through which other distinctions are lived, sometimes it works in tandem with other factors such as ethnicity, religion, nation, class, etc., and sometimes it emerges in less significant ways. The point, however, is to acknowledge its presence and impact in contexts where racialized—as Black Africans alone were the objects of trade and debasement.

race” (40). These discussions on the relative absence of race and processes of racialization in shaping relations of slavery on the African continent could only seem reasonable if we accept localized studies without attention to the ways that, in the context of the Atlantic slave trade and the rise of modern European hegemony, local meanings are always infused within broader regional and, by this time, global relations.6

Thus, it is one thing to make the important distinction to assert that slavery on the African continent was not “racial slavery”; it is quite another to assume, by default, that relations of race were not—or did not become—significant. Race making unfolded in the expansion of slavery—not only in the Americas but also in the joined regions of West and Central Africa. And in time, race and slavery were interwoven (notwithstanding African participation in the trade), and slavery became a powerful ideological factor in the rapidly emerging modern racial worldview that linked slavery (unfreedom) to a general Blackness, and freedom to (European) Whiteness. It is for this reason that we do not hear of any European ever being in fear of becoming enslaved on the West Coast of Africa.

The transatlantic slave trade and the ensuing expansion of European empire building brought together the African continent and the rest of the world into unparalleled global “intimacies” (Lowe 2015). Even before a “racial worldview” (with an ideology that insisted on the general superiority [biological, cultural, civilizational, etc.] of Europeans [Smedley 1993]), there were already racial distinctions made on the ground. A clear example of this, as we will see below, is the way that many of the “Euro-African” individuals and communities that rose to prominence during the slave trade, often deployed implied racial difference to separate themselves from their local communities (Barry 1998; DeCorse 2001; Jones 2013; Mark 1999).

Accepting this point requires the acknowledgment of a definition of race as a set of processes—as well as other cultural, political, social, and economic mechanisms—that work to structure power and hierarchies based on presumed biological and cultural difference. In this way, the participation of African agents in domestic slavery need not presume—especially by the eighteenth century—the absence of an emergent racial ideology and racializing practices. For European agents were often on the ground, if only on the coast (though often beyond), and over time their consolidation of power had specific racial tincture. And by the time the slave trade is abolished, “legitimate trade” is celebrated, and formal colonialism is established, the ideology of race had already permeated African communities. This is not to say that other forms of identification were not also important; it is to make the case that race becomes one of the key distinctions of identity and power in the places impacted by the slave trade. Moreover, the resultant ideologies of whiteness and “civilization” would be used to justify the coming formal establishment of European colonialism.

My argument is that we cannot analyze the contours of identity and community formation on the African continent today without understanding the ways that, together, the transatlantic slave trade and formal colonial rule on the African continent (1) represent the longue durée of the violence of European imperialism in Africa and (2) depend on an explicit ideology and practice of race and racialization. Nevertheless, studies of slavery in Africa seem often excerpted from the European-led slave trade—even though this trade radically transformed modern global structures of power. To be sure, Africanist anthropologists came to the study of slavery relatively late and from the liberal traditions of cultural relativism. By the time scholars began to tackle slavery on the continent, however, the colonialist (and racist) terms of engagement with Africa had already been established.

III

In his essay “Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting Uses of Tribalism in Africa,” Peter Ekeh (1990) was concerned with how current analyses of African society often occurred, implicitly and explicitly, on the presumption and ideology of “kinship” as the basis of all African sociocultural and political phenomena (see also Korang 2004). Even as the language of “kinship” is no longer tenable for most scholars, and “culture” and “ethnicity” have become more acceptable, such replacement terms continue to retain kinship’s conceptual kernel: an essentialist view of African social organization. But what made enduring the idea of kinship (and its approximate terms) as the natural, if not primary, form of African communal and political relations is its consolidation both in colonial racist practice and the “pseudo ethnological dogmas” (Patnaik 2006) of anthropological knowledge production. As Ekeh (1990) argues:

The scope and persistence of kinship in Africa have their beginnings in the exigencies and imperatives of the slave trade. Under colonialism kinship registered its revised presence in the form of kinship systems studied by anthropologists. In colonial and postcolonial Africa, kinship has been transformed into ethnic groups whose members are bound together by new moral definitions. (672–673)

The fourth part of this essay is devoted to the colonial practice of racially othering Africans in the deployment of an essentialized idea of kinship (through the deployment of “tribe” and “native”). But first we have to briefly turn to the role of anthropology in this legacy, because, more than any other, the discipline contributed to these particular ways of apprehending African society.
Until the late twentieth century, kinship studies dominated the discipline of anthropology. Early kinship studies were based on “the assumption that all societies recognized the same basic genealogical relationships” (Lavenda and Schultz 2015:374). But this assumption was also about early anthropologists’ belief in stages of “progress” and “evolution,” where human societies presumably traveled from savagery to barbarism to civilization (Morgan 1877). It meant that human development depended on a progression of social, political, and economic organization. Kinship relations were understood to be the result of a “pre-state” society. A “civilized” society, on the other hand, meant that its social and political organization went beyond kinship relations and to centralized polities, often understood to be “nations.” In this context, only certain societies—those considered at the beginning stages of the march toward civilization, the “primitive,” “tribal,” “traditional” societies—were deemed to be governed by principles of kinship (Sneath 2016).

It is important here to understand the relationship of kinship to “tribe.” By the nineteenth century, anthropology, concerned with evolution and in constructing racial difference, “wove the term ‘tribe’ into the narrative of primitive society governed by the principles of ‘kinship’” (Sneath 2016:2). As John Iliffe (1979:323) pointed out in his study of colonialism in Tanganyika, the notion of tribe depended on racial thinking where European colonial administrators and their anthropologists believed that “every African belonged to a tribe, just as every European belonged to a nation.” Postwar anthropologists preferred “tribal” over “savage,” which was considered more pejorative. Nevertheless, tribes “were seen as cultural units ‘possessing a common language, a single social system, and an established customary law.’ Their political and social systems rested on kinship. Tribal membership was hereditary” (Iliffe 1979:323). As Marshall Sahlins stated in 1968, “Tribes occupy a position in cultural evolution” (quoted in Sneath 2016:2). He went on to explain that tribes would eventually give way to more “advanced cultures” or “civilizations.” For Sahlins, a civilization knew how to “maintain law and order” in ways that would guarantee peace. A tribe, on the other hand, only knew how to live in perpetual war. He is explicit in these distinctions: “the U.S. is a state, the tribe is a state of nature. Or, the U.S. is a civilization, the tribe a primitive society” (Sneath 2016:2; emphasis added). A vast ethnographic effort, buttressed both by religious and “scientific” authorization, the image created was one of Africa where tyranny, war, and chaos are the natural condition of its people. And this view of African chaos and tyranny was also informed by the work of antislavery societies and provided the justification for the imposition of formal colonial rule of the continent.

Indeed, the “connective tissue that links the history of slavery to that of colonialism” (Oluosog 2015) on the African continent was the racial ideology of the presumption of African/Black inferiority and European/White superiority. But this simple and factual observation is by no means taken for granted, much less operationalized in much analysis of continental African politics and society. By the onset of formal colonial rule on the African continent, “race” had already become “the term extraordinaire used to interpret perceived social and biological differences among subjected populations. Mental capacity, social organization, behavior, and aesthetics all were understood to operate within an innate, biological realm of race—a realm that ranked white-skinned Europeans at the top of civilization and black-skinned Africans as the epitome of the most extreme variant of racial alterity” (Pierre 2006:43; see also Harrison 1995; Stocking 1968). Anthropology’s racial science had a paradoxical, but nevertheless devastating, impact on African communities. On the one hand, racial theories followed the homogenizing pressure of the transatlantic slave trade and European imperialism and dismissed differences among African communities, seeing Africa and Africans “racially” as singularly “Black.” This is not to discount the tremendous political and community transformation occurring on the African continent as a result of the trade; it is rather to also show that, simultaneously, the modern ideology of race, once discursively and practically set in motion, had other reproductive effects: “it was coarticulated with, translated to, and mapped on local conditions” to produce new distinctions, politics, hierarchies, and consciousness (Garuba 2008:1641). On the other hand, colonial anthropology, while distancing itself from certain aspects of racial science, continued to be committed to its “tribal” isolates (think here of the formulation of “Nuerland”) and the presumed naturalness of their locality.

These localized studies reinforced the idea of scattered, noncentralized (“acephalous,” etc.) polities, located on the “savagery” end of the self-referential European civilizational scale (see Amselle 1998). In truth, whatever the claims of British liberal Africanist anthropologists, the focus on culture and kinship as autonomous from changing political and economic forces in societies did not actually contradict racial science and views of alleged African biological and cultural inferiority. How could it? Its theoretical precepts depended on presumed African racial difference.” To be more explicit, the formula of

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8. We must pause, for a moment, to ponder whether descriptions of African societies have shifted greatly from this characterization today. For the constant references, currently, to “ethnic conflict” or “tribal warfare” or African communities being run by “warlords” and needing “conflict resolution” and “capacity building” do not move too far away from Sahlins’s ethnocentrism.


10. The argument was that Africa had no civilization (and, therefore, no history), and whatever “civilization” there was (i.e., Egypt) was imported from outside: “The civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, [who were now, according to Seligman, “Europeans’ and white”], its history the record of these people and their interaction with two other
“tribe”—and, later, “kinship”—worked to further racialize Africans by stressing a particular type of alterity and, in the words of Kwaku Korang (2004), a “lack of worldliness.” Extreme localization of African “tribal” isolates works to remove Africans from “a worldly temporality” (Korang 2004), the hybridizing process of colonial imposition of violence and difference.

This intellectual history is not tangential. It is important to recount, however broadly, because this history both helped to structure European colonial rule on the continent and also sets the precedent, the “indelible imprint,” on the conceptualization and study of Africa and Africans. Indeed, Seligman was known as a staunch advocate of the Hamitic Hypothesis. The Hamitic Hypothesis was the theory that all aspects of civilization—language, technology, and certain cultural practices—on the African continent came from a “superior” race, the so-called Hamites. For Seligman (1930) “the Hamites—who are ‘Europeans’—belong to the same great branch of mankind as the ‘Whites’” (97). Evans-Pritchard’s The Nuer is also influential because it provided anthropologists an opportunity to “study the organization of a society without chiefs,” and his work on kinship shaped generations of mainstream anthropological political theory. But the work also perpetuated anthropological racist ideas about African difference that were articulated through what Amselle (1998) calls a “cultural-structuralist vision of things” (37), the artificial boundaries around societies and “ethnic” groups as unchanging.

It is often argued that the early intensive fieldwork in Africa was supposed to provide empirical evidence to refute the commonsense views of “primitives” and “savages” as simple-minded with suspicious and chaotic customs (Porth, Neutzling, and Edwards, n.d.). But this move did not allow the discipline to easily jettison the racialized assumptions about Africans built into its theoretical formulations and serving as a backdrop for ethnographic studies of African societies. As anthropologist and historian Andrew Apter (2007) contends, there is “an evolutionary assumption” lurking beneath the genealogical and political typologies of kinship studies. It remains “still difficult to exercise, that a cephalous societies like the Tallensi Nuer, or Tiver were structurally more primitive... and hence were less advanced or capable of civilization” (134). My intention is both to acknowledge anthropology’s intellectual domination of colonial representations of Africa and to remind us of the racial logics that shape the discipline’s apprehensions of African social and political formations in these representations and beyond. These intellectual practices worked in concert with the colonial order.

In mid- to late-twentieth-century anthropological theory and practice, the focus on “kinship systems” diminished greatly while use of the concept itself was largely replaced with terms such as “culture” and “ethnicity.” This was undoubtedly due to postcolonial critiques of the anthropology of Africa, which castigated the cultural (if not racial) hierarchies of presumed African “primitivism” built into the concept of kinship. The focus on kinship studies quickly shifted to one of “ethnic groups,” but without the concomitant analysis of the racial determinism of the original terms of engagement. However, similar to the Boasian revolution that saw US anthropological analysis shift from the use of “race” to that of “culture” (Stocking 1968; Trouillot 2003; Visweswaran 1998), the new terms of engagement—particularly, “ethnicity” and “ethnic groups”—are applied without either acknowledgment of the sociopolitical context of the terms these new ones replace or a clear theoretical framework that exorcises the racial logic on which the original term was originally deployed (Trouillot 2003). In other words, while the racial underpinnings of presumed African “primitivism” (and consolidated through the terms of “tribal society” and a focus on “kinship” as a form of primitive social relations) are assumed in later critiques of the terms, such is not incorporated into later (seemingly correct) analyses of African societies. What we get, then, in these organs of this organism; in particular, kinship and its presumed lineage systems were considered the “Rosetta Stone for their understanding of non-Western tribal societies, and became a model, at a very early stage, for how one might approach other kinds of social networks” (Anthrobase, http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/del/structural_functionalism.htm [accessed August 6, 2018]).
new terms, is the preservation of the conceptual apparatus that gave us kinship studies, that continues to depend on what Bernard Magubane and James Faris (1985) call the “deformed structures” of ethnographic studies on “ethnic groupings”—structures that work to “prove the tenacity among Africans of the primordial loyalties,” and that solidify ethnicity or tribe as the core of African authenticity (Korang 2003).

Anthropology of Africa in the early twentieth century was colonial anthropology (Ekeh 1990). The goal of a colonial science such as anthropology was to discover the patterns of behavior of the “natives” in order to aid in the immediate concerns of colonial governance. And colonial rule was grounded on race. Thus, racialized stereotypes of natives—conditioned by prevailing views of race in Europe and the United States emergent through settler colonialism and African enslavement in the Americas—appeared in empirical studies and served as scaffolding for the control of the various facts of African lives (Mahmud 1999). While this is a well-known point, it is remarkable how the reality of colonial racial formations continues to remain, at best, only an implicit recognition in historical and social scientific discussions of African societies. In other words, though there are very few analyses of race and racial formation on the African continent, the terms deployed to understand and analyze social formations on the continent are themselves constructed through a racial logic. A glance at most texts on African history will demonstrate that, generally, in the list of the legacies of colonialism, the consequent ideology and practices of race and racialization do not appear as significant and extensive. What is more remarkable is that in discussions of “ethnicity” the racial logics underpinning European colonial deployment (and sedimentation) of such categories are often not acknowledged. Thus in 1992, for example, Christopher Fye (1992) railed against historians—both African and White—for refusing to acknowledge the fact and consequence of race and White racial rule in colonial Africa: “Somehow the memory of racial authority had been swept under the carpet” (26).16

By the time cultural anthropologists turned to the study of slavery on the African continent, the colonial legacies of anthropological analysis carried through to new studies of “African slavery.” Anthropological discussions of the impact of slavery in Africa are still developing. However, with few exceptions they often occur through a paradigm of “ethnicity” and “kinship,” conceived “as preconstructed material” (Amselle 1990:13), extracted from their contexts and treated as autono-

16. A perfect example can be found in John Iliffe’s important Africans: The History of a Continent. First published in 1995, it is one of the more nuanced historical texts about Africa. Yet, in it, there is no mention of race and the racializing impact of colonial rule. And, indeed, in the section on the changes in African society brought by colonialism, Iliffe dismisses the construction of “tribes” and consequent fostering of “tribalism” by both colonial administrators and White missionaries through their project of reducing numerous dialects to fewer written languages. But even as he makes the claim that “tropical African colonies were purely European creations” (Iliffe 1995:231), nowhere does he mention the racial violence of colonial rule as well as the violence in the making of ethnicity.

17. South Africa is, of course, always the exceptional case.

18. The Senegambia region, e.g., remained under the simultaneous influence of French, British, and Portuguese (as well as the corrupt chartered companies), and the rise of a “disparate crowd of slaving privateers who crisscrossed the seaboard from north to south” (Barry 1998:74).
slave trade” (679). The strengthening of what is considered “kinship” relations emerges in this context, as small groups of individuals had to find ways to protect themselves—outside of the boundaries of slave-trading states (or polities victim to these states). Amselle (1998) also reminds us, for example, that even the popular anthropological notion of “segmentary societies” (14) depended on the inability to acknowledge that societies were often separated from their centers and political formations precisely because of European conquest.

While it is certainly commonsense knowledge that slave trading and the institution of slavery had incalculable influence on the structure of African societies, especially West and Central Africa, colonial anthropology’s encounter with African societies did not, in the first instance, make analytically significant the long historical impact of aspects of this external trade in Africa. Africanist anthropological analyses on “domestic slavery” emerged much later in the discipline, but also continued the trend of treating “culture and kinship as being autonomous from the dominant and themselves changing forces in society” (Cooper 1979:111). In the process, the impact of colonial conquests on various competing groups during the slave trade—especially the link between the slave trade, racialization, and colonial rule—is often hidden.

Formal colonial rule took African diversity and “accentuated one existing identity, which Europeans called tribal” (Iliffe 1995), and then ruled using such identity. Other times, colonial officials created “tribal” identities to divide their subjects. European missionaries were also part of this identity construction process. Missionaries reduced “Africa’s innumerable dialects to fewer written languages, each supposedly defining a tribe. Yoruba, Igbo, Ewe, Shona, and many other ‘tribes’ were formed this way” (Iliffe 1995:239). This is not to say, of course, that African agents did not participate in the making and remaking of local “tribal” identities. Certainly, those with access to colonial agents and missionaries deployed these identities to consolidate their individual positions within the colonial complex. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that, left to their own devices, African societies—like all other human societies—would have logically evolved and modified to different dictates. Thus, the structures of colonial rule halted the permeability of “ethnic” and other identities because they prevented normal adaptive changes in community and identity in African societies (Patnaik 2006:43). At the same time, the intellectual agents of colonial rule erected the ideological edifice that made “tribe” and “kinship” seem inflexible, denying Africa (and Africans) history and worldliness.

In my earlier work (Pierre 2013), I focused on British indirect rule in West Africa and the colonial practice of “making the native”—what I call “nativization.” And I argued that nativization was racialization. The native was rendered racially (as well as culturally and mentally) distinct from the European ruler, and this was marked by colonial legal differences made between “custom” (and/or “tradition”) and “civilization.” Of course, nowhere is this clearer than the views of Frederick Lugard, the main architect of British indirect rule in Africa. As is well known, Lugard (1922) considered “the typical African of this race-type” to have a mind that is “nearer to the animal world than that of the European or Asiatic” (70). In his discussion of Lugard and the philosophical foundations of British colonialism in Africa, Olúfẹmi Táíwò (2010) reminds us that Lugard’s racist evolutionary view of Africans did not change much throughout his tenure as colonial official. Lugard’s view had three interrelated elements. First, there is a hierarchy of races on an evolutionary ladder with Europeans at the top and Africans at the bottom. Further, the “more removed from the European and the more unlike him you were, the closer you were to animals and the less human you were” (Táíwò 2010:137). Second, the African world was peopled by “primitive savages” and would need a wholesale makeover before Africans could be included in the community of full humans. But the African world “had to be made livable for the European” (Táíwò 2010:137), who was in charge of its primitives. Hence colonial space had to be arranged to protect the European from the African (i.e., apartheid). Finally, and as a result of these views, “the relation of the European and the African in the colonial world . . . was always to be indirect and mediate” (Táíwò 2010:137). These racialized views, of course, were the ideological basis for colonial structures and the British insistence of indirect rule. In other words, evolutionism—supporting imperial ideas of racial difference, destiny, and hierarchy—not only served as the dominant paradigm for emergent anthropology, but it also provided the working guidelines for colonial officers and government anthropologists following Lugard’s “dual mandate” in Africa. At the same time, the institutionalization of racialization was hidden through the process of “native making.” Through official recognition or artificial invention of local practices “natives” were considered a loose “constellation of mutually exclusive and antagonistic ‘tribal’ groupings” (Pierre 2013:12), considered primordial and presented as self-ruling. Nativization ultimately concealed White racial power.

However, racializing processes and practices (as well as racial consciousness and inequality based on racial logics) emerged long before Lugard and formal colonial rule in West Africa in general. Focusing on the Gold Coast/Ghana, in particular, I will briefly discuss important sites of social and political transformation effected by the European contact and the ensuing commercial trade in Africans: the emergent community of “Euro-Africans” (or Afro-Europeans), the children

19. “Ethiopia and Benin must be regarded as the exception among African states in existence at the onset of the slave trade. Unlike them, most other ancient African states, corrupted into the service of the slave trade, constitute the second category of our classification. Examples of these states include Dahomey, Oyo, the Hausa-Fulani states, and Borno. It should be assumed that involvement in the slave trade would compromise the character of these states. . . . We should also expect that in the long run the individual citizen would rely less on the state for his own protection in these changed circumstances” (Ekeh 1990:677).
born to union between transient European male traders (from Portugal, France, England, among others) and often elite African women in the various regions of trade. The small but politically significant Euro-African community that emerged during the slave trade has captured scholarly attention of late, with a number of historical monographs devoted to detailing their experiences and complex social and political positions within local West African societies (Brooks 2003; Jean-Baptiste 2013; Jones 2013). But while this group has only begun to be revealed and studied within anthropological scholarship (in particular, with the archaeological work of DeCorse [2001], Goldberg [2018], and see also Mark [2002] and Thiaw [2003]), recognition of its presence should help adjust both the kinship terms through which scholars apprehend and analyze sociopolitical transformations of African communities impacted by the slave trade and the significance of racial formation in these communities.

In *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*, Bayo Holsey (2008) focuses on two key nodes of the transatlantic slave trade—the West African coastal towns of Cape Coast and Elmina (Ghana)—to demonstrate the ways that they were "remade through reference to Europe" (27). She shows the ways that these towns were "cosmopolitan trading centers," with a truly diverse community of a broad range of people—"Atlantic creoles"—in a society "formed through a complex interplay of race and gender" (27). Holsey discusses the ways that, while these towns already had quite diverse populations, European contact brought in a different character, expanding the diversity of the populations to now include European traders and African traders and laborers from various regions in the continent.

When I first began conducting ethnographic research on racial formation in postcolonial Ghana, I was surprised to learn of families with mixed-race legacies dating back to the sixteenth century. One Ghanaian family friend, in particular, often spoke of those members of his own family, many with European surnames, who revealed, in particular, types of differentiation around color and class. "They think they're better than us," he once lamented, describing the ways that such family members were often keen to point out certain discussions of birth and legacy. Many of these families have been well absorbed into local family lines, with only the European names as a marker of distinction. Others bear the distinction in skin color, class, and continuing endogamous relationships. From its establishment, European trade on the Gold Coast (later, Ghana) brought out the emergence of new economic and social classes. Among them were a group of people known as "mulattoes, sons and daughters of marriages between the white merchants and local consorts" (Buah 1980:75). Primarily because of their connections to White European merchants, members of this group occupied influential positions in commerce and, often, local politics. Historian Roger Gocking (1999) argues that there was "considerable endogamy" among this group and that its members could be considered "one large extended family" of blood relations (56). And Christopher DeCorse's archaeological work in Elmina (western Ghana) reveals the unique position of this Euro-African community, which, I argue, points to specific formations of racial consciousness (through the interplay of race, color, class, and aesthetics) in the Gold Coast (Pierre 2013). Indeed, the first European-style school in the Gold Coast was established for the Euro-Africans, children of European traders who were expected to take up trading, including participation in the selling and buying of their African kin.

One of the most detailed analyses of this group comes from Boubacar Barry (1998). In his study of the impact of the slave trade in the Senegambia region, he details the significant role members of the group of *saignars* (as Euro-Africans were called) played in the slave trade as traders, middlemen, and competitors to Europeans, even disrupting the trade monopoly of European chartered companies. What is significant is that "the economic prosperity of these [Euro-African] slave trading families was indisputable" (Barry 1998:79), which enabled the education of their children in Europe and the consolidation of economic as well as social and political power. Holsey (2008) and other scholars have pointed us to both of the complexities of these Euro-African families—their positions within local communities and their relationship with European slave traders. Hilary Jones (2013) also shows that, "Despite the absence of strict racial segregation, social and economic mobility depended on one's proximity to European authority, and biological kinship to European men conferred access to political power" (22). Thus, it is clear that "interracial" couplings and marriage over the two centuries of European slave trading on the West Coast of Africa depended on a set of beliefs that extended beyond localized notions of identity and identification. But what is most significant, at least for our purposes, is the fact that the shifting position of this group of people also depended on shifting ideas of difference, particularly racial difference. Peter Mark’s (1999) longitudinal study of transformations in Luso-African identity and politics in the Senegambia region, for example, demonstrates the constant and complex shifting of loyalties and communities with the expansion and waning of the transatlantic slave trade.20 While Luso-Africans’ claims of distinctiveness was first linked to differences in physical features from local communities, it would later be articulated through religion, language, and material culture (especially as those physical differences disappeared). Between the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, shifting politics among European groups interacting with West Africans also impacted what identities would be available to Luso-Africans. European claims to "Whiteness" also meant European refusal to accept the intermediate and malleable Luso-African identity. Indeed, "Eighteenth century European descriptions of Luso-Africans progressively betray . . . negative judgments," as the association of dark skin with "social inferiority [reflected]

20. I thank Ibrahima Thiaw for alerting me to the work of Peter Mark.
the growing influence of the Atlantic slave trade, which in turn influenced European attitudes about race” (Mark 1999:184).

At the same time, it is important to underscore that the focus on local Euro-African relationships alone does not address all aspects of the interlocking process of local and global practices of race. While politics on the West African coast were in flux, the shifting balance of power in favor of Europeans also meant that “European cultural markers and hierarchies were gaining power” (Ipsen 2013:377). Thus, these complex and shifting differentiations around race and difference cannot be examined in the strict terms of ethnicity and kinship groupings—especially as explored and understood by Africanist anthropologists. For Euro-Africans, a relation of mimicry, hybridity, negotiation, and alienation to European kinship was refracted through particular notions of race, gender, and class. And the nature of racialization during the slave trade meant that “race” came to determine—as it did in places like the Americas—who was enslavable (Ipsen 2013:386) in West Africa. In fact, at the height of the slave trade, “no Africans were completely safe from sale to the slave ships, [though] elite families such as [Euro-Africans] were better positioned to protect themselves from being sold across the Atlantic” (Ipsen 2013:394).

By the closing of the nineteenth century, however, the formalization of British colonial rule of the Gold Coast meant also the formalization and consolidation of racism and White supremacy. This meant the dismantling of the social order that enabled the rise in prominence of a “middle” group, such as the Euro-Africans, or the educated African elite. Instead, the new colonial state was explicit in its determination to “Europeanize” all upper positions in the colonial civil service. Most importantly, this was done through the operationalization of racial ideology of “nativization.” Thus, African elites, including Euro-Africans, who claimed cultural and racial differentiation from local African populations (and, simultaneously cultural and racial kinship with European traders and future colonists), lost this distinction through a clear process of racialization through nativization. They, too, became racialized as “native.”

In other words, the Euro-Africans, as well as other differentiated African elites, were now rendered singularly “African”—and therefore “native”—in a way that flattened both their unique cultural traits and their differences from local populations of (enslavable) “Africans.” That community, until recently, also remained subsumed within academic descriptions of the broader African or “native” continental populations. How could the anthropological paradigm of kinship (and now, “ethnicity”) explain the explicit power dynamics of the race formation that emerged in West Africa and the world within the power-laden context of the violent transatlantic slave trade? Is it possible to understand kinship and ethnicity outside of racialization processes? How do we explain the absence of race analysis in the scholarship on the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade on African communities on the continent?

V (or, By Way of Conclusion)

I have been arguing that, in their specific processes of racialization, Africans have also experienced one aspect of the broad racializing of “Black” populations globally. And, as such, racializing processes on the African continent must be considered as analogous to those of communities of African descent (the diaspora of the transatlantic trade) in the Americas. Doing so requires an understanding of the modern development of African societies that shifts from any exclusive investment in local configurations to systematic approaches in which the histories and legacies of slavery and race are situated. Racial science—and its disproportionate focus on Africans—helped to create a global view of race, one that impacted all who are racialized as Black. How do we account for this? The current usage of ethnicity (and the ideology of kinship) as the primary signifier of African identities took distinctive shape during the emergence of colonial anthropology, which itself both influenced and was influenced by colonial traditions and practices. What has been consecrated is that African ethnicity, whether the primordial view of the recent anti-racist constructionist view, seems to be only about African relationships with one another. Thus, a focus on African ethnicity alone does not allow for an understanding of the ways that racial ideologies continue to impact European relationships with Africans (as well as African relationships to one another). It erases the manner and violence of conquest “marked by the obsession and the capacity of the West to dominate non-Europeans in a variety of hierarchical orders” (Groovgui 1996:4).

For scholars, it does not allow the study of the emergent and continuing racially hierarchical relations between Europeans and Africans on the African continent.

The discussion of nativization as racialization (and the concomitant intellectual and practical deployment of the terms of ethnicity and kinship for Africans) and the historical example of the “Euro-Africans” present important sites of European domination, in the process justifying a monstrous set of practices. Race, “constituted as the defining signifier of difference between the colonizer and the native, reconciled Europe’s ‘civilizing mission’ with the violence of colonialism” (Mahmud 1999:1224). It is in this context that we should be able to see how the racialized logic of “ethnicity” (and tribe) works—as one side of the racializing coin of continental Africans and their descendants. By understanding the workings of racialization

21. I describe the consolidation of racial hierarchies during colonial rule in Gold Coast and the place of “Euro-Africans” within it. In the new colonial grand scheme of things, there were “now only two salient distinctions: European and Native. Europeans were white, natives were anything not white; and to be a nonwhite ’Euro-African’ was to share with the ‘African’ . . . the same inferior exchange value as native compared to a superior white caste” (Pierre 2013:23).

22. It goes without saying that “analogous” or “similarity” does not mean “sameness.”
processes on both the African continent and among African-descended communities in the Americas as an integrated development of European imperialism (a longue durée linking the transatlantic slave trade to colonial rule), we can work to de-provincialize the discussions that reafirm, however inadvertently, notions of African “tribal” identities. Most importantly, this new view should force an end to the “systematic isolation” (Chrisman 2003) of the transatlantic trade in Africans and formal colonial rule, while creating the space to truly explore how race and racialization impact local African communities.

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Sovereignty after Slavery
Universal Liberty and the Practice of Authority in Postrevolutionary Haiti

J. Cameron Monroe

This paper synthesizes recent archaeological research on the Kingdom of Haiti, a short-lived experiment in political sovereignty founded in the years following the Haitian Revolution. I will explore the potential for an archaeology of sovereignty in the Black Atlantic world. Examining both architectural spaces and artifacts recovered from the palace of Sans-Souci, royal residence of King Henry Christophe, this paper highlights a constellation of material practices that fostered an emerging ideology of authority in postrevolution Haiti. Collectively, this research is revealing how political agents drew creatively and strategically from both European material culture and Afro-Caribbean traditions in the practice of political authority in the Kingdom of Haiti, casting new light on the complex nature of sovereignty after slavery in the Age of Revolutions.

The archaeology of slavery in the Atlantic world has matured dramatically in recent decades, transforming from a provincial subset of historical archaeology in the American South to one yielding new perspectives on the formation of the colonial world and its enduring legacies (for reviews, see DeCorse [1999]; Fennell [2011]; Singleton [1995]). Research across the Caribbean, in particular, has played an important role in revealing the nature of everyday resistance, marronage, and consumer culture in post-emancipation societies with a view toward exploring how Africans and their descendants participated actively in the making of the modern world (Armstrong 2003; Armstrong and Fleishman 2003; Armstrong and Reitz 1990; Delle 1998; Delle, Hauser, and Armstrong 2011; Farnsworth 2001; Handler, Lange, and Riordan 1978; Hauser 2007, 2008; Kelly and Bérard 2014; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). The archaeology of slavery in the Atlantic world has thus matured significantly. Freedom and sovereignty emerge as central themes in this research agenda. And yet, one exceptionally relevant example has been absent from archaeological discourse, the independent states of postrevolution Haiti.

Haiti provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore the materiality of state making in the ashes of a colonial slave society, revealing the emergent tensions between Enlightenment political ideologies and the practice of political authority at the local level (Garraway 2012). This paper examines the materiality of political sovereignty on the Kingdom of Haiti (1807–1820), a short-lived experiment in nation building in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Sovereignty in the Kingdom of Haiti gestured toward an ideology of universal liberty that gripped the Atlantic world and materialized in neoclassical architectural spaces and the consumption of particular European goods. Recent excavations at Sans-Souci, the palace of King Henry Christophe (first and last king of the Kingdom of Haiti), however, are documenting the evolution of Christophe’s architectural plan for the site over time, as well as the presence of material culture and foodways inspired by Afro-Caribbean traditions dating to an earlier period in the construction of Haitian sovereignty (1805–1810). Collectively, this research is revealing how political agents drew creatively and strategically from both European material culture and Afro-Caribbean traditions in the practice of political authority in the Kingdom of Haiti, casting new light on the complex nature of sovereignty after slavery in the Age of Revolutions.

Materializing Sovereignty in the Early Modern World

Recent anthropological approaches to sovereignty emerged in opposition to classical political theory, which exalted the sovereign state as imbued with singular absolute power within well-defined territorial boundaries and vertically rooted in the political apparatus of the state (Hobbes 1982 [1651]). Informed by insights from postcolonial and critical theory, as well as theories of globalization, anthropologists have in recent decades questioned the notion of the clearly defined sovereign territory, recognizing the complex and often overlapping claims to political sovereignty in modern states (Agamben 1998; Agnew 2018; Cattelino 2010; Geertz 2004; Li 2018; Rutherford 2012). Additionally, scholars have highlighted the often tenuous nature of the structures that enforce state power internally. Indeed, in recent anthropologies of the state, power has emerged as diffuse and multicentric (cf. Foucault 1980). Sovereign states, and the relationships of inequality that define them, have been recast as works in progress, ones that depend on political maneuvering by leaders and followers in innumerable public and private performative contexts (Rutherford 2012). Sovereignty emerges from this discussion as a political project that depends...
fundamentally on establishing firm control over territories, building international affiliations and alliances, and advancing novel forms of status distinction among audiences of subjects.

Archaeological approaches to centralized states have experienced similar disillusionment with classical theories of sovereignty and increasingly emphasize the important role of material culture in the practice of sovereignty in the past. Central to these new archaeologies of sovereignty has been a focus on how material culture was deployed in public performative contexts to materialize social difference and status distinction (DeMarrais 2014; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Inomata 2006; Inomata and Coben 2006; Monroe 2014, 2010; Smith 2011, 2015). As a sphere of material practice that, by definition, both reflects and constrains human interactions, the importance of architectural space as a tool for shaping political struggle has been highlighted in recent archaeological research (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Monroe and Ogundiran 2012; Pearson and Richards 1994; Smith 2003). This has resulted in spatial archaeologies of power that are transforming our understanding of how state agents extended their political reach across territories and how they sought to naturalize power among subjects, providing valuable new perspectives on the nature of politics in the past. In particular, scholars have argued that spatial strategies employed by elites can be geared both to monopolize the public experience of power (Ashmore 1989, 1991; Casey 1997; Fritz 1986; Helms 1999; Inomata 2006; Lefebvre 1991; Leone 1984; McAnany 2001; Monroe 2010, 2014; Thrift 2004) and to reorganize and routinize everyday social life (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 2003; Donley-Reid 1990; Foucault 1995 [1977]; Giddens 1984; Monroe 2010; Moore 1996; Ortner 1984; Pearson and Richards 1994; Rabinow 2003). Buildings can emerge as powerful tools of domination, therefore, when they simultaneously broadcast elite perceptions of the world and shape popular experience of that world (Monroe 2014; Smith 2003).

And yet, archaeologists are equally concerned with the audiences such material displays of power were intended to impress, intimidate, and indoctrinate. Indeed, domestic settings were deeply embroiled in political practice and state-making processes. Within quotidian contexts, archaeologists have identified the material traces of internal political jockeying (Blackmore 2014; Brumfiel 1992; Monroe and Janzen 2014), highlighted the important role of domestic labor in the operation of empire (Brumfiel 1991; Costin 1993; D’Altroy and Hastorf 2001; Hastorf 1991), and located evidence for the rejection or reformulation of dominant ideologies (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Wilkie and Bartoy 2000). Some have identified situations where the production, use, and discard of domestic material culture unfolds in ways that suggest that social structures, writ architecturally, were in fact internalized, or at least closely emulated, by loyal subjects (Leone, Potter, and Shackel 1987; Monroe 2009; Pauketat 2001; Smith 2001). However, others have also questioned the degree to which architectural form and domestic material life always develop in lockstep, opening the door to considerations of archaeologies of resistance, as well as acquiescence, to dominant political structures and ideologies (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Lightfoot, Martínez, and Schiff 1998; Mullins 1999; Wilkie and Bartoy 2000). Buildings, meals, and objects emerge in this discussion, as coconspirators in a political machine geared both to authorize and reject political sovereignty in the past (Smith 2015).

Archaeological research on the early modern world provides clear examples of the relationship between sovereignty, materiality, and audience in the past. Research in a range of colonial contexts has pointed toward the ways in which architecture was used in the service of political ideology in the early modern Atlantic world. Archaeologists, architects, and historians have argued that the spread of neoclassical architecture across Europe and its colonies in the eighteenth century was closely articulated with changing social and political values. This tradition, referred to as Palladianism after the sixteenth-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, emphasized the use of “symmetrical compositions, temple-like house forms, geometrical spatial organization, motifs drawn from antiquity, use of the triumphal arch, and minimal ornamentation” (Singleton 2015:96) and gestured toward a deep and enduring past (Deetz 1996). James Deetz argued that neoclassical architecture publicly materialized an Enlightenment-era philosophy of individuality, social order, and universal freedom, what he called the Georgian worldview in Anglo-American contexts (Deetz 1996). Yet Palladian architectural norms simultaneously facilitated the expansion of technologies of social control and racial and economic inequality into the everyday lives of subjects, thereby serving the political interests of an emerging mercantile elite (Bailey 2018; Bentmann and Müller 1992; Deetz 1996; Dresser and Hann 2013; Leone 1984, 2005; Shackel, Mullins, and Warner 1998; Singleton 2015). Similarly, scholars have noted that architectures of order, symmetry, and control were deployed across a range of plantation landscapes, revealing how neoclassical principles of landscape design were used to monitor and control the everyday lives of enslaved colonial subjects (Armstrong and Reitz 1990; Bentmann and Müller 1992; Delle 1998, 1999; McKee 1992; Singleton 1990, 1999, 2015; Thomas 1998). Architectures of liberty and equality served, at differing social scales, to mask deepening inequalities defined in terms of race and class.

Importantly, archaeologists have explored the degree to which these patterns were associated with changes in material life in domestic contexts (Deetz 1996; Yentsch 1990, 1991). For example, Deetz noted that meals in the Georgian era were characterized by a decline of generalized stews in favor of the tripartite division of ingredients (meat, vegetable, and starch), characterized by a reduction in species diversity and standardization in preparation techniques (i.e., the use of saws to portion cuts of meat) (Deetz 1996:171). Additionally, Deetz noted a shift from a preponderance of communal serving vessels to individualized table services (cups, plates, saucers, and utensils) characterized by matching sets of pottery, reflecting the new ideologies of order and individualism gripping the
Atlantic world. These new preferences represent the emergence of a new consumer culture, in which material culture, architecture, and foodways allowed colonial subjects, emulating fashionable elites, to negotiate social status in a world in flux (Calvert 1994; Carson 1994, 1997; Leone 2005; Leone, Potter, and Shackel 1987; Martin 1994; Pogue 2001; Yentsch 1991).

This pattern contrasts starkly with that of plantation contexts associated with enslaved Africans in North America and the Caribbean. There, despite the imposition of European spatial norms in the planning and layout of plantation landscapes, enslaved Africans regularly rejected the domestic material correlates of this tradition (Ferguson 1992; Yentsch 1994). Indeed, rather than the highly segmented and individualistic meals and place settings desired by Europeans and Euro-Americans, enslaved Africans continued to prepare meals with irregularly chopped portions of meat, served in bowls and eaten communally (Deetz 1970; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2001; Heinrich 2012; Kelly and Wallman 2014). Similarly, archaeology within the domestic spaces of the enslaved has identified spiritual practices that appear to have resisted the imposition of Euro-American cultural norms (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Franklin 2001; Heath and Bennett 2000; Samford 2007; Wilkie 1997). Interpreted in the context of the oppressive socio-spatial regime of slavery, such patterns can be read as evidence of the limitations of architectural regimes for transforming the domestic lives of enslaved subjects, an expression of agency in the context of an overwhelmingly hostile colonial structure.

Architecture and material culture were thus intimately entangled in new claims to power and authority, and their critique, in the emerging Atlantic world. Indeed, the spatial structure and historical symbolism associated with neoclassical architecture in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic world was deployed to send distinct signals to different audiences. On the one hand, neoclassical architecture can be read as the materialization of an ideology of individualism and liberty in keeping with Enlightenment political values. On the other hand, neoclassical spaces were built as technologies of social discipline and control designed to segregate and homogenize subjects according to race and class. In both cases, architecture masked deepening social inequalities and the expansion of state power. Domestic assemblages from historic sites, furthermore, reveal the degree to which such ideologies were internalized and accepted (or rejected) more broadly across communities of subjects (free and enslaved). The nature of these assemblages can be used, therefore, as an index of the degree to which people "bought into" the political values materialized by elites in buildings and landscapes, providing a quotidian counterpoint to the political narratives presented publicly.

Materializing Sovereignty in the Kingdom of Haiti

The Haitian Revolution ushered in an era of political change, one in which ex-slaves, maroons, and free gens de couleur united to forge new political institutions in the ashes of Colonial Saint Domingue. Scholars have long struggled to appreciate the nature of political leadership in the decades immediately after this momentous event (Cole 1967; de Cauna 2004, 2012; Fick 1990; Geggus 1983; James 1938; Manigat 2007; Moran 1957). The Haitian Revolution has often been interpreted in the context of a universal history of political liberty, one based on the principles of freedom and equality espoused by the French Revolution (James 1938). Yet the various experiments in political order that followed were often autocratic in nature. Indeed, in subsequent decades, few political institutions were established to check centralized government authority, and the rural peasantry was essentially excluded from civic and political participation (Trouillot 1990). These factors reveal an emerging paradox between a discourse of political freedom and the practice of authoritarianism, in which Haitian rulers served simultaneously as liberators and subjugators of the rural peasantry (Garraway 2012).

The founding father of the first independent Haitian state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, established the short-lived Empire of Haiti (1804–1806). His generals proclaimed him Emperor for Life, swearing "to obey blindly the laws that emanate from his authority, the only one that we recognize" (cited in Garraway 2012). Following Dessalines’s assassination in 1806, Haiti was pulled apart by civil war, resulting in two states that experimented with divergent political models. In the southern half of the country, the Republic of Haiti (1807–) espoused the principles of representative democracy, maintaining both a senate and a relatively weak presidency (Dubois 2012:62), yet was structurally organized to benefit a wealthy mixed-race elite class. The political project initiated in northern Haiti by Henry Christophe, himself born a slave, provides an interesting contrast.

Immediately after the revolution, Christophe was appointed governor of the north under Dessalines. Following Dessalines’s assassination, Christophe declared himself president of the State of Haiti (1807), and in 1811 he proclaimed himself King Henry I of the Kingdom of Haiti, a hereditary monarchy founded on the principles of strong centralized government (Garraway 2012). Historians writing in the nineteenth century describe both the constructive and oppressive qualities of Christophe’s rule. Some describe him as a benevolent king driven by concern for the well-being of his followers (Madiou 1989), whereas others describe him as a despot bent on authoritarian rule (Ardouin 1858). His kingdom came to ruin in 1820, however, the culmination of enduring conflicts with the southern republic, the imposition of an economic embargo by a host of foreign nations, and, ultimately, his suicide.

Christophe instituted a broad set of political reforms across his territory, forging a stable state bureaucracy and a powerful military, invigorating rural production, and establishing formal economic ties with contemporary nation-states around the Atlantic. The polity was divided into three administrative divisions and six districts, and state officials managed and monitored rural agriculture within each zone (Roux 1816).
Across the kingdom, the “Code Henry” enforced a severe labor regime that sought to intensify the productivity of a struggling rural peasantry, and thus bore certain similarities with the colonial plantation society that it supplanted (Cole 1967). As a result, agricultural production soared, and the kingdom was annually exporting 15,000,000 pounds of sugar, 20,000,000 pounds of coffee, 5,000,000 pounds of cacao, and 4,000,000 pounds of cotton (Moran 1957:131). Despite the imposition of numerous embargoes against Haiti in the first decades of the nineteenth century, trade continued. By 1811, the kingdom had imported £1,500,000 in British goods (Cheesman 2007:194), and according to one account, 10 English, 43 American, 10 Danish, and 8 merchant vessels of various origins visited her shores in 1817 (Vastey 1923:cvii). The success of Christophe’s state depended in no small part on his ability to establish political authority across his realm, stimulate production and trade, and normalize economic relationships with contemporary states around the Atlantic world.

The success of this project also depended on the use of royalist symbolism to underwrite his political authority. Christophe established a Haitian peerage system based on the feudal European example, complete with heraldic crests and mottoes (Cheesman 2007:131; Moran 1957). Membership granted land and title to counts, dukes, and barons, each of whom was charged with managing administrative sectors and regions. Additionally, he promulgated symbolic associations with contemporary West African states, such as Dahomey. He maintained a standing army called the Royal Dahomets, who served as his political enforcers across the realm (Dubois 2012:62), as well as the Society of Amazons, a corps of women who accompanied the king and queen on royal processions (Dubois 2012:62). Both institutions drew inspiration from military institutions in the West African Kingdom of Dahomey (Alpern 1998), as did a number of fortresses bearing its name across Christophe’s realm (Madiou 1989:300). John Thornton (1993) argues convincingly that Christophe utilized such symbols of power to appeal to an essentially African rural population most familiar with monarchical forms of government. Doris Garraway (2012) argues that such symbols of state were used to make transnational claims about African equality and achievement, which was a central trope of Haitian revolutionary politics. Collectively, these tactics can be read as part of a complimentary set of royal strategies to establish regional hegemony across his realm, assert status distinction at the local level, and insert Haiti into the global community of nations on equal footing, the key elements of sovereign state making outlined above.

This experiment in Haitian sovereignty was intimately connected to material statements of power and authority (Trouillot 1995). Henry Christophe was an avid builder, earning him the popular nickname le roi bâtisseur (the Builder King). Christophe constructed nine royal palaces and 15 fortresses (including the massive Citadelle Laferrière), and reclaimed and renovated 15 prerevolution plantations as rural seats of power (Ardouin 1858:447; de Cauna 1990). Christophe’s architectural efforts are most clearly visible today in the town of Milot. Milot’s occupation reached into the colonial era, and yet it transformed dramatically during Christophe’s regime. Habitation Milot appears on the Philippeau map of 1786 and was described by the German geographer Karl Ritter as a “simple plantation” at this time (Ritter 1836:78). According to Ardouin, Christophe stationed military regiments there in 1802 (Ardouin 1858, vol. 8:369, 458), and it became his base of military operations until independence in 1804. By 1806 Milot was “a small town” and “the spot which has been selected by the general in chief [Christophe] for his country retreat” (Raguet 1811:409). Ritter suggests that at its height, the town boasted 160 houses and 500 residents, including the Haitian nobility who resided at Milot when Christophe’s court was in residence (Ritter 1836:78).

The expansion of settlement at Milot was closely linked to construction activities at Sans-Souci (fig. 1), Christophe’s largest palace and seat of power. This royal complex covered approximately 13 hectares, and according to Brown, during its construction “Hills were levelled with the plain, deep ravines were filled up, and roads and passages were opened” (Brown 1837:187). The complex contained numerous additional buildings: individual residences for Christophe, the queen, and the heir apparent; a military garrison for his Royal Dahomets, residences for state officials, and two extensive gardens. The ground plan and façade of the main palace reveal strict adherence to aforementioned neoclassical principles of separation, bilateral symmetry, the control of movement through space, and the use of Greco-Roman elements. These elements earned Sans-Souci “the reputation of having been one of the most magnificent edifices of the West Indies” (Brown 1837:186), described as a veritable Versailles in the Caribbean because of its splendor.

Vergniaud Leconte attributes the design and building of the palace to the architect Chéri Warloppe (Leconte 1931:273), yet there is significant disagreement on the construction history of the palace complex as a whole (see Bailey [2017] for a full discussion of the evidence). Oft-cited oral traditions claim the palace was built rapidly between 1811 and 1813 (Bailey 2017:75), early in the reign of Christophe as king. However, its construction chronology was more complicated. The account of Norbert Thoret, eyewitness to the revolution and its aftermath, indicates that Christophe had already built a “superb home” for himself at Habitation Milot by 1804 (Nouët, Nicollier, and Nicollier 2013:47). Twentieth-century historian Vergniaud Leconte suggests that this building was located on the site later referred to as the palais de la reine (Leconte 1931:338). Christophe’s Gazette Officielle (no. 4, 1809), furthermore, reports that two years into his presidency (1809), he was already residing at his “new” palace at Sans-Souci, suggesting the possibility that this structure and the palais de la reine, visible today, were one and the same. The date of completion for the remainder of the complex is also somewhat ambiguous. Leconte indicates that the palace was finished in 1813 (Leconte 1931:349), two years into Christophe’s reign as

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king. However, Karl Ritter, who visited the site during and after Christophe’s reign, claims it was not completed until 1817 (Ritter 1836:17). Whether or not final completions were made by this later date or the palace underwent subsequent renovations, the palace was clearly occupied and regularly used for public events in the early years of Christophe’s reign.

In the first published architectural analysis of the site, architectural historian Gauvin Bailey describes Sans-Souci as an example of “restrained Baroque Classicism of the Regency and Louis XV’s reigns,” and identifies Germain Boffrand’s Palais de la Malgrange in Lorrain as its probable inspiration (Bailey 2017:117) (Fig. 2). Bailey highlights the use of the Doric order and monumental staircases on the front and back sides of the palace, representing an architecture of impact and power. Also of interest is the neoclassical formalism of Christophe’s garden, marked by multiple terraces, a central fountain, and royal bath, features that characterized garden landscapes around the Atlantic world in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Cosgrove 1993; Leone 1984:383). However, while the design of the palace and outbuildings adhered to neoclassical formalism, absent is the strict adherence to Cartesian planning and golden ratios across the royal complex as a whole (Brinchmann et al. 1985). Sans-Souci gestured, therefore, to the architectural aesthetics of power that gripped the Atlantic world in this period, yet its planners forwent the kind of visual impact fostered by rigid Palladian rules of perspective applied to landscape design, in favor of an architectural landscape loyal to the natural topography.

Yet just as the architectural assemblage projected salient reminders that Haiti had entered the modern community of nations, the objects that animated material life at Sans-Souci palace did the same work on a smaller scale. Visiting the palace eight days after Christophe’s death, the collapse of the kingdom, and the ransacking of the royal palace, Karl Ritter described the scattered vestiges of its material assemblage:

The whole first floor contained a great many halls, richly decorated according to European taste. We were astonished at the devastation here. Not infrequently, we had to step over beautiful draperies or debris from mirrors. The furniture was made of mahogany wood, the windows covered with silk curtains and the floors polished. I saw glass windows here for the first time in this country, I even encountered a few glass paintings [Glasmalereien] in the apartments. (Ritter [1836:77–79], cited and translated in Bailey [2017:88–89], emphasis added)

Thus, material culture, and specifically “European taste” in material culture, played an important role in accentuating the grandeur of the royal court.

A taste for British material culture is particularly well attested at Sans-Souci. Portraits of the royal family were commissioned by English artists, and the well-known Richard Evans painting depicts Christophe in English Regency style dress (Bailey 2017:27). Sets of fine pottery emblazoned with the royal sigil were ordered from the Spode potteries in England. One newspaper account from 1811, published in the Evening
Mail, describes an extraordinary shipment of royal regalia destined for Christophe’s court that was confiscated by British customs for underrepresenting its total value:

Seizure of Christophe’s Regalia

The seizure made at the Custom house some time ago, of the valuable articles intended for the Emperor of Hayti, excited much curiosity. A list of them has been made out, of which the following is a copy:

2. A Case Containing two Breast-plates, and a pair of Drop Earings, set with Diamonds and Emeralds.
3. A Case, containing a gold Cup.
4. A Ditto, containing a Gold Salver.
5. A Ditto, containing Diamonds and Rubies.
6. One small Gold Fillagree Stand, set with Amethysts.
7. One pair of Gold Spurs.
11. One Diamond Collar.
12. One Row of Pebble Beads and Crucifix.
13. One Chrystal, with Tassel, and Relic.
14. One Box containing sundry Diamond and Gold Pins, Brooches, Earrings, Crosses, and Watches.
15. Seven Diamond Tiaras.
16. Seven Diamond Lockets, Pins, and Rings.

(Evening Mail, Friday, December 13, 1811)

The desire for goods such as these reveals their importance for establishing a sense of status distinction and international engagement in postrevolutionary Haiti (Cole 1967; McIntosh and Pierrot 2017). However, McIntosh and Pierrot (2017), citing advertisements in British newspapers that publicized Haitian orders of British goods, have gone so far as to argue that the conspicuous consumption of English material culture, specifically, was part of an ingenious public relations campaign to gain English popular support for Haitian claims to sovereignty. Thus material culture was also implicated in attempts to gain recognition and support at the international level.

The adoption of neoclassical architectural motifs and imported material culture is particularly significant for understanding how things were complicit in assertions of Haitian sovereignty in the era of Haitian monarchy. In buying into this assemblage of material symbols, Henry Christophe and his court adopted the material language of power in Europe and its colonies, making simultaneous claims to independence and equality at the international level, yet asserting royal power and authority within his nascent state. And yet our understanding of the development of this suite of material practices is poorly documented in the historical archive, as is our appreciation of the degree to which this ideology permeated the domestic sphere. Archaeological research, discussed below, is beginning to fill the gaps in our understanding of these processes, revealing how European material culture and Afro-Caribbean traditions were assembled in elite domestic spaces in the years between the revolution and the crowning of Haiti’s second monarch.
Archaeological Research at Sans-Souci

In the early 1980s the Haitian institution ISPAN (l’Institut Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National) and UNESCO conducted an exhaustive architectural survey at Sans-Souci in preparation for its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, documenting nine major zones of visible architectural remains dating to the royal period (fig. 3). Archaeological analysis of these structures hinted at dramatic change over time, suggesting that Sans-Souci was the product of at least two major building episodes. Preliminary archaeological testing by ISPAN in the 1980s targeted the cour caitnier, a long platform that extends east to west across the palace landscape, reaching the main royal palace to the east, and the palais des ministres, a long multiroom structure aligned along the southern edge of the cour caitnier (fig. 3). ISPAN’s excavations in the palais des ministres identified the walls of a second multiroomed structure and associated staircase, hereafter referred to as the early phase building (EPB), below the final phase of construction (fig. 4). This structure extended under the cour caitnier and appeared to have been built in alignment with the palais de la reine to the northwest, suggesting that they were both part of a unified plan for the site that predated the royal phase of construction.

In 2015 the Milot Archaeological Project, a collaborative research project initiated by the University of California, Santa Cruz, the Bureau National d’Ethnologie (BNE), the Musée du Panthéon National Haitien (MUPANAH), and the Institut Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN), renewed archaeological surveys and excavations at Sans-Souci. These excavations were geared toward exploring the building chronology of the site and teasing out whether the visible structures were constructed as part of a unified plan or, rather, represented organic growth over time. Additionally, we sought to recover a sample of domestic material culture from each identified architectural phase that could inform on material consumption practices at Sans-Souci over time. This research targeted two areas of the site: the palais des ministres (area A) and the palais de la reine (area B) (fig. 3). Overall, these excavations confirmed three phases of settlement below the royal era structures. These include (1) a contact period Taino settlement, (2) an early postrevolution occupation, and (3) an architectural phase dating to the early years of Christophe’s rule. The following discussion will outline the architectural chronology of the site revealed by excavation and evidence for material consumption practices behind palace walls, highlighting how archaeological research is contributing to our

Figure 3. Plan of Sans-Souci, derived from terrestrial LiDAR (3-D scanning).
understanding of Haitian state making in the early nineteenth century.

**Architectural Chronology**

In 2015, 2017, and 2018, we reopened ISPAN’s excavations in five rooms in the *palais des ministres* (designated area A): rooms 1, 2, 3, 10, and 11. In rooms 1, 2, and 3 (area A1) (fig. 5), ISPAN’s excavations were geared toward tracing wall foundations alone, and thus substantial sections of stratified material were left intact. Excavations within this material were initiated at the floor level of the latest phase of construction, revealing a complex stratigraphic sequence including multiple phases of construction and occupation. Just below the floor levels of all three rooms, we identified layers of stone, brick, and mortar construction fill, which was deposited on a simple mortar floor (F27) that reached the walls of the EPB. Below this floor, we identified stratified layers of artifact-rich domestic midden more than a meter thick. This material passed under the foundations of the EPB and thus predated it, and contained sherds of shell-edged pearlware with scalloped edges and impressed straight lines. Production for this style of pearlware ranges from 1805 to 1830, providing a *terminus post quem* of 1805 (Miller and Hunter 1990). This midden thus postdates the revolution and corresponds to the years before large-scale construction began (represented by the EPB) at Sans-Souci. At the bottom of this midden, we identified a small stone cobble wall extending across rooms 1 and 2 (W45), over which the southern wall (W5) of the EPB was built. This midden bottomed out on a layer of silty sand devoid of artifacts.1 Excavations

1. It is also worth noting that in 2017 our excavations in room 1 continued below the level of what we thought was sterile sand. These excavations revealed a second midden containing iron fragments, cattle bones, and indigenous *meillacoides* pottery of the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. This material denotes the presence of an indigenous settlement.
In 2018, furthermore, we reopened ISPAN’s excavations in rooms 10 and 11 (designated area A2), where we identified additional analogous architectural sequence (fig. 6). ISPAN’s excavations in the 1980s revealed a stone wall and staircase in each room. Our work here in 2018 was devoted to cleaning off post-exavcation erosion and accumulated modern trash and excavating undisturbed material associated with these features. Once cleared, we identified a similar stratigraphic sequence to that identified in area A1. In room 10, for example, we identified a mortar floor associated with the final phase of construction in the palais des ministres. This floor sealed almost a meter of construction debris that, in turn, capped an earlier retaining wall of a plaster-paved terrace extending north, under the cour caittier and east into room 11. In room 11, furthermore, we were able to determine that the staircase in room 11 was slightly curved and rose from east to west, reaching the terrace identified in room 10.

Like the architectural features in area A1 to the west, these structures appear to have served as precedents for the final phase of construction at Sans-Souci. For example, the stairway leading up to the mortar-paved surface in rooms 10 and 11 finds a convenient analogy in the southern entrance to the palace itself, though on a dramatically smaller scale. Additionally, the angle of intersection produced by the walls of the two early-phase structures in areas A1 and A2 (153°) is similar to that produced by the later palais des ministres and the southern façade of the royal palace (163°). This suggests that the staircase identified may have led to an earlier palace building on site, which was covered over during the construction of the cour caittier. The final, royal phase of construction thus expanded on a general plan and principles of design that were already well established at Sans-Souci as early as the beginning of Christophe’s presidency.

In 2017 we also opened new excavations in the so-called palais de la reine (designated area B) to test the suggestion that this building was contemporary to the EPB in area A and possibly Christophe’s original palace on the site. Excavations in one square (AS24) revealed a small section of the building’s interior. Excavations across three squares (AS24, AT24, and AT23), however, revealed the piers of an exterior arcade, connected by a brick threshold that extended along the east side of the palais de la reine (fig. 7). Overall, this layout confirms Karl Ritter’s visual representation of the building, published in 1836, which shows three arches granting entrance to this arcade. Additionally, our excavations revealed the remains of a clay tile and mortar floor that extended across both the arcade and the building’s interior, as well as out onto a patio to the east. excavating through the floor material of the arcade and exterior patio, we discovered a second wall foundation. This foundation rests just to the east of the brick arcade threshold and associated stone piers, and the two features diverge by 1.5 degrees. This foundation thus represents an earlier structure, one possibly torn down during the construction of the palais de la reine. In 2018, we extended excavations in two units to the north (squares AT21 and AT22), revealing a

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in 2018 revealed a stone retaining wall and mortar-surfaced walkway south of and running parallel to the EPB.

Our excavations in area A1, therefore, reveal that the EPB and its associated walkway were constructed on top of a dump of midden material deposited after 1805. This linear arrangement of room cells, flanked by a long walkway on the south, is thus architecturally analogous to the palais des ministres constructed above, suggesting these later buildings were simply a modified version of an existing plan. We are not yet able to determine decisively whether the EPB dates to the periods of Christophe’s presidency (1807–1810) or his reign as king (1807–1820). Because historical sources suggest that the initiation of large-scale building and landscape transformation only began in 1810, a year before Christophe was crowned, it is likely that the EPB dates to this period. This sequence would put the date of the midden below to between 1805 and 1810, or the early years of political consolidation after the revolution.

with a terminal phase of occupation dating to the contact period. Unfortunately, this material was encountered on the last day of excavation in 2017 and was sealed and backfilled for future excavation.

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In 2018, furthermore, we reopened ISPAN’s excavations in rooms 10 and 11 (designated area A2), where we identified additional analogous architectural sequence (fig. 6). ISPAN’s excavations in the 1980s revealed a stone wall and staircase in each room. Our work here in 2018 was devoted to cleaning off post-exavcation erosion and accumulated modern trash and excavating undisturbed material associated with these features. Once cleared, we identified a similar stratigraphic sequence to that identified in area A1. In room 10, for example, we identified a mortar floor associated with the final phase of construction in the palais des ministres. This floor sealed almost a meter of construction debris that, in turn, capped an earlier retaining wall of a plaster-paved terrace extending north, under the cour caittier and east into room 11. In room 11, furthermore, we were able to determine that the staircase in room 11 was slightly curved and rose from east to west, reaching the terrace identified in room 10.

Like the architectural features in area A1 to the west, these structures appear to have served as precedents for the final phase of construction at Sans-Souci. For example, the stairway leading up to the mortar-paved surface in rooms 10 and 11 finds a convenient analogy in the southern entrance to the palace itself, though on a dramatically smaller scale. Additionally, the angle of intersection produced by the walls of the two early-phase structures in areas A1 and A2 (153°) is similar to that produced by the later palais des ministres and the southern façade of the royal palace (163°). This suggests that the staircase identified may have led to an earlier palace building on site, which was covered over during the construction of the cour caittier. The final, royal phase of construction thus expanded on a general plan and principles of design that were already well established at Sans-Souci as early as the beginning of Christophe’s presidency.

In 2017 we also opened new excavations in the so-called palais de la reine (designated area B) to test the suggestion that this building was contemporary to the EPB in area A and possibly Christophe’s original palace on the site. Excavations in one square (AS24) revealed a small section of the building’s interior. Excavations across three squares (AS24, AT24, and AT23), however, revealed the piers of an exterior arcade, connected by a brick threshold that extended along the east side of the palais de la reine (fig. 7). Overall, this layout confirms Karl Ritter’s visual representation of the building, published in 1836, which shows three arches granting entrance to this arcade. Additionally, our excavations revealed the remains of a clay tile and mortar floor that extended across both the arcade and the building’s interior, as well as out onto a patio to the east. excavating through the floor material of the arcade and exterior patio, we discovered a second wall foundation. This foundation rests just to the east of the brick arcade threshold and associated stone piers, and the two features diverge by 1.5 degrees. This foundation thus represents an earlier structure, one possibly torn down during the construction of the palais de la reine. In 2018, we extended excavations in two units to the north (squares AT21 and AT22), revealing a

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Figure 5. Views of MAP (Milot Archaeological Project) excavations in the Palais des Ministres, area A1. Top, View of Early Phase Building (EPB) under rooms 2 and 3 of the Palais des Ministres taken from the southeast. Bottom, View of the walkway running parallel to the EPB under room 3 of the Palais des Ministres taken from the south.
Figure 6. Views of MAP excavations in the Palais des Ministres, area A2. Left, View of the platform identified under room 10 (taken from the south). Right, View of the stone and brick staircase discovered under room 11 (taken from the south).

Figure 7. Plan of MAP excavations in the Palais de la Reine, area B1, showing arcade threshold and piers, clay tile floors throughout the structure, and carriage tracks extending south from an exterior patio.
nearly identical stratigraphic sequence. In square AT22 our excavations identified another earlier structure of unknown function positioned in alignment with the foundation described above (fig. 8).

This earlier foundation was dug into a layer of construction fill composed of a mix of soil, stone, broken brick, fragmented roof tiles, both clay and white marble tiles, and a range of artifact types that extended across all units. The assemblage of artifacts recovered in this layer was essentially identical to that collected in the Christophe-era midden of area A, yet the high frequency of fragmentary structural debris suggests an existing building was torn down nearby in the process of leveling the area. Fragments of the same diagnostic pearlware with even scalloped edges and impressed straight lines identified in the midden of area A were also recovered in this fill. Therefore, the fill upon which both buildings in area B were constructed must date after 1805. Thus the palais de la reine itself cannot have been constructed at the same time as the EPB in area A; however, this earlier structure identified very well may have been. Vergniaud Leconte wrote that Christophe’s first building was, in fact, located on the site of the palais de la reine (Leconte 1931:338), and it is possible that we have identified the “superb home” described by Norbert Thoret (Nouët, Nicollier, and Nicollier 2013:47). All of this is to say that in a decade of construction, Christophe managed to refashion the landscape at Sans-Souci at least three times, suggesting an evolution and expansion of the use of these architectural tools of power over time and drawing from an overall plan that was already well established.

Figure 8. Views of MAP excavations in the Palais de la Reine, area B1. Left, View of a wall foundation in squares AT21 and AT22 situated below the exterior patio of the royal era building (from the north). Right, View of earlier phase construction in square AT22 extending under the exterior patio and carriage tracks of the royal era building (from the east). Note the natural rocky surface at the bottom of both excavation units.

Domestic Assemblages

The artifact assemblages recovered from these contexts allow us to begin to characterize the material aspects of everyday life at Sans-Souci in the period between the revolution and the royal era (1805–1810). Excavations in areas A and B have recovered over 14,000 artifacts, including iron, ceramic, glass, animal bone, copper, lead, and stone objects. The domestic material recovered in middens and construction fills of areas A and B can thus tell us quite a bit about international trade, local production, and cultural traditions in the years between the revolution and the commencement of monumental building activity at Sans-Souci in 1810.

The quantity and diversity of imported ceramics in this assemblage is notable, particularly given the numerous trade embargoes forced on Haiti in the years after 1804 (fig. 9). One interesting aspect of the ceramic assemblage is the presence of large numbers of late eighteenth-century French faience and lead-glazed earthenwares, which make up approximately 30% of the assemblage. It is possible that sets of French pottery were collected from old colonial sites and reused at Sans-Souci. Such reclamation strategies are readily acknowledged in reference to military hardware and artillery, specifically French cannons (Rocourt 2009:149). Additionally, during the construction of the Citadelle, General Christophe commanded one colonel to organize farm laborers to disassemble bricks from abandoned plantations across the Plaine du Nord (Bailey 2017:73). Such sites were seen as assemblages of resources that could be reused within the new polity, and it is not inconceivable that
quotidian objects such as tablewares were also strategically collected from French Plantation sites, possibly from Habitation Milot itself.

Additionally, however, refined English wares are visible also in the assemblage. Small quantities of English creamwares and pearlwares stand out (14% of the assemblage). Similarly, ongoing analysis of the industrially produced coarse wares (18% of the assemblage) suggests that 72% are of a type manufactured in London (Jillian Galle, personal communication, 2018). Haiti actively sought to expand trade with Great Britain via Jamaican ports in this period, and Julia Gaffield (2015) has described an extensive clandestine trade with port colonies such as Curacao and St. Thomas. The English pottery excavated in both areas A and B seems to attest to such trading opportunities. Overall, the assemblage largely lacks matching sets and is quite heterogeneous, supporting the notion that these items arrived on palace grounds through either opportunistic or clandestine means. However, this early evidence of a preference for English material culture stands as an important precedent for efforts to expand trade with England during Christophe’s reign as King.

However, locally produced ceramics with clear Afro-Caribbean inspirations have been identified in our excavations. For one, the assemblage contained a number of locally produced tobacco pipes (fig. 9). Tobacco pipes produced in England or Holland were typically made with diagnostic kaolin clay that fires bright white, and approximately 71% of the pipes recovered fit into this category. The remainder, however, were made in local brown clays and were characterized by forms not encountered in European examples. These pipes were also heavily decorated with stamps and thin lines of punctate incisions. A number of these pipes were shaped in faceted geometric forms, and all were of the short stem variety. Short-stemmed pipes are commonly found in contact period West African contexts and occasionally recovered Afro-Caribbean sites (Handler 1983; Monroe 2002; Ozanne 1964), indicating the survival of African inspired smoking traditions in postrevolutionary Haiti. Additionally, large numbers of handmade, low-fired, grit-tempered, globular cooking vessels with scalloped shoulder decorations were recovered in both areas (34% of the ceramic vessel assemblage) (fig. 9Q–T). These pots are similar in every way to African-derived potting traditions across the Caribbean and strongly suggest an Afro-Caribbean source for cooking traditions at Sans-Souci. Despite the large-scale adoption of “European taste” in the architectural and artifactual records, potting and pipe making represent clear evidence for local, African-inspired traditions at Sans-Souci in its early years of occupation after the revolution.

While the style of these cooking vessels is suggestive, even more important is what went into them. Archaeologists have noted that faunal assemblages associated with the African diaspora are characterized by high rates of chop marks and overall fragmentation, representing a diet based largely on stews, as well as much greater species diversity, including a prevalence of wild fauna (Franklin 2001; Heinrich 2012; McKee 1999). Our excavations have recovered nearly 1,300 animal bone fragments, of which 463 specimens recovered in the midden in area A were identified by David Ingleman (Ingleman 2015; Monroe 2017). This faunal assemblage suggests that site occupants drew from a broad faunal resource base (fig. 10). The

Figure 9. Ceramic artifacts from MAP excavations at Sans-Souci. Left, Domestic pottery. A–B, lead-glazed earthenware; C–D, stoneware; E–G, French faience (tin-glazed earthenware); H–I, English creamware; J–M, English pearlware; N–P, wheel-thrown unglazed coarse earthenware; Q–T, handmade Afro-Caribbean ware. Right, Locally produced decorated tobacco pipes with short geometric stems.
assemblage is dominated by barnyard animals (cow, goat, pig, and chicken). However, smaller quantities of wild terrestrial fauna and marine resources (including marine fish and mollusks) are also represented. Additionally, the mammalian assemblage includes both forelimbs, hind limbs, and axial elements, indicating that at least a portion of the domesticates were locally raised and butchered. Cut marks were identified on 11.5% of the mammal bone specimens and 6% of the avian assemblage, a pattern consistent with culinary practices in which meat was chopped and prepared in stews rather than sawed and roasted over an open flame. High-quality meals prepared at Sans-Souci, therefore, were prepared in ways that had deep cultural roots in Afro-Caribbean cuisine.

Conclusions

The archaeology of slavery in the Atlantic world has expanded its intellectual terrain substantially in recent decades. Once restricted to questions of cultural continuity and creolization on plantations of the American South, archaeologists are now exploring political, economic, and cultural entanglements on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as the material lives that Africans and African-Americans built after slavery. The archaeology of slavery has thus adopted a truly global perspective that is yielding a new understanding of the formation of the colonial world and its lasting legacies. Although the quest for individual freedom and personal sovereignty have emerged as central themes in new research agenda, scholars have rarely examined the new political formations that took root in the wake of emancipation. Haiti, oft-cited exemplar of state making in the ashes of colonial slavery, is particularly well situated to answer important questions about the materiality of sovereignty seeking in the past.

In this paper, I have emphasized that sovereignty depends fundamentally on establishing firm control over territories, building international affiliations and alliances, and establishing novel forms of status distinction among audiences of subjects. The aforementioned discussion of historical and architectural evidence from the Kingdom of Haiti provides a new appreciation of the complex intersections of culture, politics, and economics in the decades following the Haitian Revolution. Monumental architecture and luxury goods were adopted to send targeted messages to subjects and sovereigns alike. Buildings were a central component of strategies to embrace the Enlightenment ideology of universal liberty. At Sans-Souci, this ideology was most clearly materialized in the incorporation of neoclassical facades and architectural elements, the symbolic currency of the day for expressing universal liberty and cultural modernity. At the same time, however, the massive scale of the site sent clear messages of royal power and status distinction to Haitian citizens across the kingdom. Architecture served as an active agent in the production of political sovereignty in Haiti. This new Haitian elite sought to fill their domestic spaces with material culture manufactured in Europe, reflecting a set of consumer practices embraced universally by mercantile elites living around the Atlantic world. Imported wealth, sequestered behind palace walls, thereby served to accentuate social distance between ruler and the ruled. Neoclassical architectural motifs, and imported material culture, were thereby domesticated to serve decidedly Haitian political agendas.

Importantly, these practices can be traced back to the intervening years between the end of the revolution (1804) to the transition to monarchy in Christophe’s Haiti (1811), suggesting an evolution and expansion of the use of these material symbols as tools of power over time. Indeed, ongoing archaeological research at Sans-Souci, which builds on previous work by Haitian authorities, has identified multiple layers of occupation extending back to the contact era, including two phases of occupation that date between the revolution and the royal era (1805–1810). Excavations within middens dating to this period have revealed large quantities of imported items from France and, to a lesser degree, Great Britain. This
material reflects the complex networks of exchange upon which Christophe depended to acquire imported material culture but may also reveal initial efforts by Christophe to establish mercantile connections with Great Britain. However, just as Christophe was beginning to experiment with material symbols of power deployed by communities across the Atlantic world, Afro-Caribbean cultural practices continued unabated within domestic contexts, providing salient reminders of the African roots of this experiment in political independence. Indeed, the preparation of wild and domestic fauna, cooked in Afro-Caribbean vessels and served on French and English plates, represents the emergence of an Afro-creole diet at Sans-Souci, one that speaks to a deeply rooted Afro-Caribbean cultural transcript unfolding in Haiti after the revolution.

Sovereignty in the Kingdom of Haiti thus represents a form of creolization at the political scale, providing a new vista from which to appreciate the nature of political movements in the Age of Revolutions. However, a number of key questions remain. Does the presence of older French pottery in this earlier phase reflect a pattern whereby Christophe reintroduced colonial material culture into his cupboards? Does the large-scale discard of this material represent a pattern of “cleaning house” as his later complex was built, and what do the corresponding domestic assemblages look like? Does the large quantity of locally produced tobacco pipes and handmade Afro-Caribbean wares speak to an expansion of local economic networks? Would these cultural traditions be rejected in later years, following the construction of the neoclassical palace façade? There is clearly much more work to be done to answer these and other questions to our fullest ability. What is clear, however, is the extent to which Christophe’s court creatively assembled European and Afro-Caribbean material traditions to assert their claims to Haitian sovereignty in the years after the Haitian Revolution.

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From the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Contemporary Ethnoracial Law in Multicultural Ecuador

The “Changing Same” of Anti-Black Racism as Revealed by Two Lawsuits Filed by Afrodescendants

Jean Muteba Rahier

In this article, I examine the unfolding—within and beyond a court of law—of two relatively recent litigations initiated by Afrodescendants, in which two different antidiscrimination legal instruments provided the grounding for the cases’ “resolutions.” The argument suggests that contemporary ethnoracial legal instruments have failed to interrupt the reproduction of structural racism, or of what Tanya Hernández has called “race regulation customary law.” One of the lessons of this essay is certainly to point to anti-Black racism’s resilience, as it transforms itself as needed to better survive in also changing sociopolitical configurations. The essay uncovers the continuing operations of the Ecuadorian racial order in the very spaces and situations—the courtrooms of the justice system and beyond—where it is supposed to be combated, frontally. It reveals the inadequacy of contemporary antidiscrimination legal instruments to deal more holistically with the many facets of the situation and impacts of anti-Black racism and race regulation customary law on Afrodescendants’ affects and emotions, and the making and remaking of their precarity.

In this article, I examine the unfolding—within and beyond a court of law—of two relatively recent litigations initiated by Afrodescendants, in which two different antidiscrimination legal instruments provided the grounding for the cases’ resolutions. In doing so, I suggest that contemporary ethnoracial legal instruments have failed to interrupt the reproduction of structural racism, or of what Tanya Hernández has called “race regulation customary law” (Hernández 2013). One of the lessons of this essay is certainly to point to anti-Black racism’s resilience as it transforms itself as needed to better survive in also changing sociopolitical configurations. I contend that the circumstances of Black Ecuadorians illustrate well the state of affairs of Afrodescendants in the Andean subregion (mostly Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia).

An African origin, which is not seen as positive in mainstream Ecuadorian society, and the highly negative value ascribed to coming from a lineage linked to the experiences of enslavement sustain the many expressions of Ecuadorian anti-Black racism and the construction of Afro-Ecuadorians as “ultimate Others” (Rahier 2003, 2011, 2014). Afro-Ecuadorians live within national borders while remaining extraneous to mainstream and popular understandings of Ecuadorian national identity. Their “up-rootedness” from Africa contrasts with indigenous peoples’ “rooted-ness” in the Americas. Unlike Afrodescendants, indigenous people have been seen as an unavoidable ingredient in the “ideological biology of national identity” (Rahier 2019:175–198) that reifies mestizaje (exclusively White and indigenous “race mixing”) as prototypical national identification (see also Greene 2007a, 2007b). This essay shows how much ideological mestizaje continues to do its work within the Ecuadorian configuration of multiculturalism (Rahier 2012).

The argument developed acknowledges the significance of the emergence of the “new Latin American constitutionalism” (Herrera 2015; Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012; see also Rahier 2019) that marked the spread of the “multicultural turn” in the history of the region’s race relations from the 1980s onward. However, as shown below, relatively recently adopted ethnoracial law does not really tackle race regulation customary law that facilitates Ecuadorian anti-Black racism’s reproduction in multicultural Ecuador, in a multitude of state organs’ institutional processes, and in many individuals’ behaviors and attitudes, despite the existence of well-meaning and relatively new ethnoracial legal instruments. The examination of the two cases in focus here reveals that even during attempts to use such instruments in court to correct the wrongs Afrodescendants

1. To express that idea in this essay’s title, I borrowed Paul Gilroy’s notion of the “changing same” (Gilroy 1991).

2. This is notwithstanding the mistreatments indigenous people also endure.

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suffered because of racial discrimination, race regulation customary law is at work to secure the reproduction of the racial order. This is visible in so many details of the very unfolding of the cases and in the way the court-ordered resolutions are actually observed or not. Race regulation customary law inserts itself in these legal processes even though the lexicons some of the sociopolitical actors involved used to construct the facts in focus might not have made direct reference to “race,” and have instead pointed to mental, moral, or physical (dis-)abilities, “education,” or “commonsense preparedness” (nivel de preparación).

I understand “ethnoracial law” to encompass (1) the articles of constitutions and special laws—adopted since the late 1980s—that recognize and define identity-based collective rights (generally over land or “territory,” cultural practices, and perspective), and which make what is usually called “multicultural legal instruments,” which sanction the right to be “plurivally” or “decolonially” different and (2) the constitutional articles and special laws often referred to as “racial equality law” or “antidiscrimination law” adopted by constituent assemblies and by municipal, provincial, or departmental, national, and international or multilateral governing bodies that criminalize hate crimes and discrimination to guarantee the protection of Afrodescendants’ rights and to remedy wrongs they have experienced (the right to be the same). This distinction between the right to be different and the right to be the same has had notable relevance in Brazil. It has been so particularly when considering debates about political strategies within Black social movements, whereas—generally speaking—representatives of urban Black communities and individuals are more animated by the struggle to secure the right to be the same, and rural communities and individuals are more inclined to fighting for the right to be different (see Butler 1998; Hanchard 1994, 1999; Paschel 2016; Pinho 2010; Rapoport Delegation 2008; Sansone 2003; and many others).

In Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil (2016), Tianna Paschel proposes a categorical dichotomization of what she calls two different “political field alignments,” which she conceptualizes as two separate and mutually exclusive politico-legal discourses of “ethno-racial collective rights” (or “multicultural rights”) on one side, and “racial equality law” on the other, which correspond to the two categories of legal instruments brought by Latin America’s new constitutionalism, which I identified above. Each political field alignment results from the combination of domestic politics with the politics of the “global ethno-racial field.” Determined to take distance from the many Latin Americanist scholars who identify both “political field alignments” with the multicultural turn because they see their intents as falling within the scope of Latin America’s new constitutionalism for the benefit of rural (collective rights) and urban (racial equality law) Afrodescendants, Paschel sees these two political field alignments as occurring at two different time periods: the late 1980s and the 1990s for the “multicultural alignment” and the 2000s for the “racial equality law alignment.” When considering the Latin American region as a whole and moving beyond the particularities of this or that specific national context (Brazil or Colombia, e.g.), one can undeniably see in virtually all relevant constitutional reforms or in the adoption of new constitutions—including the Brazilian and Colombian cases—articles prohibiting racial and other discriminations prominently placed alongside articles recognizing ethnoracially based collective rights. Legal scholars consider the recognition of “ethnoracial collective rights” and the adoption of “legal protection against racial and other discriminations” as two aspects of the new Latin American constitutionalism, as two different threads of a single multicultural project to reorganize society. When consulting recent constitutional reforms and adoptions of new constitutions, one can appreciate that both sets of preoccupations and instruments have characterized Latin American multiculturalisms and new constitutionalism since their very beginning. As I argue elsewhere (Rahier 2019), what Paschel calls the “multicultural alignment” and the “racial equality law alignment” should be seen as the two faces (one rural and the other urban) of the same coin and not as two antithetical processes.

The first litigation officially began when Afro-Ecuadorian organizations and individuals filed a complaint for discrimination with the Superintendencia de la Información y Comunicación or SUPERCOM (Superintendence of Communication) against the White-mestizo political caricaturist Xavier (Bonill) Bonilla for his caricature of Afro-Ecuadorian National Assemblyman Agustín (Tin) Delgado, from the political party Alianza País (AP). It was published on August 5, 2014, in the newspaper El Universo (an outlet aligned with the opposition to Rafael Correa’s AP government). The case was found receivable under the Communication Law (ley orgánica de comunicación). The second litigation was initiated by former military cadet Afro-Ecuadorian Michael Arce and his mother, Liliana Mendez, for racial discrimination and hate crime committed on Arce by the “White-mestizo” Lieutenant Fernando Encalada, an instructor at the Escuela Superior Militar Eloy Alfaro or ESMIL (Superior Military School Eloy Alfaro, the primary Ecuadorian military school to form officers). On March 28, 2012, the Ombudsman’s Office sent its investigation report to the Office of the Prosecutor to document that a human rights crime had been committed against Arce and recommended further legal action. The prosecutor initiated an investigation of Encalada and the ESMIL, pressed charges, and

3. About the “pluriverse,” see Escobar (2018); for a discussion of “decoloniality,” see Mignolo and Walsh (2018).

4. Rafael Correa was Ecuador’s president from 2007 to 2017.
5. Since then, on December 18, 2018, under long-standing pressure from numerous segments of society and from international organisms, the Ecuadorian National Assembly voted in favor of profound reforms of the Communication Law. One of these reforms consisted in eliminating the SUPERCOM altogether (Higuera 2018).
overcame a number of obstacles to finally lead the case to a successful outcome. This was the very first time the penal code was used to remedy racial discrimination against an Afro-descendant in Ecuador. At the conclusion of the trial in the National Court of Justice, Encalada was found guilty, condemned to five months and four days in prison (the duration of which he had already served preventively while the case was underway), and court-ordered to arrange with the ESMIL’s support a public apology ceremony to Arce.6

My article’s argument is not aimed at investigating the genealogy of Ecuador’s anti-racist discourse or to discuss the origin(s) of the social mobilization about race in the country. Instead, its objective is to question the practice of the Ecuadorian justice system and explore the actual application of antidiscrimination legal instruments, between 7 years (for the Communication Law) and 11 years (for the Penal Code) after their formal adoption, to provide a remedy to Afrodescendants in defense of their rights. My exploration uncovers the continuing operations of the Ecuadorian racial order in the very spaces and situations—the courtrooms of the justice system and beyond—where it is supposed to be combated, frontally. It reveals the inadequacy of contemporary antidiscrimination legal instruments to deal more holistically with the many facets and impacts of anti-Black racism and race regulation customary law. These include their effects on Afrodescendants’ affects and emotions and the making and remaking of their precarity.7 Afrodescendants in Ecuador or anywhere else should have, like anyone else, the right to enjoy respect and to live joyful and constructive lives.

Anti-Black Racism and Race Regulation Customary Law from Monocultural Mestizaje to Multiculturalism and Ethnoracial Law

Unlike what took place with the Jim Crow laws at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States and with the apartheid laws of the 1950s in South Africa—which organized and enforced racial hierarchy and segregation—racial regulation, the reproduction of a racial/spatial order, and the clear drawing of racial lines in Latin American countries were generally not established by a set of written laws per se. Instead, they were put in place, performed, maintained, and protected by customary law and practice, with open support and conformance from state organs and individual bureaucrats, state coercive forces, and the justice system. In short, here “customary law” refers to unwritten law that reflects long-established practices, usages, and traditions of a local or national “community” and that general law might consider as a lawful practice (Hernández 2013:11–12).

I follow Tanya Hernández (2013:13–14) when she explains that the concept of “customary law and practices” she works with is not aligned with what anthropologists have sometimes called “traditional law” when referring to the indigenous legal systems in Latin America that happened to clash with the settler colonial and postcolonial state’s legal regimes, but that the contemporary multicultural state eventually accommodates, within certain limits (Andrade 2017; Sieder and Barrera 2017; Stephen 2008; Thomas 2016; Velasco 2017). Instead, the concept of “customary law” useful here points to the set of values, beliefs, and practices the colonial and postcolonial states use to systematically ground their decisions and interventions to implement, reproduce, and administer a particular socioeconomic and racial order for the long-standing benefit of identified White and White-mestizo elites in multiracial and multiethnic societies. Customary law does not need to be written to be binding, and in the Latin American region it is the “deployment of state resources (with policing of racial segregation and dedication of financial incentives for European immigration) [that] is the key factor for transforming social convention into customary law” (Hernández 2013:14).

Latin American race regulation customary law has naturalized a racial hierarchy of White supremacy that continues to impact all sectors of such societies. That hierarchization is in many ways grounded on the former colonies’ multiple legal regimes, whereas indigenous peoples, African slaves, and European settlers were each subjected to different sets of laws (Hooker 2005; Lynch 1992; Wade 1997), and where European laws—reserved for European settlers and their descendants—were considered as existing in a superior state of being. This colonial and hierarchical legal order was further compounded by the fact that Europeans and their descendants oversaw, regulated, and managed the practice of all other legal regimes. White supremacy continues to be a fundamental characteristic of Latin American societies.

During “monocultural mestizaje”—the period that preceded the late 1980s and the beginning of the “multicultural turn” in the region—no Latin American constitution acknowledged ethnoracial and cultural diversity in national populations. In that regard, they followed republican constitutional models imported from Europe and the United States, and their texts exposed a striking assumption of ethnoracial national uniformity,8 despite the unavoidable and characteristic ethnoracial diversity of all Latin American national populations, from colonial beginnings onward. In Ecuador, as has also been common in the region, such a constitutional

6. I have published on these two legal cases elsewhere from a different perspective with Jhon Antón Sánchez (Rahier and Antón Sánchez 2019).
7. Here, “precarity” is fundamentally concerned with the politics of inclusion and exclusion and points to the way we humans depend on the affective labor of others and on institutionalized forms of recognition to sustain our positive and constructive survival.
8. This assumption is shared by various scholars of nationalism working at that time, and particularly by Benedict Anderson (1991 [1983]) in his work on nations as “imagined communities.” For a critique of Anderson’s silence about nations’ ethnoracial diversity and diasporas, see Smith (2010).


silence about ethnoracial diversity aligned well with the ideology of national identity promoted by national elites and the state, which proclaimed the mestizo(a) (mixed-race individual of Spanish/European-Indigenous ancestry) as Ecuador’s prototypical national identity (see Rahier 2003, 2014:65–88; Silva 1995; Stutzman 1981; Whitten 1981:10–28). That ideological reification of mestizaje was directly inscribed within the framework of White supremacy, as it relegated indigenous identities to the national past while keeping Blackness at bay entirely, outside understandings of the nation. This produced a peculiar “ideological biology of national identity” that somehow acknowledges and incorporates indigenous contributions according to the logic of Whitening (blanqueamiento) while erasing any possible African and Afro-Ecuadorian influences. Here is always a scale of, or degrees of, alterity at work.

Constitutional silencing of ethnoracial diversity officially came to an end with the “Latin American multicultural turn” (Rahier 2012) and the advent of what legal scholars have called the “new Latin American constitutionalism,” which reached Ecuador with the adoption of the 1998 constitution. Indeed, the very first line of that constitution’s Article 1 states that “Ecuador is a social, sovereign, unitary, independent, democratic, pluricultural and multietnic state subjected to the rule of law.” Its Article 83 goes further by bringing more specificity: “The indigenous peoples, who define themselves as nationalities of ancestral roots, and the black or Afro-Ecuadorian peoples, are part of the Ecuadorian State, unique and indivisible.” For the very first time, the 1998 constitution mentioned in various articles the existence of indigenous people and languages, Afrodescendants, and Montubios. It recognized collective rights for indigenous peoples and also—in specific circumstances—possibly for “Afro-Ecuadorians.”

The multicultural turn was further confirmed in Ecuador with the September 2008 adoption through popular referendum of a new 494-articles-long constitution previously approved by a constituent assembly installed after the first election of Rafael Correa as Ecuador’s president in 2006 (he took office in 2007). The 2008 Ecuadorian constitution emerged out of the utopian effervescence that accompanied Correa’s electoral victory, which was successfully carried over with the support of a leftist mult organizational movement self-identified as a “citizens’ revolution” (revolución ciudadana) and which involved—among others—various groups of indigenous

people and their organizations and Afrodescendants and their organizations (Antón Sánchez 2013, 2018; de la Torre 2006, 2010; de la Torre and Conaghan 2009; Rahier 2011).

The First Case: Afrodescendant Organizations and Individuals versus Bonil and El Universo

The first “legal case” was an administrative process overseen by a state organ (the SUPERCOM) that is led by a superintendent and functions as a national administrative overseer of all communication medias, and also at times as a communication medias administrative tribunal where the parties usually come with attorney representation. It receives complaints, organizes the necessary hearings (which function as court hearings do), and reaches obligatory resolutions in application of the Communications Law.¹¹

Both the sociopolitical actors involved and the general public have made sense of the facts of the case by locating them in one of two different “fields of meaning”: the “freedom of speech-elitist view of National Assembly” field and the “long history of anti-Black racist representations in the Ecuadorian press” field. Inscribing the case in one or the other field led to completely different readings that use different frames of reference. Interestingly, at specific moments in the unfolding of the case, and particularly during the hearings organized by the SUPERCOM, some of these actors faced each other looking at the same things from obviously unrelated perspectives, grounding their pronouncements and legal arguments in two dissimilar matrices.

The case began with a speech that Assemblyman Tin Delgado gave during the 277th session of the National Assembly on May 6, 2014.¹² The difficulty with which he read a text that he had undoubtedly not written left everyone in the audience bewildered. His painful-to-watch reading performance was videotaped and uploaded on different websites by opponents of Correa with the intention to ridicule Tin Delgado’s struggle with reading correctly words he was obviously discovering and


¹¹. The Communications Law was published in the Official Register on June 25, 2013. Various of its articles are directly aimed at criminalizing and punishing discrimination. Articles 61 and 62, which are cited in this case, further elaborate on discrimination.

¹². Agustín (Tin) Delgado is an Afro-Ecuadorian man born in 1974 in Ambuquí, in the Chota-Mira Valley (Northern Ecuadorian Andes). He is a retired national soccer player and is quite famous in Ecuador for having been a record scorer: 31 goals in 71 games. He is particularly revered for having brought glory to the Ecuadorian national futbol (soccer) team at the 2006 FIFA World Cup (Rahier 2014:175–190). For the 2013 legislative election, he was selected by Rafael Correa’s party to run for a seat for the Province of Imbabura, in which his native Chota-Mira Valley expands. Due to his enormous popularity, he was easily elected on the AP list to the National Assembly along with other former Afro-Ecuadorian soccer players. He decided to leave active politics at the end of his first and only term. There is no doubt that this case left him emotionally wounded.
probably not understanding. The video immediately became “viral” on social media and provoked thousands of commentaries, most of which mocked Delgado.

With that speech, Tin Delgado projected onto the national and international scenes the poor quality of the school system and the economic difficulties many face in his native Chota-Mira Valley—one of the Black areas of the country. His difficulty to read evoked the image of young boys and girls dropping out of primary school to help with urgent household necessities. Despite having been very successful to the point of reaching national and international fame in one of the two avenues usually opened to Afrodescendants in Latin America for the performance of excellence (music and sports), he was put back down and was told that he does not belong to his country’s National Assembly because of his lack of education.

I interviewed Bonil in 2015 about this case. He explained that it is the virulence of the outcry in the social media criticizing Tin Delgado for being in the National Assembly despite his limited education that inspired him to publish, three months after the speech, on August 5, 2014, a couple of images to summarize the substance of that discontent. The caricature (see fig. 1) actually uses two photographs showing Tin Delgado in suit and tie, on which Bonil superimposed two text balloons, one for each photograph. The first balloon mostly evokes Tin’s stuttering his speech out, while the second continues a monologue begun in the first balloon: “With my speech everyone tells me ‘poor Tin, poor Tin.’ But with my congressman’s salary, no one can say that I am poor.”

The publication of the caricature provoked many reactions in Ecuador and in the Ecuadorian diaspora. Many criticized Rafael Correa and the AP for the political “maneuvering” that led to the inclusion of “uneducated but popular” soccer players in their list of candidates to the National Assembly “just” to secure a majority.

Bonil told me that with this caricature his intention was to criticize an assemblyman from Rafael Correa’s party who, “regardless of his racial identity,” was unduly and undeservedly paid a major salary with taxpayers’ money. The fact that Delgado could barely read was the best proof there was: the National Assembly is for “educated people” only, those who are not do not belong there. In many settler societies (and beyond), the lack of formal education has often been brandished to keep ethnoracial minorities away from instances of power and affect—whether in their theorizing of race and affect—a “racialized empowering affect” (see conclusions below). During our conversation, Bonil never acknowledged comprehending in any way what in his position and what in his caricature was problematic. Defending his right to publish whatever he would like to say had to be protected in the name of the defense of freedom of speech. This case, from his perspective, was no different from previous occurrences when Correa also attacked him and El Universo for publishing other caricatures making fun of him.

On his Twitter account, Tin ignored the words of El Universo and rejected Bonil’s “apologies” for not being sincere. This brought Bonil to apologize a second time on his Twitter account later the same day (El Universo 2014a). That day as well, Ecuador’s president accused Bonil and El Universo of anti-Black racism (El Universo 2014b). Correa repeated his accusation of racism during his following Saturday radio show and announced that “the law will have to be applied” to censurate them (Bonil and El Universo).

Bonil’s and El Universo’s legal counsel negated that racism had anything to do with that particular vignette of Bonil’s column. They adopted a defense strategy that consisted of brandishing the press’s right of freedom of speech, “as it should exist in all civilized democracies,” adding that it is not because an assemblyman is Black that one may not criticize him, and that we must continue to talk truth to power no matter the ethnic or racial identity of the politician (see Gándara Gallegos 2015; Herrera 2015).

The years of Rafael Correa’s presidency—2006–2017—(particularly the earlier ones) saw the consolidation and development of various sectors of the middle class in Ecuador (El Telégrafo 2012, 2013; Jaramillo 2014). The growth during

14. See http://www.eluniverso.com/2014/08/05/caricatura/3323116/bonil (accessed April 17, 2017). Ecuadorian congressmen and congresswomen make about US$6,000.00 per month. With that salary, they must cover some of their expenses.
15. All translations from Spanish to English are mine.
18. Throughout his various terms in office, Correa maintained a contentious relationship with the press in general (see Economist 2014).
those same years of a relatively small, mostly urban Afro-Ecuadorian middle class that highly values education (many have law, medical, master’s, and doctoral degrees) explains the emotional investment behind the filing of the legal case against Bonil and El Universo. For the complainants, all members of that emerging urban-based Black middle class, watching the video of the speech Tin gave to the National Assembly, his struggling to simply read a text, and most importantly the virulence of the many condemning commentaries against him published in the printed press and online, recalled anti-Black stereotypical images they had to painfully confront more than once in their own lives, despite their obtaining higher-education degrees. Tin’s national notoriety for his exploits in the Ecuadorian national team during the 2006 FIFA World Cup (Rahier 2014:175–198) further incentivized the complainants’ identification with him. Afro-Ecuadorian national figures are so few and far between that those who have national notoriety tend to acquire a symbolic quality that includes the entire Afro-Ecuadorian group of origin in its scope. An assault against one of them—particularly through the publishing of a caricature that taps so obviously in a repertoire of racist stereotypes—is recognized immediately as direct violence against Afro-Ecuadorians and Black people in general. The limited space I have here allows the reproduction of only one of these commentaries: “Bonil’s caricature expresses the anger that we all feel when we have friends or family members who study hard even with specializations and cannot get a job, while there is a person who has no idea what he read a few days ago who makes $6,000.00/month without doing anything, and they even victimize him.”

Many in Afro-Ecuadorian political activist circles agreed that something had to be done—that such a visible case could not remain without a public Afro-Ecuadorian intervention. On November 15, 2014 (that is to say, more than six months after Tin Delgado’s speech and three months after Bonil’s caricature), an Afro-Ecuadorian attorney, Alodia Borja, filed the case with the SUPERCOM on behalf of Afro-Ecuadorian individuals and organizations. The complaint repeated the text of the two balloons in the caricature before stating that the case was “a clear violation of Articles 61 and 62, . . . of the Communication Law, for disseminating discriminatory messages that denote apology of discrimination or incitement of the population to perform discriminatory acts” (emphasis in the original; Procedimiento Administrativo Nø. 0129-2014-INPSDNJRD). She then continued providing commentaries left in the press in print and online as many examples of discriminatory acts incited—and this goes to the core of her legal theory—by Bonil’s caricature. The limited space I have here allows the reproduction of only one of these commentaries: “Bonil’s caricature expresses the anger that we all feel when we have friends or family members who study hard even with specializations and cannot get a job, while there is a person who has no idea what he read a few days ago who makes $6,000.00/month without doing anything, and they even victimize him.”

The SUPERCOM found the case receivable and decided to hold an Audiencia de Sustentación (a hearing for both parties to present arguments and evidence) on February 9, 2015. Throughout the case, from beginning to end, and particularly...
during that hearing, Bonil’s and El Universo’s defense consisted of invoking the inalienable freedom of speech. The plaintiffs, on the other hand, presented a narrative projecting a perspective that had to be listened to in the space of intercultural discussions or tensions the case had opened up in multiculturalist Ecuador.

For the February 9, 2015, hearing, the defense of Bonil and El Universo hired the services of a dark-skinned Afro-Ecuadorian attorney, Lenin Hurtado, who—unlike the Afro-Ecuadorians behind the complaint filed by Alodia Borja—preferred to emphasize individual educational achievements and responsibilities over group solidarity. He shared the conviction that only “well-prepared people” can serve in the National Assembly. During my interview, Bonil made reference to Lenin Hurtado on several occasions, citing him each time as the perfect example of a “well-prepared Black man.”

For that hearing, the role of Lenin Hurtado was very simple:20 communicate two key points to the SUPERCOM and to the audience: (1) Bonil’s caricature was not racist: it was doing nothing more than emphasizing the lack of education of one assemblyman from the AP party, and (2) all state officials, including assemblymen and women, must be looked at critically, even if they are Black: in other words, being Black should not preclude a state official from being criticized.

A few days after that hearing, the SUPERCOM reached a four-point resolution that in substance found El Universo responsible for not respecting the prohibition established in Article 62 of the Communication Law, and therefore imposed on it the obligation to publish within 72 hours, in the same space where the prohibition was incurred, a public apology to the Afro-Ecuadorian groups affected by the discriminatory content due to socioeconomic condition that was broadcast on August 5, 2014.21 It also declared Bonil’s responsibility for having failed to observe the deontological norms established in the communications law, and consequently issued a written admonition reminding him of his obligation to correct and improve his practices for the full and effective exercise of the rights to communication, as established by law.

The Second Case: Michael Arce and Liliana Mendez versus Lieutenant Fernando Encalada and the Escuela Superior Militar Eloy Alfaro (Esmil)

In 2011, the 19-year-old Afro-Ecuadorian Michael Arce joined the ESMIL. His dream since childhood was to become the first Afrodescendant general ever in Ecuador. Unfortunately, since the very beginning of his recruitment as a cadet, he was physically and psychologically abused by his instructor, Lieutenant Fernando Mauricio Encalada Parrales, and by other cadets and sub-officers acting under his leadership. The bad treatment Arce suffered led him to request a discharge the same year he had been admitted. Once back home with his mother, Liliana Mendez, the ESMIL asked them to reimburse the partial scholarship payment Arce had received. Considering the outrageous treatment her son had endured, and the unfair crushing of his childhood dream, Mendez filed a complaint on behalf of both of them for mistreatment with the Ombudsman’s Office, alleging racially based discrimination and asking for the nullification of the ESMIL’s request for reimbursement. After a field investigation, that office found responsibility for violation of Arce’s human rights and referred the case to the State Prosecutor’s Office in March 2013. The Ombudsman’s report includes a two-page list of the constant abuses suffered by Arce in different circumstances and situations.22 He had to be on duty every night for a week, without possibility to rest (while the usual expectation for the other cadets was to be on duty at night no more than once a week). During training, he was ordered to enter in boxing matches against five other cadets at the same time. He ended up with broken bones. Encalada routinely ordered Arce to get in a pond with iced water and mud for many hours. He obliged the other male and female cadets to castigate Arce: they were told that they would be chastised if he did not request his discharge. He asked the peloton to insult Arce, to physically abuse him in a variety of ways. Encalada ordered Arce to guard the school outside in the cold all night with wet clothes on, to roll on wet dirt and gravel naked in front of everyone; to walk uphill for several kilometers carrying a heavy bell tower in a backpack; and to wear a sweater, poncho, and all possible garments under the sun, in hot weather. Arce was constantly abused verbally; he had less time than the other cadets to prepare for and perform activities, which always ended up in his being ridiculed in front of everyone. They accused him of being a homosexual (a demeaning insult in such a macho environment) and of being less than women. Encalada told him that a nigger will never be official in his army.

The Human Rights Directorate of the Office of the Prosecutor assumed reception of the complaint in 2012 and assigned it to the Prosecutor, Dr. Gina Gómez de la Torre. Gómez de la Torre found criminal responsibility and decided to press charges before the local court of Pichincha against the ESMIL Lieutenant, Fernando Encalada. She had gathered evidence of hate crimes according to Article 212.5 of the Penal Code in use at that time.

The chronology of events could be summarized as follows:

- September 2011—Michael Arce joins the ESMIL after successfully passing the admission tests. A few months later, he requests his discharge with the support of his mother.

20. He is the son of the late Jaime Hurtado, a national figure in Ecuadorian politics. Lenin Hurtado had been a member of the 2007 Constitu- tional Assembly for the Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD), a Marxist-Maoist political party to which his father also belonged.

• March 28, 2012—The Ombudsman’s Office sends its investigation report to the Office of the Prosecutor.

• May 21, 2012—The Office of the Prosecutor begins preliminary investigation for hate crime based on the report of the Ombudsman.

• July 3, 2013—A hearing is held to formulate charges against Encalada for the crime of racial hatred. The Sixth Court of Criminal Guarantees of Pichincha orders preventive detention against Encalada for the crime of racial hatred.

• November 19, 2013—Encalada is called to trial for racial hatred. The trial preparatory hearing is held in the Sixth Court of Penal Guarantees of Pichincha.

• December 27, 2013—The Seventh Tribunal of Criminal Guarantees of Pichincha declares Encalada innocent; he regains his freedom. This ruling is issued despite testimonial evidence and the report of two experts who deconstructed the sociological and psychological processes of the racial discrimination documented in the collected evidence of the case.

• April 10, 2014—The Office of the Prosecutor files an appeal and nullity of the judgment issued by the Seventh Tribunal of Criminal Guarantees of Pichincha. It requests the annulment of the hearing because the evidence presented at the hearing was not duly assessed to determine its decision.

• June 18, 2014—The hearing to address the appeal made by the Prosecutor’s Office against the acquittal of Encalada takes place in the Single Criminal Chamber of the Provincial Court of Justice of Pichincha.

• June 19, 2014—The Single Criminal Chamber of the Provincial Court of Pichincha denies the appeal for annulment and appeal filed by the Prosecutor’s Office.

• July 9, 2015—Gladys Terán, the Judge Rapporteur of the Special Chamber of Criminal Guarantees of the National Court of Justice, declares the constitutional nullity for lack of motivation in the sentence issued by the Chamber of the Provincial Court of Justice of Pichincha. The case returns to the Provincial Court of Pichincha for a second hearing to assess the psychological and sociological expert reports.

• November 19, 2015—Hearing for nullity and appeal hearing. In this proceeding, the judges of the Provincial Court of Justice of Pichincha sentence Encalada to 5 months and 24 days of deprivation of liberty (which is the equivalent of the time he has already served).

• March 10, 2016—The Court of the Chamber of the Provincial Court of Justice of Pichincha confirms the guilt of Encalada for the crime of racial hatred against Arce. The magistrates decide in their resolution that, as an integral reparation to the victim, the ESMIL must ask for public apologies in the framework of a military ceremony to Michael Arce. Likewise, the Armed Forces must publish the ruling in their official media, both in print and on its electronic portal. Finally, the victim, Michael Arce, and the sentenced, Fernando Encalada, will both have to receive psychological treatment. In addition, Encalada must pay damages and procedural costs.

• July 10, 2017—A two- to three-minute-long act of public apology that had been ordered by the National Court of Justice is performed by Encalada to former cadet Michael Arce. The Prosecutor’s Office, the Ombudsman’s Office, and Arce himself, together with his family, expressed their disagreement with the act: Encalada expressed his public apologies for the “alleged aggressions” of Arce, while adding that he does not agree with the sentence he received.

• July 11, 2017—The Ombudsman rejected the act of apology offered by Encalada to Michael Arce in the back parking lot of the ESMIL and asks the Court of Criminal Guarantees to objectively assess the facts and order the performance of an appropriate act (Medina 2017).

In a detailed interview,23 Gómez de la Torre explained how she had to maneuver to go around the many obstacles erected in her path by the military. The Prosecutor’s Office benefited from the report filed by the Ombudsman, who had managed to interrogate Arce’s fellow cadets without the presence of any officer. The Ombudsman’s report provided extremely valuable evidence. The prosecutor also approached former cadets who had already graduated but who were in the ESMIL when Arce was admitted. At first they agreed to testify in court, but then they changed their minds and decided not to. The prosecutor found out that they had been threatened by the ESMIL through phone calls. Another source of immense pressure for the prosecutor was when an attorney, Caupulicán Ochoa, who was also the personal attorney of Rafael Correa, Ecuador’s president, was hired by the ESMIL for representation in the case. This fact was a bit contradictory as Correa had been in a number of ideological and political conflicts with the country’s military forces.

On the day the charges were filed, July 3, 2013, as the judge prepared to make his pronouncement ordering the preventive detention of Encalada, he considered the presence of a strong military contingent in the courtroom and ordered the support of the police fearing that the military would forcefully take Encalada away in an escape attempt as soon as he pronounced his ruling. The media, convened by the Afro-Ecuadorian collectives, played an important role in turning the case of Michael Arce into a topic of national relevance. Despite losing in first and second instances, the prosecutor remained confident that she would take the case to the end if necessary. In fact, she expected that the case would surely be resolved in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), but she did not have to go there.

The examination of this case brings about the opportunity to underline the fact that the state is not a monolith and should not be fetishized. Instead, it might be more useful to see the state as having a processual nature “as a mappable constellation of social practices” (Kortright 2005). Indeed, there is no doubt that it is through the eyes and minds of citizens that the media, both in print and on its electronic portal.

state comes to existence—that is to say, as Gupta and Sharma indicated (2006)—that it is through the representations of the state that citizens carry along, reproduce, and transform in their interactions with state bureaucrats that the state lives on. And as ethnographies of the state-in-practice have shown, the bureaucrats working on behalf of various state organs might eventually be at odds with each other: they may be working to attain different, and even opposed, objectives.24

There is no doubt that in this second legal case against Encalada and the ESMIL, the prosecutor, Gina Gómez de la Torre, played a crucial role in the relatively successful outcome of the case, despite the enormous and constant pressure from the military, which never arranged a proper apology session to Michael Arce and to Afrodescendants. Above and beyond victimizing Arce, the racist acts documented in this case also oppressed and offended all Afrodescendants.

Michael Arce declared:

The experience of racism made me feel the depth of the contempt for other human beings some people have. It has been hard to see the cruelty with which people can be treated for the simple fact of being different. What encouraged me to submit the complaint was that I did not want what happened to me to be repeated again, not only with Afro-Ecuadorians, but also with anyone else. Society discriminates for many reasons, when what makes us rich as a species is that we are different. (December 21, 2017, FLACSO-Ecuador)

As I complete this manuscript, Michael Arce is a student in education at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. He now wants to be a schoolteacher.

Conclusions

The two cases reveal that the very existence of ethnoracial legal instruments—and specifically of antidiscrimination law—allows Afrodescendants to eventually initiate legal procedures for the defense of their human rights and promote their aspirations to live free of racism and prejudice. In Ecuador, they could not do that prior to the multicultural turn and the adoption of its two multicultural constitutions (1998 and 2008) and special laws. The two litigations allowed for the issue of anti-Black racism to be examined, discussed, declared unacceptable, and criminalized, somewhat disturbing, perhaps—at least momentarily—ordinary race regulation customary law.

The cases also illustrate in so many ways the continuing ordinary practice or application of race regulation customary law in contemporary everyday life, in the functioning of state organs and agencies (more so in some than in others, as shown by the trajectory of each one of the two cases), in the justice system, in media representations, and in daily interactions. Indeed, race regulation customary law can be seen at work behind the case with which media representations carry on unstedily tapping into a vast repertoire of anti-Black racist images, and behind many of the commentaries reproduced in the printed press or posted online that the publication of Boní’s caricature triggered. Race regulation customary law is also behind the conviction that Tin Delgado and people like him do not belong in the National Assembly because they are “uneducated.” It can also and obviously be seen in the discriminatory behaviors of the ESMIL instructor, Fernando Encalada, and of other military officers and cadets against Michael Arce. It “supports” the many positionings of the ESMIL and the military power structure in favor of Encalada, and consequently against the admission of Afrodescendants in the major national military school for officers of the country. It is also informing judges’ incapacity to comprehend the discriminatory acts described to them by prosecutors for what they are and their reticence to comprehend the spirit of and the use of relatively new antidiscrimination legal instruments to break the status quo and defend Afrodescendants’ human rights. It is similarly behind the decision of many judges to altogether dismiss cases involving racial discrimination soon after they are filed. As made obvious in this essay, the existence and usage of legal instruments are not enough to vanquish anti-Black racism. Reaching such an objective must also come with the adoption of context-specific social policies that contradict and confront head-on race regulation customary law and its many ordinary manifestations of anti-Black racism. Legal instruments and their application in a court of law by themselves cannot vanquish the anti-Black racism more or less hidden in the Ecuadorian “common sense.”

Both cases provide an opportunity to discuss affect and racialization, as they each come with excellent illustrations of the two cornerstone of “racialized affect” as theorized by Ulla Berg and Ana Ramos-Zayas (2015:662). One must be animated by a particular affective disposition to feel at ease to commit, knowingly or not, racist acts. Inversely, the experience of having been racialized as an outsider or as a marginalized person or group directly impacts the affective perspective of those so treated and works for the reproduction of the status quo. Berg and Ramos-Zayas distinguish between “liable affect” and “empowering affect.”

“Liable affect” [refers to] the affective practices that serve to racialize, contain, and sustain conditions of vulnerability and a constitutive element of subject formation for poor, migrant, and socially marginalized populations. . . .

“Empowering affect” [points to] the affect associated with privilege and always-already perceived as complex, nuanced, and beyond essentialism. While a conception of “liable affect” results in a simplified and essentialized “inner world” that undermines the complexity and subjectivity of populations racialized as Other, a conception of “empowering affect” perpetuates the privileged and nuanced subjectivity frequently reserved for [Whites] and Latin American self-styled Whitened elites. . . .

Undeniably, in the first case—built around the publication of Bonil’s caricature—the racialization of Tin Delgado through his representation as one more example of the uneducated and stupid Black male who is obviously out of place in the National Assembly comes imbricated with the racialization of (educated) White and White-mestizo men as the natural assemblymen and state organs’ bureaucrats, or as the intellectual journalists and caricaturists who must enjoy at all cost freedom of expression. Bonil’s interpellation of Lenin Hurtado, and Hurtado’s self-presentation—in accordance with Bonil’s legal defense strategy—as the ideal and acceptable Black man to serve in the National Assembly because of his level of education (he reads well and expresses himself orally in what is taken to be a sophisticated way) must be interpreted as participating in the same logic. In this perspective, Hurtado stands as the exception that confirms the rule. The liable affect imposed on both Tin Delgado and Michael Arce had devastating emotional consequences on both (and on many other Afrodescendants): Tin did not want to be reelected to the National Assembly, and Arce requested a discharge from the ESMIL a few months after being admitted. Lenin Hurtado’s performance of self during the February 9, 2015, hearing, and the legal argument he developed then, on the other hand, brought him the (illusion of the) benefits of “empowering affect” as he publicly distanced himself from the ethnically based argument developed by the plaintiffs and their attorney, Alodia Borja, and claimed that if one’s performance of self does not meet certain criteria, one does not belong to the National Assembly.

As shown, both complementary racialization processes that give shape to liable and empowering affects can be seen building up an ethnocratic scape where (educated) White and White-mestizo men belong to the sociopolitical and economic apex of society (including the National Assembly, the military, and other state organs) and Black men to its bottoms (except in some circumstances). Among other technologies, race regulation customary law uses the medium of education to do its work, establishing a correspondence between the “freedom of speech—elitist view of National Assembly” field of meaning and the “empowering affect” that grounds ordinary Whites’ and White-mestizos’ senses of self and their claim that “uneducated” Black men do not belong to certain societal spaces. “Although ‘empowering affect’ perpetuates privilege, such privilege has to be continuously reinvented and even developed in terms of ‘knowing’ and recreating its racialized Other” (Berg and Ramos-Zayas 2015:663).

Afrodescendants’ rejection of the “freedom of speech—elitist view of National Assembly” field of meaning to instead embrace “the long history of anti-Black racist representations in the Ecuadorian press” field to make sense of the contents of Bonil’s caricature allowed them to assume agency against the disciplining project of racialization, against the subjugation mechanisms emanating from the caricature, and against the very idiom and logic used to construct Afrodescendants as unworthy.

In the case that opposed Arce and Mendez to Encalada and the ESMIL, it is evident that Encalada and the cadets he controlled felt entitled and enjoyed an empowering racialized affect as they inflicted physically and mentally painful abuse on Arce. Without it, they could not have done so. For his part, Arce endured a “liable racialized affect” until he could not take it any longer and requested his discharge. As he explained, it is with the strength of his mother that they broke the spell and dared initiate a legal procedure to redress the situation as much as they could.

Both cases reveal that social scientists studying racialization processes must take affect and emotions into consideration. The cases point to the extreme fragility of the rights Afrodescendants eventually “gained” with the multicultural turn. The ignorance of many operators of the justice system about the relatively new ethnocratic legal instruments (multicultural legal instruments and antidiscrimination law) and the virulence of race regulation customary law in Ecuadorian society and in state organs and agencies do often combine for justice not to be made, for otherwise “good-looking” legal instruments to be left aside, unused or misused. In both cases, Afrodescendants’ complaints benefited from the political conjuncture of Correa’s opposition to El Universo and Bonil and from the politically sympathetic disposition of state agents (in the SUPERCOM and the CORDICOM, and in the Ombudsman’s and Prosecutor’s Offices), which brought the cases to a successful outcome where certain and limited “remedies” were provided.

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Serving Status on the Gambia River
Before and After Abolition

Liza Gijanto

The Atlantic slave trade and its abolition created two distinct commercial spaces on the Gambia River that represent the use of similar tactics to project socioeconomic identities at different points in the Atlantic trade that are compared in this paper. First, the trading village of Juffure, at the heart of the Niumi polity’s commercial center, gained prominence during the height of the trade in the eighteenth century. It became home to a multiethnic community whose residents were entangled to varying degrees in commerce. Community members asserted status and identity through material means that were based in established traditions of crafting and feasting. A second and distinct commercial space emerged at the city of Bathurst, which the British established following abolition in 1807. This new commercial center took shape with its own unique multiethnic community. At Bathurst the "Liberated Africans" utilized Western middle-class practices including meals to assert their identity as African elite. Thus, both the Liberated Africans and residents of Juffure used foodways to project specific identities to gain entry into commerce.

From the mid-fifteenth to the late nineteenth century, commerce along the Gambia River was defined by its relationship with the broader Atlantic world. The Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath at times defined and at others complicated this relationship. When the British trader Richard Jobson sailed from England to the Gambia in 1620, he proudly noted his refusal to purchase slaves, stating that his were a people who did not "buy or sell one another, or any that had our owne shapes" (Jobson 1968 [1623]:82–105). This sentiment was not long held, and within a half century, the British and French followed Portugal’s lead, inserting themselves into the existing West African slave markets (Barry 1998:36–42; Curtin 1975:76–80). During the roughly three and a half centuries of the river’s entanglement in Atlantic commerce, the Gambia’s commercial center relative to the Atlantic shifted from the interior polities of Niani and Cantor to the coastal north bank and finally to the south bank at the mouth of the river in 1816 (fig. 1). This last shift was the establishment of a British colony at Bathurst as part of their broader abolition efforts in West Africa. However, British abolition was only directed toward the Atlantic and not the local domestic trade or enslavement that occurred outside of the colony along the remainder of the river. If an enslaved person was able to reach Bathurst, they would be free, but if they did not, the British did not intervene.

The opening of the Atlantic and incorporation of the Gambia into the emerging oceanic-based trade heralded a phase of heightened interaction and settlement in the Niumi polity as well as a range of adaptations to the way people engaged with this new wealth (cf. Gijanto 2017). Niumi’s prominence quickly came to an end as the British and French were pulled into conflicts in Europe and the Americas, neglecting the river trade in the late eighteenth century. Its role as an economic power was further diminished by Britain’s 1807 abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. This marked a turning point in Britain’s relationship with West Africa. After centuries of exporting slaves from the coast as a trading partner, they transitioned to a policy of abolition that included coastal patrolling, military enforcement, and resettlement of captives (Curtin and Vansina 1964:187; Frederiks 2002:221). It is estimated that as many as 250,000 “Liberated Africans” were freed between 1808 and 1896 (see http://liberatedafricans.org). Nearly half, or an estimated 175,000, were removed from slave ships and brought to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where ship captains were put on trial (Anderson et al. 2013:1–10). Following these trials, the Liberated Africans were often enlisted in British armed forces or were sent to their colonies in West Africa, such as Bathurst, or to a handful of American colonies (Anderson et al. 2013:102).

1. The mid-fifteenth-century arrival of the Portuguese resulted in a rise in mercantile activity along the river that caused many polities to reorient themselves politically and commercially toward Atlantic markets. Following a failed attempt to enter the Gambia River in 1455, Alvise da Cadamosto successfully contacted several communities a year later. When seeking trading partners, he was directed to the then commercial centers upriver as far as Cantor and Niani (Crone 1937:67–69). In 1457, Diogo Gomes (1937:93–95) recorded an elaborate trading system based at Cantor, with caravans coming from as far away as Timbuktu, Cairo, Tunis, and modern-day Sierra Leone. Subsequent merchant’s accounts from the fifteenth into the seventeenth century are in agreement that two polities dominated the commercial landscape at the time of their arrival (cf. Crone 1937:67–69; Donelha 1977:139; Gamble and Hair 1999:60).

2. Bathurst was renamed Banjul in 1973. This is believed to be the island’s original name when it was sold to the British in 1816 and renamed St. Mary’s Island, and the colonial capital was named for the third Earl of Banbury.
At the same time, domestic slavery experienced a resurgence throughout the Senegambia, as both Britain and France sought to diversify their exports by the mid-nineteenth century as the industrializing West demanded new products. Along the Gambia, groundnut (peanut) cultivation took hold, requiring a large domestic labor force, the demand for which was met through warfare and enslaving captives. Historians generally concur that the shift from exporting slaves to that of "primary products" such as peanut, palm oil, or gum arabic transformed West Africa (Lovejoy and Richardson 2002:32). The main question remaining is how. One area is the rise of domestic slavery along the coast and the inevitable collapse of traditional political structure in the Senegambia that relied heavily on amassing wealth and controlling trade by the local mansa (kings) and alkalhos (village heads) (Quinn 1972).

Bathurst was settled at a time when the British were actively dictating commercial relations and local rulers were being marginalized. The new colony was home to resettled Liberated Africans alongside British officials, Indigenous Africans, and creole traders, as well as foreign merchants. The Liberated Africans had to define a respectable role and identity in a foreign land by shedding the stigma of slavery. They ultimately did so by portraying their identity through a British lens of middle-class domesticity as evidenced through the material culture consumed. This paper explores the different strategies of identity expression employed by those actively engaged in the Atlantic trade and those who were viewed as its victims. Both the residents of Juffure and the Liberated Africans in Bathurst had to navigate shifting commercial and social circumstances in order to gain success in the Atlantic sphere. A key tool for both was foodways.

Niumi’s Atlantic Center at Juffure

On the eve of European contact in the mid-fifteenth century, Niumi was sparsely populated with a few villages along the riverbank and Atlantic coast. The establishment of major British and French trade depots in the seventeenth century created an influx of wealth via a wide range of goods that were sought by merchants from the interior. The demand for these items, and the high prices Europeans, and later Americans, were willing to pay for wax, ivory, and slaves, made it worthwhile for caravans to travel directly to Niumi (Wright 2012:62–70).

Mansas and alkalhos permitted European companies to construct trading factories in exchange for taxes and tribute. In Niumi, the twin villages of Juffure and Albreda became home to major British and French trading depots. The British set up their base of operations on James Island with a support post at Juffure as early as 1672, while the French were entrenched at Albreda, directly opposite on the north bank, by 1681. These depots were a draw for merchants and caravans, rerouting trade from upriver to the coast. To varying degrees, all individuals within the surrounding settlements participated in or were connected to...
Wars that plagued the river in the nineteenth century.3 Those who drew the greatest benefit were the traditional elite. Not unlike the ceddo regimes that dominated present-day Senegal, the ruling lineages that controlled the Gambia polities and villages were able to profit off the trade through tribute, rent, and open force when needed (cf. Barry 1992). It was their ever-increasing acts of exploitation as the trade went into decline that spurred the Marabout-Soninke Wars that plagued the river in the nineteenth century.3

Juffure was the largest village within the new commercial center. From its founding, Juffure was a trading village and the closest village on the north bank to James Island, for which it served as a freshwater source; this, coupled with the proximity to nearby French Albreda, drove the British to continuously seek a permanent presence there. Repeated pleas to this effect permeate letters from Royal African Company shareholders to their chief merchants on the river throughout the 1660s and into the 1710s, attesting to the importance of Juffure within the commercial center.4 On December 27, 1727, an official trading factory opened at Juffure under the direction of Francis Griffith and was supplied with all the necessaries for trade.5 The relentless drive of the Royal African Company to have a factory here also attests to the village’s commercial prominence.

Five years after the factory was settled, the Royal African Company employee Francis Moore (1738:56) described Juffure as “a large town near the river where the Company had a factory pleasantly situated, facing the fort.” While documentary accounts are few, standing ruins and oral accounts describing former structures indicate a substantial factory complex. The construction of the buildings out of laterite and brick, as opposed to other (contemporary) factories constructed out of mudblock and reeds in the local fashion, suggests a desire for longevity (DeCorse, Gijanto, and Sanyang 2010); in actuality, its occupation was sporadic and short-lived.

Juffure Factory was abandoned in 1741 due to conflicts with the Niimimansa.6 This was partially driven by the Juffure alkalho who inserted himself as an intermediary between the British and the Niimimansa, often amassing more wealth than the mansa as his tax collector (Quinn 1972:45). It is not known if the British continued trading after the factory’s closure or whether a formal presence was reestablished before the company was dissolved in the 1750s. The succeeding Committee of Merchants Trading in Africa sought a post at Juffure, as well.7 In 1762, Governor Debat wrote to the committee in London announcing that “our house at Gillifree [Juffure] is finished.”8 While the date of the factory’s second abandonment is uncertain, the village no longer held commercial prominence by the end of the 1700s (Park 1807:5). The 1816 transfer of British political and commercial control of the river from James Island to Bathurst as part of its new stance against the Atlantic slave trade solidified Juffure’s transformation from a wealthy trading village into a colonial backwater. The factory’s fate is demonstrative of the larger decline of Niumi and the Atlantic trade on the river. A final account in 1847 describes Juffure as a good, but small, village with no hint of commercial activity (Ingram 1847:150).9

The Senegambia colony was established following the end of the Seven Years’ War and signing of the Treaty of Paris of 1763, giving Great Britain control of Saint-Louis and most other coastal ports in the Senegambia. It was meant to be managed in conjunction with the Committee of Merchants but was largely neglected due to the American Revolution. The colony was dissolved when forts and settlements in Senegal were returned to France in the 1780s (see Dziennik 2015). During this period, the little oversight present was focused on Senegal, leaving former depots like James Island on the Gambia in decline and local leaders lacking the resources needed to retain power. Juffure’s commercial success connecting local economies to the Atlantic sphere stemmed from its ability to supply foodstuffs as trade goods. Food was integral both to its residents’ participation in trade and assertion of socioeconomic status in the village during the height of the trade in the eighteenth century.10 The removal of the British and French created a decline in demand for these items, as ships and outposts no longer needed to be provisioned on a regular basis.

3. The Soninke were the traditional aristocracy in the Senegambia. Soninke is the accepted nomenclature for those practicing African religions in the nineteenth century and is associated with non-Muslims who drank and engaged in other immoral behavior (Klein 1972:428; Wright 2012:133). Conversely, the term “Marabout” was used to identify those that adhered to conservative Islamic practices and fought for the interests of the peasantry rather than the elite. The Marabout-Soninke Wars were a series of conflicts driven by Marabout leaders who sought to convert these individuals and overthrow the traditional power structure. Both the British and the French sided with the Soninkes, though the French took a more active role in suppressing Marabout factions (Barry 1992:276; Klein 1972).

4. From the National Archives, Kew London (NA) T70 Series: Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and successors: Records 1669–1833. The Gambia journals begin at T55, while there are several ledgers that contain letters from the Royal African Company to all their holdings on the coast. There are several journals written in London that have been derived from letters and books sent to the company from James Fort. The journals have account details for all posts on the Gambia that were to report to James Fort as the central office including Juffure.


7. NA T70/30: Letters from the Coast of Africa to the Committee of Merchants Trading in Africa, 1753–1758.

8. NA T70/30: Letters from the Coast of Africa to the Committee of Merchants Trading in Africa, 1753–1758.

9. This observation corresponded with the onset of the Marabout-Soninke Wars on the river.

10. See NA T70 series.
While abolition altered local markets, the final destabilization of the elite resulted from the combination of local production shifts to crops that they did not control and the rise of Islam that had the greatest impact. The new emphasis on the peanut trade enabled peasants to sell a crop that was not subject to taxation by Niumi’s elite because it was not deemed valuable prior to the nineteenth century (Wright 2012:130). In addition to allowing commoners to skirt the purview of the elite, the new trade gave rise to the practice of traders advancing goods on credit to subtraders who worked with the new mercantile class in Bathurst and remained in business year-round (Klein 1972:425). Before this, the trading season had been limited to the months just prior to the rainy season when many had to return home to meet their agricultural obligations to the local elite. This new reality meant that more individuals were cultivating and trading peanuts and thus were not beholden to the mansas arbitrary trade schedule (see David 1980).

In reaction to this, local rulers attempted to extract higher taxes and rents where they could and became more ruthless in their treatment of the peasantry and foreign traders. This led many to support the Marabout in their aims to destroy the traditional power structures.

Bathurst and the Liberated Africans

Niumi’s decline coincided with changing attitudes toward slavery and its perceived morality in Britain, as well as the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The failure of the Senegambia colony and return of holdings in Senegal to the French spurred a re-examination of their interests on the Gambia River by the British government. The new commitment to abolition changed the Gambia’s strategic importance in the Atlantic sphere of Western powers. Bathurst was founded as a military and commercial center, built on St. Mary’s Island at the mouth of the Gambia River and purchased from the Combomansa (Gray 1966:301). After its purchase in May 1816, Lt. Governor Brereton noted that, even though the settlement was a great expense to the Crown, it would “become the key of the river, [and] will be attended with the certain happy consequence of forever abolishing that detestable traffic in slaves, of late so common in this neighborhood.”11 From the perspective of the British, the colony was a case study. They aimed to create an African city that thrived on legitimate or “moral” commerce (Gray 1966:306–310).

As a planned city, areas were designated for government, mercantile, and residential activities and subdivided into a series of neighborhoods demarcated by agricultural spaces (Gijanto 2013:101–102). Streets were laid out along a grid with major thoroughfares leading to the port and warehouses on Wellington Street,12 which served as the focal point as one arrived by ship (fig. 2). The neighborhoods drew their names from their early residents, such as Jola (Jollof) Town, Portuguese Town, and Soldier Town.13 Soldier Town was comprised of facilities for the British military and barracks for the colonial garrison, including Liberated African units beginning in 1827,14 and became a predominantly African neighborhood after the massive death toll on British-born soldiers sent to Bathurst from disease (Gray 1966:308–309). Most Liberated Africans resided in Portuguese Town after arriving via Sierra Leone from as far off as the West Indies and Nova Scotia (Rice 1967:93). This became one of the wealthiest sections of Bathurst and included many prominent Luso-African merchants, known as grumettes, resettled from Goree in Senegal, living along Wellington Street (Gray 1966:320). In addition to being multiethnic, Bathurst was home to several religious groups from the 1820s on, with the Indigenous African population subscribing to Islam and the Liberated Africans, grumettes, and colonial officials belonging to multiple sects of Christianity.

11. Gambia National Archives (GNA), Colonial Correspondence Series (CSO 1/1). Between London and the Colonial office in Gambia regarding the establishment of Bathurst, GNA CSO 1/1:19.
12. Wellington has been renamed Liberation Avenue.
13. The exception is Half Die, which takes its name from a series of cholera outbreaks that killed nearly half the residents of what was previously known as Mocum town. GNA CSO 1/1:15.
14. The British Slave Trade Abolition Act explicitly stipulated that Liberated Africans enter the British armed forces or commit to apprenticeships lasting as long as 14 years (Anderson et al. 2013:104).
It was within a conflicted atmosphere of abolition, exploitation, and new urban growth that the Liberated Africans came to form an ethnic group that would later be called the Aku by their neighbors (Mahoney 1968:30). The first group arrived in 1818 and were welcomed as a new, legal source of low-paid and often unpaid labor (Hughes and Perfect 2006:20). The journey from Sierra Leone was often as deadly as that to the Americas. In the years between 1832 and 1843, “over 4,000 Liberated Africans were sent from Sierra Leone to The Gambia,” and of those sent to Bathurst, “more than 1,000 . . . died within a year or two of arrival” (Webb 1994:139). The British established the Liberated Africans Department to accommodate their relocation, including encouraging Liberated Africans to “be apprenticed to traders, join local militias, or become independent craftsmen” (Webb 1994:139). In reality, these apprenticeships were synonymous with indentured servitude, and in many cases, conditions were similar to those from which the apprentices had ostensibly “liberated” by the British Crown. They were further marginalized early on by a lack of alternative economic opportunities (Mahoney 1968:30). These limited circumstances created a negative perception of this community in Bathurst society.

The Wesleyan Church was central to the reinvention of this community. In the 1840s they supported the first “mutual assistance groups” or “friendly societies,” which offered education and political forums for the Liberated Africans, helping them move beyond the initial period of apprenticeship (Hughes and Perfect 2006:27, 61). These spaces fostered the formation of a distinct community offering “opportunities for collective thinking” promoted by the church. In 1845, the Anglican Church Missionary Society Grammar School was established in Bathurst and went on to educate some of the most influential Liberated Africans in colonial society (Sarr 2015:15). Through education and training provided by missionary schools, children of the first Liberated African arrivals were able to acquire professional jobs, including those in the colonial government. Over time, many began to gain status in colonial society, given respectability by their connection to European religious and educational institutions. By the late nineteenth century, Liberated Africans and their descendants had carved out an elite niche in an initially hostile environment, becoming a middle-class community by taking advantage of commercial opportunities and government jobs now open to them through their education. Those who excelled in the public and political realm obtained formal education beyond high school abroad in Freetown or London, in turn advancing their positions in Bathurst.

The Williams Family

The Williams family home at 2 Lovell Street provides a glimpse into the experience of the Liberated Africans in colonial Bathurst (see fig. 2). Located in the Soldier Town neighborhood, the site is situated in an area where many properties had remained in the hands of Liberated African families until relatively recently. Their ownership dates to at least 1886 (Williams Property Deed, 1886). The site’s proximity to a Wesleyan church just around the corner and visible from the yard emphasizes the family’s connection to the church that included providing several organisms.

Family members were educated or trained for skilled professions. For example, several men served as government printers. The family also boasted numerous ship pilots such as Robert and John, the latter of whom was one of six listed pilots “licensed under the Ordinance (124) of twentieth June 1862, to conduct vessels between the entrance of the River Gambia, and the Port of Bathurst.” The women also occupied professional positions. Julia Williams was a prominent nurse and met Queen Elizabeth II on one of her royal tours. These professions necessitated political connections and access to education beyond the elementary level. In addition, they provided the family with a higher income than most Indigenous Gambians in the city. Many Liberated Africans, particularly those engaged in commerce, gained wealth on par with colonial officials despite their early years of servitude.

Many properties in Soldier Town were owned by wealthier Liberated African families, including the Williamses. Property listings dating up to the 1930s, a time of global economic recession, indicate that many of them rented rooms or secondary structures to laborers and migrants, creating a mixed-class neighborhood. Most of their renters held low-wage, labor-intensive jobs in the United Africa Company and Public Works Department. Property listings from the 1930s demonstrate that at one point the Williams’s tenants were unrelated, working-class laborers. This social position is reflected in part by the presence of kirinting structures—easily assembled buildings “characterized by woven bamboo sheets used to construct the walls”—throughout the neighborhood including

15. The term “Aku” and the people this term describes loosely trace linguistic and cultural roots to Yoruba, though the term now encompasses all who belong to the creole community (Cole 2013:35; Hughes and Gailey 1999:26). However, this group self-identifies as krio or Liberated Africans and views the term “Aku” as something applied to them by others. As such, this community will be referred to as Liberated Africans in this paper moving forward.

16. According to some reports, inhabitants of Bathurst’s model city, Freetown, Sierra Leone, sometimes “derogatorily referred to apprenticed re-captives as ‘slaves,’ a name also used for re-captive men conscripted to serve as soldiers” (Brooks 2010:95).

17. In 1921, they comprised roughly 6% of the population of Bathurst. This grew to 12% in 1944 and peaked at 13% in 1951 (Hughes and Perfect 2006:12)

18. It is not known at this time when the family initially arrived in Bathurst, but family oral history suggests they came via Sierra Leone.


20. GNA Bathurst Volume 4, n.d.

the Williams site (Gijanto 2013:104). It also has a traditional Liberated African house.22 Kirinting structures were quite common in poorer areas of Bathurst throughout the colonial period, despite government attempts to ban their construction because they were primarily built of timber and thus susceptible to fire.

Although the Williamses are not necessarily representative of the entirety of the Liberated African experience, their lives in Bathurst were intricately connected to the overarching British socioeconomic colonial environment. Archaeological deposits from their home suggest they utilized these connections to express a middle-class identity. Like at Juffure, this identity is readily discernible in the remains associated with foodways.

Foodways Expressions of Identity

Food-related inquiries in archaeology that consider the entire chain of consumption from production, crafting, and the various identities that can be expressed through the meals consumed all fall under the broad guise of “foodways” (cf. Twiss 2012). This term is broadly defined as the relationship between the food eaten and the material culture used to prepare, present, and consume it; a number of researchers have expanded their examinations to include food disposal as well (cf. Gifford-Gonzalez and Sunseri 2007; Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998). Above all, food is seen as a tool to express or project multiple social identities and to assert power related to economic status (Scott 2008). At times, the focus on identity and power has been expanded to include crafting and its relationship to the broader meal (Arthur 2014; Logan and Cruz 2014; Spielmann 2002) or simply the social aspects of production in relation to food (Lyons 2007). Those examining the more recent past have highlighted the connections between selection of mass-produced wares and identity rather than crafting (Pavao-Zuckerman and Loren 2012). Here, my discussion of foodways is limited to the material culture associated with the meal, which is characterized by a series of practices enacted in its preparation, service, and consumption.

The reorientation of trade networks in Niumi and increased access to European trade goods enabled it to emerge as an important center of commerce. As part of the Atlantic world, the residents of Juffure were in a continual process of negotiation between their socioeconomic structures and interaction with foreign traders introducing potentially new commodities and ideas. Similarly, the Liberated Africans negotiated a complex colonial landscape to emerge from a community of quasi-enslaved to one that held political prominence in the mid-twentieth-century independence movement. Each community harnessed available resources to negotiate as well as transform the existing cultural order (Sahlins 1985:vii). Eighteenth-century Juffure was defined by its residents’ actions, practices, and institutions culminating in material representative of these in the archaeological record. Whereas Juffure’s residents utilized material culture to assert their access to Atlantic markets, the Liberated Africans adopted Western material culture to demonstrate their place among “civilized” colonial society. At both Juffure and the Williams site, these distinctions are seen in the material residues of the meal. To interpret everyday meals in both locales, it is necessary to determine what was available, what people chose to eat, and what items they used to cook, serve, and consume it.

To do this, trash deposits were targeted. Eight trash deposits at Juffure are engaged here—one associated with Juffure Factory and seven from the village (fig. 3; table 1). These date throughout the Atlantic era (i.e., late seventeenth to early nineteenth century). Deposits from the late Atlantic or colonial period ranging from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century were excavated at the Williams site.23 Those dominated by nineteenth-century materials are highlighted as part of this comparative study (fig. 4; table 1). A second consideration is that deposits at Juffure represent multiple households or compounds on a neighborhood level within a village, whereas the Williams site is restricted to the family and at times their tenants. Additionally, at Juffure there are clear distinctions between what are considered episodic or special meals analogous to feasting and everyday fare (Gijanto and Walshaw 2014). The Williams trash is not as clearly segregated. Regardless, both assemblages demonstrate the importance of meals in establishing one’s socioeconomic standing.

Juffure

In trying to understand the typical, everyday fare for the residents of Juffure during the Atlantic era, and what might have been unique, the overall relationship between the community and foodstuffs is important to understand. For Niumi, certain crops and livestock were commodities as well as food. For some, trading foodstuffs provided access to Atlantic markets, while much of the provisioning was done directly by the mansa who collected crops as tribute from the local communities. Travelers to the Gambia River provide vivid descriptions of the local wild flora and fauna. European merchants and travelers identified at least six types of domesticated grains in the region in the early seventeenth century (Gamble and Hair 1999:163). As early as 1456, Cadamosto declared that the diet on the Gambia included a great abundance of grain (Crone 1937:26). The apparent variety available did not translate into a diverse diet. Johnson described boiled grains forming the bulk of the primary meal, but little to no meat was consumed because “they are great sparers thereof, and preserve them [animals] to sell unto us, for small pieces of Iron, beades, and such like commodities, whereof if we be furnished, we can want none of that provision” (Gamble

22. These structures are referred to in the Gambia as “Aku” houses.

23. Excavations at Juffure and the Williams site included a mix of shovel test pits and 1x1-meter excavation units. All artifacts discussed here are from excavation units. At Juffure, these are from dense trash deposits. In contrast, distinct trash deposits were not identified at the Williams site; excavations were shallow (ca. 50 cm or less), and most nineteenth-century contexts were identified adjacent to the family home. At all sites, units were terminated at subsoil and excavated following natural and cultural stratigraphy, with levels exceeding 10 cm divided into arbitrary contexts (10 cm each).
and Hair 1999:104–105). Francois de Paris was part of provisioning trips to the Gambia River (1682–1683) and described Albreda’s value as a source of foodstuffs as well as ivory and slaves (Paris 2001:29). In the eighteenth century, Moore (1738:109) discussed a variety of wild game, such as snakes, monkeys, alligators, and birds, noting that there was hardly any animal the locals did not eat, suggesting that wild animals made up daily meals while domesticates remained commodities. Collectively, these accounts imply meals were purposely limited, as foodstuffs were reserved for sale and profit as well as to pay tribute, thereby providing residents with access to the Atlantic market through provisioning.

Whereas everyday meals were sparse, episodic events such as feasts were held during the height of the Atlantic trade, transforming food from a commodity into a social resource. Available archaeological data from Juffure suggests that village feasts were small-scale episodes, distinguishable from the everyday meal. Three distinct episodic deposits were excavated at Juffure. These are distinguished from everyday trash disposal by the density of ceramics, fauna, oyster shell, and botanicals with intermixed ash lenses and burnt soil in pits cut into the former ground surface. In contrast, the everyday deposits took the form of sheet middens, located in between relatively sparse matrices representing natural soil column formation in the uppermost levels. The often thin and intermittent contexts bracketing these suggest that these were regular events in the eighteenth century. To further discern the role of food in this context, everyday and episodic meals at Juffure are compared to everyday meals consumed by the British residents of Juffure Factory. The evidence for all meals includes botanicals, faunal remains, and locally produced ceramics.

The Meals at Juffure. As Jobson and others described, grains formed the basis of most meals on the Gambia River, the most pervasive being African domesticated grains, including pearl millet (Pennisetum glaucum L. Br.), sorghum (Sorghum bicolor spp.), and rice (most likely the African domesticate Oryza glaberrima Steud). The difference observed between the episodic contexts and everyday meals is not a greater diversity of foodstuffs, or privileging of European foods, but rather a higher quantity of local grains, notably rice (table 2). Rice is present in all but one episodic deposit compared with 60% of everyday contexts and 88% of the factory deposit. In terms of grains, the episodic foodways at Juffure more closely resemble everyday fare at the factory than everyday meals in the village. This suggests that food normally reserved for sale to the British at the factory and other European merchants on the river were withheld for these special events. Because these episodic events required withholding provisions from the European supply line to feed guests, it is clear their socioeconomic value was such that potential interruption of European trade could be tolerated. It also reinforces the value of African grains as commodities that maintained and challenged the social order at Juffure.

Though differences appear more in quantity than kind with regards to grains, the faunal assemblage suggests differences in the way food was prepared. Cut marks, slicing, intentional breakage, heating, boiling, and charring are all potential indicators of cooking practices. The everyday faunal assemblage is comprised of highly processed remains consistent with stews or other forms of West African cooking practices involving a sauce served over a grain (table 3). This is most apparent in deposit 3a where 81% of the total fauna was unidentifiable (NISP = 147 of 327). For those that could be identified as mammals, excluding complete bones, 55% were 1 centimeter or less in diameter followed by those between 1.01 and 2 centimeters in diameter at 34%. This level of processing is reminiscent of stews utilizing limited amounts of meat. It is recognized that small fragment size may be a remnant of postdepositional processes, such as scavenging or trampling, as well. Yet the extremely small size of

24. Flotation conducted at Juffure yielded macrobotanical assemblages consisting of the charred remains of domesticates and wild taxa.
fragments from the factory and everyday deposits, combined with higher incidences of cut marks, slicing, and breakage culminating in small, unidentifiable fragments, is in direct opposition to faunal remains in episodic contexts. In these deposits, the fragment size increases slightly, with the smallest fragments making up 36% of the collection while those between 1.01 and 2 centimeters were 45%. The episodic deposits contain larger pieces of fauna with traces of heating and burning, indicative of roasting larger cuts of meat (Bauer 2008:1; Fisher 1995:5). Traces of heating along with charring may either represent roasting or depositional trash burning; however, charring on bones is mainly restricted to the ends, and thus can be associated with roasting. In episodic contexts at Juffure, both trash burning (determined through burnt bone and surrounding ash) and roasting meat occurred in greater frequencies than in everyday deposits as seen with deposits 3a and 3b where no ash was encountered, and burnt bones were not present in high numbers (7% deposit 3a and 14% deposit 3b). Similarly, only 7% of the fauna in the factory deposit was burned. For all episodic deposits, burnt bone ranges between 17% and 25% of the assemblages.

In addition to how food was prepared, the types of meat eaten differ as well. As part of episodic meals, there is an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deposit</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juffure</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Post-episode 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Williams site map (2 Lovell Street, Banjul).
Table 2. Botanical remains from Juffure deposits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site and deposit</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Samples (n)</th>
<th>Pearl millet</th>
<th>Sorghum</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>UNID millet</th>
<th>Brachiaria/Setaria</th>
<th>Beans</th>
<th>Baobab/cotton</th>
<th>Wild/weedy SNE (ubiquity %, no. taxa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juffure village:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a Episode 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>15 (67)</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>53 (100)</td>
<td>45 (100, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Everyday 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2 (50)</td>
<td>1? (50)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>8 (100, 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c Everyday 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>2 (66)</td>
<td>4 (66)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>16 (100, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Episode 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Context 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>19 (6 taxa)</td>
<td>57 (5 taxa)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Context 9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>32 (50, 7)</td>
<td>38 (75, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Episode 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18 (50)</td>
<td>5 (50)</td>
<td>17 (83)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>7 (17)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>38 (75, 4)</td>
<td>14 (66, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a Everyday 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>38 (75, 4)</td>
<td>14 (66, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b Everyday 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 (66)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (66)</td>
<td>2? (33)</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>14 (66, 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juffure factory</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>55 (88)</td>
<td>24 (88)</td>
<td>20 (88)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>72 (100)</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>3 (25)</td>
<td>3 (25)</td>
<td>20 (75, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus and deposit</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>NISP</td>
<td>Mammal</td>
<td>Reptile</td>
<td>Avian</td>
<td>UID</td>
<td>Aquatic fish</td>
<td>Cardium costatum</td>
<td>Gnaisostrea tulipa</td>
<td>Dietary shell</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locus 1:</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Post-episode</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>51 (61)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>7 (8)</td>
<td>13 (16)</td>
<td>11 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>3,146</td>
<td>1,713 (55)</td>
<td>40 (1)</td>
<td>131 (4)</td>
<td>216 (7)</td>
<td>391 (12)</td>
<td>289 (9)</td>
<td>313 (10)</td>
<td>53 (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>1,341</td>
<td>1,158 (86)</td>
<td>4 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>5 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>48 (4)</td>
<td>40 (3)</td>
<td>22 (2)</td>
<td>20 (2)</td>
<td>44 (3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>445 (71)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>2 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>10 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>106 (17)</td>
<td>29 (5)</td>
<td>31 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus 2:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Post-episode</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>29 (7)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>2 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>250 (57)</td>
<td>147 (33)</td>
<td>11 (3)</td>
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<td>16 (1)</td>
<td>160 (11)</td>
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<td>426</td>
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<td>88 (21)</td>
<td>48 (11)</td>
<td>14 (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Episode 2</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>6 (29)</td>
<td>17 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>139 (7)</td>
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<td>34 (2)</td>
<td>538 (27)</td>
<td>495 (25)</td>
<td>116 (6)</td>
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<td>2b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>81 (66)</td>
<td>10 (8)</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>22 (18)</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
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<td>…</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (67)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>13 (5)</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>147 (52)</td>
<td>19 (7)</td>
<td>3 (1)</td>
<td>43 (15)</td>
<td>55 (19)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>124 (53)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>11 (5)</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
<td>6 (3)</td>
<td>84 (36)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>6,911</td>
<td>3,188 (46)</td>
<td>111 (2)</td>
<td>110 (1)</td>
<td>290 (4)</td>
<td>253 (4)</td>
<td>1,959 (28)</td>
<td>677 (10)</td>
<td>323 (5)</td>
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</table>

Note. UID = unidentifiable; NISP = number of identifiable specimens.
increased consumption of fish, bird, and reptiles (see table 3). For example, during the height of the Atlantic trade, the animal resources exploited contained a mix of terrestrial and marine species, with most shellfish consumption (specifically oyster) occurring in episodic contexts. In contrast, clam species were the most exploited shellfish in everyday deposits and at the factory. Overall, the range of fauna exploited and meat preparation at the factory more closely resembles the episodic contexts rather than daily meals at Juffure, although the types of mammals consumed may be an exception. Though pig is present in the village, it made up a greater percentage of the factory assemblage (19%) than the village (4% everyday contexts versus 6% in episodic contexts). While the majority of the Juffure population was Muslim and therefore in theory prohibited from eating swine, there was a significant Luso-African community who were professed Christians that likely did consume pig. It is possible that the pig meat was either prepared by them, or for company officials in attendance at meals in different compounds or at community events. The assemblage from the factory resembles the earliest episodic context in deposit 2a. The mammals from episodic contexts in deposit 2a contain more domesticates overall but also include a greater variety of nondomesticates, such as herbivores, than that in deposit 1a. In comparison, the deposit 1a episodic meal is dominated by unidentified bovid or antelope species, with a noticeable decrease in identifiable cow fauna from the everyday consumption levels in the village (5% vs. 27%).

The meat and grains consumed were cooked and served in locally produced low-fired earthenware vessels. Alterations in paste recipes are observed at Juffure over time and between everyday and episodic deposits. The use of different tempering recipes, firing practices, and potentially clay sources brought about new aesthetic features of ceramics in Niumi (see Gijanto 2011a). The ceramics found in all eighteenth-century deposits differ from those produced in either the late seventeenth or the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, some ceramics appear to be reserved for episodic events. The decisions made during the production process by a potter visibly impacted the aesthetic nature of the ceramics produced throughout the Atlantic trade, including the continued production of certain ware types and not others for everyday use, and the creation of different wares for public display.

In specific contexts, transformations in pottery production—including the range of diversity—are indicative of social change (cf. B. K. Chatterjee’s comment in Arnold 1975; Hammond 1966; Joyner 2007). A part of this was the pressure to feed a growing population. Both the early years of the Atlantic trade and the period following its decline are represented by a limited number of ware types with little internal variation with regard to paste recipes, color, and firing practices (Gijanto 2011b). As the population of Juffure became more involved in commerce, presumably gaining wealth, the ability to display this wealth also increased. In eighteenth-century contexts a total of 154 ware types were identified, many of which were restricted to episodic contexts. While other methods of display were enacted, such as forms of personal adornment (Gijanto 2011a), archaeological investigations demonstrate that status was actively expressed through food at Juffure.

Of note is the fact that imported ceramics via the Atlantic were not a major part of meals in the eighteenth century at Juffure village or factory, even though they dominated the tables at James Fort during the same period (Gijanto 2018). Just 50 sherds of imported ceramics were found in the factory deposit, the largest percentage (36%; n = 18) being some form of tin-glazed earthenware. However, this is compared to a total of 57 sherds from across all deposits at Juffure village, with nearly half (n = 20) being pearlware fragments from deposit 1b. This is an everyday nineteenth-century deposit from the post-Atlantic era at Juffure. The local ceramics that dominate all assemblages and were used during the early years of the Atlantic trade (pre-eighteenth century) are sand- and organic-tempered (with limited oyster shell inclusions) wares. The increase in ware types during the Atlantic trade, in addition to increased variation within individual wares, is indicative of heightened production to support a growing population, as well as less time for perfection. The variation and tendency toward “rougther-looking” ceramics may be partially attributed to lesser-skilled potters producing more wares to meet the growing demands of a large population. This phenomenon has also been noted in other regions of the Senegambia (cf. Deme and Gueye 2007). These wares include a dominance of shell temper and increased variety in temper combinations, with a decrease in the use of organic materials. Three ware types dominate episodic assemblages at Juffure but were rarely present in everyday contexts. Each has some amount of oyster shell tempering and tend toward dark pink colored or black paste with slightly more refined exterior surfaces. These are distinct from ceramics recovered often less than 3 meters away in contemporary everyday deposits that are dominated by sand or sand and grog mixed tempers. There appears to be a distinction between private and more publicly viewed wares, largely based on temper. The “public” wares are those associated with communal or episodic gatherings, and “private” wares are those reserved for everyday use.

These distinct patterns demonstrate that over a relatively short period there are significant changes in the local ceramics. When viewed over time and contextualized within a past punctuated by specific large-scale events like the opening of the Atlantic and its decline, the strategies used by Juffure’s residents to assert status in these ever-shifting circumstances was done through traditional means. The increased variation within individual ceramic types and ware groups is most prominent in mid- to late eighteenth-century contexts. The favoring of certain ware types among this broad range of choice for episodic meals suggests that pottery production, at least to some extent, was driven by the regularity and expectations surrounding these events. The dominance of heavily shell-tempered ceramics in episodic deposits compared with the continued use of sand or sand and grog temper combinations in everyday settings suggests that certain wares were reserved for special events, serving as the local “fine china.” The reservation of
these wares for public meals, paired with the consumption of grains and animal domesticates usually reserved for sale, indicates that those contributing to and hosting these meals were asserting their socioeconomic status through such a display, demonstrating that they could access these beyond the required tribute.

The decline of these practices and decrease in variety of ceramics in the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century deposits coincided with the weakening power of the ruling Soninke class. Beginning in the 1740s Niumi began to suffer from drought, and by the end of the century had trouble provisioning the British merchants on the river (Wright 2012:11). The loss of revenue for the mansa coupled with the new sense of food insecurity in Niumi and decline in commercial activity are reflected in the sparse meals, including the associated ceramics.

The Williams Family

The Williams family lived and thrived at 2 Lovell Street during a period of growth in Bathurst where merchants established new trade networks along the river as part of the emergent groundnut trade (ca. mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century). Because of the concentration of colonial officials, merchants, and military personnel in Bathurst, the city became the epicenter of British colonial society whereby strict divisions were enforced between Europeans and the colonized individuals whom they viewed as either deserving or undeserving. While not as extreme as in larger colonies such as India, Africans within the Gambia colony were only able to gain economic standing if they adhered to British sensibilities.

For the Liberated Africans, this meant conforming to the expectations of a British middle class. In order to do so, they “needed to learn how to consume the decencies and luxuries which new values taught them to desire and [with which] new incomes could be sustained” (Young 2002:154). In the nineteenth century, a global middle class was emerging throughout the industrialized and colonial worlds. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, the mass production of a wide range of goods created an array of materials that could be used to mimic the elite, and a standard for gentility was established that tied the home to the self to a collective identity (Mullins 2011:2). Such forms of consumption have also been noted to have spiked in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and its colonies (Lawrence 2003). Mullins (2011:44) highlights the phenomenon of “the emulation of elite materiality” in his investigation of the motivations for the wave of Western consumerism as part of the Industrial Revolution. Following this conclusion, it appears as though the Liberated Africans may have made specific consumer choices to align themselves with the British elite and form a colonial creole bourgeoisie peculiar to Bathurst. In addition to their home conforming to the Liberated African style, the artifact assemblage from the Williams site suggests the family walked a fine line between British and West African traditions. The decisions behind their consumption practices appear to be guided by two primary concerns: (1) displays of “middle-class” status and (2) economic necessity.

Several recovered objects attest to the Williams’s ability to access local and global markets. Both everyday items and others for public display were found of varying quality. For example, a pharmaceutical bottle recovered near the Williams’s house has a screw-cap top but was corked, indicating reuse. While archival sources suggest the inhabitants of the house were well off, this recorked pharmaceutical bottle may demonstrate they were not necessarily wealthy and relied on local marabouts or herbalists for medical remedies. Thus, frugality existed in this case when items were not intended for use in public contexts. This is seen again with a straight pin refashioned as a fishing hook. Alternatively, the bottle may also be a form of juju, acquired for luck, to manipulate an individual or to prevent witchcraft. If this is the case, at least one member of this seemingly “British” middle-class family subscribed to local Gambian beliefs. Two hundred seven trade beads were recovered from the Williams site similar to those found at two other sites in Bathurst associated with merchants and that were popular in the upriver trade. Therefore, it is possible that the Williamses purchased these beads for adornment or as items of barter. A final possibility is that, like the pharmaceutical bottle, the beads were part of traditional healing or spiritual practices. Regardless, these items demonstrate the line the Williamses may have trod between middle-class and working-class colonial Bathurst. This is even more evident in the material assemblage associated with foodways at the site. These include ceramics and faunal remains.

Meals. Discerning the multiple forms of identity associated with and impacted by the complex processes of globalization and the emergence of the Liberated African middle class, it is necessary to compare and contrast use of local and imported materials related to the meals consumed by the Williams family. To this end, the ceramic and faunal assemblages at 2 Lovell Street lend themselves nicely. The imported ceramic assemblage included (n = 82) European and American sherds with an average production date of 1864. Most of the imported wares in this assemblage would therefore have been owned by the Williams family before their move to 2 Lovell Street, or acquired during the first generation of those residing on the property. It must also be noted that date of production need

25. This is not unlike the experience of other foreign traders and creole communities that settled and traded in the Senegambia during the Atlantic trade. For example, the Luso-Africans served as middlemen in the region beginning in the sixteenth century. They established their identity in a similar fashion to the way locals did—based on language, religion, occupation, and material culture. In the Gambia, the Luso-Africans, commonly referred to as “Portuguese,” either lived within or occupied separate areas of the major trading settlements, and descriptions of their material culture, physical appearance, and proposed identity are discussed by several individuals from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (for a detailed discussion, see Horta 2000; Mark 2002).

26. Botanical samples were collected at the Williams site but have not been analyzed.
The majority of these, as well as the whiteware sherds, show few signs of use, suggesting that most were not used on a daily basis and were likely reserved as the family’s “special china,” taken out for guests and special occasions, while local ceramics were likely used for daily meals. Furthermore, the relatively small number of annular \((n = 4; 4.9\%)\) and mochaware \((n = 5; 6.1\%)\) may suggest that they were considered higher value than the more common plain and transfer-printed white wares and may have been used solely for display. A final point of note is that the highly fragmentary nature of the faunal remains suggests the family ate mostly stews rather than “plated” meals and thus would not have required the whiteware for everyday meals. This is in line with import ceramic forms of which 28% \((n = 23)\) were some type of plate or dish, though most of the vessel forms were unidentifiable \((n = 52; 63\%)\).

Some of the imported wares recovered were not mass produced, a fact that suggests that the Williams family may have used European ceramics as an ostensible display of “good china.” The wheel-thrown, lead-glazed Vallauris coarse earthenware sherds, for instance, likely originated from southern France. While these wares were manufactured with utilitarian intent, and despite the presence of French merchants in the colonial city, they would have been costlier than local wares, and it seems likely that the Williams family bought and engaged these foreign wares for their perceived aesthetic statement. The lack of use-wear visible on these sherds, however, is not necessarily indicative of display. West African foodways traditionally incorporate limited utensil use, and thus hollowware, if used to

<table>
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Whiteware: undecorated</td>
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<td>1780–1900+</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
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<td>1820–1935</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
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serve African dishes, would have little to no evidence of utensil marks. Yet considering the limited number of Vallauris sherds recovered and the much higher number of local ceramic holloware, it is likely that these also served as a form of public display demonstrating their ability to acquire imports to serve traditional meals. Each potential conclusion would involve the construction of elite identity in the form of intentional distinction from other Gambian ethnic groups’ eating habits and foodways.

The local ceramic assemblage is dominated by refined and semirefined grog-tempered wares like those found in nineteenth-century contexts at Juffure. At the Williams site, grog-tempered wares account for 48.6% (n = 55) of the local ceramic assemblage. However, shell-tempered wares characteristic of the eighteenth century at Juffure, and mainly associated with episodic meals previously discussed, were also recovered. The low number of these sherds (n = 9; 8%) may represent older pots in circulation rather than continued manufacture into the nineteenth century on the river.

Most of the local ceramic sherds recovered were of poor quality, including friable ceramic sherds with uneven firing, which may indicate that some or all of the occupants of 2 Lovell Street were using cheaper local ceramic vessels to cook or store foodstuffs. These sherds were scattered throughout the site, with the majority (n = 14; 12%) recovered from units near the Williams house. The reasons for this may simply be the desire to invest more in imported wares that would be seen by guests. Furthermore, the local wares may be from the tenants and not the Williams family, although their closeness to the Williams house also suggests otherwise.

Analysis of faunal materials centered on the identification of genus or species when possible, as well as alterations. Pasaniti’s research reveals that, within this small sample, the vast majority of the faunal fragments recovered were of unidentifiable species (NISP = 705) due to the highly fragmentary nature of the assemblage similar to that at Juffure. The fragmentary nature of the faunal remains, including the fish, suggests that much of what was eaten was likely stew. Those that could be identified fell into the following broad categories: “1% are reptile, 4% are bird, 15% are mammal, and an overwhelming 80% are fish” (Pasaniti 2015:7). The Williams’s diet, then, was predominantly fish, suggesting preference for the inexpensive staple available in the local markets. Interestingly, 87% of the fish recorded were small, suggesting that the occupants of the property were consuming some of the most inexpensive protein on the market (Pasaniti 2015:9). These were interspersed with more expensive ladyfish and catfish. While this suggests that the Williams family may not have had the funds to purchase expensive meats on a regular basis, it also may simply represent preference. Mammalian species were restricted to domesticates also available in the market—goat, cow, and pig. The bird is solely chicken.

It is unclear whether this choice reflects necessity or availability. Considering Bathurst’s location on the mouth of a river, the occupants of this site may have simply been more familiar with dishes involving fish; those featuring pork and other large mammals may have been reserved for special occasions. Additionally, several members of the Williams family were ship pilots. The quantity of fish consumed may reflect their status as a seafaring family and their level of access to this food. In contrast to the fish, the evidence for pig consumption (nine examples of Sus domesticus were identified) separates the Williamses from the predominantly Muslim Indigenous African population in Bathurst.

It is possible to deduce from the limited number of imported sherds that the Williams family relied more heavily on local ceramics for functional purposes than on European wares. Imported ceramic sherds were small with form discernible for less than half of the sample. The form of most sherds was unidentifiable (n = 56; 68.3%), followed by tableware sherds (n = 21; 25.6%). Additionally, only 28% of imported ceramic sherds in the collection showed use-wear, compared to the 72% of imported sherds with no signs of use. Through analyzing the limited signs of use evident on imported European ceramics, one may attempt to gauge with some level of certainty the role these objects played in the Williams’s daily lives.

It is likely that most local ceramics were utilitarian, while most imported ceramics served predominantly aesthetic purposes. However, that any imported ceramic vessels recovered from the site showed evidence of use demonstrates a departure from traditional West African foodways. The Williams family may have used some traditional West African pots, but they also (at least occasionally) ate with flatware on imported European plates and bowls. Perhaps the Williams family bought these objects to attempt to align their consumption patterns with those of the colonial officials and merchants.

Conclusions

The socioeconomic landscape of Atlantic era Juffure and colonial Bathurst represents the moral trajectory of Britain’s entanglement in and attempts to end the transatlantic slave trade. At Juffure, the rise of the broader Atlantic trade, including the slave trade, created new economic opportunities that faded with abolition. The shift in commercial centers and settlement of Bathurst represented a newfound interest in colonial rule that Britain restricted to the coast and small section of land along the north bank of the river. The remainder of the land that came to form the modern nation of the Gambia was left to local rule and was the source of merchant wealth as a production zone of groundnut and other resources for global markets. In this setting, the emerging middle class in the city found themselves in a similar position as the resident of Juffure a century before. At the same time, Niumi and the rest of the river polities experienced decades of warfare that culminated

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27. To date, only a portion of the faunal remains recovered from 2 Lovell Street (NISP = 754) have been analyzed (Pasaniti 2015). Any conclusions drawn from the analyzed sample must thus be interpreted with this limitation in mind.
in the formation of the protectorate and abolition of domestic slavery.

Like many situations throughout history, success in economics is tied to one’s projected or perceived status. As new communities are founded, that both Juffure and Bathurst were founded in response to shifts in the Atlantic trade, their residents were able to manipulate old and new forms of identity assertion to gain or maintain their position in the local economic order. Niumi had become dependent on the Atlantic trade to access world markets to acquire the materials they used to assert status (Gijanto 2011a; Wright 2012:111). Recognizing the role of material culture in creating or projecting a desired identity, an aesthetic form is then a resource through which objects can create or undermine the existing social order as people and status become synonymous with things. At Juffure and the Williams sites we see the use of ceramics tied to foodways as one tool to assert or aspire to a preferred status, both exhibiting a form of “fine” or “good china.” The objects engaged do not simply exist, they become through their socialness (Appadurai 1986). The shift in ceramic manufacture and near reservation of shell-tempered wares for episodic meals suggests these were imbued with meaning that was connected to these events. Similarly, the use of mass-produced ceramics indicative of middle-class gentility by the Williamses in conjunction with their likely private use of locally produced wares suggests the mass-produced ceramics were deployed in a similar fashion.

These boundaries became less tenable in the nineteenth century, as Niumi’s influence declined and the British became more active in the affairs of the river polities as a result of the rising power of the Marabout. Over the course of a century what we see in Juffure, and Niumi more broadly, is the material manifestation of rising wealth and declining political fortunes, which in turn impacted how wealth was displayed and by whom. At the same time, the Liberated Africans in Bathurst were coming into their own, rising from a condition of poverty akin to enslavement, to form a solid middle class. Like the traders seeking access to commerce in Juffure, they asserted this status through material culture associated with the meal.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Baba Ceesey and the staff of the Gambian National Center for Arts and Culture for their ongoing support of my work in The Gambia. Portions of this project were funded by the US Fulbright program. Finally, numerous St. Mary’s College of Maryland undergraduates contributed to this project, including Sean Reid, Sarah Platt, Anna Passaniti, Elizabeth McCague, Rosemary Hammack, and Katelyn Kean.

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The Problem
Religion within the World of Slaves

Mark P. Leone

A spirit bundle from Wye House, Talbot County, Maryland, is described and interpreted as a function of the Afro-Christianity created during and after the Atlantic slave trade. The bundle is made up mostly of worn shoes and boots; it dates to after Emancipation and was discovered in the 1990s. This interpretation attempts to use the Slave Narratives of the 1930s to understand the meaning of the bundle. The imminence of the supernatural in the bundle and the simultaneous structure of the nearby Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal churches is tied to the early Christian debates of the third and fourth centuries of the immediacy and individuality of access to God in contrast to the hierarchical structure of the church.

This essay has three points. First, a discovery was made at Wye House on Maryland’s Eastern Shore of a collection of boots, shoes, iron objects, cloths, and a capped bottle, as well as a carved wooden head with two faces back-to-back on each side of the head. Wye House plantation is famous because Frederick Douglass (Douglass 1845, 1855, 1881) was a slave there, owned by one of the Lloyd family’s overseers. My archaeological project, Archaeology in Annapolis, excavated there for nine years in the slave quarters (Jacobucci and Trigg 2010; Leone et al. 2013; Russo 1992; Tang 2014; Tang and Skolnik 2012).

Second, this essay is about African American religion or “slave spirituality.” This involves the relationship between Hoodoo (also sometimes spelled with a lowercase h) and Black churches, specifically the Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal churches. One question in this essay is, How do Hoodoo and these two churches exist with each other?

Third, Orlando Patterson’s Slavery and Social Death (1982) concentrates on Saint Paul and Paul’s definitions of slavery and his vision of Christianity leading to the hypothesis in this essay that Paul’s definition of Christianity offers a way to see that Hoodoo and the two Black churches of eastern North America are two sides of a single religious expression, originally defined by Paul as he attempted to set the theological structure of the early Christian church.

There are three assumptions to understand the bundle discovered at Wye House. The first assumption is that the things described and sources used to understand the bundle are African American. This is not a claim to direct and sole African antecedents, although none of this is a denial of memories, names, practices, some language, and some culture from Africa. This is also not a claim that African American Christianity is derivative of European Christianity through copying. This is an assumption that leads to the hypothesis that Hoodoo and the Black church are African American: created here by enslaved and then free people of African descent in North America (see also Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988).

The second assumption is that an image and things representing the divine hold power over humans having contact with them. People can be aroused by such images and things and can even be enslaved by them (Nasrallah 2010:280).

Third, the world of the invisible and supernatural cannot be approached successfully without a world of things. This is not an archaeological conceit. It is the assumption that the material world is a way to experience and approach the supernatural.

This third assumption can be seen in plantation religion. Boots, shoes, and two-faces were connected to ghosts, spirits, and tracks, which were a way that the divine manifested itself. Within the diasporic version of Afro-Christianity that came into existence in Protestant North America, many material things could contain, control, direct, and initiate the actions of supernaturals. Several scholars of North American Afro-Christianity have made this point (Chireau 2006; Gomez 1998; Hazzard-Donald 2013:135; T. Smith 1994:35, 167).

The Spirit(s): African and Christian

Everybody believed in ghosts. Nobody would pass by a graveyard on a dark night, and . . . not [be] afraid.

—(Isabella Dorroh, quoted in Federal Writers’ Project [1936:328])

Ghosts? I used to ’em. I see ’em all de time. Good company! I live over dere by myself, an’ dey comes in my house all de time. Sometime I walk along at night an’ I see ’em. An’ when you see ’em you see a sight. Dey play. Dey dance ’round an’ ’round. Dey happy all right. But dey’ll devil you, too. When
dey find out dat you scary, dey’ll devil you. Dey don’t do nuthin’ to me. Only talk to me. I’ll be in my house an’ dey’ll come talk to me. Or I’ll be walkin’ down de road, an’ meet ‘em. Dey’ll pass de time of day wid me, Like:

“Hey, Solbert! How far you goin’ Solbert?”

“I’se jes’ goin’ down de road a little piece,” I’ll say.

“Uh-huh”

Or sometime dey’ll say,

“Mornin’ Solbert. How you feeling?”

“I’s jes’ so so.”

“Uh-huh”

—(Anne Bell, quoted in Federal Writers’ Project [1936:54])

Another time she heard footsteps approaching a certain house in the yard, but she could never see anybody walking, though she could distinctly hear the gravel crunching as the ghost walked along. “God is the only one who can do any conjuring. I don’t believe anybody else can.”

—(Federal Writers’ Project 1936:99)

The late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century world of enslaved people as recorded in the Slave Narratives has spirits and ghosts in people’s daily and nightly lives.1 Ghosts can speak, walk, sit, order, see the future, tell a story, prophesy, and that is the most common reference to them, but in this quote, there is a clarification that a ghost is an emanation of God. The narrator means the Christian God. This quote is one of the clearer moments in the Narratives when a believer in Hoodoo and its healing practices, called conjure, is Christian.

Ghosts are agents of terror, curing, protecting, predicting, and prophesying. They are supernatural and populate everyday life. They are to be anticipated near cemeteries, in the woods, and lanes. They may be spirits of the dead, to be sure, and that is the most common reference to them, but in this quote, the power of a ghost to direct and be heard is that of God, not a spirit who is one among many. This is an important lead to how some African practices, having become generic in North America and seen in Hoodoo and conjure, become, or already were, Christian.

A ghost can speak, walk, sit, order, see the future, tell a person how to solve a problem, and command action. Furthermore, God, like spirits, is everywhere and can accomplish anything. How is that power harnessed?

If ghosts can be heard, their tracks can also be seen. However, the tracks may be those of the devil. Tracks, called gophers, can be collected as dust or dirt and can be put in a bag and used magically. Gopher dust, more recently called hot foot powder (Hazzard-Donald 2013:102, 163), can be used with other ingredients to cure, disable, protect, or fulfill other wishes dealt with through conjure. But conjure is only done by God.

Tracks are left by bare feet and by shoes. Footprints may belong to a particular person, and tracks or footprints can be scooped up and saved. It does not appear to matter whether the tracks come from a living person known to the collector or are from a ghost. The track contains the soul of whoever walked to make the print. It is a metonym. The being itself. Its soul. The footprint maker is captured this way. Gopher tracks are the essence of a living person, or if the print is a ghost’s, then the dirt or dust contains the actual power of the supernatural or divine.

This point is significant for three reasons. First, it makes Afro-Christianity different from some of contemporary European Christianity (MacGaffey 1988a, 1988b; 2000a, 2000b; Payne 1968 [1888]; Price 2002). Second, the immediately divine element in this case is African and sees an active role for humans in controlling the divine. Third, it enables us to see the link between things, on the one hand, and the role of religion in promoting and prohibiting action, on the other. So, taken together, some things can contain the supernatural or the divine. They became indispensable as means of access to the supernatural, God.

Orlando Patterson links things to spirits, which are the active component in Afro-Christianity. He argues that Africans in the Caribbean, Brazil, and North America built the only permanent version of the Reformation seen in the last 500 years.2 He argues that despite every effort to destroy it, Afro-Christianity in its many forms always kept its independence in its own rituals, prayers, dance, music, practitioners, and places of worship. It has an alternative medicine, food, language, music, and relationship to the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and Saint Paul. They were never closed down, and they thrive today.

These are religions that came out of plantation slavery. They enabled Africans to survive and are creations in the New World. Orlando Patterson (1982), Ira Berlin (1998:12, 298–364), John Thornton (1992:192–205), and Cecile Fromont (2020) see a new culture coming out of Atlantic Africa, out of Atlantic slavery and plantation slavery. Berlin and Thornton call the people of this process Atlantic Creoles, coming from West Central Africa but who begin the new culture in the Portuguese colonization and Christianization of Kongo and Angola in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Scott (2004) and Patterson (1982) see New World plantation slavery as the more likely place for originality.

This position is articulated by David Scott, who sees that the New World and the Atlantic bowl created something entirely new as a result of Atlantic slavery:

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1. The Slave Narratives (or simply Narratives) are from the Works Progress Administration’s (WPA’s) Federal Workers’ Project Slave Narratives (Federal Writers’ Project 1936). The Narratives and Hyatt (1970) are searchable, or word searchable. I used spirits, boots, shoes, tracks, gopher, ghost(s), Holy Spirit, and other terms to find uses and meanings for the materials from Wye House. I used the Virginia and North and South Carolina narratives. There are no approximate references in the Maryland Narratives. This paper’s quotes only begin to explore the useful citations in the Narratives. There are many more citations that could be found.

2. Orlando Patterson, lecture, University of Maryland, April 2017.
I am urging, therefore, that we need a way of describing the regime of slave plantation power in which what is brought into view is less what it restricts and what restricts this restriction, less what it represses and what escapes or overcomes this repression, and more the modern conditions it created that positively shaped the way in which language, religion, kinship, and so on were reconstituted. (Scott 2004:115)

John Thornton clearly shows the deep-rootedness of Portuguese Catholicism in Central and West Central Africa before the Portuguese ship many slaves out to the near Atlantic. He also describes a deliberate local effort led by converted African leaders to preserve local religious practices, thus creating an Afro-Catholic religion in western Africa itself, long before it was either transferred to the Caribbean and the rest of the New World or became a model that the colonizers enslavers and those to be enslaved made possible and practicable (Thornton 2013; see also Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988). "The element of Christian identity that set Kongo’s Atlantic creole apart from Portuguese culture was its mixing of Christian ideas with local religious concepts. . . . Traditional Kongolese religion focused on two sorts of otherworldly beings, deities with territorial jurisdiction and the souls of dead ancestors” (Heywood and Thornton 2007:62).

"Nkisi, the Kongo term referring to physical receptacles in which the spirits of deities or ancestors manifested themselves and which the Portuguese often called ‘idols,’ were used for an important linguistic transformation.” Ukisi, an abstraction, became "holy." “The new vocabulary transformed such items as the Holy Bible into a ‘book with the characteristics of idols.’ . . . Saints were converted into ancestors’ souls” (Heywood and Thornton 2007:63–64). This occurs in the early sixteenth century. These ideas came up into the later colonial era in Africa, as we know from Karl Laman and Wyatt MacCaffey (Laman 1991 [1962]). Thornton uses MacCaffey to identify power objects or nkisi, also called a possessed object, or among the “personhood of objects” and made over the last 500 years in West, Central, and Atlantic Africa (Thornton 2013:73–74).

The kiteke [the carving of a figure] ceases to be a wooden statue and becomes the entity that possessed it . . . so that the spiritual entity is the nkisi and the object, just a material item until it is possessed . . . . In short, nkisi in seventeenth century Kikongo referred to a transcendent Otherworldly force, which might have particular characteristics and manifest itself in named individual spirits, but still retained its generic meaning and could be used for good or evil purposes. (Thornton 2013:74)

In correspondence that is recent, John Thornton says,

In order to make use of this material from sixteenth-century Africa in the nineteenth-century Chesapeake, there is not only Thornton’s scholarship but also Ira Berlin’s (Berlin 1998; Thornton 2013). Berlin knows the Chesapeake, and he and Thornton use the terms “Charter Generation” and “Plantation Generation” for enslaved peoples who were taken to the New World. The first, or Charter Generation, are Atlantic Creoles and include many Africans who are outright Christians and had been so for some time in Africa or who, if not practicing Catholics, at least knew a lot about this form of Christianity. This generation reached the Chesapeake either directly, but in small numbers, or from the Caribbean, also in small numbers. The point of the term and definition by Berlin and Thornton is to establish the Christianity held by this first generation of enslaved people and their already deep familiarity with many aspects of European culture, thus calling them Creole and seeing them and their background in Africa as key to founding a new African American culture in the Americas. This argument sounds very different from Scott’s emphasis on plantation slavery as the basis, or origin, for a new African American culture, but it allows both a new culture in Africa and a new culture in the New World built by Africans by allowing a Charter Generation a previous deep familiarity with linguistic and religious parts of European culture. Berlin’s and Thornton’s argument does not extinguish what Scott (2004), and Price (2002) before him, have argued about the originality of African American culture in the New World largely because of the spatial enormity and duration of the development of New World African cultures over the last 500 years.

Berlin (1998) and Thornton (2013) go on to argue that a succeeding Plantation Generation (1670–1780) of much greater numbers of enslaved Africans, and including people less familiar with Atlantic Creole culture in Africa, became more isolated on plantations and among themselves, as well as necessarily self-referential on the enormous plantations that were established in the Caribbean and on the east coast of North America and thus retained more African culture untouched by European influence in all its forms. In these conditions, people re-Africanized their lives, preserving in their own intense interaction and plantation isolation more of their African background, and were less influenced by the Europeanized Charter Generation (Thornton 2016). Therefore, they appear more African and less creolized from Africa. Thornton thinks it is

likely that some African Creole culture was left; Berlin does not think there was much. In either case, there are two conclusions. The first is that there is some precedent within Atlantic Creole culture for newly enslaved Africans of the late seventeenth century to have some knowledge of Christianity, or even to be practicing Christians. The second is the possibility that succeeding generations of enslaved people also brought some sense of Christianity with them or learned some of its principles, rituals, or key concepts from their enslaved Creole antecedents already in the New World.

The idea of an antecedent familiarity with Christianity does make it easier to explain the widespread and enthusiastic embrace of Christianity by enslaved peoples from the 1720s on. However, such a proposition also permits the rebirth of African practices like the use of bundles that contain the divine. Fromont’s work (2020:11–12, 30–33) supports both possibilities by arguing for the profundity of the creation coming from West African Christianity making its own version of a new, Christian, native religion.

Left out of all this is David Scott’s (2004) and, to some degree, Ira Berlin’s (1998) effort to locate new religious creations on slave plantations. This is where Hoodoo in North America comes from after about 1720. We know that Hoodoo’s practices and rituals are mostly African but that their practitioners were active Christians.

Thornton (2013) leaves one point that needs placement in this argument. In areas like Kongo and its vicinities, African bundles had already been Christianized in the sixteenth century, even with some approval from missionizing Jesuits. Therefore, it may not matter who is historically correct in order to understand the many bundles from Annapolis, Maryland, and Maryland’s Eastern Shore that date from the 1720s to the 1930s–1940s. The bundles contain the divine, and they allowed individuals to experience the divine where they wanted to and for the purposes at hand. This Afro-Christian contact is where one finds both Scott’s (2004) African Atlantic originality and Patterson’s (1982) permanent Reformation. This may have been an innovation in sixteenth-century Africa as Thornton (2013) and Fromont (2020) show. However, when transported to the New World, it led to the eventual founding of whole new languages, cuisines, healing practices, and religions. These are both African and Christian, and they are new. In Orlando Patterson’s terms, they became and remain a permanent Reformation. In Scott’s terms, as well as in Nietzsche’s (1985, 1987, 1988), they are modern. Economically and politically, they are modern. In my terms, it means that they changed to meet the demands of exploitative capitalism.

By the eighteenth century and probably earlier, the European Reformation enabled workers to work under intolerable conditions that created proletarians and proletarian churches like Methodism, Quakerism, Shakerism, Mormonism, and many other nonconformist churches that renewed and extended the effects of the Reformation. Access to emotional life that was defined as containing manifestations of the Spirit was one of their hallmarks. The key to both Afro-Christianity and renewed European Reformation churches was putting access to the supernatural in people’s hands. But the key element of both that requires attention today, when larger social reforms have failed or are out of reach, is that they succeeded at modifying exploitative conditions at local levels, often invisible to any but their own members. This is certainly one accepted way to look at the Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal churches in North America (Hazzard-Donald 2013; Payne 1968 [1888]; Price 2002; Raboteau 1978:151; M. Smith 1997; Sobel 1979, 1987; Stuckey 1987, 2013).

The permanent reformation that Patterson is talking about is a process within institutional churches and the practices of their members (Price 2002; Scott 2004). Not only did the religious communities create cultures but they also created institutions that had a cooperative component. To be sure, some European Protestant reforming churches actually were communal like Shakers and Mormons. The first Afro-Christian religious communities of the Caribbean, Brazil, and North America were not self-governing but could be cooperative. But the Afro-Protestant churches to come out of North America did aim at communal music, rituals, cuisine, healing, salvation, language, eventually schooling, some shared land properties, institutions for credit, and race-free businesses of the kind Booker T. Washington later urged (Mullins 1999). The point is that the labor and conditions of slavery also produced socializing proletarian religions, and they are all Christian, either Afro-Christian or emotional reforms of European Christianity for whites, from about 1750 on. And many of these still exist and thrive.

Wye House, Talbot County, Maryland: The Home of the Problem and the Data

All this allows a hypothesis about the meaning in a bundle found at Wye House. Sometime in the 1990s, workers who were putting a new roof on the Captain’s Cottage (fig. 1) at Wye House looked into the attic of the building from outside and saw a pile of boots and shoes against the building’s only chimney. That pile was removed at the time and subsequently lost on the Wye House property until the spring of 2017, when it was found again. I saw these boots and shoes for the first time in August 2017. On March 3, 2018, they were photographed.

There are 24 shoes and boots (fig. 2). There are two or three iron bars (fig. 3) and two white bowls, both broken, one with its base shaped like a cosmogram (fig. 4) and the second with seven lobes surviving. There is a piece of white cardboard (fig. 5) with two large capital As in cursive written on it in black, and the white tail end of a duck decoy made of cork. There is a length of string or cord. And there are five pieces of cotton cloth (fig. 6), all parts of clothing, crumpled.

Discovered originally with this pile was a carved wood piece with a human face carved on either side, making a single figure with a head that has two faces (figs. 7–9). This can be called a two-headed doctor, a term coming from the WPA Slave Narratives. There are three mentions of these in the Narratives.
Figure 1. The Captain’s Cottage at Wye House, originally the kitchen for a now demolished large plantation house. The cottage dates from the late seventeenth century. The bundle of shoes and boots was found against the chimney rising on the right side of this image. There are three stories to this building. Above the main or first floor is a second floor with the single dormer. Above the second floor is an attic with no opening to let light in. The hyphen end building to the far right dates from the 1990s. Photograph by Patrick Rogan. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis. All photos in this article are the property of Archaeology in Annapolis, Mark P. Leone, director and principal investigator. Permission to use these photos comes directly from the project which I direct.

Figure 2. The entire ensemble of the bundle from the attic of the Captain’s Cottage at Wye House is pictured here, but without the two-faced figure. One or two other items of iron may have been lost. The five pieces of cloth are on the left. At the top, to the right of the cloth fragments, is a stoppered bottle; below it is the tail end of a duck decoy made of cork and painted white, with the end facing the bottom of the photograph. Below this is a piece of multilayered cardboard with a white surface on which is written a series of letters in cursive. Below that is a very small piece of white porcelain chipped into the form of a cosmogram. Next to the bottle in the top row is the twisted hinge, and below it is a piece of metal of unknown function. Below that is a small chamber pot, broken but with seven lobes intact around its remaining sides. There are 24 boots and shoes, and fragments, most with eyelets and with holes in the soles. At the bottom middle, to the right of the chamber pot, there is a piece of string, cord, or shoelace. This assemblage was laid out by Leone, photographer George Holzer, and museum designer Patrick Rogan. It does not represent the original look or design of the bundle as it was found in place around 1990. Photograph by George Holzer. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.
and they represent a person who can see in two directions and live in two worlds or cultures at once. “No matter how a person becomes a doctor, a first-class doctor should be a fortune-teller—a seer and master of dreams and spirits—able to tell what has happened, is happening, and will happen” (Hyatt 1970:279). This carving is the only one from North America as far as I know.

The key to understanding shoes and boots is the sole. The eyelets are important as well. Much of Hoodoo is based on English wordplay. In Harry Middleton Hyatt’s *Hoodoo–Conjuration–Witchcraft–Rootwork* (1970) “sole” is “soul,” for example. If you sell your soul to the devil and he comes for it after the seven-year contract is up, you can hand him your shoe sole because it is your soul and he has to accept it and you have bought off the devil.

I’ve heard about dat but I don’ know if it be true. But one thing about it—you have to visit the four forks of the road for nine mornings. On de ninth morning that you visit dere, you’ll find de devil. He’ll meet you at de four forks of de road and yo’ and him’l git together, and then you’ll have a good was’lin’ [wrestling match] and he’ll ast you what you want. And you’ll tell him that you want the World’s gifts for twenty years or thirty years—just how long you want ’em. Now, when de time runs out, dat’s when de devil’s coming for you. Well, when he comes for you, you might stoop down and cut off a piece of your shoe sole and hand to him, and he’ll tell you that you got de world again and you kin go, and you sure enough got him if you kin stand to face him. And you do anything that you want to do, was’lin’, fightin’—anything of the kind. (Hyatt 1970:99)

Eyelets on shoes and boots are traps for spirits who come and go through the house by way of the chimney and hearth. Every shoe and boot in this bundle had eyelets. Spirits in Hoodoo are twofold. They are the dead wandering through the land who can be made to cure, punish, protect, and bring luck and good fortune. They can be sent to harm others. The theology or folk beliefs regarding spirits is complicated but ultimately amalgamates with the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, a manifestation of God and of God’s grace or beneficence.

The thread to pull together the items in this bundle is spirits. Spirits of the dead, or people’s souls, wandered and could be captured through eyelets and either held there permanently or be directed back against the living individual who sent them to do something perverse. I learned from my colleague, the late Gladys-Marie Fry, that sifters or strainers or colanders, trellises, chain link fences, eyelets, and the straws in brooms...
trap spirits. These holes, openings, or elements like bristles must be counted by a spirit before the spirit can continue its movement. They hold the spirit.

It is clear from the *Slave Narratives* (Federal Writers’ Project 1936) and Hyatt (1970) that most or all of the people in them are Christians and that they believe in the actions of the Holy Ghost. The founders of the early Christian church are spirits too. The Hebrew prophets, Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul are all spirits and can be captured by prayer and made to act through being captured in and by bundles. This is not standard Christian theology but rather, as Thornton (2013) showed, is Afro-Catholic and Atlantic Creole and presents a world of spirits who can be aligned for many needs.

My initial interpretation is that a pile of shoes is made up of soles and eyelets, and thus we can infer the presence of spirits and souls. There are two references in Hyatt to piles of shoes: Elizabeth City, North Carolina ([438] 557:1) in Hyatt (1970:483), and Wilson, North Carolina ([1505, 1506], 2673:9) in Hyatt (1970:482). In the Wilson source, a pile of shoes will bring you friends and good fortune. The closest recipe to explain this pile says to gather worn shoes (fig. 10) and put them in a large covered can and roast or toast them for a while without destroying them, and then take the ashes and scatter them in four directions, and this act will bring the scatterer and her household friends. In the Elizabeth City source, this is a way of blessing the household or protecting it.

We can begin with this quote as the starting point for an interpretation. The whole assemblage should be thought of as one, created over a period of years, possibly by the cook in this old kitchen building. The assemblage that I will call a bundle was created in the mid- to later nineteenth century. It is in a standard place for an African American Hoodoo bundle, where the chimney is both conduit for spirits and warm most of the year. It is likely that the person was either a Christian or approaching Christianity through Hoodoo or Afro-Christianity. So this is a sacred space, the second one (Wilford 2016:D6) we have identified at Wye House. The young boy Frederick Douglass was brought to this very building by his grandmother at four or five years old, in about 1820, and entrusted to the not-so-kind cook for the great house who gave him a closet next to the hearth to sleep in and who fed him miserably. This bundle was made in this very place years later when he was a successful abolitionist.

**Afro-Christianity in the Chesapeake Region**

There is a forming or emerging religious world (Scott 2004:98–131) in the Chesapeake region that altered slavery so that the Chesapeake produced both a new kind of Reformation Christianity and a new kind of revolutionary hero similar to those of the Caribbean; these are Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, people who contributed to ending slavery in their time.

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4. “Paraphernalia of conjure: the Bible. All hold that the Bible is the great conjure book in the world. Moses is honored as the greatest conjurer. ‘The names he knowed to call God by was what gave him the power to conjure Pharaoh and divide the Red Sea’” (Hurston 1990 [1935]:277, 280).
Can this emerging religious world explain the worn soles of the shoes? The shoes are not so much to be seen as worn out, which does not seem to be true in most cases, as to be well-worn. They all belonged to somebody—a lot of individuals—for years. And they all left a lot of tracks in the course of their lives. So they are a part of a wearer. Can we see them as metonyms—literally, the wearer herself and himself?

Found with this collection, or bundle, of shoes was a carved wood figure with two faces on one head. This is known in the Narratives as a two-head, or a two-headed doctor. It represents a person who can see in many directions, understands more than one culture, and can see the future, according to the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Writers’ Project Slave Narratives. This may be the only two-head found in North America. Photograph by Matthew Palus. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.

Figure 7. A single wood carving of a figure with a human face on either side (the second face is shown in fig. 8). Figure 9 is a side view of the figure, showing both faces in profile. The figure was found with the bundle of boots and shoes and other materials. Its date is unknown. The figure can be called a two-head, or a two-headed doctor. It represents a person who can see in many directions, understands more than one culture, and can see the future, according to the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Writers’ Project Slave Narratives. This may be the only two-head found in North America. Photograph by Matthew Palus. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.

Figure 8. This second face is unplastered, while the face in figure 7 has been coated with plaster and then carved. Photograph by Matthew Palus. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.

Figure 9. This side of the head has an ear and a flat top to the head. No image was taken of the head from the opposite side. Photograph by Matthew Palus. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.

Can this emerging religious world explain the worn soles of the shoes? The shoes are not so much to be seen as worn out, which does not seem to be true in most cases, as to be well-worn. They all belonged to somebody—a lot of individuals—for years. And they all left a lot of tracks in the course of their lives. So they are a part of a wearer. Can we see them as metonyms—literally, the wearer herself and himself?

My informant [Hyatt] refrains from criticizing hospital doctors for their inability to cure her, though she considers them impersonal and uninvolved. Naturally, the West Indian,

To return to our informant [Author’s note: This is Hyatt speaking,] once again we meet an old routine—the doctor (M.D.) fails; the doctor (Hoodoo) is called in. This time,
a man of her own race would appear in a better light; at least he permitted her to have something “to rub and . . . to gargle with.” But, when the woman says, “The doctors said, ‘Don’t give her nuthin tuh rub and . . . tuh gargle with,’” do not believe her, though she is telling the truth from her changed point of view. After the colored doctor offered it to her, the white doctors by not offering it to her had forbidden it. This is a mere gripe. She knew the doctors had done everything medically possible; the real trouble was herself, spiritual—“Ah’m goin’ . . . go to church fo’ this and . . . ah’m goin’ tuh pray to get well.” She realizes death stared her in the face—“Ah didn’t want tuh die.” Two steps having been taken toward health, she then took a third—“It happened so ah jest had to move.”

Despite her changed attitude, she still refused to accept any blame for her condition—a man and woman separately would not have Hoodooed her had she been all sweetness and light! She needed a scapegoat. Scapegoat also would permit her to satisfy those childhood beliefs and fears which had floated to the surface during her illness. Too intelligent to call in a Hoodoo doctor, she summons the spirit of a dead Hoodoo doctor. He appears not as master giving orders but as sinner seeking forgiveness—his eternal future depending upon her. She, of course, is the spirit of the dead Hoodoo doctor. Thus disguised she saves the soul of a sinner (his—actually her own) and cures herself by forgiving him (finding the bewitched feathers). In forgiving him she forgives herself. If you don’t forgive yourself neither God nor Church can do it for you—though either or both may smooth the way. This solution of my informant’s is the brilliancy and power that comes with a dream. This is also my guess about what happened. Each reader is entitled to a similar guess. (Washington, DC, [629], 808:3 in Hyatt [1970:349])

From the outside, Hoodoo and conjure are more easily tied to Africa and some of the religions of Kongo, especially their power, which was feared (Fromont 2020:11–12). When reading the Narratives, Theophus Smith (1994), Yvonne Chireau (2006), Katrina Hazzard Donald (2013), and Zora Neale Hurston (1990 [1935]:183–211) see that the practitioners are Christians. In North America, they are Protestants. By the time of the Narratives, they are regular church members, but probably not for all of the events the narrators describe. It is also clear that Hoodoo existed and was widely practiced within the context of Afro-Protestantism. How do we understand these two traditions fitting together? How is this new creation out of African religions and out of Christianity part of changing Christianity?

**Figure 10. Two views of a single ankle-length boot or shoe. A. This view shows a row of empty eyelets. Sometimes multiple eyelets are used to trap a spirit, a ghost, or a wandering soul. Each of the 24 boots and shoes, and each fragment of them, is worn, having a hole in the bottom sole (B). Photograph by George Holzer. Courtesy Archaeology in Annapolis.**

**Afro-Christianity/Hoodoo and Pauline Christianity**

Orlando Patterson lays the intellectual foundation for an ever-changing dynamic in Christianity that revolves around slavery (1982:70–72). To do so, he characterizes Saint Paul’s views on redemption. Patterson cites evidence of two contradictory positions within Christianity about redemption, and he uses Paul to illustrate them. Paul points out that Christ’s death and resurrection eliminated the slavery of death and subservience to sin, the cause of eternal death. This is the doctrine of justification. For Paul, redemption means release from enslavement to death, to sin, to guilt. “Justification means that the believer has been judged and found not guilty, in much the same manner as the slave who has received the most perfect of manumissions, the restoration of his natality with the legal fiction that he had been wrongfully enslaved. . . . Paul in fact went so far as to use the idea of adoption to describe the relationship between redeemed man and God.” “Redeemed, justified, reconciled man is elevated from the status of slave
to that of son, and becomes ‘an heir through God’ of the promised salvation” (Patterson 1982:70, n. 141; see also Davies 1959:55–58). This comes from Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels. Paul and the rest of Christianity that followed also used another concept of Christ’s death and resurrection. The other concept, which has profoundly conservative spiritual and social implications, held that Christ saved his followers by paying with his own life for the sin that led to their spiritual enslavement. The sinner, strictly speaking, was not emancipated but died anew in Christ, who became the new master. “Here was the confluence of two old ideas: the Near Eastern and Delphic notion of freedom through sale to a god, and the Judaic idea of the suffering servant and sacrificial lamb” (Patterson 1982:71). Paul’s first point is the essence of early Reformation Christianity. “The slave, it will be recalled, was someone who by choosing physical life had given up his freedom. Although he could, of course, have kept his freedom and died, man lacked the courage to make such a choice, Jesus, ‘his savior,’ by his death made this choice for him. It is the feature that was completely new in the religious behavior and death of Jesus.” Therefore, Jesus “annulled the condition of slavery in which man existed by returning to the original point of enslavement and, on behalf of the sinner about to fall, gave his own life so that the sinner might live and be free” (Patterson 1982:71).

To continue to understand Paul’s second interpretation of the crucifixion and to see his interpretation as a socially conservative one, and the one that also survives and flourishes, is “one [that] was pre-Christian and essentially [the] Judaic ethic of law and judgment, in which obedience to divine law, and judgment according to one’s social and religious actions, were of the essence” (Patterson 1982:71).

This second view and essentially pre-Christian interpretation of salvation is re-enslavement to a god. The believer is a slave to God. This is the “triumph of the conception of the believer as the slave of God and of Christianity as a theological transformation of the order of slavery” (Patterson 1982:72).

Patterson concludes his argument by saying, “Whatever other factors explain Christianity’s conquest of the Roman world, there seems little doubt that the extraordinary way in which its [Christianity’s] dominant symbolic statements and meanings are informed by the experience of slavery was a major contributing factor. . . . For the same reason too, Christianity was to provide institutional support and religious authority for the advanced slave system of medieval Europe and of the modern Americas” (Patterson 1982:72).

The novelty that comes from introducing Orlando Patterson’s idea here lies in his situating Western slavery within the early development of Christianity and showing that North American slavery and its extensive ties to Christianity sit within this context. I am interested in the conundrum that Paul articulated and perpetuated, which is: What and when is salvation? Is it true emancipation or is it spiritual death leading to later eternal life in Christ? Patterson is clear that the Christianity of Roman slavery was carried over to North American slavery almost perfectly. This meant that in both slave economies, Rome and North America, Christian masters were forgiven upon conversion and received redemption, and slaves were redeemed through belief in Christ and promised later eternal life by being enslaved through the Christ’s redemption.

My hypothesis here using the assemblage I described, as well as the two dozen other bundles my graduate students and I have excavated in Annapolis and on Maryland’s Eastern Shore since 1990, is that Hoodoo and its institutionalized successor, the Black church, has created a successful but compartmentalized combination of both of Paul’s interpretations of Christ’s death and resurrection. This requires that we see that Hoodoo and its modern practices do not exist within the Black church, where they have often been condemned, but within the lives of their members.

If Christ’s death and resurrection conquered death and sin, now and forever, it was a magical act of salvation for all and a vast, powerful, and threatening social leveler. It freed every believer and attracted—as intended by Jesus and his disciples—the colonized Jews of Israel, slaves, and the poor throughout the Roman world. It was a huge force for freedom, and Rome saw it that way.

The core of the African beliefs that survive in Afro-Christianity is that the supernatural can be commandeered to act through ritual performance. God can be made to act, not just asked to act. This is the equivalent of justification: God has made a man whole forever by one redemptive act. Through the use of bundles, mojo, “fixens,” tricks, and Hoodoo in general, God is not only everywhere but is universally available to save, cure, protect, attract, punish, ease, and escape—in short, to save always and forever. Thus, we can see why Hoodoo did not die but survives and thrives in places alongside but outside the Black church. The Black church meanwhile preserves the idea of ultimate salvation in the next life through obedience, following the Word, and sacrifice through personal discipline.

Theophus Smith (1994), Yvonne Chireau (2006), and other scholars point out that magical bundles operate to contain the spirit and make it act. The bundle is the spirit. It is God acting—being present. It is salvation from hurt, harm, pain, disease, disgrace, captivity, loneliness, and all the parts of daily life requiring salvation. Therefore, I argue that it is redemption in Saint Paul’s first sense and can be seen as a threat to the whole social order.

The boots and shoes, the two-head, the iron rods, and the white ceramics can contain the spirit. They act to make some supernatural do something or to make needed events happen. If they are a means to salvation, then the boots were stored in a safe space, a kind of tabernacle, which might have been seen as perpetually holy or powerful. This might make sense when opposed to the newly founded and vibrant Black churches to which most local African Americans belonged. Those churches featured scripture, music, and community, or structure that
daily life needed and that offered freedom of expression, strong community bonds, social and economic opportunity for coordinating members, and salvation through discipline.

Orlando Patterson (1982) and scholars like Albert Raboteau (1978) call the black North American church essential to the survival of the Black community. But Patterson goes two steps farther. He includes all Afro-Christianity, including that of Brazil, the Caribbean, and Louisiana Voodoo, as well as North America’s Afro-Protestantism. In other words, the Black church is like Santeria/Lukumi (Gonzalez-Wippler 1989), Vodun, Candomblé, Palo Mayombe, and the array of Afro-Christian religions with which we are familiar.

Second, Patterson (1982) in his wide-ranging concern for religions founded in the context of slavery, particularly Christianity, calls the Black church a permanent Reformation. By that he means that it is free of the dominant political and economic structure of the exploitative larger state.

Using this argument, the Black church is constantly navigating the two contradictory poles within original Christianity as Paul did. On the one hand, there is often immediate and permanent salvation and freedom from sin for any convert of any social status, such as Samuel Boulware experienced (quoted in Federal Writers’ Project [1936:69]). This is earthly emancipation. Then, and on the other hand, there is being ransomed by Christ’s death and resurrection by being freed from sin and death by being a servant of God, like Anne Bell did (quoted in Federal Writers’ Project [1936:54]), or through re-enslavement to Jesus through a church.

Hoodoo does the first, and its core concept comes to African Americans from Africa. The Black church primarily does the second and is African and European. The church uses both spiritual discipline and direct access to the divine. It is community centered, is fairly free politically, and can change. Katrina Hazzard-Donald (2013) best describes the development of Black plantation Christianity and Black church life. However, the core of Hoodoo needs to be seen as having direct access to the divine, an element arriving from Africa. Arguing for two sides within Afro-Protestantism establishes the usefulness of Patterson’s (1982) analysis of the existence of contradictions within early Christianity as Paul rationalized them.

Once we see that what Saint Paul was struggling with is a historic dichotomy that makes an inevitable dynamic within Christianity, then we do not need to make Paul unique, as the mainline Christian church does. Instead, we can say that just as Toussaint Louverture was a product of modernity and was captured by it, just as much as he was a revolutionary, so Douglass and Tubman were a product of the two-millennia-old dynamic within Christianity just as much as they are of the African Atlantic or Atlantic bowl. Both points are David Scott’s: the consequences of African Atlantic slavery and Western European modernity. We can say that the problem Paul worked on, freedom versus slavery, and how each social condition is achieved or escaped, exists across time and that the problem’s continued existence with the unresolved nature of the struggle is alive in the Black church. We can also see that the Black church’s ties to Hoodoo result in what Patterson (1982) wants to see as a permanent Reformation.

Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman: Are They Like Saint Paul?

This leads to Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. They are both from the area that my students and I have been working in since 2000. We think that each exemplifies the first half of the argument in Saint Paul about immediate salvation (emancipation) by conversion in Jesus of Nazareth. Each navigated freedom or salvation. Harriet Tubman achieved an enormous amount of freedom through her Underground Railroad, which began on her plantation in Dorchester County just south of Easton in Talbot County, where Douglass was born and raised.

Douglass and Tubman come from places a few miles from each other within Talbot and Dorchester Counties, adjacent to each other on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. On one hand, this is the slave-holding area of enormous plantations, with one—the one owned by the Lloyds where we excavated—having over 550 enslaved people between 1830 and the 1850s. On the other hand, there was a large community of freed African Americans in Easton, the area’s largest town. This urban community had been free since the American Revolution, and its members owned property, businesses, and farms. It was the community that Douglass returned to after the Civil War and was most likely the community that nurtured Douglass and provided safe spaces and stops for Tubman’s Underground Railroad passengers. The actual role of people in this community in Douglass’s and Tubman’s programs was not clear until after the Civil War. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that these two giants who negotiated freedom came from within this large community that helped to raise and create them and that they, in turn, saved. Today, both have been lionized there, but only in the last few years.

Here in these deeply Christian communities we can choose to see the dilemma within Christianity that Paul never resolved. How to eliminate slavery without destroying a slave-owning society? That problem was solved by the churches one way. Tubman’s answer was different and was immediate freedom and was to walk people to freedom in another land by herself, personally, calling herself Moses. Douglass’s answer was to write and write and fight and fight and see emancipation through the Civil War, only to see slavery never really die and to be reborn in another form during Reconstruction. He was always the prophet calling for reform and change according to the nation’s founding vision. In the long run, he lived alongside the Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal churches and dedicated one of each in Easton after the Civil War. But as a prophet he was separate from them. Unlike Tubman and Douglass, these churches stressed salvation for the next life through discipline in this one, or sacrifice and obedience to the will of God. This contrast between emancipating prophets and disciplined church life is
Paul’s articulation of the Judaic and Delphic idea of freedom and salvation through re-enslavement through Jesus, who saves for eternity, versus immediate freedom through conversion. Regardless of how we read the words and actions of Douglass and Tubman, there is a clear interpretation. They have come into their own as heroes in their native land, with Douglass now being treated as leader and prophet, not just a famous man. His words are read aloud and performed frequently. Less so Tubman, although people walk her walk and do not just visit.

We raise the widespread celebration of Douglass and Tubman in their home because it is new and it is successful. They are models of one way of being Christian and lead directly to salvation in a free land.

The spirit bundles could be made or requested by anyone. This was free access to divinity. Douglass and Tubman spoke and acted outside of the institution even though institutions helped both of them. Theirs is a process called continuous revelation (Thornton 1992:235, 246, 2012:398–399), which is free access to divinity. This is how I understand the bundles and Douglass and Tubman. They were vehicles to reach freedom and security. And they invented freedom and security as prophets just as the bundles were called to cure and protect, and did so.

I intend a further step with this analysis. David Scott makes two moves in his Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment that are important to ending this essay. The first is to say: “Whenever the sugar plantation and slavery existed, they imposed a pattern. It is an original pattern, not European, not African, not part of the American main, not native in any conceivable sense of that word, but West Indian, sui generis, with no parallel anywhere else” (Scott 2004:98). Nonetheless, this pattern is also called Atlantic Creole, a product of the Atlantic bowl, plantation slavery, and unique to the African New World. Within this uniqueness he places Toussaint Louverture, an early leader of independent Haiti. Louverture’s uniqueness combines his role in creating, rationalizing, and leading a free Black republic and of trying to make it modern in the Enlightenment sense. In this, he is an American, a republican, an African, and a New World child of the Enlightenment. So he is an Atlantic man, a creation of the Atlantic bowl, and could not get around its influence or its inherent conflicts: capitalism, hierarchy, exploitation, and poverty that cannot be escaped. These latter terms are my impositions on Scott’s definition of the “pattern.”

If Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803) is an Atlantic man who is the product of the Atlantic crossings, are Frederick Douglass (ca. 1818–1895) and Harriet Tubman (ca. 1822–1913) his near contemporaries? The leap to take with this list of Atlantic people who were created through plantation slavery is to say they embody Paul’s dynamic because they each took a set of ideas and turned them against conditions that were intolerable and, in doing so, they wedded Paul’s ideas to revolutionary words and actions and created freeing institutions. This allows Paul and the Black churches to be modern, hierarchical, and reliant on rationality and Jesus of Nazareth, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and the bundles to be democratic: one process out of time and arising from slavery.

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The Crying Child
On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons

Temi Odumosu

This article sketches key concerns surrounding the digital reproduction of enslaved and colonized subjects held in cultural heritage collections. It centralizes one photograph of a crying Afro-Caribbean child from St. Croix, housed in the Royal Danish Library, to demonstrate the unresolved ethical matters present in retrospective attempts to visualize colonialism. Working with affect and haunting as research material, the inquiry questions how museums and other cultural heritage institutions are caretaking historical violations, identifying themselves as hosting agents, and navigating issues of trust and accountability as they make their colonial collections available online. Speculating about what an ethics of care in representation could look like, the article draws on reparatory artistic engagements with such imagery and proposes how metadata could be rethought as a cataloging space with the potential to alter historical imbalances of power.

Why risk the contamination involved in restating the maledictions, obscenities, columns of losses and gains, and measures of value by which captive lives were inscribed and extinguished? Why subject the dead to new dangers and to a second order of violence? Or are the merchant’s words the bridge to the dead or the scriptural tombs in which they await us? (“Venus in Two Acts,” Saidiya V. Hartman, 2008)

While researching I become part of your army of ghosts. Haunting. Haunting. (Unearthing. In Conversation, Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński)1

This article is concerned with how we attend to the dead represented in the open digital commons, those ancestors glimpsed in code, through substitute JPEGs and TIFF files. It considers how we welcome people into mindful encounters with representations of enslavement and colonization and how we guide people overall in the use and circulation of sensitive visual material. By “we” I refer to those of us doing the work of historical and cultural narration and caretaking, but I am also addressing our students as well. To borrow the words of Susan A. Crane in the context of Holocaust atrocity, I “want to highlight the ethical torque of knowing the [slavery or colonial] past through images for anyone who is historically conscious, and from that consciousness propose alternative responses” (Crane 2008:310). What is presented here, then, is a series of expanded reflections that draw on my art historical background researching African people and imagined types in early modern European art and also my current work on colonial archives and the performance of memory in Scandinavia. This experience is the window through which I delineate a speculative ethics of care in collections that is concerned with “emotional justice,” as Marika Cifor describes it: “framing records as repositories of affect” and then appraising them (working with, describing, and sharing them) as such (Cifor 2016:14).

Responding to the delicate questions posed by Saidiya Hartman in her seminal essay “Venus in Two Acts,” the whole discussion negotiates tensions surrounding access to representations and visibility of enslaved or colonized peoples, as they intersect with community needs for historical recognition, cultural ownership, and healing (Hartman 2008).

Critical thinking about the effects of digitization on cultural heritage politics, practices, and values is not new. In 1981 F. Gerald Ham called on the archive community to take seriously how technology was ushering in a new “postcustodial” era, which required the profession to reconsider its inherited roles and self-understanding as special gatekeepers of history (Ham 1981). Decentralization and mobility of information, datafication of culture, and negotiation of collaborative knowledge production are the ongoing concerns that have surrounded transformations in collections management systems. Ross Parry’s invocation of the term “rescripting” in Recoding the Museum adequately describes what has been required along the computational and conceptual road to handle fundamental issues of trust and ownership central to what it means to be an institution (Cameron and Kenderdine 2010 [2007]; Parry 2008:82).

1. A quotation from the artwork: Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, Unearthing. In Conversation, 2017, video, duration 13:00 minutes.

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Now digitized artifacts and documents have come to represent their own forms of remembrance and are in general positively viewed as the means through which access to out-of-reach and/or decaying collections can be brokered. Digitization has also provided a range of innovative solutions (3-D scanning, 360-degree photography, OCR [optical character recognition] combined with AI [artificial intelligence]), with the front-end result of enabling users to zoom into and manipulate collections on their own terms.

Experience has taught, however, that digital solutions in heritage contexts come with challenges. And ethically contentious scenarios have specifically called into question the reproduction, recording, and sharing of sensitive material in this new data reality where there are clear gaps between what is legal to do and what is tolerable or just (Dalgleish 2011), for example, the vulnerabilities of caretaking LGBTQ+ archives, which concurrently reveal, empower, and riskily expose already marginalized people recorded there (Chenier 2015; Cowan and Rault 2018). Similarly, Suzannah Biernoff points to the “tangled history of symbolism and aversion” surrounding images of human disfigurement in World War II medical photography (Biernoff 2012:189). She narrates the morbid and troubling appropriation of these archival images in the context of a popular video game called BioShock. And the issue of archival censorship is a double-bind that was negotiated by librarians at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln who expressed their difficult “soul-searching” as they began digitizing back issues of the boisterous student-run satirical magazine Angwani (1913–1946). They write in their sobering phenomenology of practice that manually scanning each page led us to see, at scale, the magazine’s prejudices, biases, and oppressive and destructive rhetoric—both textual and visual. As we digitized issues and discussed what we read and observed, we became increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of making widely publicly available digital content full of such messages, which could be easily and broadly circulated via the Internet either without context or with ahistorical context. (Brink, Ducey, and Lorang 2016:18)

Alongside others who share the discomfort of unmediated access to, and batch scanning of, cultural memory, I too turn my attention to further troubling images; revisiting those breaches (in trust) and colonial hauntings that follow photographed Afro-diasporic subjects from moment of capture, through archive, into code. Activism and critical awareness-raising in data and internet studies provide an important (and urgent) context for these concerns, since they are grappling with wide-ranging manifestations of coloniality in technology, such as cyber racism, recording of black life and death in digital culture, white prototypicality in biometrics and identity management, and algorithmic bias (Brown 2010, 2015; Nakamura 2013; Sutherland 2017). However, this particular discussion really represents a specific request or demand of the cultural heritage sector to drop the illusion of techno-neutrality. As Haidy Geismar (2018) insists, “We need to explore how digital objects are used to constitute reality effects, creating object lessons by altering and participating in how we both see and understand the world” (19). Thus, I would like to explore what creativity might emerge and what shifts in institutional practices could take place if we asked questions such as these:

- What does it mean for an archive or collection to provide open digital access to materials representing violated subjects who did not necessarily consent to being documented?
- To what extent are institutions taking seriously non-European perspectives on looking at, or engaging with, ancestor remains?
- And how can we extend concepts of caretaking and custodianship beyond institutions toward reparative strategies proposed by artists, activists, and other agents of change?

Some of the answers to these questions will require much more than theoretical or artistic inquiry, for example, reception research with audiences and cultural practitioners. And there is still much complementary research required to augment work already done on the “mediatisation of memory” (Dijck 2007; Garde-Hansen 2011; Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading 2009; Hoskins 2017). Methodologically speaking, you will notice that I slip between disciplinary lingua—records, documents, artifacts, artworks, traces, sources, data—which at this stage makes it difficult to categorize the scholarly emphasis of this contribution. I have initially chosen to work this way because the rich interdisciplinary literature provides multiple points of access to the issue of what Achille Mbembe succinctly describes as the buried disorder of colonial “remains” and “debris” (2002:22). In short, this article is an invitation to dialogue. Adopting a montage methodology that also mixes words and images (sometimes speaking independently), I seek to actively pinpoint the ambiguity and quietness in the discourse, while inviting in other considerations. Since ethics and caretaking are the product of collective negotiation, this thought exercise should too be open for questioning and debate.

Punctum

One particular photograph is motivating this inquiry, a document in which issues of care, custodianship, affect, and oversight combine. This photograph suspends in time a Black body, a series of compositional choices, actions, and a sound. It represents a child standing alone in a nondescript setting, barefoot with overpronation, in a dusty linen top too short to be a dress, and crying. Clearly in visible distress, with a running nose and

2. Inspiring examples of people and projects developing direct actions in the field include Joy Buolamwini’s work in the Algorithmic Justice League (https://www.ajlunited.org/). Harlo Holmes’s work in Guardian Project (https://guardianproject.info/), and the work of Deb Raji as part of the Partnership on AI (https://wwwpartnershiponai.org/).
copious tears rolling down its face, the child’s wrinkled forehead gives a sense of concentrated energy exerted by all the emotion (fig. 1). Emotions that object to the circumstances of iconographic production. Because all the natural and affecting sounds of a child’s cry are muted via the photographic lens onto paper, and further still in the digital image, the pregnant silence one experiences in encounters with this photograph across media is particularly arresting. The initial camera silenced the cry. Thus, it is what we cannot hear that marks the violations taking place in and around this image; and we need to perform a “bone deep listening, a sensing of the unbridgeable chasm” to fully access this “seen cry unheard” (Campt 2017; Moten 2003:83).

My first encounter with the photograph was face-to-face in an album, during archival research at the Royal Danish Library. It stood out as one of thousands of private and commercial images in their special collections, produced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, when the islands were under Danish colonial rule (Gøbel 2017; Krabbe Meyer 2019). Images made by Danes of life in the tropics, dressed in white cotton, attended to and supported by Afro-Caribbean people. Images that migrated with returnee families back to Denmark and were then stored for safekeeping. The photograph was taken around 1910 by Axel Ovesen (ca. 1885–1972), a military officer who went to St. Croix as a young man in 1906 and soon opened a studio there while building a publishing business. These were days of uncertainty on the islands, where emancipation of slavery had been achieved as the result of a rebellion in 1848. Following this, working conditions for the formerly enslaved grew worse, and contracts bound laborers and their families to plantations for miniscule wages. The mounting tensions erupted in a significant labor dispute in 1878 known as the “fireburn,” which saw plantations destroyed in protest (Jensen 1998). By 1910 imported Caribbean sugar cane was being replaced by sugar beet produced locally in Denmark. The Danish government was also negotiating the sale of the islands, which during World War I were eventually transferred to the United States in 1917. They are now the US Virgin Islands. Axel Ovesen’s images were thus documents tracing a landscape and community in transition.

The child in the photograph is unnamed and, so far, unknown, but we get a sense of the popularity of the image as an aide-mémoire, by way of its multiple appearances in Danish collections. For example, the photograph appears randomly pasted in the private albums of the Helweg-Larsen family and those of Major Theodor C. von Zeilaus, donated to the Royal Danish Library. In these particular album contexts one cannot

Figure 1. Photograph of crying child pasted in the Helweg-Larsen family album (1910–1920). Photo credit Axel Ovesen (and Emilie Langkjær). Royal Danish Library.
fully decipher the intentions of private visual curatorship, which include a jarring mix of colonial views: crying child alongside street and harbor scenes with Caribbean people dressed in Sunday best, or crying child alongside a group portrait of Danish soldiers and a view from a horse race. In another album containing photographs and postcards, the image appears together with those of other Black children, who are categorized with handwritten notations. An older smiling girl standing with a confident pose and directly facing the camera is noted in English as “A nice girl.” Another smiling young girl who has been dressed up with a bow in her hair tilts her head and stands among palm leaves. She is described in English as “A glad girl,” although “glad” in Danish also means cheerful. Under the crying child’s photograph is a handwritten note in Danish stating “En gnaven,” meaning a grumpy or upset one (but also uncooperative). Such labeling practices categorized Afro-Caribbean subjects as obedient and familiar types who could also be “tamed” through the cutting, pasting, and inscription of album production (Barthes 1999:117–119). And this process of reordering experience and describing the people among whom they lived in limiting terms contributed to a narration of “atypical” (even dissonant) memories for Danes “that wanted, and wants still, to communicate” (Langford 2001:23; Van Dartel 2012).

The crying child’s image was used repeatedly in storytelling within private albums as an example of what Danish catalogers describe as “Folkeliv” (folk life) from the Virgin Islands—views of Afro-Caribbean people in daily situations like selling food at the market, carrying coal, or doing their laundry. The repetition is also likely because Ovesen transferred the image onto a postcard, which he too labeled at the bottom (close to the child’s feet) with the pejorative title “A St. Croix Pickney, D.W.I.” (fig. 2). This was an augmentation strategy similar to that of postcard makers across the Caribbean, which Krista Thompson explains sought to “control, stabilize, and contain the meaning of the cards and the images of the islands generally for potential travellers,” as well as for those who would never take the trip (2006:257). The word “pickney” also had transnational resonance as a local adaptation of an old word used to describe children but given violent associations by way of the “Pickanniny” racist caricature during Jim Crow. In American literature and visual culture, the character was a popular trope whose core attributes were “juvenile status, dark skin” and “the state of being comically impervious to pain” (Bernstein 2012:20; Bogle 2003). The real child captured by Ovesen in St. Croix felt pain. But they entered the archive (and come to us now) as a metaphor for displacement, a repeating data-body with no name, no caretakers, no clear gender markers, no explanatory context. Crying without an identifiable source of provocation. Orphaned via the technology of photography into a “zone of nonbeing,” and then slipped on paper into the storehouse of Danish colonial memories (Fanon 2008:2).

A sobbing, miserable photographic tronie leaning mimetically into the storehouse of Danish colonial memories (Fanon 2008:2).

3. Many thanks to Nina Cramer for providing nuanced translations of Danish terminology.


on that old form of Dutch character painting that sought to articulate, through artistic skill, intense physiognomic expressions and emotions (Percival 2016:57–63). This is the kind of candid “infinitely reproducible, duplicatable image” that Okwui Enwezor once described as “truly archival” (2008:12), an enduring photographic impression of asymmetrical contact between colonizer and colonized (fig. 3).

We know that this postcard traveled with private correspondences across the Atlantic, and perhaps, in this context, it was intended as a ruse for (racial) humor. For example, just before Christmas in 1912, a Danish father in St. Croix sent the postcard to his son in Copenhagen, writing: “Dearest son! Here you have a little boy from St. Croix; he sure doesn’t look happy, does he? But you must look happy all of the time; that’s what you promised.” This boy received Afro-Caribbean tears in the post, as a gift from his absent father and a comparative antidote to his own separation anxiety. What promises (of happiness) did the colonial postcard circulate, or protract, or stand in for? (Ahmed 2010:29). Evidently the postcard was sent for remedial effect, but toward what outcome (fig. 4)? Colonial postcards did considerable identity work within and between nations (Geary and Webb 1998). Tanya Sheehan’s (2018:103–131) recent study of postcards in America provides a sobering assessment of national anti-Black communication in middle-class vernacular culture, arguing that use of photography to produce stereotypical and performative racial tropes legitimized the images on postcards as being “true” and “real.” Considering the relationship between postcard images and their correspondence on the backs, Sheehan writes that “everyday...
encounters with comic images of African Americans, framed by the guiding hand of a trusted adult, had the ability to fuel children’s fantasies of their own whiteness and rightness, encouraging the consolidation of a discrete and desired self” (113). British colonial postcards similarly used ethnographic photography of so-called everyday life to fortify imperial subjectivities (an “us” and a “them”), while authenticating the sender’s exotic location and thrilling proximity to difference (Wollaeger 2006:71–127).

If we read “against the grain” of Ovesen’s photograph, while at the same time registering its edges, marks, and textures, as Ann Stoler (2009) advises, then the emotional protest expressed by the child does offer a refusal with which to think and feel (50), a sonic disruption that resists the “terms of negation and dispossession” (Campt 2017:96). Certainly there were other Afro-Caribbean babies and children captured in photographs from the Islands, but this particular child haunts as a subject unwillingly forced into cultural labor, and this resonates across archival materialities, contexts, and time (fig. 5). What were the conditions of photographic production? How did Axel Ovesen meet and encounter this child? And, importantly, to whom did this child belong? There are no concrete answers beyond what the photograph tells, and it tells that something was—is—amiss. For what is this visualized cry if not an expression of separation (from the absent guardian) and a call for care and attachment, even a request for milk? Reading around the photograph in other ways, and past the critique of Black parenting within its implied humor, the image could be interpreted as a provocation to Danish colonists on the affective state of things present and things to come, a Black mirror for their self-understanding as good colonial parents to the Islands, who will soon abandon their custodial “duty” and soothe their own upset with treasured photographic memories (Andersen 2013; Thisted 2009). This photograph could do such ideological work. But the important issue for us now is where we stand as onlookers in this colonial constellation, as witnesses to a Black child being archived and appropriated. The material distancing of this image means that we are unable to intervene in this moment passed; however, as Roland Barthes (1999) infamously told us, we can share it: “from a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me” (80). The cry can move us. Judith Nelson (2005) writes that “infant crying is interactive and relational from the very beginning of life. Infant cries must alert and unsettle protectors enough to bring them close, if not to bring them running” (19). So who and where are the protectors seeking to symbolically console this crying Black child in the open commons and fend off harm?—in other words, those conscientious witnesses determined to “restore the civilian skill of spectatorship: to be an addressee of this injury, to produce its meaning as injury, and to continue to address it” (Azoulay 2008:306; Gordon 2011).

Figure 3. Album page from “Fotos og prospektkort fra Dansk Vestindien” (Album 332). Early twentieth century. Royal Danish Library. Editorial blur added by the author.

Figure 4. “For eller Imod? / For or against?” 1916. Postcard. Harry Nielsen. Royal Danish Library.
expressions, image, and presence in space and time. The recent 2017 centenary commemoration of colonial transfer provided a critical (albeit challenging) moment of reflection and witnessed renewed interest and investigation into this history, and its consequences, on both sides of the Atlantic (Andersen 2020). Several 2017 exhibitions used the photographic archive as the starting point, or as a backdrop, for a discourse that Astrid Nonbo Andersen (2020) succinctly describes as marked by uncertainty and struggling with an inherited and dominant narrative of “innocent colonialism” (59; Krabbe Meyer 2019). During this process of historical redress, digital repatriation was centered by heritage institutions as a solution to immediate problems of access to documents, and the Danish National Archives in particular focused their efforts on this endeavor (Agostinho 2019). Between 2013 and 2017 they scanned 5 million pages of colonial administration documents and crowdsourced support for transcription since many were written in an old form of Danish.” They also produced a special website called The Danish West Indies: Sources of History, enabling people to discreetly search the records but also explore context through curated themed sections. Similarly, the National Maritime Museum, National Museum of Denmark, and Royal Danish Library all provided digital access to colonial artworks, objects, photographs, and other documents, open-accessing as a reparative gesture of transparency.

Digitization has come with critiques of power, bias, and legitimacy, since the institutional drive to reproduce the excessive scale of the colonial project as big data enacts its own forms of erasure. As Daniela Agostinho (2019) writes, “this logic of quantification—itsself embedded in the archives—can stand in the way of centring the experiences of the communities who lived under colonialism and slavery” (157), as well as defer access to latent expressions of their humanity. The digital option also raised the practical issue of consistency, since access to these resources requires electricity, a strong internet link, and computers or mobile devices, all of which become quite precarious when (for example) a hurricane hits the islands, as they did with Irma and Maria in 2017 (fig. 6). Most critically for this discussion, since much of this material is understood and treated as Danish “property” (made by Danish hands, and/or from private family collections), there have been few attempts to negotiate approvals or community support for the ways images of Afro-Caribbean ancestors are actually used, digitally or otherwise. This also means that labeling and descriptive practices in collections management systems have prioritized Danish representation and perspectives.

5. See Article 3.2 of the sales treaty of August 4, 1916. The original handwritten version is both in English and Danish and is housed at the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, E4 Traktater, VII 120 USA 1916 8 4).

6. The Danish National Archives have worked hard to transform their traditional image as a gatekeeper to this history. They recently produced a selection of films of people talking about their investment in the archives from different perspectives, in order to explain the positive aspects of digitization. See the full playlist of videos here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDOvgvDsIFrOpAUZZWnb6f-JaXcD06vX0.

7. See https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/.
The legal versus moral discussion framing Danish and other colonial collections is a sore point. We know that artworks and images of enslaved and colonized peoples were predominantly envisioned by Europeans, who also controlled the means of production, rights of access, and dissemination. Jane Anderson (2013) critically centers this problem of authorship as an anxiety underpinning colonial archives and collections, especially for communities excluded from this peculiar logic of cultural preservation and meaning-making, a logic that keeps legal copyright (and thus the politics of custodianship) weighted toward the inheritors of colonial power. Communities with kin represented in archival material therefore have little or no legal stake in visual and other kinds of documents and must defend the legal versus moral discussion framing Danish and other colonial collections is a sore point. 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perpetuating the dynamics of slavery, which denied African Americans the right to own, claim, or inherit property. As we have already seen, this issue of ownership in slavery’s afterlife is the unresolved trouble that will challenge this open case. And it will be interesting to see the extent to which Lanier will be asked to legitimize her claim to kinship, where the evidence base is once more reliant on the “official” archive and not the oral family lore from which she initially heard about her ancestors. But Lanier’s personal intervention will prove an important action for rethinking reparative justice in the cultural domain, and it will certainly nourish the moral poetics of “fair use” in copyright law (Murray 2013).

Within this climate of redress, institutions are being asked to reconsider their terms of engagement in profound ways. We could describe the mindset required to revision institutional praxis and make room for complexity, as a hosting or hospitality approach, one that encourages questions about coexistence, such as What is in the atmosphere? Who looks after and who receives care? Who is the host and who is the guest? How do we accommodate needs? And what are the rules of engagement? Scholars are offering different suggestions for approaching the layered responsibilities of ethical hosting (Bismarck and Meyer-Krahmer 2016). For example, Joel Wurl (2005) called for archives to shift from the traditional idea of custodianship to “stewardship” as a way to deal more equitably with records representing diverse ethnicities in collections. While this shift in language may seem subtle, Wurl (2005) argues that the difference is most clearly distinguished precisely around the tricky issue of ownership, writing that “a stewardship ethos encompasses a very different set of relationships between stakeholders and materials. It is characterized by partnership and continuity of association between repository and originator. In a stewardship approach, archival material is viewed less as property and more as cultural asset, jointly held and invested in by the archive and the community of origin” (72). Wurl further notes that “material may be gifted to a repository not as a finite action but as part of an ongoing relationship, and that “the goals of stewardship are preservation and access to information, wherever it might be physically held, while intentions or claims of possessing the largest or most valuable yield of material for a given community are both irrelevant and hollow” (72). Similarly, Andreas Pantazatos also approaches the issue of ethical

caretaking of objects as active and relational by reformulating the responsibilities of museum trusteeship as being shaped by gestures and procedures of “entrusting.” Taking the rather limited International Council of Museums (ICOM) ethical guidelines as a springboard, Pantazatos (2016) affirms the museum’s critical role and capacity to “account for the transit [conveying] of objects between past and future in such a way as to secure the transfer of their significance, broadly constructed” (180). The framework explored is a triangular duty of care within museums: building “trust” by sustaining the significance of collections through an evolving “biography of objects,” which must be developed through “negotiation” (187). Negotiation, Pantazatos writes, is the “ethical catalyst for the museums’ duty of care” because it is not simply about awareness of multiple “beneficiaries and stakeholders,” but also involves thinking about how these parties are involved in the entire life cycle of an object (187). Emphasizing that with trust and entrusting comes vulnerability (for we cannot be sure if our host will be competent), Pantazatos concludes that addressing core concepts of accountability, trusteeship, and care involves respectfully “allowing room for those stakeholders who can shape the transit of an object from past to future” (197).

In Denmark things are slowly beginning to change to accommodate and consider the ethical tensions of “custodianship” and to make room for the investments of multiple stakeholders. For example, following their exhibition Blinde Vinkler/ Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony (May 19, 2017–February 3, 2018), curators at the Royal Danish Library hosted a summer school for students in the US Virgin Islands, introducing their collections and participating in public talks there. They have also produced norm-critical online educational materials from the exhibition for high school students in Denmark, to ensure continuity and raise awareness. Small steps. Overall, however, the Danish situation is instructive (particularly when viewed within an energized international context), because it concretely shows how power is wielded through material/matter on the battleground of history. Denmark has the “things” that attest (witness, certify, authenticate) their colonial entanglements. In brokering these memories with the US Virgin Islands, through and with digital data, the texture or grain of the archive itself is once more revealed: the grain that represents “signatures of a history that neither can be scraped off nor removed without destroying the paper,” the grain that brings the initial violations into “bolder relief” (Stoler 2009:8).

Grappling with Data

At this moment in the text, I initially wanted to reproduce an image that is both deeply troubling and demonstrative, an act of violence by an internet troll who recently repurposed a well-known American lynching photograph from 1930, in order to symbolically “hang” a European politician of African descent. I considered representing it with a heavy editorial blur, so that only the faint outlines of the action could be seen. I also contemplated abstracting a detail. But the purpose of lynching imagery was profound humiliation in the context of White supremacist solidarity, and this is an effect being mobilized by the anonymous troll (Apel and Smith 2007). In the end, I simply did not want to participate in its racist work. But the remediation action, and the image’s very existence, underscores the necessity for vigilance surrounding the digitization of sensitive collections.

Now I want to think more loosely—which is to say sketch, intuit, browse freely across ideas. This is in order to consider the digital surrogates of collections and propose what might constitute “fair use” online, particularly when curators and institutions are not looking. One of my core concerns is that we have yet to delineate a sacred environment for the images that articulate (in part) the experiences of slavery and colonization, that we have not yet decided what material is off-limits. I say “off-limits” with trepidation because I do not mean to suggest cultural ghettoization but, rather, to insist on care where there has historically been none. Perhaps it is pertinent here to retrace the arc of the problem. Erasures of Black subjectivity in colonial documents, and in the information kept by collections that house them, index the hierarchies of rights and value embedded in the slavery system. These erasures also reenact what Edouard Glissant described as the “deterioration of person” marking African experiences of the “open boat” (2010:5). European use and commodification of the enslaved body for manual labor transferred to the domain of the visual, producing a surplus of images in different materials (ink, paint, paper, silver, wood, porcelain) that became surrogates for unsanctioned intimacies that only continued through the emergence of photography. The ethnographic use of photographs for record, capture, and surveillance also brought with it reproductive copyright issues tied to “legal personhood,” which maintained a racialized view of privacy as “a privileged form of property” that could only be claimed by those who owned themselves and/or the means of production (Osucha 2009:73). Appropriation and excessive production of the Black body image as cipher has thus taken its toll, on the level of being, knowing, and doing.

So delineating some kind of sanctity for difficult images is not a simple task. As Susan Crane asks, “What constitutes an atrocity image? Do we ‘know it when we see it’? Must it be sufficiently horrific and disgusting? Should the victims be innocents?” (2008:322). This whole terrain becomes even more complex when we think beyond photography. For example, it is currently possible to buy clothing and household goods with a digital imprint of the 1797 Brookes slave ship diagram (fig. 8). This is not a document representing identifiable people but rather an explanatory tool created by British abolitionists to express the dehumanizing mercantile logic of the trade, as African bodies met the technology of the ship (Radburn and Eltis 2019). Over time the image has acquired resonance as an
artifact representing one aspect of the Middle Passage Atlantic crossing, the “womb abyss,” which is still a deeply painful part of Afro-diasporic memory work (Glissant 2010:6). Is the Brookes an image that needs “protecting”? Indigenous communities in varying contexts are exploring refusal and/or counteractive strategies when dealing with archival material, for example, Sápmi artists in their confrontations with ethnographic imagery, and particularly race biology photography and documents that in some cases represent known family members (Dobbin 2013). Native feminist Laura L. Terrance says about finding an indigenous woman’s boarding school journal that “I am not going to tell you the name of the young woman the journal belonged to or even her tribe. I am not going to tell you which boarding school she attended and I am not going to tell you which library I found it in or where it is now” (Terrance 2011:621). Bodily and “analytic practices of refusal,” argue Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “involve an active resistance to trading in pain and humiliation, and supply a rationale for blocking the settler colonial gaze that wants those stories” (Tuck and Yang 2014:812). To look, to say, to share, or not?

Enrique Martino makes a convincing argument that open-sourcing digital collections does provide a way for archives to enter a wider cultural bloodstream, to be liberated from colonial structures and fully participate; that mobility enables sources to “disembark in different places, and circulate where archival remainders can be reactivated and made meaningful, not only by, for or through professional historians” (Martino 2014:410). And in terms of getting air, online research does provide healthy distance from the loaded choreographies of institutional access to originals: permissions, white gloves, dust, contained spaces, and quietness. But digital artifacts of a sensitive and dehumanizing nature are vulnerable without contextualization. And Wayne Modest (2016) asks an important question: “What kinds of affective force do collections that evidence colonial relations have both within and without the museum?” (25). I am wondering if there is a way to develop an ethics of care for digitization that is able to signal to different kinds of users or audiences where and how sensitivity is required, not as an optional stance but as a prerequisite for the digital encounter.

It is important to consider the ways in which we find enslaved or colonized people and “things” in the sea of data online. My research, for example, is still reliant on historical and highly racialized terminology to find what we are looking for. General terms include “colonial,” “slavery,” “racism,” “race,” “Jim-crow,” even “sugar” and then specific transatlantic locations or trading hubs such as “Barbados,” “London,” “Bristol,” “Guinea,” “Virginia,” and “Hait.” Focusing on peculiar searches for people, I might type “African,” “Black,” “Negro,” “Neger,” “Slave,” “Moor,” “Blackface,” “caricature,” and “Venus.” The following terms are adapted in different linguistic contexts: “esclave,” “Zuckerhut,” and “neger.” But the outcome is the same. The database absorbs my searches, provides options for appropriate material based on relevance, and then holds a memory of that algorithmic trail until another inquiry is made. Then the process begins again, while keeping the colonial episteme intact: search, find, identify, claim, or steal (Christen 2007; Geismar and Mohns 2011). If this incessant searching for presence leaves pronounced traces, then what kind of digital layer are we adding to an already traumatized archive?

Digitization processes (particularly for institutions) come with profound losses. Mark Wolf (2000) succinctly writes that digitization is not a neutral process, for it “changes whatever passes through it” (89). In a technical sense objects are de-materialized, and this influences how institutions handle the
data. As Joanna Sassoon (2005) emphasizes, photographic collections in particular are “reduced to, and managed as, data banks of images, understood to be uncomplicated, transparent and passive representations of truth” (204). Similarly, Joan M. Schwartz (2002) argues that photographic collections that do not provide contextual data transform “photographic archives into stock photo libraries, reducing photographs to their visible elements, and conflating photographic content and photographic meaning” (157). Certainly, there is ambiguity around what is materially lost and what is gained in mediatization. Yet Fiona Cameron (2010 [2007]) insists, as others have, that digital assets are not merely referential: “the digital historical object can exist in many realms and perform many roles that go beyond reproduction, interpretation, education, documentation, and archive” (68). They can have a rich cultural life outside of institutional bounds.

Returning to Axel Ovesen’s photograph, we can see how data orphanings act out in real time and point toward the delicacies of custodianship online. If you tried to search for this photograph or the postcard on the Royal Danish Library’s digital collection, it would be by geographic context, photographer, or by album owner. The main keyword attached to the photograph is “børn” or “children” in English. This keyword also links Ovesen’s images to a range of others from similarly precarious situations, such as “Eskimo-types; Children; Hudson Bay” and “Danish red cross feeds German children” and “Poor children ‘Annaly.’” Since several of Denmark’s public collections are tied to an aggregate service that also makes digitized material available on Europeana (the European-wide archival database), it is possible to also find the photograph without entering the library’s institutional interface. However, the same search restrictions apply. On the one hand, the child is somewhat protected by extremely limited metadata (basically for researchers with an interest), but on the other hand, the image still hovers on servers and clouds without proper contextualization—hovers there until someone decides to query, scroll, click, zoom in, and then download.

Momentarily, then, I want to speculate about the possibilities for transforming metadata into a repository of necessary tension, where one can “return” to colonial moments and produce what Anjali Arondekar (2006) calls “a counter-record of that history” (12). Metadata as a quiet, undercommons reconfiguring the digital thoroughfares (associations, keywords, hyperlinks) that bring a public into encounters with challenging histories (Sassoon 2005:208–210)—but also, metadata as an alternative cataloging space capable of narrating in full an object’s life and afterlife, and making that known to users with each right-click and download. So, here is a proposition: What if the digital object could do all the speaking that the original could not do? What if the digital object could say on behalf of persons represented: “Look, here is my story. I’ve experienced pain, and now you are part of it; tell me what you intend to do with me?” And such a question, extended by way of a collection to the invisible user, seems fair. It is quite similar to the one in Susan Crane’s (2008) pedagogy with students after they have seen harrowing images: “And so I ask my students, with no political agenda in mind: what are you going to do with what you now know? The ethics of collective memory rests with their decisions and may determine what we choose to look at” (323). Here in this speculation, I am asking the data to perform—to perform a(nother) haunted (Blackman 2019; Gordon 2008). Because ghosts make their presences felt, precisely in those moments when the organizing structure has ruptured a caretaking contract; when the crime has not been sufficiently named or borne witness to; when someone is not paying attention. The ghost is “pregnant with unfulfilled possibility, with the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding” (Gordon 2008:183). And I know that what I am suggesting here is a form of labor that may be unrealistic on the level of scale, not just because of the sheer volume of collections already digitized but also due to the extra space and electrical energy more embedded data require. However, the opportunities for intervening both in back-end collections practices and web user experience, which insists on a more conscientious data flow around the commons, feels like something approximating practical ethics.

Praxis

I began this paper tentatively and I end it in the same way, uncertain whether I have adequately conveyed what an ethics of care in the open commons could look or feel like. But I have sketched some lines around issues of trust, community, affect, afterlives, and mattering. Let me once more invoke the crying child, which encouraged this veritable thought experiment and which has become in this text a reluctant metaphor for the state of digitized colonial collections (at least in Denmark). In 2016, Crucian artist La Vaughn Belle included this child in a photomontage series called Upward Mobility, Learning to Be, Preacher Man Belle, Obeah Man Brown, St. Croix Pickney (2016), where she worked with high-definition digital copies of colonial photographs in the Royal Danish Library collection. Here she juxtaposes the collection’s images with old photographs of herself and her parents, producing some very moving digital diptychs that hinge on the archive itself. Her reparative gestures integrate unnamed people back into the context of a family album, fusing community bonds and providing them a place to rest and to be resignified. At the same time, she inserts and asserts her story into those partially told and fragmented Danish memories saved by various institutions that hold copies of these photographic images. Since these are not photographs the artist took herself but are slivers of family memory, Belle’s juxtapositions also disrupt the temporal register, blurring identities to reveal alternative possibilities for bodies in a shared (post) colonial location. Does Belle find visual resonances by coincidence, or does photography call certain bodies into peculiar engagements with the viewfinder?

In the series, Belle also remakes titles, or appropriates them from different archives, asking the viewer to consider how colonial typologies were and are made by language but also to
more intimately register what happened (to families, culture, identity) in the change of custody from Denmark to the United States. When Belle places a photograph of herself as a child in contrast with Ovesen’s postcard “A St. Croix Pickney, D.W.I.”, something interesting happens (fig. 9). On the one hand the comparison immediately opens the emotional field, expanding the possibilities for what a child from St. Croix could or can experience and feel: she is smiling and happy, looked after, smartly dressed in neat socks and shoes. At the same time, the sensitivity with which her momentary joy is captured only further defines the severity of Ovesen’s image, highlighting the need for extra care in the witnessing gaze. Perhaps it is here, in the artist’s hospitable gesture, that the seeds for future digital and cultural practices, seeking to attend to histories of enslavement and colonization, can be found.

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Figure 9. St. Croix Pickney. 2016. Digital photograph by La Vaughn Belle. Royal Danish Library. © La Vaughn Belle. Courtesy of the artist.
infrastructures for sharing unshared histories in European Colonial Archives” (2018) added even more useful dimensions to the discussion. Art helps me to think, so I am incredibly grateful for the inspiration provided by all the artists I have had the honor of working with closely, especially during this writing with Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle. I am also ever grateful to Nina Cramer for her diligent research support navigating Danish collections and providing nuanced translations. Lastly, I need to give special thanks to Laurie Obbink at Wenner-Gren for being so supportive during the entire process (from conference to journal) of bringing this essay to life.

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A “tone of voice peculiar to New-England”
Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec

Charmaine A. Nelson

Found throughout the transatlantic world, fugitive slave advertisements demonstrate the ubiquity of African resistance to slavery. Besides noting things like names, accents, languages, and skills, they also recounted details that disclosed the regional origins and ethnicities of the runaways. Although detailed analyses of fugitive slave advertisements have been produced since the 1970s, Canadian slavery has been conspicuously absent from such studies. This article exposes and challenges Canada’s overwhelming absence from slavery studies more generally, recognizing the ways that the Underground Railroad has been enshrined in national curriculum and popular imagination to erase the colonial violence of Euro-Canadian settler histories. Challenging the erasure of Canadian slavery, fugitive slave advertisement will be analyzed to reveal the complex heterogeneity of the enslaved population of African descent. Focusing on Quebec from the moment of British conquest (1760), this article argues that this heterogeneity was a hallmark of the enslaved population of Quebec, which was composed of African Canadian, African American, African Caribbean, African-born, and indigenous enslaved peoples. The article then poses directions for future research that can further explore the cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and social implications of this extraordinary diversity.

The Montreal Gazette issued its first paper on August 25, 1785.¹ That the first runaway slave advertisement (Guthrie 1785 in Mackey [2010a:328]) appeared the following month on September 29, 1785, demonstrated the local White settlers’ knowledgeable use of print technology to perpetuate the colonial racial order through which their ownership of Black bodies was justified and secured (see fig. 1). Although an archive of slave sale, auction, and fugitive advertisements exists alongside other legal, private, and government documents, for the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, Canadian participation in transatlantic slavery under the French and British empires is little known both inside and outside of the nation. The prolific ignorance about Canadian slavery has been strategically cultivated by Euro-Canadians who have, over generations, created the Canadian myth of racial tolerance enshrined in a federal policy of multiculturalism.

This article is an attempt to disrupt this dominant Canadian narrative by remembering the centuries-long presence of people of African descent—both free and enslaved—in the regions that became Canada. I also wish to highlight fugitive slave advertisements as an important part of the colonial archive, which, in their capacity for mass production and circulation and their ability to codify Blackness and conflate it with the status of slave, became an essential component of a transatlantic discursive strategy for the subjugation of people of African descent.

¹. All of the Quebec fugitive slave advertisements have been transcribed in Mackey (2010a:307–344).

What replaces slavery in the Canadian national imagination is celebratory narratives of the Underground Railroad, the period between 1833 when the British abolished slavery by an act of Parliament and 1865 when the American Civil War ended. A national cohesiveness of memory has been produced through the almost universal teaching of Underground Railroad histories in both elementary and high school curricula (particularly in February during Black History month). Canadian education therefore plays a central role in the indoctrination of presuppositional Canadian youth who are taught from a young age that Canada is both racism free and race blind. But popular media has also played a central role. Many Canadians have been raised on Heritage Minutes, one-minute historical short films about various aspects of Canadian history created by Historica Canada that air nationally on Canadian television.

One such short film titled Underground Railroad represents a white Quaker woman comforting a formerly enslaved Black woman, Eliza, as they wait anxiously in Canada for news of Eliza’s enslaved father who is en route out of slavery in the United States.² The film ends with Eliza’s father emerging from the wooden bench in which he had been hidden on a wagon trip north to embrace her and his unnamed son. The father then exclaims, “We’re free,” to which Eliza responds emotionally, “Yes, Pa, weez in Canada!” The constant recitation and celebration of the Underground Railroad has allowed Canadians to erroneously disassociate Canada from a two-century history of transatlantic slavery and to enshrine a period of


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three decades, casting themselves as the liberators of enslaved African Americans. These myths allow White Canadians to celebrate their difference (mainly from a White Americanness that they actively associate with a proslavery American South) as a citizenry made up of “good” people whose White settler ancestors presumably exploited no one on their quest for land, power, and capital. This hierarchization of Whiteness is not solely built on a fabricated history of a completely anti-slavery North (Canada) and a completely proslavery South (USA). Instead, when Euro-Canadians do concede that slavery happened in Canada, they routinely attempt to distinguish and valorize their own slaving histories as somehow superior (meaning more benevolent and less violent) based on the ludicrous assumption that slave-minority societies were fundamentally less physically and psychologically brutal for the enslaved than slave-majority ones.

In sharp contrast, the unacknowledged histories of Canadian participation in transatlantic slavery—by the state and popular media alike—have bred a collective amnesia resulting in an appalling lack of national support for the academic study of Canadian slavery, the knock-on effect of which is the absence of the serious study of topics of obvious and accepted importance in the field of slavery studies. The study of Canadian slavery lags far behind other regions in the quantity, scope, and focus of the scholarship. The number and disciplinary diversity of the scholars devoted to the study of slavery in the American South, the Caribbean, and the northern parts of South America has led to a host of specialized studies of slave culture, diet, dress, family structures, literacy, maternity, and resistance and the detailed study of population size and mortality. Significantly, while the analysis of fugitive slave advertisements has been an important subfield in American,1 Caribbean,2 and South American slavery since the 1970s,3 my publications are among the first to undertake a similar study of Canadian notices.4 Furthermore, while important sources on Canadian slavery provide regional overviews and other important information, the majority do not prioritize the lives or experiences of the enslaved.5

Another scholarly deficit in the study of Canadian slavery is the absence of studies of the cultural and ethnic makeup of enslaved communities of African descent. Instead the term “Black” is employed in ways that undermine a clear understanding of the complexity of this enslaved community. Despite its usefulness, I would like to offer alternatives for the catchall racial term “Black,” which in its homogenizing universality assumes a creolized subject—a person who was born in a colony or who has undergone a process of creolization, which for the enslaved was always under duress.6

In what follows, I analyze Canadian fugitive slave advertisements within a broader diasporic context in order to understand how Quebec slave owners cited birth origins as a means to identify and recapture enslaved fugitives. This study is focused on slavery in British Quebec and therefore encompasses the period between 1760 (the date of the British conquest of New France) and 1833, the date of British abolition of slavery. However, in reality, the Quebec fugitive notices were published between 1765 and 1798.7 The fugitive slave notices at the center of this study were collected and transcribed by Frank Mackey, who, however, only subjected them to very brief analysis (Mackey 2010a).8 I also employ other historical sources to deduce the birth origins and cultures of the enslaved, arguing that a key marker of the distinctiveness of the enslaved Black population in eighteenth-century Quebec was its profound heterogeneity.

Figure 1. Robt. M. Guthrie, “Run Away on Thursday morning last,” Montreal Gazette, Thursday, September 29, 1785, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 4; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

5. See, e.g., de Sant’Ama Petiz 2006; Ferrari 2006; Freyre, de Vasconcellos, and Noya Pinto 1979.
8. For a discussion of creolization, see Mintz (2008) and Rupert (2012).
9. For Nova Scotia, the earliest slave sale notice that I have found thus far was published on May 30, 1752, while the earliest fugitive slave advertisement dates from May 19, 1768. The earlier dates of slave notices in Nova Scotia align with the earlier project of British colonization, starting in 1713 as a part of the Treaty of Utrecht. However, consistent effort at settlement did not take place until 1749 under Edward Cornwallis, the captain general and governor-in-chief of Nova Scotia. See “Joshua Mauger, 1752; Advertisements, JUST imported and to be sold by Joshua Mauger,” Halifax Gazette, Saturday, May 30, 1752, p. 2; PANS MFM 8151, Reel 8151, March 23, 1752–March 6, 1766, printed by John Bushnell, Grafton-Street, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.
10. Mackey collected Quebec newspaper notices about Black people in the period of (British) Quebec. However, since the analysis of the advertisements was not his focus, his brief remarks about names, ages, origins, status, complexion, and region only span eight pages (2010a:307–314).
While the flight of the runaway or fugitive and their often premeditated acts of redefinition and passing sought to unbind them from the category of slave, the advertisements sought not only to reconstitute this connection but also to naturalize it. Thus, the slave-owning classes sought to criminalize demonstrations of agency by the “self-motivated” (Waldstreicher 1999:248) people who were enslaved, to code running away as what Marcus Wood has termed “an act of theft, albeit a paradoxical self-theft” (Wood 2000:79). Against this colonial act of dehumanization, I would like to position the fugitives not as criminals but as freedom seekers, and the act of running away as a defiant and extremely perilous act of self-(re)definition.\(^\text{11}\) However, at the same time, given the deep reticence and indeed hypocrisy of Euro-Canadian populations—displayed in their active and ongoing negation of their colonial and slaving histories—I have consciously chosen to use the terms “runaway” and “fugitive,” not because that is what the enslaved people were in any essential way but because that is how they were historically viewed and categorized by the White slave-owning classes who sought to immobilize, imprison, and re-enslave them and by the judicial, legal, and political infrastructures, also controlled by the same Whites.

### The Fugitive Slave Archive

The runaway slave advertisement is a primary source with prescribed limits. The limit of the slave advertisement is that it confirms only that someone, socially deemed to be a slave, was thought to have run away from the person who claimed to own the runaway. It is important to note that the archive, however, can never fully capture the extent of resistance through flight in any given region. Since colonial newspapers were traditionally published only weekly, an enslaved person’s quick re-capture foreclosed the need for the printing of a fugitive notice. We can therefore surmise that many more people escaped than were ever documented in such notices.

The runaway slave advertisements can provide for us a window into the lives and worlds of the enslaved.\(^\text{12}\) Each example was about the recapture of an individual or individuals who had fled, and as such required that their owners share details that illuminated what made the runaways unique, both in manner and appearance. As such, runaway slave advertisements, ubiquitous across the Americas, are repositories of data on enslaved populations. As David Waldstreicher has noted, such advertisements were generally premised on four categories, “clothing, trades or skills, linguistic ability or usage, and ethnic or racial identity,” categories the manipulation of which could alter the perception of one’s class and race (Waldstreicher 1999:249). Accents were also used both to identify how a fugitive might sound when encountered and to indicate to where they might be fleeing. For example, when the merchant John Turner Sr. placed a notice for the return of “a Negro Slave named Ishmael” in the Quebec Gazette on July 29, 1779, he described him as having a “tone of voice peculiar to New-England, where he was born” (Turner 1779 in Mackey [2010a:321–322]; see fig. 2). But the appearance of the fugitive’s body—both biological (skin color, hair color and texture, height, build, etc.) and how the fugitive was adorned (the color, material, type and style of clothing and footwear, wigs, scarring, etc.)—was paramount.

The advertisements themselves are testaments to the necessity of deception as a survival tactic of the enslaved. Since advertisements regularly included descriptions of the dress and speech of the fugitive, even when the slave owner did not explicitly document the regional origins of the enslaved person, they are evidence of the ethnicity of the slave population, their Creoleness or Africaness.

I would like to do something that scholars of Canadian slavery rarely undertake, that is, to place my case study within a broader transatlantic context that includes other sites of both temperate (Nova Scotia) and tropical plantation slavery (Jamaica),\(^\text{13}\) My focus is British Quebec between the dates of 1760 and the early 1800s. Frank Mackey has provided a great service to (Canadian) slavery studies scholars by compiling and transcribing the Quebec slave advertisements (fugitive, auction, and sale) for enslaved and free Black people. However, he does not provide extensive analysis of the advertisements, nor does he develop a specific argument about creolization and visual culture. Instead, his book animates the lives of enslaved Blacks under British rule and their complex relationships with White slave owners in a society where slavery was embedded in the fabric of daily life. Mackey has determined that “ninety-four notices concerning the sale of black slaves and the flight of black prisoners, ship deserters, servants, and slaves” were published in early Quebec newspapers (Mackey 2010a:307). While around 40 enslaved men, women, and children were offered for sale in 43 notices (the last advertised in 1798), 45 people of African descent took part in 50 escapes (the last also in 1798) and were listed in about 51 fugitive notices (Mackey 2010a:307–308).\(^\text{14}\) The multiple escapes of certain individuals account for

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11. I am grateful to Sylvia Hamilton for sharing with me her idea of enslaved fugitives as freedom runners; conversation on November 7, 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

12. An examination of the transcribed fugitive slave advertisements published in Mackey’s book (2010a:307–344) reveals various details about the bodies (height, build, movement), dress practices (hairstyles, head wrapping), labor, illness (smallpox), suffering (marks and scars), skills (violin playing), literacy, familial bonds, and birth origins of the enslaved in Quebec.

13. The rarity of comparative slavery studies scholarship that includes Canadian sites is a product of three issues: (1) there are simply not enough Canadian slavery studies being generated, (2) most scholarship focuses on tropical or semitropical regions with slave majorities, and (3) most comparative studies focus on similar sites (population, climate, labor, etc.).

14. The last slave sale notice was placed anonymously and ran in the January 22, 1798, Montréal Gazette for a woman described as “An excellent Negro Wench aged about 30 years” (Mackey 2010a:338). The last fugitive notice was “James Frazer, 1798, NINE DOLLARS REWARD,”
the fact that the number of notices is greater than the number of enslaved people (Mackey 2010a:308).

The Power of Naming: Names, Ages, and Racial Types

Certain categories of naming reoccur, even dominate, in fugitive slave advertisements. While the first name of the enslaved person was almost always provided in fugitive slave advertisements, family names were rare since the process of enslavement customarily entailed the stripping of the African’s entire name and the imposition of the owner’s family name. Significantly, this pattern is the reverse of slave sale advertisements in which the name of the enslaved person was commonly withheld. The namelessness of the enslaved person heightened their commodification for the potential buyers, dehumanizing them and driving home the idea that they were merely an object for sale. But surely, too, this deliberate refusal to provide what was arguably (in regions where slave owners were familiar with each other’s slaveholdings) the most obvious identifying information was a means to impede potential buyers from ascertaining troubling information about an enslaved person.

This was certainly the case when the merchants James Johnston and John Purss placed an enslaved woman named Bett for sale in a Quebec Gazette advertisement of July 5, 1787 (Anonymous 1787 in Mackey [2010a]:329; see fig. 3). According to an earlier fugitive notice placed for her, Bett had absconded from the pair only a few months prior during the winter on March 7, 1787 (Johnston and Purss 1787 in Mackey [2010a]:329; see fig. 4). Alarmingly, the notice described Bett as being in a state of advanced pregnancy, “big with child, and within a few days of her time” (Johnston and Purss 1787 in Mackey [2010a:329]). As such, Johnston and Purss’s description of the pregnant Bett not only disclosed the heightened value of the fleeing woman who, according to colonial legal discourse, literally carried what was tantamount to their property in her womb, but in the eyes of many White settlers, tainted her as irresponsible and rash. Clearly, then, withholding Bett’s name in their subsequent slave sale notice was a strategy of disassociation.

Whereas it was rather common to withhold an enslaved person’s first name in a slave sale advertisement, the same was not true of fugitive slave notices. In a rare example where the first name was withheld, the September 1, 1766, fugitive notice of the merchant Isaac Werden claimed that “A NEGRO GIRL, of about 24 Years of Age,” had absconded on Saturday, August 22 (Werden in Mackey [2010a]:314). Although he described her appearance (“pitted with the Small-pox”), language acquisition (“speaks good English”), and dress (“Had on black Gown and red Callimanco Petticoat”), Werden oddly did not provide her first name.

The Virginia planter, Robert “King” Carter (the richest planter in the state), instructed his overseer to initiate the process of renaming enslaved Africans at the point of purchase (Berlin 1996:251–252). The process of renaming must have been a moment of great conflict. Although renaming was frequently a process wherein the enslaved person’s removal from Africa could be cemented through the imposition of a European name, naming practices in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Americas indicate that slave owners and their overseers often imposed names that deliberately recalled not just the African birth origins but also the specific ethnicity of the enslaved.

Jamaican Hope Estate’s A List of Negroes on Hope Plantation in St. Andrews (Anonymous 1788) listed 135 men, 41 boys (176 males), 133 women, and 42 girls (175 females), several of whom were given names such as Eboe Sampson (no. 116), Angola Sampson (no. 117), Eboe Toney (no. 120), Eboe Fanny...
but none from African ones. Although analysis of these vessels and incoming vessels from British and Caribbean ports with enslaved people of African descent did not do so in the period of British rule, the merchant ships that arrived in ports like Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec City with enslaved people of African descent did not do so directly from Africa. It was the growth of this African-born population through which “white New Yorkers learned to distinguish between Kongos and Angolans, Mandes and Mandingos, as they became familiar with the differences among African peoples” (Berlin and Harris 2005:10–11).

White Canadian knowledge of Africanness surely paled in comparison. This deficit is revealed in how African-born enslaved people were identified within fugitive slave notices. Of the 51 fugitive slave notices for 45 runaways that Mackey has identified for Quebec, only five people were described in ways that stated or inferred that they were African born. Interestingly, all five were males and none of the descriptions provided a specific ethnicity. The first documented enslaved person whose origins appear to have been African was the striking declaration that marked Drummond as outside of the linguistic norms of a Creole in Quebec (McCord in Mackey [2010b:314]). William Gilliland’s September 19, 1771, fugitive notice for “a Negro Man” named Ireland (who had allegedly escaped with a White indentured servant named Francis Freeland) stated that Ireland “speaks English tolerably plain, but no other Language, except that of his native Country, Guinea” (Gilliland in Mackey [2010b:318]). Notably, though, Gilliland made no attempt to indicate Ireland’s specific African regional origins or language group(s).

The five fugitive slave notices placed by William Brown were more direct than McCord’s or Gilliland’s. Perhaps the explicit statement of the origins of the fugitive can be related to Brown’s position as the owner of the *Quebec Gazette*. Arguably, more

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15. In Jamaica, enslaved people’s ethnicity was taken as a predictor of their resistance, and the most feared ethnic group was the Coramantee (Akan from West Africa’s Gold Coast). See Mullin 1992:24, 26; Paton 1997:623. According to Richard Sheridan (1992:27), the maroon leaders were mainly comprised of Akan-speaking Coramantee slaves from the Gold Coast.

16. One printed custom house notice listed the vessels that had arrived in Halifax from Barbados, Jamaica, London, St. Vincent, and St. Thomas. See Anonymous 1799.

Figure 3. Anonymous, “FOR SALE, A STOUT, healthy, active NEGRO WOMAN,” *Quebec Gazette*, July 5, 1787, vol. 1142, p. 3; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

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(no. 266), Eboe Nancy (no. 276), Congo Sukey (no. 283), Ang-gola Sukey (no. 284), Eboe Phillis (no. 301), and Eboe Dolly (no. 302) (fig. 5). This practice was not merely rooted in a bid to easily distinguish between the enslaved but also proved useful in the White desire to differentiate and hierarchize Africans on the basis of potential resistance as supposedly rooted in ethnicity.15

Contrarily, the retention of African names, naming prac-
tices, and the documentation of specific African origins and ethnicities are almost impossible to detect at the level of White interference or official documents in Nova Scotia and Quebec. This is largely due to the fact that the African-born portion of the slave minority population in both regions surely comprised the smallest percentage of the communities. It followed then that slave owners in these regions were less acquainted with African-born people and less capable of identifying them by ethnicity. Instead, slave owners in these two regions either proclaimed the African birth explicitly or implied it through a comment on language or accent. The reason for the smaller population of African-born people was the nature of merchant enterprise in the regions. As I will discuss in further detail below, in the period of British rule, the merchant ships that arrived in ports like Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec City with enslaved people of African descent did not do so directly from Africa. This is further verified through an analysis of custom house advertisements that routinely indicated outgoing and incoming vessels from British and Caribbean ports but none from African ones.16 Although analysis of these vessels and their human cargoes has yet to be undertaken, the Anglo-Caribbean origin of many of these ships, along with the evidence obtained from slave advertisements and bills of sale, strongly suggests that the dominant enslaved population onboard would most likely have been Creole or Caribbean-born people.

Slave ships arriving from Africa were normal in the Caribbean, parts of South America, and the American South. As such, Jamaican fugitive slave advertisements routinely listed the enslaved by racial type and/or African ethnicity. However, there were also regions in the American North where enslaved African-born populations became normal. Ira Ber-lin and Leslie M. Harris have linked the increase of the slave population in eighteenth-century British New York to the increasing arrival of slave ships directly from Africa. It was the growth of this African-born population through which “white New Yorkers learned to distinguish between Kongos and Angolans, Mandes and Mandingos, as they became familiar with the differences among African peoples” (Berlin and Harris 2005:10–11).

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The five fugitive slave notices placed by William Brown were more direct than McCord’s or Gilliland’s. Perhaps the explicit statement of the origins of the fugitive can be related to Brown’s position as the owner of the *Quebec Gazette*. Arguably, more
than any other slave owner in Quebec City, and indeed the province, William Brown would have been familiar with the possibilities, reach, and power of the fugitive slave advertisement, all of which hinged on the printing of specific and often intrusive details about the enslaved person. Significantly then, all of Brown’s five fugitive notices for Joe’s escapes on November 22, 1777, January 25, 1778, December 22, 1778, September 16, 1779, and February 18, 1786, proclaimed that Joe had been “born in Africa” (Brown in Mackey [2010b:313, 320, 321, 322, 328–329]).

Although there is not enough evidence to state it definitively, the fourth and fifth Quebec fugitive slave notices, published 14 years apart, that disclose the African birth origins of a runaway may have been for the same person described as a “Negro man Named JACK 5 feet 8 inches tall.” While the first notice placed on May 21, 1778, by the fur traders James Finlay Sr. and John Gregory (Finlay and Gregory in Mackey [2010b:320]) reverted to the linguistic paradigm describing Jack as speaking “no other tongue but English, and that upon the Guinea accent” (the French notice placed by William Grant on March 15, 1792, described Jack as “né en Afrique”; Grant in Mackey [2010b:335]).

Interestingly, then, none of the fugitive slave notices placed to recapture these five enslaved males provided any indication of their ethnicity, and only two stated explicitly that the runaways had been born in Africa. But, of course, the absence of statements of Africanness in other Quebec fugitive slave advertisements does not mean that other enslaved fugitives were not also born in Africa. Other sources become useful in discerning the size and scope of this minority population. For instance, although the brothers and business partners Mathew and John Macniders identified the enslaved “NEGRO MAN” fugitive named Caleb by age, height, and clothing, his origins can be ascertained through his deed of sale (Macniders in Mackey [2010b:330]). Mackey has determined that Caleb, who was purchased on June 26, 1786, from the carpenter William Mackenzie for £35, was named in the deed as a “native of Guinea, about thirty years old” (Mackey 2010b:539, n. 50).

Different groups of enslaved people surely coped with enslavement in different ways. For the African born, depending on their age at embarkation, the duration and intensity of their memories of home surely informed their relationship to other enslaved people, their experiences of their new societies and their slave owners, and their ability to retain their African cultures. One means of cultural retention was the preservation of African names. Berlin has noted that enslaved Africans remembered and used their real names as a form of resistance, citing runaway slave advertisements from Georgia...
where an owner conceded that the fugitives he had renamed Abel and Bennett actually went by the names Golaga and Ab- bром, respectively (Berlin 1996:252, n. 4). Similarly, Philip D. Morgan discussed enslaved people with both African and Anglo-Jamaican names at Vineyard Pen, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, where Thomas Thistlewood was the overseer (1750–1751) (Mor- gan 1995:52; see also Sweet 2006). Whether fighting to hold onto their chosen African or European names, this practice seems to have also existed in British North America.

In a runaway advertisement placed by Azariah Pretchard in Quebec for “A NEGRO MAN” whom he named as Isaac, Pretchard was also forced to concede that he “calls himself Charles some times [sic]” (Pretchard in Mackey [2010b:337]).

In another Quebec case, an advertisement placed by James Fraser noted that an escaped “Negro Man” went by the name Robin or Bob and a “Negro Woman” by Lydia or Lil (Frazer in Mackey [2010b:338–339]). Similarly, in a notice placed by Michael Wallace for the return of “a Negro Man Servant . . . named BELFAST,” he admitted that the “likely, stout-made fellow” of about 27 years of age “goes by the name of BILL.”

In yet another case in Nova Scotia, when Abel Michener of Falmouth advertised for the return of an Irish indentured male named John M’Neil and an enslaved female named Philis, he admitted that the latter called herself Betty.

In their bid to assimilate and “civilize” the enslaved, White slave owners regularly imposed traditional European names on them. For instance, males were frequently given the Irish name Mungo (Mongo). One fugitive slave advertisement placed by Benjamin Dewolf of Windsor, Nova Scotia, in the Halifax Gazette on October 24, 1780, listed “a Negro Boy named Mungo, about 14 Years of Age” who had run away on Tuesday, October 17. As Beth Fowkes Tobin asserts, “Mungo was a common name for African slaves” and was popularized in plays like Frances Burney’s A Busy Day (1801) in which the White heiress Eliza has a Black servant named Mongo, and Isaac Bickerstaff’s The Padlock: A Comic Opera, in Two Acts (1768) that also included a Black servant named Mungo.

Descriptions of the enslaved person commonly included an age, race, or at least an indication of adult or child status and also a description of the body type or weight (such as stout), height, and importantly, complexion or racial type. However, due to the infrequency with which the enslaved were issued standard identity documents like birth certificates, the supposed age of the enslaved was often mere guesswork. In the context of Jamaican plantation slavery, annual ledgers similar to those used to track livestock, extended to the regulation of the enslaved populations and would often list slave births, but by the year only. Far less specific were the age ranges given for enslaved children and adults. The plantation ledger A List of Negroes on Hope Plantation in St. Andrews (Anonymous 1788) did not provide specific ages for each enslaved person but rather provided only estimates, or grouped people in various age ranges. An example of the former practice was three male coopers listed as an African Wilkes about 35, a Creole Roger about 30, and another Creole Will about 25. In the same ledger, marginal notes grouped the enslaved across the diverse ages of 1 month to 6 years, 6 to 14 years (a group that the ledger indicated was employed as a weeding gang), 20 to 55, or simply as old and infirm. More specific, but still elusive, enslaved males named East, West, North, South, Short, Long, and Swift were noted as “part of the 20 new Negroes purchased October 1787 ages from 20 to 25” (Anonymous 1788).

In Jamaica, the term “Negro” often became interchangeable with the word “slave.” For instance, Christer Petley has demonstrated that the uber-wealthy White Jamaican planter Simon Taylor, who owned four estates and managed several others for absentee planters (making him responsible for the management of some 4,000 enslaved people), frequently referred to the enslaved on his plantations as “Negroes” (Petley 2009:51). However, the term did not necessarily indicate an African birth origin.

African-born people were far less likely to be mixed race and were commonly described as having dark complexions and scarification. Enslaved Creoles could indeed also be racially unmixed and have dark complexions. Thus, while the naming of mixed African and European racial heritage in fugitive advertisements normally indicated that the enslaved person was a Creole, care must be taken to recall the heterogeneity of African corporeality that transcended the idea of a uniform dark complexion and tightly curled hair. In a case related by Shane White and Graham White, James Brittan recalled the beauty of his African-born enslaved grandmother who had hair “fine as silk and hung down below her waist” (White and White 1995:68).

20. Tobin’s assertion is based on the scholarship of Tara Ghoshal Wallace (Tobin1999:30).
21. Petley reveals that Taylor, who was born on December 23, 1738, had an annual income of £47,000 and an estate estimated at £1,000,000 when he died in 1813. Petley further notes that in the British Isles between 1809 and 1839, only 905 people died having achieved a personal wealth of £100,000 (2009:46).
22. The beauty of her hair, and no doubt its similarity in texture to that of Europeans, inspired the jealous rage of the White slave mistress who had the woman whipped, cut her hair off, and ordered that his grandmother henceforth wear it shaved to the scalp. The White mistress redirected her anger toward her husband at the enslaved female victim of
detailed list of racial terms for people of African ancestry. Terms like “sambo,” “mulatto,” and “quadroon” indicated a supposedly definitive racial mixture of African and European ancestry and as such revealed, almost always, a Creole.23

Ethnicity and Complexion: Naming Practices

Just as slave owners in tropical locations like Jamaica paid careful attention to the African ethnicity of the enslaved and expressed concern for the resistance of certain groups, similar preferences, albeit broader, seem to have taken root in northern regions. For instance, in regard to the selection of laborers for his plantation, Mount Vernon, George Washington preferred to buy Creole West Indian (or Caribbean) people, who were, according to R. F. Dalzell and L. B. Dalzell, “thought to be preferable to Africans since they were already familiar with plantation ways” (Dalzell and Dalzell 1998:130).24 Meanwhile in Quebec, when the cofounders and co-owners of the Quebec Gazette, William Brown and Thomas Gilmore (who died in 1773) were searching for reliable labor for their printing office, they wrote to their former employer William Dunlap in Philadelphia in 1768 and specified that they wanted a “Negro Boy” who was “fit to put to press, and who has had the Small Pox, is Country born, and can be recommended for his Honesty” (italics mine).25

The description offered by Brown and Gilmore was precise and detailed. While the mention of smallpox reveals slave owner preoccupation with the health and mortality of their enslaved laborers, it also underscores the commodification of labor that was at the heart of slavery. Their preoccupation for the male’s fitness and age highlights the demands of the intellectual and physical nature of the work to which they intended to set their new “Negro Boy.” While the request that Dunlap’s choice be honest was of obvious relevance to any slave owner, the request that the Black boy also be “country born” demonstrates the White preference for Creoles, Blacks who, through their birth in the Americas, were deemed to be “seasoned” and less resistant. While it is as yet undetermined if this preference for Creoles existed in other northern regions like Nova Scotia, I would argue that evidence will eventually bear out that this too was the case, in part because slave owners in the regions that became Canada were far less familiar with African-born people than with various groups of Creoles (African Canadian, African American, and African Caribbean people).

Whereas the practice of identifying the enslaved by ethnicity persisted in Jamaica until the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the use of the term “Negro” as a generic term for people of African ancestry seems to have pervaded racial discourse in Nova Scotia and Quebec. Significantly, the frequent use of the term “Negro” implies that White slave owners did feel it necessary to name race in such advertisements, perhaps in part to differentiate between enslaved Indigenous people (“panis” or “panise”) or Africans in Quebec.26 While Jamaican racial naming was comprised of a six-pronged hierarchy including Negro, sambo, mulatto, quadroon, mustee, and mustiphino, Quebec naming practices for enslaved Blacks as indicated in slave advertisements included only Negro, Negro-Mulatto, or Mulatto. Although the archive of slave sale notices in Nova Scotia is less definitive, known auction, fugitive, and sale advertisements use the terms “Black,” “Negro,” and “mulatto.”27

Within the slave minority context of Canada, the term “Negro”—as a common stand-in for “Black,” “African,” and “slave”—disrupts our ability to understand to what extent African ethnicity or Creole status was discernible within the enslaved and free Black populations. Since the history of slavery in the region under the French (as New France) dates back to the 1600s, without a doubt, African Canadians (or those whose creolization had dominantly occurred in the region) were definitely present. The history of African American fugitives fleeing north (not to freedom at this time, but simply away from their specific enslavement and toward a community that would hopefully not identify them as enslaved) as well as the forced relocation northward of enslaved Blacks by their White American owners (mainly Loyalists) meant that African Americans were surely also present in significant numbers in (British) Quebec, starting in 1760.

23. The enslaved Creoles who defy this description are what Ira Berlin demonstrates the White preference for Creoles, Blacks who, through their birth in the Americas, were deemed to be “seasoned” and less resistant. While it is as yet undetermined if this preference for Creoles existed in other northern regions like Nova Scotia, I would argue that evidence will eventually bear out that this too was the case, in part because slave owners in the regions that became Canada were far less familiar with African-born people than with various groups of Creoles (African Canadian, African American, and African Caribbean people).


25. William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, Quebec City, letter to William Dunlap, Esq., Philadelphia, April 29, 1768, p. 1, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. This letter is partially transcribed in this lecture: Colonel Hubert Neilson, “Slavery in Old Canada: before and after the conquest,” Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, March 2, 1906, p. 32. It would appear that Brown and Gilmore did not get what they asked for, since a series of six fugitive notices were printed in their newspaper (five by Brown and one by the sheriff, James Shepherd, Esq.) for the “NEGRO MAN SLAVE named JOE, born in Africa,” who in terms of the act of running away, appears to be the most resistant enslaved person known to date in the history of Canadian slavery (italics mine). For transcriptions of these advertisements, see Mackey (2010a:319–322, 328–329).

26. In Quebec where enslaved people of African and Indigenous ancestry were enslaved together, the term “panis” was used for enslaved Indigenous males and “panise” for females, regardless of ethnicity.

27. I have dedicated this from my own research and the notices compiled in Whitfield (2018).
Besides Creoles who were of African Canadian and African American origins, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Black populations in Nova Scotia and Quebec were augmented by the steady arrival of other Creoles, the enslaved people of African descent who arrived as the “secondary cargo” or commodities on ships that originated from Caribbean ports, ships also loaded with primary cargoes of slave-produced plantation goods like sugar, rum, and molasses. Printed in the *Halifax Gazette*, on Saturday, May 30, 1752, the notice titled “Advertisements, JUST imported and to be sold by Joshua Mauger” listed six enslaved people for sale. While the word “just” worked to further objectify the people listed in the advertisement by emphasizing the newness of the arrival of Mauger’s human commodities and his desire for a quick turnaround, the word “imported” announced the enslaved people as foreigners. The first person to be described in this notice was “A very likely Negro Wench, of about thirty five Years of Age, a Creole born.” Creole, as it was used in this context, was a way to describe a Caribbean origin. However, this advertisement may also have disclosed the presence of African-born people among the group, a point detectable in the lack of English language fluency in a group arriving from the British Caribbean. The notice continued, “Also 2 Negro Boys of about 12 or 13 Years old, likely, healthy and well shap’d, and understand some English [sic].”

Unlike more southern port settlements in British North America (later the United States), the primary port in Nova Scotia, Halifax, and the two primary ones in Quebec, Quebec City and Montreal, did not appear to receive merchant ships directly from Africa. Instead, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century newspaper notices for shipping affairs routinely listed vessels arriving from or bound for Britain and the Anglo-Caribbean. Such information was commonly printed in notices reporting harbor news and custom house activity or those placed by individual ship captains advertising space for passengers and/or freight. In one such case, an advertisement printed on Tuesday, March 26, 1799, in *Royal Gazette and Nova-Scotia Advertiser* (Anonymous 1799) exposes the profound economic transatlantic connections between Halifax and the Anglo-Caribbean. The notice informed the public that the brigs *Lord Nelson* and *Nymph*, captained by Rundle and Pryor, respectively, had arrived from St. Vincent along with Captain Hughes’s brig *Friends* from St. Thomas in 28 days and an unnamed brig from Jamaica.

Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Evidence of Ethnicity and Birth Origin: Quebec

While the ubiquity of the term “Negro” elides the specificity of African or Creole origins in Quebec, some of the fugitive advertisements disclosed more specific information about the ethnicity of the enslaved. Within the 51 Quebec fugitive notices, this information can be grouped into four categories: (1) those that disclose African birth, (2) those that disclose birth or origin in the region that became the United States, (3) those that indicate a Caribbean origin, and finally, (4) those that betray some anomalous characteristic unusual to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century residents of Quebec. This last category is the most uncertain since it is based on my educated reading of what is stated and withheld in the notices (table 1).

The first category, African birth, has already been discussed above (9.8% of fugitive notices and 11.11% enslaved fugitives). In the second category, six people can be potentially identified as African American Creoles (11.76% of fugitive notices and 13.33% of enslaved fugitives)—potentially only since the notices do not always indicate the United States as their place of birth but instead their place of residence prior to their forced migration to Quebec. The mulatto Andrew who fled from James Crofton of Montreal was listed as born in Maryland (Crofton 1767 in Mackey [2010:315]), a “Negro” named Cesar was purchased by Jean Orillat on August 25, 1773, from Garret Van Vliet of New York (Orillat 1775 in Mackey [2010:318]), a “Negro Slave” named Ishmael was described by his owner John Turner as possessing a “tone of voice peculiar to New-England, where he was born” (Turner 1779 in Mackey [2010:321–322]), the “Negro Lad” Nemo was described as being born in Albany (Ritchie 1779 in Mackey [2010:323]), and finally, a man named Tight (Saul 1784 in Mackey [2010:326–327]) and woman named Ruth (Saul 1789 in Mackey [2010:332]) (described as a married couple) who were listed in separate fugitive notices published over five years apart, had been purchased in Albany, New York (Mackey 2010b:536–537, n. 40).

However, of the six, only Andrew, Ishmael, and Nemo seem to have been born in as opposed to from what became the United States. It is important to note that due to the dates of these notices, only the ones for Ishmael, Nemo, Tight, and

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Table 1. Fugitives listed by ethnicity or regional origins with date of first or only escape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African American</th>
<th>African Caribbean</th>
<th>Foreign to Quebec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew (1767)</td>
<td>Lowcannes (1773)</td>
<td>Drummond (1765)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar (1775)</td>
<td>Thompson (1779)</td>
<td>Will (1768)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishmael (1779)</td>
<td>Snow (1784)</td>
<td>Bell (1778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nemo (1779)</td>
<td>Alexis (1787)</td>
<td>Pascal (1788)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tight (1784)</td>
<td>Ruth (1789)</td>
<td>Isaac (1794)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


29. The name of the brig from Jamaica was not printed, and the captain’s name is partially illegible but may be Sprot (Anonymous 1799).
Ruth were placed after the United States had declared its independence from Britain. Further, it is unclear if any of the fugitives was young enough to have been born after the declaration itself and therefore born precisely in the United States (as opposed to British North America). However, regardless, the political upheaval of the late eighteenth century that led to dependence from Britain. Further, it is unclear if any of the fugitives was young enough to have been born after the declaration itself and therefore born precisely in the United States (as opposed to British North America). However, regardless, the political upheaval of the late eighteenth century that led to war and the clearer articulation of distinctive regional US cultures—like Ishmael’s peculiar New England accent—were certainly also already present during the period when these people were born.

In the third category, Caribbean origin, although only one Quebec notice proclaimed this explicitly, three more enslaved fugitives appear to have shared this origin (7.84% of fugitive notices and 8.89% enslaved fugitives). A “Negro man” named Lowcanes who escaped from the merchant and ship captain William Gill on November 18, 1775, was likely of Caribbean origin (Gill 1775 in Mackey [2010b:319, 534, n. 27]). The enslaved man may have been named after a place. Mackey has deduced that the name Lowcanes may have been an Anglicization of the French name Léogane, the name of a town on the island of St. Domingue, then a French Caribbean colony and a center for sugar and coffee production (Gill 1775 in Mackey [2010b:319, 534, n. 27]). Furthermore, the fact that Lowcanes purportedly spoke “good French” but “no English” would align with an experience of enslavement on the French Caribbean island.

A fugitive notice placed by Mr. Simon Fraser asked the public to aid him in the recapture of JNO. Thomson, who he described as “a black Boy . . . height about 5 feet 3 or 4 inches, born in Spanish-Town, Jamaica” (Anonymous 1779 in Mackey [2010b:322]; see fig. 6). Placed in the early autumn, the September weather was likely still warm enough to embolden the young Thompson, who was accustomed to a tropical climate. That Fraser, who asked for Thompson to be brought to his residence or “on board the same Ship” used the title Mr. would indicate that he was most likely a passenger, as opposed to a crew member. But it is unclear if Fraser had just arrived or was preparing to sail, and thus also if Thompson had arrived on the same ship from elsewhere with Fraser (perhaps his native Jamaica) or had been purchased or hired in Montreal to accompany Fraser on an impending voyage. It seems more likely that Fraser was leaving the settlement, since if he had intended a prolonged visit or to reside in Montreal, he would likely not have given the option for the public to return the boy to the ship. The fact that the Black youth had a family name and was not explicitly named as a slave may indicate that he was free. However, enslaved Black sailors like Pompey (who was listed in a Quebec fugitive notice on August 15, 1771) were present in Quebec, and Fraser’s advertisement insists on some contract that Thompson had supposedly violated with his flight (Johnston and Purss in Mackey [2010b:317–318]).

A “Negro man” named Snow was, like Thompson, also likely from the Caribbean. Although listed in a fugitive notice along with another Black man named Tight from Albany (Saul 1784 in Mackey [2010b:326–327]), the ship captain René Hippolyte Laforce, who was involved in West Indian trade, owned the tall and slender, bilingual, and ironically named Snow (Mackey 2010b:537, n. 41). Laforce’s travels to the Caribbean increase the possibility that Snow might have been purchased in that region. Meanwhile, although listed as a Negro servant by his female owner, the Widow Perrault (Perrault 1787 in Mackey [2010b:329]), Mackey claims that Alexis was a mixed-race slave, the “mulatto” son of the Guadeloupe-born Catherine,31 who had been purchased in February 1755 by the prosperous merchant Jacques Perrault for 1,275 livres (Mackey 2010b:536, n. 39).32 Since Catherine was a French Caribbean Creole, her son Alexis necessarily shared her Caribbean heritage, even if his father was most likely a White man. Since Perrault purchased Catherine alone in 1755 and Alexis was supposedly 18 in 1775, it seems that he was born into slavery in Quebec when Perrault owned his mother. Given the prolific sexual exploitation of enslaved Black females within slavery, it behooves us to ask if the White Perrault was Alexis’s father and, if so, if the Widow Perrault’s slave sale notice for Catherine in the Quebec Gazette on March 4, 1784, was a punitive attempt to separate mother and son (Perrault 1784 in Mackey [2010b:326]).

The fourth category is the most nebulous since it is comprised of notices that did not feature specific descriptions of the regional origins of the enslaved. Nevertheless, five enslaved fugitives can be assigned to this category: Will, Drummond, Bell, Pascal, and Isaac (9.8% of fugitive notices and 11.11% enslaved fugitives). In a fugitive notice of July 15, 1768, an enslaved man described as “a Mulatto named WILL” draws attention due to his description by the owner, the Quebec merchant Eleazar Levy, as speaking “French, English and Spanish” (Levy 1768 in Mackey [2010b:315]; italics mine).33 While the first two European languages were common among the free and enslaved inhabitants of Quebec, Spanish was not. Since slave owners customarily advised the readers of the language proficiency of the enslaved—as when John McCord

30. The advertisement lists Pompey as “lately bought of Mr. Perrras,” who Mackey describes as a grain and flour merchant (Mackey 2010b:532, endnote 23).

31. Mackey suggests that Catherine (alias Catiche, Catherine Martin) was the woman offered for sale by the Widow Perrault in a curt sale notice in the Quebec Gazette dated March 4, 1784. As Mackey had also noted, the odd advertisement listed no price, physical description, or list of her skills. Madame Perrault, “A VENDRE UNE NERGRESSE,” Quebec Gazette, March 4, 1784, transcribed in Mackey (2010a:326). Mackey claims that Catherine was a free woman (a “naigresse Libre”) by 1799, when she was admitted as a patient to the hospital Hôtel-Dieu from January 6 to 28 (536, endnote 39).

32. Mackey claims that the Widow Perrault, Louise Charlotte Boucher de Boucherville, purchased Catherine and Alexis (at the supposed ages of 50 and 18, respectively) for 166 13s 4d at the auction of her husband’s estate after his death in 1778 (2010a:536, n. 48).

33. Sarah Levy was presumably a female family member of Eleazar (Mackey 2010a:531, endnote 17).
explained that the enslaved “Negro Man” Drummond “Speaks very bad English, and next to no French”—the absence of similar clarification of Will’s language skills would seem to indicate that he spoke and comprehended all three languages well (McCord 1765 in Mackey [2010b:314]). As such, as a mixed-race man and almost certainly a Creole, Will may have been born and/or raised in a region where Spanish had been spoken, regions that included the southern regions of what was to become the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America and Caribbean islands like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the region of Santo Domingo (today, the Dominican Republic) on the island of Hispaniola.

Drummond’s language skills also trigger questions about his origins. Since many enslaved people who had been born or spent significant time in Quebec quickly became proficient in both English and French—like Tom Brooks, who was described in a Montreal fugitive notice of 1785 as speaking “English and French perfectly” (Guthrie 1785 in Mackey [2010b:328])—Drummond’s “very bad” language skills may indicate that he was African born or purchased in a region where neither language was common.34 Furthermore, we can speculate that Drummond had not lived long enough in Quebec to perfect these languages. Similar to Drummond, Nemo, supposedly born in Albany, was described, suspiciously, as speaking English and French only tolerably (Ritchie 1779 in Mackey [2010b:323]). While the lack of French fluency makes sense for a man from Albany, the lack of English fluency does not. A comparison with Nemo’s female accomplice, Cash, leads me to believe that she was African Canadian. Specifically, it is their owner, Hugh Ritchie’s, failure to provide a birth origin for the 26-year-old Cash, along with an acknowledgment that her French and English were very fluent, that leads me to believe that Cash may have been born in Quebec.

An enslaved mixed-race female, Bell, seems to have shared a similar experience of a recent migration like Drummond. Bell was listed in two fugitive advertisements in the Quebec Gazette on August 20, 1778, and November 5, 1778. According to Mackey, her owner, the butcher George Hipps had purchased her at auction from Thomas Venture, a ship captain (Hipps 1778 in Mackey [2010b:321, 355, n. 32]). The history of her sale by Venture and the nature of his employment indicate that Bell could have been forcibly migrated on Venture’s ship from outside of Quebec. This history and her mixed-race identity mean that, like Will, she was most likely Creole.

The mixed-race man Pascal Puro was also likely from outside of Quebec. Although Constant Freeman placed the advertisement for his escape, it explained that Puro, described as a “Mulatto,” was the property of John Sargent, a Loyalist from Salem, Massachusetts, who settled in Barrington, Nova Scotia, after the War of Independence (Freeman 1788 in Mackey [2010:331, 539, n. 52]). Puro had apparently escaped from the schooner Lucy, also owned by Sargent (Mackey 2010b:539, n. 52). Sargent’s own origins in the United States, his residence in Nova Scotia as a prosperous merchant, his possession of a ship, and Puro’s escape directly from it, all increase the likelihood that Puro was not from Quebec (Mackey 2010b:539, n. 52).

Like the mixed-race man Will, who piques interest due to his proficiency with Spanish, Isaac’s language skills similarly point toward his potential foreignness to Quebec. Isaac, listed as a "NEGRO MAN" in the notice, had escaped on April 29, 1794, from Azariah Pretchard Sr. at New Richmond “in the district of Gaspé” (Pretchard 1794 in Mackey [2010b:337]). Pretchard described Isaac as capable of speaking “good English and some broken French and Micmac” ([sic]; italics mine) (Pretchard 1794 in Mackey [2010b:337]). Since Mi’kmaq people were indigenous to the Maritimes and the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, Isaac’s knowledge of this language indicates his experience with these communities or individuals. Isaac’s potential connection to these regions aligns with Pretchard’s history. A Connecticut Loyalist, after the War of Independence (according to Mackey). Pretchard “was persuaded . . . to lead a group of refugees to the Gaspé” (Mackey 2010b:541, n. 64).

34. Mackey similarly argued that Drummond’s language skills likely indicated that “he was a recent arrival from overseas” (2010a:530, end. note 11).
Therefore, while Isaac may have been an African Canadian, whom Pretchard encountered and purchased in the region, he could also have been an African American who was forcibly relocated by Pretchard to New Richmond from the United States.

If my deductions are correct across these four categories, of the 45 people of African descent listed in 51 Quebec fugitive advertisements, as many as 20 may have been foreign or, put another way, not African Canadian. If we remove Ireland, who had fled from New York, and one of the two men named Jack (in the event that the two Jacks were the same person), we are still left with a sizable number of people of African descent—18, who were from elsewhere (40% of enslaved fugitives).

Conclusion

Due to the lack of slave ships transporting enslaved Africans from the African continent directly to ports like Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec City, African-born people almost assuredly comprised the smallest portion of the enslaved Black population in both Nova Scotia and Quebec. The lack of direct shipping routes between Africa and Canada and the infrequency and lack of sophistication with which Quebec slave owners named African-born people in fugitive slave notices—especially given the pervasive belief in the heightened resistance of this group—would indicate a comparatively small population. While enslaved people of African birth make up approximately 17%, 21%, or 25% of this regionally and ethnically defined population (depending on whether Ireland and both Jacks are counted), without further information it is still premature to conclude that African-born people were more likely to resist through flight than their Black Creole counterparts, as was the popular notion among White slave owners in Jamaica. As I have discussed elsewhere, Jamaican planters and overseers quickly recognized that plantations with greater numbers of African-born people were more likely to have rebellions. The enslaved populations’ knowledge of the maroon communities in Jamaica, combined with the continual influx of large groups of Africans on slave ships, must have had a serious influence on this pattern.

However, whether African or Creole, many enslaved Blacks identified primarily with their African identity and culture. In Quebec, the enslaved male Jean-Baptiste-François who apparently, upon gaining his freedom, renamed himself Jean Beaucour dit l’Africain or Jean-Baptiste L’Africain is a case in point (Mackey 2010b:72, 168; Nelson 2016:146). Thus far, in the Quebec fugitive slave notices, 20 of 45 fugitives (44%) can be identified by regional origin, either through the details stated in the notices or in other archival sources. The enslaved populations of tropical colonies like Jamaica came to be composed primarily of two groups: an ethnically diverse group of Africans and an ever-increasing African-Jamaican or regional Caribbean Creole community due to an interisland slave trade. In contrast, the Black enslaved population of British Quebec was augmented through migration in two primary ways: (1) through the inland migration of Creole African Americans and others from the regions that would become the United States and (2) through the transatlantic traffic of merchant ships from the Anglo-Caribbean that docked at ports like Montreal and Quebec City. Further study of the dress and cultural habits of enslaved people of Quebec will shed light on how they retained or adapted their African and African Creole cultures and hopefully how they interacted and perceived each other and resisted their enslavement.

Some of the most important questions are as yet unanswerable: (1) Could the enslaved in Canada distinguish the ethnicity and birth origin of their fellow bondspeople? (2) If so, how could they discern such things, and what did it mean to their intragroup politics, interaction, and communication? (3) How aware were the enslaved of the transformations in their cultural and social practices as they were changed over a
lifetime and across generations from Africans into Creoles? (4) If Creoles by definition were more apt to be “seasoned” or “broken,” what did this mean for cross-ethnic alliances in terms of resistance and rebellion?

While much scholarly attention has been given to the question, What was Blackness?, I would like to ask instead, When was Blackness? In Jamaica where hundreds of enslaved people lived together on plantations thousands of acres in size, did a Black majority, many of whom were African born, translate into greater opportunities for the performance and preservation of one’s African ethnicity? Did what Ira Berlin has called the “radical separation of master and slave and the creation of the worlds of the Big House and the Quarters” create a physical buffer that provided the enslaved with the unsupervised room to preserve their African cultures? (Berlin 1996:284). Or did the immediate expropriation of their African past inhibit the practice and maintenance of cultural knowledge (Berlin 1996:284)? Contrarily, did the proximity of the enslaved to their owners in the urban spaces of Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec City and the “heavy burdens of continual surveillance” inhibit cultural preservation? (Berlin 1996:283).

The diasporization of Africans implies their creolization or their transformation in places like Canada and Jamaica from African to African Canadian and African Jamaican, respectively. But I am interested not only in the question of what creolization looked like but when it occurred. Under the burden of White-imposed slave codes, laws, and prohibitions, when did Africans lose their ethnic specificity and become something else? The archive of fugitive slave advertisements can be helpful in answering such questions. Joe, enslaved in Quebec City, fled at least five times from William Brown, the cofounder and owner of the Quebec Gazette.36 While listed as a “Negro Lad” with tolerable English and French in the first fugitive slave notice of November 27, 1777 (Brown 1777 in Mackey [2010b:319]), in the last notice dated May 4, 1786, he was described as the fluently bilingual pressman of the newspaper (Brown 1786 in Mackey [2010b:328–329]; see fig. 7). Significantly, then, Brown’s notices map not only Joe’s determined resistance but also the very process and progress of his creolization.

This article represents an attempt to understand complexity within Blackness, by beginning to uncover the specific regional and ethnic origins of the enslaved population of African descent in Quebec. It is with this knowledge that we will be able to better comprehend the cultural, linguistic, social, and spiritual complexity of this community and whether and how they worked to preserve their African and African American (continental) ways of life while living and laboring under the strategic material impoverishment, cultural prohibitions, social surveillance, and physical brutality of the White slave-owning classes of Quebec.

Acknowledgments
This research would not have been possible without the generous support of an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2014–2019). I also received valuable feedback from colleagues at Harvard University, where I first presented this research with the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research while serving as the William Lyon Mackenzie King Chair of Canadian Studies (2017–2018). I would also like to thank Harvard’s Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs who cosponsored my chair, providing invaluable research time, resources, and funding.

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Anonymous. 1788. A list of Negroes on Hope Plantation in St. Andrews. Paper, 32.39 x 20.3 cm, ST West Indies Box 3(s), Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

36. Although Joe was initially enslaved by William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, Gilmore’s premature death in 1773 meant that he never printed fugitive slave advertisements for Joe’s escapes (1777–1786). Five notices were placed by William Brown and one by the Quebec City sheriff and gaol-keeper, James Shepherd and John Hill. Mackey 2010a:319, 320, 321, 322, 328–329.


Valongo
An Uncomfortable Legacy

Tania Andrade Lima

This article discusses the archaeological and sociopolitical action that brought Valongo Wharf in Rio de Janeiro back to life. This action aimed to put the remains of the past in the service of present-day causes like the fight for recognition, respect, social justice, and fundamental rights for Brazil’s Black population. But although widely recognized by Black and White people alike, Valongo causes discomfort. Reflecting the current resurgence in racism and religious intolerance, Valongo is unwelcome for many White people because it foregrounds the Black population. For other White Brazilians, it exhumes evidence of the brutal subjugation of Black people by Whites occurring in Brazil until the late nineteenth century, a shameful episode they would rather forget. In parallel, many Afro-descendants resist an undesirable and shaming association of themselves with slavery that is seen to perpetuate their subalternity. Responding to this multidimensional context, the article seeks to instigate a reflection on the limitations of a White archaeologist, inevitably possessing an implicit bias, investigating an archaeological site particularly sensitive to Afro-descendants in Brazil and elsewhere, and to encourage Black people to more actively engage in the material recovery of their own past, work that has thus far been predominantly performed by White archaeologists.

In 2011, the United Nations promoted the International Year for People of African Descent in order to “redouble our efforts to fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that affect people of African descent everywhere.” That same year, in a happy coincidence, Valongo Wharf was unearthed in Rio de Janeiro, the largest port of arrival for enslaved Africans in Brazil in the nineteenth century. Archaeological excavations had been made possible by the urban infrastructural works carried out in the port area for the 2016 Olympics (Lima 2013a, 2013b; Lima, Sene, and Souza 2016; Lima, Souza, and Sene 2014).

This paper discusses how the research, developed under my coordination, was put at the service of this cause, from the very outset when it was conceived as a sociopolitical action that could contribute toward the construction of emancipatory social policies for the Afro-descendant communities. By exposing the materiality of the violence practiced as part of the transatlantic slave trade, it also sought to raise awareness and open people’s hearts and minds to the sheer magnitude that racial prejudice can assume, and indeed has assumed, many times over the course of human history. This is at a particularly dangerous moment when extreme forms of racism and intolerance are reemerging around the world, at the same time as, by contrast, a growing acceptance of differences and multiculturalism by many others, combined with the desire to protect those discriminated against.

It is precisely now that we need to reflect deeply on a period in human history when it was deemed acceptable and justifiable to imprison, torture, and force into hard labor people deemed inferior due to their skin color. The material evidence of their existence was buried and deliberately forgotten, leaving nothing to remain or be remembered of this shameful chapter of Brazilian history. Undoubtedly societies decide what they wish to recall and what they would rather forget. However, these decisions are always made without the participation of people on the margins, particularly those who generally are forgotten.

Hence it is archaeology’s historical responsibility to bring to light what others wished to bury and conceal forever in the past, to the detriment of minorities and underrepresented sectors of society. By presenting its evidence to present-day societies, people can confront this past and find new ways to deal with it. The historical archaeology that we practice aims to provide an antidote to this kind of social amnesia, which is why we chose the localization and excavation of Valongo Wharf as the primary aim of our research (figs. 1, 2), due not only to its indisputable historical importance but also because of what it represents for Brazil’s Afro-descendant communities.

Over the course of our investigation, however, we were confronted by a number of unexpected events. First was the silence and distance of Afro-descendants in response to the publicity given to the findings, later broken by the approximation of religious figures, Black intellectuals, and leaders of the multifaceted Black Movement. However, the population in general remained and still remains distant from Valongo Wharf.

A second revelation was the unexpected way these Afro-descendants appropriated the wharf. The site that we anticipated would become a place for all kinds of celebration was in turn recognized as the place of the ancestors, a sacred ground


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where rituals and religious ceremonies are periodically conducted. This convinced us that the recovery of the past of the Afro-descendants must be made first and foremost by themselves whenever possible. The gaze of outsiders like ourselves, Euro-descendants, inevitably results in this kind of misjudgment, meaning that their history should be preferably recovered and told by themselves. Our assumption is that, despite the endeavor to escape the traps and contradictions of this outsider condition, an unconscious and inescapable bias is contained in this research, openly exposed here.

In this paper I present Valongo, the complex of structures directly connected to the nineteenth-century slave trade, including

Figure 1. Access ramp and platform of the Valongo Wharf/Empress Wharf exposed by the excavations. Photo: Andrea Jundi.

Figure 2. Pavement of the Valongo Wharf, made from uneven stones, deeper and better preserved. A few higher sections of pavement from the Empress Wharf survive, showing cobblestones. Photo: Oscar Cabral.
the wharf. I also address the stigma of slavery in Brazil, the sociopolitical and economic inequalities derived from it, the Black communities’ fight for the right to reparation, the process involved in the wharf’s recognition as a heritage site, and its repercussions for Afro-descendants. Over its entire course, this process was assisted by the intensive participation of leaders from Black communities, seeking to ensure that no decision was made without their consent. It successfully culminated in the inclusion of Valongo Wharf on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 2017, recognized as one of the most important places of memory of the African diaspora, transnational in scale. This recognition has meant that the site now finds itself entering a new stage, one marked by internal disputes that have so far remained unresolved, caught in the current tense political setting of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil more widely and, indeed, the world.

Background

As part of the urban revival of the Port Zone of Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Olympic Games, a preventive archaeology program was developed to accompany the first phase of works. A research project was designed specifically to find the remains of Valongo Wharf, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was located in the designated research area and later buried. The name Valongo—an abbreviation of vale longo (long valley), owing to its situation between two hills—in fact referred to a complex of structures directly connected to the slave trade. In addition to the wharf, which was unearthened and studied in this project, it included the establishments selling enslaved people along Valongo Street (Honorato 2008); the lazaret, a quarantine station located nearby where slaves infected with contagious diseases were taken; and the Cemetery of Pretos Novos, where the victims of abusive treatment and diseases during the Atlantic crossing were buried (Pereira 2007). The wharf where enslaved people arriving from Africa and all sort of goods were unloaded was built only in 1811, by order of Prince Dom João VI, as reported by the Marquis of Lavradio in 1779. It operated for the purposes of trafficking until 1831, when a law was introduced ruling that all those entering the country henceforth would be considered free. After a sudden drop in number, the flow of imported Africans once again increased clandestinely, brought to work on the coffee plantations in Rio. This resurgence led to the promulgation of a new law, issued in 1850, banning the Atlantic slave trade definitively. Described and depicted in countless accounts by foreign travelers as a sinister and repugnant place (Arago 1822; Ebel 1972; Freireys 1906; Graham 1990; Holman 1834; MacDougall 2013; Spix and Martius 1938), Valongo market was a shameful blight on the life of the city, one that became increasingly intolerable. Hundreds of thousands of Africans brought by the Atlantic slave trade disembarked in Rio at that time, making it one of the main points of entry of enslaved Africans, not just in Brazil but in the Americas as a whole.

One particular event does seem to have been opportune in terms of eradicating the old wharf and drastically transforming the somber landscape into its antithesis: the arrival in Rio de Janeiro of the Princess of the Two Sicilies, Teresa Cristina of Bourbon, for her marriage to Emperor Pedro II. It was precisely Valongo that was chosen for the princess’s grandiose landing in 1843. The old wharf was covered by landfill and in its place emerged the Empress Wharf, renamed, modernized, and embellished. Valongo Street was also renamed Empress Road, clearly showing the intention to clear the region of the vestiges and stigma of slavery for good. The wretched masses coming from Africa were replaced by a European princess and her court, a highly symbolic opposition and superposition of these two extremes (Lima, Sene, and Souza 2016). Begun in February 2011, the archaeological excavations unearthed the stones of the Empress Wharf and, at deeper levels 0.60 m below them, exposed a floor of rough, uneven stones of the older wharf of Valongo, covered by the landfill made for the Empress Wharf. The latter was also sealed by a new landfill covering the entire area at the beginning of the twentieth century during the construction of the Port of Rio de Janeiro. Valongo Wharf, deep below, was forgotten.

Estimates indicate that around 4.8 million Africans arrived in Brazil during the period of the Atlantic slave trade, between 1560 and 1852 (Elitis and Richardson 2008), making the country the highest importer of enslaved Africans in the Americas. The export economy—based on sugarcane, cotton, and later coffee monocropping—generated a growing demand for slave labor, which reached its peak in the first half of the nineteenth century (Klein and Luna 2010:74). For the period spanning 1811 to 1842, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database allows us to estimate that around 620,000 people disembarked in Rio de Janeiro. Approximately more than half a million Africans, at least, can be estimated to have arrived there. They had very diverse origins, but at that time came predominantly from Central Africa and to a lesser extent from the West and East Coasts of Africa.

Because they were more numerous than the Europeans and Euro-descendants, they were described by foreign visitors at the time as “a mass of dark people” who circulated everywhere, making Rio a “Black city” (Mawe 1944:81; Spix and Martius 1938:45–46; Wied-Neuwied 1958:24; among others).

The Catholic Christian tradition, predominant in Portugal and consequently in Brazil, associates work with punishment. In the Catholic origin myth, Adam and Eve, expelled from paradise, were cursed and condemned to earn bread by the sweat of their brow. In the colonial world and during the

empire, this mentality led to forms of work that required any kind of physical effort, however small, being considered shameful, degrading, and undignified, associated with subordination and social inferiority. In his journey through Brazil in 1845–1846, Evbank (1856:184) observed that “Brazilians shrink with something allied to horror from manual employments. In the spirit of privileged classes of other lands, they say they are not born to labor, but to command.”

In the slave regime, work automatically became synonymous with slavery. Manual and mechanical labors were a “Black thing” to be executed solely by the enslaved, “the hands and feet of the masters,” or “the most precious cattle of the master.” Boxer (1969:188) mentions the maxim, then in vogue, that work was “for dogs and negros.” For the ruling classes, whose nobility was defined “by what the person did not do” (Schwartz 1988:210), the only dignified activities were those that required intellectual ability, destined for the Whites, in contrast to those needing only manual skill, the task of Blacks—for the Whites, “the sciences and administrative posts” (Mattos 1990:113); for the Blacks, tools.

As a result of this ideology, Africans and their descendants remained inexorably associated with work and slavery. Far from signifying their liberation, the end of slavery and trading in Africans, decreed belatedly in Brazil in 1888, left them at the mercy of new forms of subalternity. Without direct access to land and lacking any stimulus and support to become independent and productive, they were left to their own luck, subjected thereafter to other undeclared forms of slavery.

The Right to Reparation

From the end of slavery, Afro-descendants have ceaselessly fought for their integration into society on equal terms to Whites. However, the 130 years that have lapsed since have still proven insufficient to ensure basic rights for the overwhelming majority of the Black population in Brazil. Overlapping with the economically disadvantaged and the socially marginalized, they bear the stigma of slavery, even today, in the form of subordination, undignified living conditions, and the diverse types of coercion to which they are continually subjected.

An important landmark in the process of historical reparation owed by Brazil to Afro-descendants was the 1988 Federal Constitution, proclaimed exactly 100 years after the end of slavery. Among its fundamental principles, as well as considering everyone equal before the law, is the repudiation of racism, considered a nonbailable and imprescriptible offense subject to imprisonment.

Based on the Magna Carta and resulting from the struggles of the Black Movement, policies were introduced to compensate for the losses caused by the discrimination and marginalization of Afro-descendants as well as the promotion of racial equality. These included the Quotas Law (Federal Law no. 12.711). Seeking to correct the unequal access of Whites and Blacks to higher education, social and racial quotas were instituted in 2012 for entrance to public universities to those able to prove low income or who self-identified as Afro-descendants, respectively. However, racial quotas have met with strong resistance, including from those who consider them unconstitutional for allegedly infringing on the principle of equality of all citizens, and they are currently being challenged in Brazil’s National Congress.4

As a policy promoting respect for and the valorization of Afro-Brazilian history, the official public education curriculum was instructed to include material on the theme of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture by Federal Law no. 10.139 of 2003. But again, its application has met with all kinds of resistance, and the law has clearly been disregarded in many schools.

As an outcome of these initiatives, a variety of affirmative actions on different fronts began to be implemented in both the public and private spheres. According to the Black jurist Joaquim Barbosa (Gomes 2001:6–7), the objectives of these affirmative actions are to induce transformations at cultural, pedagogical, and psychological levels, aiming to excise from the collective imagination the idea of racial supremacy versus racial and/or gender subordination, to curb discrimination in the present, to eliminate the persistent effects (psychological, cultural, and behavioral) of the discrimination of the past that tend to perpetuate and reveal themselves in structural discrimination, and to implant diversity and increase the representation of minority groups in diverse sectors.

On the one hand, progressive sectors have increasingly supported these actions as a means to secure equal opportunities and social inclusion for the Afro-descendant population, combating segregation and intolerance in all its forms. On the other hand, though, the strong growth of ultraconservative positions in recent years, filled with racial prejudice, have been impeding these advances, including the repeated persecutions of Afro-Brazilian religions, very often through violent actions.

In this polarized scenario, tensions have already multiplied, and their tendency is merely to increase. Important conquests achieved previously by Afro-descendants run the risk of reversal, suffocated by the reemergence and strengthening of a racist far right that has won important political positions, now possessing sufficient decision-making power to prune initiatives already being implemented and to change decisions already made. The moment is unfavorable, but the fight for reparation must continue.

Sociopolitical Action

When Valongo Wharf was found in 2011, the national and international media quickly publicized the news. My expectation was for the Afro-descendant communities to turn up to see what we were unearthing at that moment, assuming

it would be a matter of great interest to them: the site where many of their ancestors had arrived directly from Africa to be enslaved in Brazil.

Surprisingly, though, as the weeks passed and our work advanced, nobody came to see what we had to show or receive what we had to hand over. It was at this point that we made the decision to invite leaders of the Black communities at our own initiative, keen for them to be made aware of the research that we were developing and to see what we were finding. With the mediation of the Pretos Novos Institute, representatives were invited from the Palmares Foundation in Rio de Janeiro (federal level), the State Council for Black Rights–CEDINE (state level), and the Coordination of Policies for Promoting Racial Equality of the City of Rio de Janeiro–CEPPIR (municipal level) to attend a meeting held on March 17, 2011, at the site of the archaeological excavations.

That same day, moved by what they had seen and immediately realizing its historical importance, they decided to write what was called the Valongo Charter, signed unanimously by everyone present. In this text they proposed that four days later, on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racism, immediately after President Barack Obama’s visit to Brazil on March 19–20, the Diaspora Memorial should be inaugurated at Valongo. Undoubtedly, this was a proposal that might appear naïve in hindsight, but which testifies to how ready they were to become involved at that moment and engage in the findings.

From this moment on, various leaders of the Black communities began to turn up of their own accord to learn about the work in progress. At the same time, as the head of the archaeological team I was invited by activists from the Black Movement to various meetings and events in order to present the ongoing research. In these meetings, where it was possible to observe internal divisions, I sought to demonstrate the need for direct involvement of the Black population in the investigation so that they could take possession as soon as possible of what belonged to them by right of descent. At the same time, I strove to highlight Valongo as a powerful platform to give visibility to their rightful aspirations.

Our investigation was grounded in the fact that by working over a long time frame, archaeology has the capacity to expose the different strategies of domination that captured and continue to capture individuals in webs of oppression, preventing their emancipation. Sometimes openly declared, other times subtle and veiled, these webs were woven in both the remote and recent past and continue to be produced in the present through dimensions like race, class, gender, religiosity, ethnicity, and sexuality, controlling access to knowledge, information, free expression, and basic individual rights.

To comprehend how these webs are manifested in the present, we above all need to investigate their underground roots in the past and expose them to the light of day, denouncing them so that they lose their force. It is important to know how injustices came about in order to understand why they still exist (Shackel 2011) and how we can produce information and knowledge that contribute to their reduction. It is here that archaeology, as a locus of political action (Pinsky 1989), can play a fundamental role in the struggle of disfavored groups to achieve emancipation and empowerment. On this ideological level archaeology can be profoundly effective (McGuire 2008), influencing moral and ethnic positions and helping stimulate a sense of social justice. As Wood (2002:190) argued, inspired by Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994 [1970]), the studies developed by the discipline on the social relations of the past should be used to comprehend social inequality in the present. Assuming, like Tilley (1989), that archaeological practice is an instrument of the present, indisputably ideological, its strength becomes clear if and when it assumes an activist role and becomes critically engaged. This implies interaction, continuous dialogue, collaboration, and the effective participation of the marginalized communities in some form in the research to defend their interests—in the Valongo case, the Afro-descendants.

Practicing a socially responsible archaeology necessarily involves engagement. It implies putting the remains of the past to work in the fight for present-day causes, assisting the struggle for recognition, respect, justice, and the fundamental rights of historically discriminated ethnic groups. As we know, the past is a powerful tool for social action in the present, meaning that it is the responsibility of a social-minded, activist, and emancipatory archaeology to build bridges between the two. Archaeological knowledge must be placed, therefore, in the service of social causes whenever possible. In so doing, it can contribute toward the development of emancipatory policies for oppressed groups and, ultimately, for greater social justice, helping stem the erosion of humanist values.

The deliberate attempt by dominant sectors of slave society to erase the grim and somber past of Valongo, forgetting its horrors forever, landfilling the original structure and replacing it with another sanitized wharf, had proved highly successful until recently. However, our research team believed and invested in the possibility of bringing Valongo back to the present. Its past, supposedly erased, consigned to a frozen perpetuity, burst from the earth alive and pulsating. Valongo exhales oppression, racism, intolerance, inequality, and extreme marginality. It evokes a heavy past whose consequences make themselves felt even today and will continue to be felt for a long time to come in Brazil. For this very reason, it undoubtedly provokes reflection and inspires social awareness, enabling its transformation into a space of civic engagement and dialogue, favorable to social action. In our view, its symbolic force and power can be deployed in support of Black activists and their campaigns to fight against racism and for social justice.
social, political, and economic inequality, as well as supporting political activism to ensure basic human rights and greater respect for ethnic diversity.

In bringing the wharf back to life, our aim was to affirm the right of the enslaved people of Valongo—ignored or forgotten by the dominant narratives and confined to the shadows for two centuries—to be remembered. We need to remember, always and under any circumstances (see Meskell and Weiss 2006), because if we are not careful, the errors of the past may easily be repeated.

Valongo: The Place of the Ancestors

While the excavations were still in their early stage, we were surprised by the first and touching appropriation of Valongo by Afro-descendants: the decision to use its paving stones as the setting for a religious ceremony commemorating the seventh day after the death of Senator Abdias Nascimento, a renowned Black leader, in May 2011. This had been his own request before passing away. At that moment, we felt the Black community was finally taking possession of Valongo, recognizing it as the place of their ancestors. This ceremony was repeated again, in the same location, during the rites celebrating the one-year anniversary after his passing and later too, in 2014, on the commemoration of what would have been his hundredth birthday, sacralizing Valongo as the place of the ancestors.

In parallel, as the excavations began to find objects clearly related to the magical-religious practices of the Africans—like cowries, figas, anthropomorphic stones, the sign of dikenga in different supports, crystals, and copper objects, among many others—we realized that we should invite leaders from Afro-Brazilian religions so that they could be made aware of what we were finding. Moreover, we transferred the prerogative of interpreting the objects to them, making these religious leaders partners in the archaeological investigation. As the archaeological team had a predominantly Christian background and was unfamiliar with the full complexities of the Afro-Brazilian religions, it was essential we heard from the leaders what these traditions had to say about those artifacts and their meanings.

We heard from four different religious leaders in succession, each from a different lineage and at different moments, without knowing about each other’s involvement. These were Mãe Meninazinha de Oxum, Mãe Celina de Xangô, Professor Fernando Portugal Filho, and Mãe Edelzuita de Oxa-

6. Maria da Luz do Nascimento, iyalorixá, born in Salvador in 1937 and initiated in 1960, is heir to iyá Davina, with roots in the high lineage of the candomblé of Bahia.

7. Celina Maria Rodrigues de Almeida, mãe de santo in umbanda and president of the Little Africa Cultural Center.

8. Babalawó of Yoruba traditional religion, awarded the Egbé Lógun Ede ‘Ní Ifon certificate in Òyó, Nigeria.

guan. When we presented the objects, all of the religious authorities interpreted them in the same way, a fact that struck us as extremely important. Although from different branches, it became clear that a common ground existed on which these interpretations were based, with a temporal depth of at least 200 years in Rio de Janeiro.

One of the invited iyalorixás, Mãe Edelzuita, after observing the excavation area and the sacred objects emerging from the earth, decided that spiritual works needed to be performed urgently in order to appease the ancestors who were clamoring for justice. Alongside Mãe Celina, she initially performed a ritual on the field laboratory where the artifacts were stored, in order to calm the spirits with an abundant offering of foods. We were permitted to witness and participate in part of this ritual only. A short while later, having determined that Valongo was under the protection of Xangô, the orisha of justice, another ritual was conducted, this time publicly, on the wharf’s paving stones. An ebó was offered to this entity, in the understanding that justice was finally being made at that place.

On July 1, 2012, the day of the inauguration of Valongo Wharf by Rio de Janeiro’s mayor, Mãe Edelzuita proposed a ritual of redemption and purification to bring peace and joy to the ancestors: the washing of the Valongo stones. This ceremony involved a parade of candomblé adepts, led by the iyalorixá and accompanied by Mãe Celina. Clothed in white, carrying flowers and earthenware jars filled with scented water, they made their entrance into the wharf area, singing and dancing to the sound of percussion instruments. They poured the water over the stones and deposited a large heart made of red roses with the word “peace” spelled in white roses in the middle.

Following this first initiative, the washing of Valongo Wharf became an annual event held every first Saturday of July. It was included in the official calendar of the city of Rio de Janeiro through Municipal Law no. 5.820 of December 15, 2014, recognizing the importance of its religious dimension for the Afro-descendant communities. The performance and protagonism of the iyalorixás at Valongo consecrated the site definitively as a sacred ground, the place of the Black communities’ ancestors.

First Developments: The Distant People

Recognition of the historical importance of Valongo Wharf was given impetus by the national and international media. A succession of developments contributed to openly exposing the vicious cruelty of slavery in Brazil, so strongly materialized in the Valongo region—not only at the now visible wharf, but
especially in the pitiful graves also exposed in the Pretos Novos Cemetery, where those who had not survived the brutal conditions of the Atlantic crossing had been summarily buried.

To these two places were added other locations nearby where historically freed Africans and their descendants settled over the centuries, impregnating the entire region with Africaness to the point of it becoming nicknamed Little Africa at the start of the twentieth century. Since it condenses and has preserved important places of the culture and spirituality of the Africans and their descendants, in 2011 the city administration’s Subsecretariat of Cultural Heritage (transformed soon after into the Rio World Heritage Institute) decided to create the Historical and Archaeological Circuit for the Celebration of African Heritage.10 To this end it appointed a curatorial working group to design and delimit the circuit, which included a strong involvement of representatives from the Black communities as well as public administrators and researchers. This circuit ended up including Pedra do Sal, among other marks of Afro-Brazilian culture, in addition to Valongo Wharf and the Pretos Novos Cemetery. This definition of the route was preliminary, remaining open to the possibility of later including other sites considered relevant to the Black communities, understood as a project in permanent construction. More than a tourist circuit, the aim was for it to be primarily educational, displaying not only its archaeological dimension but especially its historical, cultural, religious, political, architectural, and urbanistic aspects, a place for reflection on racism and the social inequality arising from it.

After three months’ work, the original group was expanded to include the participation of religious authorities and practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, activists from social movements, and representatives of institutions and drafted the document “Recommendations from Valongo.” Emphasizing the political dimension of the Afro-Brazilian heritage in the region, short-, medium-, and long-term actions were all proposed, looking to strengthen public policies for the promotion of racial equality in Rio de Janeiro. The “Valongo Recommendations,” concluded at the end of May 2012, were discussed at a public hearing on June 26, with the submission of this document to the city mayor planned for a few days later on July 1, the date of the inauguration not only of Valongo Wharf but the circuit, too. This submission did not take place, however. In the middle of a campaign for reelection, the document failed to gain the mayor’s attention or interest, and attempts to schedule an audience to submit it were simply ignored. The document would only be handed over to him after his reelection, at the insistence of the group’s representative, informally and hurriedly as the mayor left an event in the area of the circuit. Throughout the entire second mandate of the mayor no response was ever given to the “Valongo Recommendations.” The document’s importance was ignored.

Gaining increasing national and international expression, the results obtained in the research were presented at the international seminar “Heritage, Identity, Education and Culture: Management of Sites and Places of Memory Linked to the Slave Trade and Slavery.” This event was held in August 2012, promoted by the Palmares Foundation and UNESCO through their international project “Slave Route—Resistance, Freedom, Heritage,” attended by its cultural director Ali Moussa Iye and members of its Scientific Committee. At the opening, the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Racial Equality, in the name of the Brazilian State, requested UNESCO’s acceptance of Valongo as a candidate for its World Heritage list.

A little over a year later, on November 20, 2013, Black Awareness Day, a UNESCO delegation led by Ali Moussa Iye unveiled a plaque at Valongo recognizing it as one of the most important places of memory of the transatlantic slave trade. Just around two dozen people were present, including members of the delegation, representatives of the city administration and heritage institutions, leaders of the Black Movement, and researchers. By contrast, on this same day and time, the media reported about a thousand people present for the intense celebrations held by Afro-descendants close to the monument to Zumbi dos Palmares.

More than a year after the conclusion of the field research at Valongo Wharf, we observed that, until then, only the religious leaders and the more educated sectors of the descendant community had become involved with the site—the former because they recognized the site as the place of their ancestors, intensely worshipped by Afro-Brazilian religions; the latter because they fully understood its symbolic, social, and political significance.

A number of times over the course of the work, we asked various Black leaders where the people were. What we had always expected—for the new square to become a place of intense political, religious, artistic, cultural, or any other kind of manifestation—had failed to materialize. We only witnessed some isolated visits by Afro-descendants, many of them destitute, who appeared at the site and remained there for some time, lost in thoughts, praying, or sometimes visits by small groups. But never larger, collective movements that promote greater awareness among the Black population, that express their aspirations and demands, or that celebrate their conquests and victories. Once again in the recent history of Valongo, a puzzling distance appeared to separate the site from those who, in principle, should be the people most interested in it. In another article (Lima 2013a), the interpretation that we made on this unexpected maintenance of distance, a question previously raised in the literature (Singleton 1997; Singleton and Orser 2003), was that the vast majority of the Afro-descendant communities is repulsed by their association with slavery. This seems to be a page that they wish to see turned over forever, and remembering apparently amounts to something uncomfortable, shameful.

This reaction has already been observed in different circumstances, such as in rural Black communities that refuse to

10. Municipal Decree no. 34.803 of November 29, 2011.
recognize themselves as quilombo descendants, even though all the documentary and physical evidence points in this direction (Lima, Nascimento, and Filho 2013; Santana 2008). They deny their slave past and prefer to lose the benefits to which they would be entitled, were they to accept the association with slavery, due to the heavy stigma that this entails.

A single exception was recorded: the completely spontaneous manifestation of the Kabula capoeira group on July 14, 2012. Originating from Angola, capoeira is a mixture of an old Black martial art and acrobatic dancing. Since this first event, the Kabula group has been holding monthly educational and cultural performances at the wharf. Aiming to develop critical awareness, it is seeking to keep alive the memory of Afro-Brazilian culture in the Port Zone, transforming, in its own words, from a place of suffering for the Black population into a space of fraternization and the celebration of African culture.11 In this way the group has been fulfilling what was always our greatest hope.

A little while later, the Black filmmaker and artist Zózimo Bulbul conceived the project “African Heritage: Urban Interventions on the Port Path,” promoting a circuit along the area of Little Africa, with diverse exhibitions of Afro-descendant artists in different languages and with Afro-Brazilian gastronomy events at eight different points, one of them being Valongo Wharf. Just two editions of the event were held, the last in 2014, in homage to its creator Bulbul, who had died the previous year.

Gradually Valongo began to penetrate the Afro-Brazilian imaginary: recently a novel was published with the title O crime do Caís do Valongo [The crime of Valongo Wharf]. Written by the award-winning Black author Eliana Alves Cruz, the book is set at the start of the nineteenth century, and its well-constructed narrative unfolds through Black characters. Suggestively, the image on the book cover is that of the stone paving of Valongo Wharf.

Valongo under Dispute

In order for the Brazilian State to submit Valongo Wharf’s application to become a World Heritage Site to UNESCO, a dossier had to be elaborated with well-founded justifications. This process was conducted by the National Institute for the Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), which designated a working group to prepare the technical documentation required by UNESCO. A consultative committee was set up to provide it with support in this task, including a marked presence of leaders from the Black communities. This committee, also supported by an assistant technical body, was formally established in September 2014, and the work began soon afterward.

The initial version of the application dossier was sent to UNESCO in September 2015, signaling that the candidacy was no longer just a future prospect, but a concrete possibility. This was confirmed in March 2016 with the acceptance of the Valongo Wharf Archaeological Site as a candidate for recognition by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. This in turn kindled a renewed interest in Valongo on the part of the descendant communities, which, almost always silenced and rendered invisible, comprehended the high degree of visibility that recognition could bring.

The final version of the dossier was submitted by IPHAN to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in February 2017. In this document, Brazil’s historical responsibilities in relation to the violence against humanity caused by the enslavement of Africans were recognized, as well as the invaluable contribution of the slaves themselves and Afro-descendants in general to Brazil’s economic, cultural, and social development. The decision in favor was made on July 9 of the same year, finally adding Valongo Wharf to UNESCO’s World Heritage list during the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013.

On the following day, July 10, IPHAN and the city administration issued an invitation to a joint commemoration at Valongo Wharf to celebrate UNESCO’s recognition of the site. This celebration was attended by those involved throughout the entire process, including representatives from IPHAN and the city administration entities, leaders, and activists from the Black Movement, supporters of the cause, and researchers, totaling around 200 people.

The last National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), released in 2017 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE),12 revealed that the self-declared Afro-descendant population (54.9%) surpassed the White population (44.2%) in Brazil, with the latter ceasing to be a majority. In other words, out of a total of 205.5 million Brazilians, Afro-descendants numbered 112.7 million. This can be explained by two main factors: the increase in the birth rate of Afro-descendants and the movements of ethnic valorization and pride stimulating their self-identification as Black and Brown (negros and pardos).

No figures are publicly available for each federal state, but it is not difficult to estimate that, in the case of the Afro-descendant population of Rio de Janeiro, their attendance at the commemoration at Valongo Wharf for such an important conquest was absolutely insignificant from a numerical point of view. In other words, the Black population continues to not identify themselves with Valongo, which associates them with the degrading condition of slavery, and thus keeps a distance from it.

In 2017, new actors appeared on the scene with the election of a new mayor, a bishop from an evangelical church.


with a history of vehement rejection of the culture of Afro-
descendants and intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions. Nevertheless, he chose an Afro-descendant to occupy the post of secretary of culture, who publicly announced her intention to create a Museum of Slavery. She immediately came under severe criticism, especially from the Black communities, who had been for a long time contrary to this kind of initiative. Right at the beginning of the excavations at Valongo, when we invited the representatives of organizations campaigning for the rights of the Black population to learn about the findings, the then president of the Palmures Foundation stated that it should be better to build a Museum of Slavery, when he heard of the proposal in the Valongo Charter to create the African Diaspora Memorial at the location. However, binding Afro-
descendants forever to slavery would be to condemn them perpetually to a stigma from which they still fight hard to free themselves. In the face of the volley of criticisms from different sectors, but especially Afro-descendants, the idea was abandoned, only to reappear six years later under the new secretary of culture. The negative impact of the name led to it being changed tentatively to the Museum of Slavery and Freedom, which was equally severely criticized, adding the possibility of choosing another name via public consultation.

On March 10, 2017, Municipal Decree no. 42.929 was published, setting up a working group to present an action plan for the creation of the controversial Museum of Slavery and Liberty in the Port Region. Since then, amid intense disputes, a tangled web of conflicting opinions and interests involving federal and municipal institutions, political authorities, representatives of Black communities, activists, academic researchers, and others has formed. Combined with changes in the field of political forces at federal, state, and municipal levels, and an extremely unfavorable economic conjuncture, the projects—whether those for a center, museum, or memorial—have failed to progress beyond the blueprint stage.

Final Reflections

In different times and places, the nations constructed and continue to construct their myths. France constructed its myth of liberty, equality, and fraternity; the United States, the myth of democracy; Brazil, the myth of racial democracy. However, myths are fictions: they recount what we aspire to be, not who we really are. In this sense, these myths are beautiful examples, unlike those that propagate, for example, the notion of racial superiority explicitly constructed by some other nations.

In the case of Brazil, the myth of racial democracy masks racism, and by denying its existence only works to reinforce it. This stereotype unsuccessfully tries to conceal the processes of exclusion to which Afro-descendants today are subject in diverse domains and that make them the main victims of violence, those with the least opportunities for studying, those who earn the lowest wages, those who are forced to live in the most degrading conditions. At the root of this process lies the fact that they arrived in Brazil as slaves, treated as inferior beings. The stigma of inferiority accompanies them even today, such that this supposed “racial democracy” needs to be demystified in order for our society’s true face to emerge, perhaps not as beautiful as it believes itself to be. An effective strategy for society to confront its own reality is to remove the mask and expose the open sores of the shameful slavery system that persist beneath it. It needs to be shown how these sores are still a long way from healing, denouncing the extent to which Black people in Brazil still remain enslaved—only now in much more subtle forms, and for this reason perhaps even more perverse, since their condition is disguised under a fake appearance of freedom.

Myths can and should be transformed into attainable goals. The fact that the 1988 Brazilian Constitution and the Penal Code have made racism a crime, accompanied by the growth in affirmative actions that create better chances for Afro-descendants in Brazil, have been important victories. Nevertheless, racism remains deeply embedded in people’s minds, even if subconsciously.

In October 2017, Valongo was visited by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, sixteenth king of the Ashanti, a direct descendant of the founder of the Ashante empire, Osei Tutu I. We awaited his arrival next to Valongo, talking with an iyalorixá, when a White man passed by us, walking normally. As he went by, he said to us, in a calm voice, without slowing down, the following sentence: “There are a lot of people who want to see this buried deep again.” Without pausing or looking back, not even to observe the effect of his words, he continued on his way. This brief episode served to show us that, in spite of being recognized in many different instances by Black and White people alike, Valongo causes discomfort. The current resurgence in racism and religious intolerance makes Valongo undesirable for many White people as it brings Blacks to the forefront. For other White Brazilians, it exhumes evidence for the brutal subjugation of Black people by Whites that took place in Brazil until the late 1800s, which is a shameful episode they would rather forget. In parallel, many Afro-descendants resist an undesirable and shaming association of themselves with slavery that perpetuates their subalternity, which makes Valongo an uncomfortable legacy.

The impulse to discriminate against the Black population in everyday situations may perhaps not be acted out due to the fear of punishment, but one of the potential forms for diminishing this impulse is to catch these people through emotion, allowing them to feel the extremes to which humankind has gone in its desire to dominate and subjugate. The stones of Valongo can hopefully touch them. As a place of unspeakable suffering, whose materiality provokes a tangible and shocking experience, the wharf imposes a deep reflection on slavery and its consequences for Brazil’s social formation. Archaeology works to bring back to light the physical evidences of the past. And this exposed materiality has, in some cases, a forcefulness that has a strong impact on human sensibility, encouraging reflections that can contribute to a change in the disadvantageous positions occupied by disfavored social groups. The eloquence of material discourses

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that expose the brutality of these strategies of domination to sight, touch, and the senses in general have a profound impact on people at an intimate level, making them receptive to transformative actions. It is at this ideological level that archaeology can prove deeply effective, influencing moral and ethical positioning. The materiality of these mistakes brought to light by archaeology at Valongo constitutes a constant alert and a permanent denunciation, such that the direct confrontation with the violence once practiced there stimulates a sense of social justice in the present.

By pointing to the importance of archaeology for the recovery of the trajectory of Africans brought by force to Brazil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a history poorly documented and above all silenced, we seek to encourage the Black population’s acquisition of the tools needed for its re-construction. There are many Black historians but few Black archaeologists. At this moment, however, as a Black leader told us, young Afro-descendants prefer to study law, especially, rather than archaeology.

We took Valongo out of the ground with our heart in our hands, with great respect and deep emotion. Considered one of the most notable places of memory of the African diaspora outside of Africa itself and compared to Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Gorée Island, and Robben Island, Valongo was understood as a location that encapsulates memories of pain and struggle for survival in the history of the ancestors of Afro-descendants. These sites, testaments to large tragedies in the history of human societies, were transformed into world heritage sites so that they can serve as a reminder of the horrors committed by humanity, seeking to prevent them from ever being repeated.

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Raising the Dead
Walls of Names as Mnemonic Devices to Commemorate Enslaved People

Ana Lucia Araujo

The article examines walls of names commemorating the victims of Atlantic slavery and the slave trade in US heritage sites and museums. By exploring how, during the twentieth century, memorials of wars and genocides in Europe, Africa, and the Americas have featured walls of names to honor the dead, this article proposes a genealogy of the walls of names, by emphasizing the various contexts in which this device has been employed. Whereas naming has been a long-standing practice to honor the dead since antiquity, naming enslaved individuals in ship manifests or farm books was part of a process of dehumanization. Yet, during the last 30 years, emerging initiatives commemorating slavery incorporated walls of names to recognize the humanity of enslaved men, women, and children. By looking at a few case studies in the United States, the article seeks to understand how effectively this specific kind of memorial has been employed to recognize and pay homage to the victims of slavery.

For many years, the tragic history of Atlantic chattel slavery remained concealed from the public space of former slave societies and societies where slavery existed. Yet, in the last three decades an increasing number of organized groups and social actors have engaged themselves in activities to commemorate the victims of these human atrocities. This article examines how walls of names have been employed as mnemonic devices in memorials and museums commemorating the victims of Atlantic slavery and the slave trade. I explore how slavery has been commemorated in the United States over the last three decades, while situating this trend in the international context. Relying on the study of various initiatives and the public views of activists, curators, government officials, and other organizations, I examine examples of museums, memorials, and heritage sites that use walls of names as mnemonic devices. By focusing on the United States, I establish connections between these memorials and name-listing practices retrieved in other memorials. I underscore how these initiatives establish intentional and unintentional connections between the commemoration of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade and the memorialization of the Holocaust and other genocides, reinforcing dialogues embodying elements of the collective memory of slavery carried out by White descendants of slave owners, novels (Mitchell 1936) by looking at a few case studies in the United States, the article seeks to understand how effectively this specific kind of memorial has been employed to recognize and pay homage to the victims of slavery.

Transnational Commemoration of Slavery
Different social groups, racialized either as Whites or Blacks, have shaped the collective memories of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in the United States. Whereas the personal and collective memories of individuals and groups remained alive for a very long time in the private realm, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they started occupying the public sphere by eventually shaping a public memory and, occasionally, an official memory of slavery and the slave trade.

Unlike other areas of the Atlantic world, starting in the eighteenth century the United States championed the publication of memoirs by former slaves, leading to the emergence of the Black slave narrative as a literary genre (Davis and Gates 1985:xxii). In 1935 during the Great Depression, as part of the New Deal, US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched the Federal Writers’ Project, an initiative aimed at funding written works and supporting writers. From 1936 to 1938, men and women employed in this project were assigned to interview former slaves in 17 Southern states. Despite the biases of the interviewers, this ambitious and unprecedented initiative produced the most comprehensive collection of slave testimonies in the Americas, therefore providing instruments to understand the collective memory of former slaves in the United States (Stewart 2016:4).

On the eve of the Second World War, slavery became the object of representations in US popular culture as well. Embodying elements of the collective memory of slavery carried out by White descendants of slave owners, novels (Mitchell 1936)
and movies such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) conveyed a nostalgic image of the old slaveholding South. Reinforcing depictions of enslaved men and women as submissive subjects, the United States exported these representations of slavery to other former slave societies such as Brazil (Araujo 2014:180). Yet, with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s, African American activists, writers, artists, and other social actors challenged White renderings of passive enslaved persons. Probably one of the most successful examples of this transformation is Alex Haley’s novel of 1976 *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* and its television adaptation aired on ABC in 1977. Both the book and the television series promoted new African American representations of enslaved men and women that emphasized resistance and resilience. As Alondra Nelson has shown (2016:71), Haley’s contribution to the increasing interest of African Americans in genealogy. Both in the novel and the television adaptation, the central character Kunta Kinte (Haley’s alleged ancestor), refuses to adopt the name Toby imposed on him by his owner, by continuously asserting his African name (Haley 1976:275). *Roots* emphasized that for enslaved Africans as for anybody else, the names they received by their parents while on African soil were deeply connected to their history and identities. By claiming and naming Kunta Kinte as his ancestor, Haley recovered a story that was doomed to be lost. To some extent, the issue of naming present in the novel (and the television series) was in dialogue with Haley’s previous coauthored book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published in 1964. The book told the story of civil rights activist and leader of Nation of Islam Malcolm X (1925–1965), who chose to replace his last name with the letter X by noting that it “replaced the white slavemaster name of ‘Little’ which some blue-eyed devil name Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears” (Haley and Malcolm X 1964:229). Unlike Malcolm X, Kunta Kinte knew his name, and decided to not forget it. Ultimately, the novel and the series underscored that by keeping and remembering their names, enslaved Africans resisted against enslavement.

The decolonization of Africa and the Caribbean also transformed the memorialization of slavery. If until the first half of the twentieth century most monuments conveyed submissive representations by often portraying crouched and bent bodies of enslaved men, women, and children (Araujo 2010, 2014), starting in the 1960s an emerging public memory of slavery favored the commemoration of the enslaved who resisted bondage. Yet, figurative representations of bondspeople dominated such initiatives. Especially in the Caribbean, several monuments rendered representations of men and women who resisted bondage and fought against slavery. But despite the exception of the Caribbean and South American contexts, the presence of ordinary enslaved men and women tended to be erased from heritage sites such as former plantations or urban settings where slavery existed. Either in Brazil, Colombia, or the United States, the crucial role of the slave workforce and their numerical importance in slave societies were rarely recognized. But in the last three decades this context started to gradually change. The end of the Cold War disrupted the isolation of Eastern European countries and was decisive for the end of dictatorial regimes in Latin America and Africa. This process favored the visibility of historically excluded groups that now could assert their identities in the public space. This general framework also propelled international exchanges between these groups, increasing global connections among Black organizations and populations of African descent that during the Cold War were often prevented from denouncing racism under the threat of being charged of involvement in Communist activities. On the one hand, Black social actors and activists progressively started occupying the public space to claim the history of men and women who resisted slavery. On the other hand, historians were pressured by this new activism and began paying more attention to individual trajectories of enslaved men and women who coped with the hardships of slavery by emancipating themselves or by negotiating better work and living conditions. These scholars started relying on a myriad of firsthand narratives and testimonies by enslaved people, especially in the United States, by giving a central place to their lived experiences (Berlin 1998; Berlin, Favreau, and Miller 1998). Former plantation heritage sites remain the most important and popular venues associated with the US slave past. Still today these sites of work, torture, and terror attract thousands of tourists to Southern states every year. During the 1990s, heritage sites of old plantations of tobacco, wheat, and cotton open to visitation in the United States also started giving more visibility to the institution of slavery, a dimension once totally evacuated from these spaces that have been rather designed to underscore the luxurious lives of slaveholding elites (Butler 2001; Cook 2015:4). During the tours of Southern plantations, docents often made references to slavery by using the passive voice (Eichstedt and Small 2002). Still, despite older timid attempts and more recent robust efforts to put emphasis on how slavery was central to these plantations (Cook 2015:2; Modlin et al. 2018:3–4) that often utilized the workforce of many dozens of enslaved persons, these men, women, and children continued to be portrayed as nameless individuals. Even visitors to richer plantation sites such as Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, which over the last two decades made considerable efforts to interpret slavery, continued the outcry about how these sites whitewashed its history (Leflouria 2018; Melton 2015). Ultimately, to a greater or lesser extent even the sites that brought slavery to light continued perpetuating the dehumanization and the invisibility of enslaved men and women (Modlin et al. 2018) by rarely seeking to display their personal lives and trajectories and the ways they lived, coped with, or fought against slavery.

**A Genealogy of Walls of Names**

Thomas A. Laqueur (2015:79) argued that the work of the dead “is possible only because they remain so deeply and complexly present and because they share death with its avatars:
ancestors, ghosts, memory, and history.” Therefore, because the work of memory is rooted in bringing the past to the present, the places where the dead were put to rest over the centuries, such as tombstone-covered floors and walls of churches, churchyards, and cemeteries, constitute exemplary sites of memory and commemoration.

Since antiquity, the concern with burying the dead is perceived as a right imposed on humanity (Laqueur 2015:93; Lawers and Zemour 2016:12). Pre-Columbian societies in the Americas interred their deceased members by often using sumptuous ceramic funerary urns. West African and West Central African societies that provided enslaved men, women, and children brought to the Americas also developed elaborate mortuary ceremonies and burial practices to honor the dead (Jindra and Noret 2011:18). With the emergence of written systems among different societies came the practice of adding names and inscriptions to tombstones. These epitaphs were a means of keeping the dead as a permanent part of the world of the living, reflecting the desire of giving them humanity and immortality (Laqueur 2015:372). In ancient Greece, listing names of war victims in poems, monuments, and tombstones was intended to pay homage to those who died in battle (Laqueur 2015:377).

In Brazil, as in other parts of Latin America, freedpeople as well as enslaved men and women joined Catholic brotherhoods to have access to a dignified burial service (Kiddy 2002:157; Soares 2000:144–145). Yet in most cases slave owners and slave merchants carelessly discarded enslaved bodies in common burial grounds and unmarked graveyards. In 1991, dozens of remains of enslaved individuals were unearthed in Manhattan in New York City, giving birth to the African Burial Ground (Araujo 2014:93; Frohne 2015). In 1996, the Cemetery of New Blacks, where the dead bodies of enslaved Africans recently disembarked were disposed, was also uncovered in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro (Araujo 2014:98). In the United States, slaveholders consented to provide corpses of enslaved individuals for dissection in medical schools of the most prestigious universities in the country (Berry 2017:159–160; Wilder 2013:200). 

To this day, newspaper articles monthly report newly found unmarked slave graves in cities involved in the Atlantic slave trade such as Lagos (Portugal), São Paulo (Brazil), and Annapolis, Maryland (United States).

After the Second World War, a growing number of heritage sites, memorials, and museums, especially those associated with the Holocaust, apartheid, and the Vietnam War, included walls of names listing the victims of these atrocities. Indeed, as early as 1945, pre-state Israel initiated Holocaust commemoration through projects aimed at creating permanent memorials (Ofer 2000:26). Starting in the 1950s, plaques displaying the names of victims of the Holocaust were unveiled in “synagogues, cemeteries, public buildings, and Jewish National Fund groves” (Ofer 2000:32). In 1957 the government of Israel unveiled the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, labeled as the first official memorial especially constructed to commemorate the martyrs of the Holocaust and Second World War. Taken from a verse of the book of Isaiah, in its literal translation from Hebrew to English the designation Yad Vashem, meaning “a monument and a name,” evokes the practice of naming as the best way to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust victims. Indeed, naming has been at the heart of Yad Vashem’s mission. Since its inception Yad Vashem launched the project Pages of Testimony, a one-page form that allowed victims of the Holocaust to submit victims’ names and biographical information. In 1968, Yad Vashem created a names room storing nearly 800,000 names and testimonies organized in alphabetical order. Eventually in 1977, Yad Vashem dedicated the Hall of Names building featuring the names of nearly 1 million victims of the Holocaust that in the next decades were gradually added to a database.

Renovated in 2005, Yad Vashem currently occupies an area of nearly 45 acres and is composed of multiple sections that include two museums, an archive, a library, and a synagogue, as well as monuments, memorials, and squares. Since the renovation, the Hall of Names was incorporated into the new Yad Vashem’s Holocaust History Museum. Upon entering the memorial, visitors reach a circular ramp. The ceiling over the circular ramp, a 10-meter conic structure, displays hundreds of photographs and texts extracted from the Pages of Testimony. The space below the ramp also has a conic format carved in the mountain bedrock. Filled with water, this pool-like structure reflects the images displayed on the upper conic ceiling. In addition to visually displaying hundreds of victims’ names and portraits on the upper conic wall, the memorial’s outer walls consist of shelves holding the physical copies of Pages of Testimonies covering information for nearly 4 million of the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. At the exit of the circular ramp, visitors reach a computer center where they can consult the entire collection of Pages of Testimonies by accessing the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names.

Nearly 925,000 tourists, including descendants of Holocaust survivors from around the world, visit the Yad Vashem on an annual basis (Yad Vashem 2017:7). Drawing from the ancient practice of listing names on memorial tombstones, the international outreach of Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names may have influenced the emergence of similar commemorative devices remembering the victims of human atrocities. However, Yad Vashem introduces at least two new features to the conventional wall of names. If genocides are characterized by their massive dimension through the killing of large groups of nameless individuals, the memorial subverts this logic. By identifying each victim with a name and a portrait, as in an identity card (de Jong 2018:9), these victims of the Holocaust regain the humanity that was taken from them. Moreover, the memorial also complexifies and expands the notion of walls of names by offering the visitors a physical repository of biographical information as well as a digital archive accessible via the online database.

In the Americas the most iconic memorial embracing the concept of inscribing names on walls is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, opened in 1982. Designed by Maya Ying Lin, an American architect of Chinese descent, the memorial emerged...
as an initiative led by a group of US Vietnam War veterans through the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The memorial occupies a 2-acre area at the National Mall, a vast zone at the heart of Washington, DC, where many other national memorials, monuments, and museums are also established. The monument is an abstract structure that evokes a tombstone. The two walls form a V of approximately 75 meters in length (Sturken 1991:119). The structure is divided into 72 panels currently listing 58,220 names of US Vietnam War veterans according to the date they were declared dead or missing. Because of its bright surface, people walking along the pathway can see their own images reflected on the black walls. Podiums placed at both sides of the memorial allow the visitors to identify specific names. In contrast with the Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names, the memorial embraces a more conventional approach of commemoration. Although its location in the National Mall gives it the highest national official status, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not visible from a distance. Likewise, its horizontal shape and black color contrast with many other nearby vertically oriented memorials and monuments (Doss 2010:129; Sturken 1991:120). Further, a number of conservative veterans contested the memorial’s abstract design that, according to them, lacked heroic representations of Vietnam War veterans. In an op-ed article, veteran Tom Carhart denounced the jury that selected the memorial design for being composed only of civilians “who had seen no military service in Vietnam” and defined the memorial as a “black gash of shame and sorrow.” According to the veteran, the winning design lacked “heroic figures rising in triumph” such as the ones found in the Marine Corps War Memorial depicting the raising of a US flag on Iwo Jima, and instead was an antithetical representation featuring black walls, “the universal color of sorrow and dishonor” (Carhart 1981:23). Consequently, in 1984 a bronze statue depicting three soldiers conceived by artist Frederick Hart was added to the original memorial. Still, as Annie Coombes has pointed out, “it is the wall, and not the figurative group, that enables ritual reappropriation and animation” (Coombes 2003:91). Visitors to the memorial can personally engage with the deceased veterans whose names are engraved on the walls by seeing their own image reflected on the granite’s surface. They can also leave notes, flowers, and other mementos at the memorial’s foot. Nearly 3 million tourists visit the memorial every year. Yet, international tourists without any personal connections with American citizens killed during the war can hardly create a link of empathy with the deceased veterans.

Alternative memorials also incorporated a variety of versions of the wall of names as mnemonic devices to honor victims of war and other human atrocities. Starting in 1992, the German artist Gunter Demnig developed the project Stolpersteine (literally translated as “stumbling stones”). Again, borrowing from the prophet Isaiah (8:14), a Stolperstein, “a symbolic stone over which a wrongdoer or an entire people living in violation of God’s law must stumble is a reminder to live life in fear of God and a gauge that tells whether one has lived a proper life or not” (Harjes 2005:144). Contrasting with state-sponsored robust memorials like Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names, a Stolperstein is a simple device paying homage to a single individual (Cook and van Riemsdijk 2014:139). It consists of a concrete cube bearing a brass plate memorializing a victim of the Holocaust and placed near the individual’s last place of residence or work. Although the project started in Berlin and Cologne, to this day Demnig has laid nearly 70,000 brass plates in more than 280 cities across Europe. Containing the victim’s name as well as the dates of birth and death, the plates fulfill the function of tombstones for murdered men, women, and children who never had access to a proper burial service.

In the twenty-first century, ordinary citizens and governments sponsored many other initiatives paying homage to victims of atrocities that also include walls of names. For example, in 2005, the Shoah Memorial in Paris dedicated its wall of names listing 76,000 Jewish victims, including 11,000 children, who were deported from France during the Second World War. The memorial is composed of three massive limestone walls. The victims’ first names, surnames, and dates of birth are inscribed on both sides of each wall, all of which are divided into 30 rectangular sections organized by year of deportation. In 2006, the Wall of the Righteous was unveiled along the Allée des Justes de France (France’s Righteous Alley), a walkway alongside the memorial. Inscribed in the landscape of a neighborhood where other markers reminded passersby of the incarceration and deportation of Jewish men, women, and children, the wall bears the names of 3,900 men and women who helped save Jews in France during the Second World War. On a weekly basis, survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants visit the memorial, look for the names of their relatives, and leave them notes, mementos, and flowers.

In 2011, the National September 11 Memorial was dedicated in Lower Manhattan in New York City to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attack against the two towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (Young 2018). Occupying the area where the twin towers were once located, the memorial commemorates the 2,977 victims killed in 2001 and the six victims of the site’s bombing carried out on February 26, 1993. Reflecting Absence, as the memorial was named, consists of two reflecting pools, each one measuring nearly 4,000 square meters. The two pools are placed within the footprints of the two destroyed towers, and their edges are composed of bronze panels where the engraved names of each victim killed during the attacks offer a different format for the wall of names. Visitors to the memorial include the relatives and friends of the victims of the two terrorist attacks, but also millions of tourists from around the world. More than a site of meditation, visitors can find the names of those who were killed and engage with the written representation of each victim in a more personal way. Here, because of significance of the tragedy for the city of New York and the world, the names allow visitors to personally engage with the enormous memorial that not only corresponds to the size of the buildings destroyed but also to the numbers of lives taken by the terrorists.
Walls of Names: Paying Homage to the Enslaved

Naming became a major trend in memorials unveiled during the second half of the twentieth century (Doss 2010:150–151). Gradually recognized as the best means to honor victimized men, women, and children, walls of names break with the long-standing tradition of figurative structures representing human figures. Yet the creators of memorials and the communities behind their conception did not fully abandon figurative representations but, rather, incorporated them into the walls of names, suggesting a persisting perception that abstract structures and names alone are not always sufficient to mobilize visitors to engage with slave memorials. Although naming invests honored victims with the humanity taken from them, in the context of the Atlantic slave trade (as Malcolm X invests honored victims with the humanity taken from them, in names, suggesting a persisting perception that abstract structures. Yet lists of names of enslaved men, women, and children listed in ship manifests and farm books as ordinary commodities. Bondspeople very often carried the same names. Identifying through physical characteristics, enslaved people were listed in ship manifests and farm books as ordinary commodities. Yet lists of names of enslaved men, women, and children appear in Catholic churches’ baptism books and death records.

Despite the problems associated with the practice of listing names, the establishment of walls of names as mnemonic devices in slave heritage sites, memorials, and museums emerged as a response to social actors who demanded making slavery visible in the public space. Problematizing long-lasting historical narratives in which enslaved individuals have been portrayed as nameless victims, public historians, designers, curators, heritage site managers, and docents labored to acknowledge the presence of slavery in these sites’ grounds, to emphasize the humanity of enslaved individuals and to perpetuate their memory.

The United Kingdom is among the first European countries to engage with its Atlantic slave-trading past. The economic prosperity of slave ports such as Liverpool, London, and Bristol was deeply associated with the wealth produced by the work of enslaved men, women, and children, especially in the West Indies. During the 1990s, when the public memory of slavery started surfacing in societies involved in the Atlantic slave trade, Black activists pressured the city council of Bristol to put in place initiatives aimed at acknowledging the city’s involvement in the human trade. In 1997, the Georgian House Museum (that occupies the old residence of the slave merchant John Pinney) unveiled in one of its upper floors the small exhibition Slavery and John Pinney (Chivallon 2001:353). The exhibition, updated in 2018, consists of one long horizontal panel displaying texts and images that narrate Pinney’s involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. One long vertical panel, “Enslaved People of the Pinney Plantation,” features the names of 903 enslaved individuals who, between the 1670s and 1834, lived on Pinney’s estate (also known as Mountravers Plantation) on the island of Nevis in the West Indies. Intended to acknowledge the crucial role of slavery in building Pinney’s wealth, the decontextualized list of names instead reproduces the model of plantation inventory. By listing first names and unnamed individuals, this first attempt to give bondspeople an identity fails to honor men, women, and children who lived in slavery.

One of the first walls of names that dignifies enslaved individuals was unveiled in the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum in Cape Town, South Africa. Although Cape Town did not export enslaved people to the Americas, the colony was not dissociated from the mechanisms of the Atlantic slave trade. The Iziko Slave Lodge Museum is a seventeenth-century building where the Dutch East India Company accommodated its slaves. In 2006 the museum unveiled Remembering Slavery (North 2017:87), a new permanent exhibition telling the local history of slavery. The new exhibition features the Column of Memory, an interactive lit cylindrical structure composed of several rings bearing the names of most of the enslaved men, women, and children who were held at the Slave Lodge. Likewise, on the Church Square, just behind the museum, nine blocks of black granite of different heights commemorate slavery by presenting various dimensions of life under slavery. Again, two additional granite blocks pay homage to the enslaved kept at the Slave Lodge by displaying their names.

In the United States other heritage sites created similar rooms to honor the enslaved people who lived and worked in their premises. The Royall House and Slave Quarters in Medford, Massachusetts, is one of these initiatives. A National Historic Landmark, the mansion is the only surviving built structure with urban slave quarters in the North of the United States. The house was part of a farm owned by Isaac Royall, a British planter established in Antigua, who moved to the United States in 1737, bringing with him 27 enslaved persons. Royall’s son, Isaac Royall Jr., inherited his father’s assets after his death and bequeathed land to Harvard University. Today the mansion, transformed into a museum, is among the few sites to highlight the importance of slavery in making the wealth of the North of the United States. In the last few years, one entire room of the mansion was reorganized to honor the enslaved woman Belinda, who is known as among the first freedpersons to petition the state to obtain finance reparations for slavery (Araujo 2017:49–50). The big building that once housed the slave quarters is preserved and features a large panel displaying the names of nearly 60 enslaved men, women, and children who lived and worked in the house.

A similar initiative can also be found at the Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana. Made famous as a filming location for Hollywood motion pictures such as Interview with the Vampire (1994), for many decades the plantation’s staff failed to display the history of slavery and the enslaved population who lived and worked in the estate, to focus instead on the lives of planters and slave owners. In the 1990s the staff started discussing incorporating slavery in the plantation’s narrative, in part to respond to visitors’ criticism (Hanna 2015:6). In 2013 the exhibition Slavery at Oak Alley was unveiled (Hanna
2015:1). Spread along six replicas of slave cabins, the exhibition comprises a Names Wall where the names of 198 enslaved men, women, and children who worked on the plantation are finally recognized and honored. In addition to the display is a statement that also acknowledges this past erasure (Hanna 2015:11). Like many other heritage sites and museums in the United States featuring similar panels that play the role of a wall of names, the displays at the Royall House and the Oak Alley Plantation are inspired by the inventory format of farm books that list enslaved individuals as simple commodities. Here, however, they are intended to humanize and commemorate these men, women, and children.

Despite these marginal initiatives, the Whitney Plantation Museum in Wallace, Louisiana, is the first and most significant US private initiative featuring not one but three walls of names honoring enslaved people. Nearly 35 miles from New Orleans (Amsdem 2015), the site was designated by its creator as a “plantation museum.” The estate was originally named Haydeld Plantation, for the name of its first owner, the German planter Ambrose Heidel, who settled in Louisiana in 1721. The Haydels (whose family name spelling changed to Haydel in the second generation) owned the property until the Civil War, but in 1867 they sold it to Brandish Johnson, who renamed it Whitney to pay homage to his grandson Harry Whitney (Seck 2014). In 1999, John Cummings, a retired trial lawyer and real estate magnate of Irish descent, purchased the property to diversify his investments. In the next few years, he decided to transform the estate into a plantation museum, and he made a total investment of more than US$8.5 million to restore buildings and purchase artifacts. With the support of historian Ibrahima Seck (Whitney’s director of research), Cummings also fostered research about the site (Commander 2018:34). Large audiences also became familiar with the plantation because the site served as the setting for the film Django Unchained (2012) by Quentin Tarantino.

The Whitney Plantation opened to the public on December 7, 2014 (Amsdem 2015). The site comprises several original and newly built structures, including a visitor’s center, a big house, several pigeoniers, a kitchen, a barn, a blacksmith shop, a reconstructed church, and slave cabins brought from other plantations. Like other Southern plantations, Whitney targets an audience of White tourists. A recent survey shows that most visitors to the Whitney Plantation are White college-educated women in their forties (Alderman et al. 2015). Still, African Americans visit the site in school groups or with family members, and they very often leave testimonies on social media about these excursions.

Between 2014 and 2017 the plantation welcomed 110,000 visitors, but today an average of 11,000 tourists visit the site every month. Contrasting with other similar sites that glorify wealthy planters and very often a nostalgic narrative of the US South slave past, Whitney Plantation seeks to present bondage from the point of view of enslaved children, who in this context become the “special carriers” of cultural memory of slavery (Assmann 2011:39). To achieve this goal, Cummings and his staff used the narratives of former enslaved individuals from the Federal Writers’ Project, a choice justified because these interviewees experienced slavery when they were children.

The selected approach is not new. In the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, each visitor receives one of the 600 identification cards intended to create a link of empathy with individual Holocaust victims. This narrative strategy is based on the idea that “behind every name there is a story,” an effort to write biographical essays of each of these victims. Likewise at Whitney, visitors are assigned a card displaying the name of a former enslaved person who was interviewed as part of the Federal Writers’ Project as well as a picture of one of the various clay sculptures representing children spread throughout the site. This approach assumes that the plantation can create empathy among racist and White supremacist visitors (Commander 2018:36).

The visit to the plantation starts at the visitor’s center, where guests can spend as much time as they want to visit an exhibition about the history of slavery. Following this introduction, the guided tour starts at the Antioch Church, a building constructed by freedpeople on the east bank of the Mississippi River in 1870 and whose original structure was donated to and relocated to Whitney Plantation. The building displays clay sculptures of enslaved children, a device that aims at giving back the humanity to those who were killed in the plantation and to create a connection with the slave narratives featured along the tour. After being introduced to these life-size figurative representations of enslaved children, visitors are led to the Wall of Honor (fig. 1), the first memorial featuring a wall of names at Whitney Plantation. A two-sided concrete wall nearly 2 meters high, the memorial pays homage to the 350 enslaved men, women, and children who lived and labored on the plantation. One side of the wall contains names of African-born enslaved persons, distributed along 13 vertical black granite panels and leaving a vacant space on one additional panel to evoke the names of those enslaved who remain unknown. The opposite side displays 14 panels with names of bondpeople born in the United States and who arrived at the plantation through the domestic slave trade. In addition to the first names in languages as varied as English, Spanish, and French, further information includes skills, date of birth, and region of provenance, especially for African-born individuals. Both sides of the wall also contain passages taken from the slave narratives of the Federal Writers’ Project, even though none of the interviewees were ever enslaved at Whitney Plantation. Some engravings and photographs depicting enslaved individuals also illustrate the panels. Newspaper articles reported that the Wall of Honor memorial was inspired by the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Amsdem 2015). Yet Cummings, who designed the memorial, states the wall is, rather, intended to mirror the graves of slaveholders in Louisiana cemeteries that,

according to him, carry similar formal characteristics. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Wall of Honor works as a pedagogic device that, although giving an identity to enslaved individuals, is only presented to the visitors after the introductory exhibition and the contact with the figurative sculptures representing enslaved children.

The second memorial presenting names of enslaved individuals is the Allées Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (fig. 2), named for the historian who created the Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy database. The memorial is composed of 18 concrete L-shaped wall segments of nearly 2 meters each, evenly placed on both sides of a rectangular grass field. Each segment contains 12 horizontal black granite panels that together display the names of 107,000 Louisiana enslaved individuals currently stored in the database. Like the Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names, this memorial draws from sources stored in physical and digital archives. But unlike these repositories that very often represent nameless and faceless slaves referred to as commodities, the Allées seek to give them back their humanity and make them permanently visible.

The third memorial featuring a wall of names at Whitney Plantation pays homage to enslaved children by following a trend visible in other initiatives such as the Memorial to the Murdered Children of Besieged Sarajevo. The emphasis on enslaved children at Whitney Plantation, whose statues are also dispersed throughout the estate and especially inside the reconstructed church, to tell the story of slavery at the property is an approach designed to move White and Black audiences. The Field of Angels (fig. 3) covers a quadrangle area surrounded by a low wall. Carrying formal features similar to the two previous memorials, this third wall of names honors 2,200 children who were born into slavery in Louisiana and died before the age of three. The names engraved on the memorial’s granite plaques were registered in birth records of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Created by Rod Moorhead, the sculpture depicts a bare-breasted Black female angel carrying a baby in her arms, evoking angel figures found on opulent Southern tombstones.

Whitney Plantation introduces walls of names as commemorative devices to honor enslaved men, women, and children in unprecedented ways. As stated by Michelle Commander, establishing these memorials is certainly “a gesture of recognition that is unique given the dearth of records kept by those who bothered to refer to human property by name” (Commander 2018:37). But are these walls of names successful in humanizing enslaved individuals and creating empathy among visitors? Could the repetition of this mechanism end up trivializing the wall of names as a potent device to memorialize bondspeople?

Moreover, because the plantation is a private site, several factors limit the visitors’ engagement with the memorials featuring walls of names. Tourists must purchase a ticket costing US$22.00 and can only visit the plantation by following the 90-minute guided tour, allowing them to spend only a few minutes seeing each memorial. Visiting the Whitney Plantation’s walls of names is also a ritualized experience. In contrast with other memorials in which the descendants of the victims participated in the creation process, the memorials of Whitney Plantation did not derive from an initiative led by the descendants of enslaved people. Unlike other plantation sites and other memorials in open spaces, because all visits are guided and have a limited duration, guests are not allowed to freely visit the...
grounds, including the memorials, for as long as they wish. Al-
though visitors can stop and read the names listed on the var-
ious walls, unlike a war memorial or a memorial of the Ho-
locaust, which usually contains first and last names, most
enslaved people who died in slavery had only their first names
recorded. These gaps make it nearly impossible for any visi-
tors who descend from individuals enslaved in Louisiana to
recognize the names of their ancestors. Ultimately, the way
tourists engage with the three walls of names largely depends on
whether the tour guide can elicit emotions in them. Visitors
make meaning of the walls of names because they are first ex-
posed to the history of slavery in the introductory section of the
tour and then to the figurative representations of enslaved children in the Antioch Church, and finally they are led by a guide who contextualizes the names displayed. In addition, the widespread use of smartphones allows many visitors to expand their experiences beyond the time spent on-site by posting their personal reviews, photographs, and videos on the internet. At the same time, despite privileging naming as a memorial device, both the Wall of Honor and the Field of Angels also incorporate figurative images of enslaved individuals, suggesting that in the context of the 90-minute tour of Whitney Plantation, the creators of the memorial assessed that naming alone would not be sufficient to engage visitors with the victims of the Atlantic slave trade. Overall, despite introducing the wall of names as a device to memorialize enslaved people, the three memorials of the Whitney Plantation do not stand alone. They are part of the entire experience of visiting the only plantation site that was designed to tell the story of the enslaved and not that of the enslavers.

Other recent initiatives aimed at making visible the lives of enslaved people in museum exhibitions in the United States also make use of walls of names. Unveiled on September 24, 2016, in Washington, DC, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) is a Smithsonian Institution administered by the government of the United States. The museum features the permanent exhibition Slavery and Freedom curated by Nancy Bercaw and Mary N. Elliott. Chronologically and thematically organized, the exhibit starts in the African continent with the first contacts between Africans and Europeans and then explores the period of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the 13 colonies of what would become the United States. Following the section on the American Revolutionary War, the visitors enter a great hall titled “The Paradox of Liberty” that focuses on the persistence of slavery despite the Declaration of Independence. The hall is based on one section of an older traveling exhibition that opened in 2012 in the National Museum of American History (NMAH) in Washington, DC, 4 years prior to the NMAAHC’s inauguration. This earlier exhibition, curated by Rex Ellis and Elizabeth Chew, focused on the lives of the enslaved persons who labored in Monticello, the plantation owned by Thomas Jefferson, one of the US founding fathers. In its opening section a full-body-size sculpture of Jefferson is featured in the middle of a circular platform. Also on the podium and behind Jefferson’s statue is a large panel listing the names of nearly 600 enslaved persons who lived and worked in Monticello, obtained from Jefferson’s farm books and other records. The panel acknowledges the existence of enslaved individuals whose names remain unknown. However, Jefferson is at the center of the display, and the wall of names honoring Monticello’s bondspeople is limited to the background. This section of the exhibition appropriates and subverts the idea of a wall of names by reaffirming the slaveholder’s centrality and maintaining the invisibility of enslaved men, women, and children.

The “Founding of America” section of NMAAHC’s exhibition Slavery and Freedom (fig. 4) recreates the idea of a wall of names initially presented in the exhibition Slavery at Jefferson’s Monticello: Paradox of Liberty (fig. 5). The section repeats the idea of a wall of names, though in a different context. With its high, open ceiling, the great hall of the new museum contrasts with the previous areas’ dark and narrow rooms exploring the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. The segment focusing on the new independent United States provides the visitor with the illusion of grandness. A huge wall displays the words “The Founding of America” and reproduces a passage of the Declaration of Independence, with an emphasis on slavery’s survival and expansion after the end of British colonial rule. Across from the great wall, a rectangular platform titled “The Paradox of Liberty” features a life-size, full-body statue of Jefferson facing the visitors who enter the room. Distant from Jefferson, statues of Benjamin Banneker, Phillis Wheatley, Toussaint Louverture, and Elizabeth Freeman also occupy the other section of the display. Behind Jefferson is a wall of bricks, each engraved with the name of one enslaved person owned by him. Although the structure evokes the idea that enslaved people built Jefferson’s wealth, visitors can barely see any of the names of the enslaved individuals. In addition, this unusual wall of names...
Matter movement that emerged in the United States in 2013 entailed struggles against the legacies of slavery. The Black Lives Matter movement that emerged in the United States in 2013 largely employed the hashtag #sayhername on social media as an instrument to resist police violence against Black women. New official projects continue the construction of walls of names to memorialize the victims of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. In the United States, after researching its ties with slavery, both the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary are planning the construction of memorials honoring the enslaved men and women who lived and worked at these institutions of higher education. However, in both of these cases, the inclusion of walls of names in slavery memorials is a response to the demands of communities of descendants of bondspeople who have determined that this kind of device is the most appropriate for reinstating humanity to their ancestors.

Proliferation of Naming as Commemoration

The practice of name listing to honor the dead can be retraced to antiquity. Gradually incorporated to graves and tombstones, lists of names became important mnemonic devices to commemorate deceased individuals. The twentieth century witnessed the construction of a growing number of memorials and monuments to honor veterans of war. Especially in the aftermath of the Second World War and the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust, memorial projects increasingly embraced the idea of walls of names. Writing the names of the dead on memorial walls not only gave life and humanity to millions of victims of genocides and human atrocities but also accorded to them a permanent presence among the living ones.

As the commemoration of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery gained ground over the last 30 years, monuments and memorials honoring enslaved men, women, and children, very often inspired by initiatives memorializing the Holocaust, adopted various versions of the wall of names. Although these early ventures drew from quintessential dehumanizing sources such as slave ship manifests and farm books, they are gradually making bondspeople more visible in slavery heritage sites and museum exhibitions. Yet, as I have shown, despite the growing popularity of walls of names, these devices alone seem to not always be sufficient in the case of commemoration of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery, because upon arriving in the Americas, enslaved Africans lost their original names. Most of those who died in slavery had only their first names recorded. The names of many more do not appear in historical records.

Unlike Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names, the Shoah Memorial in Paris, or the World Trade Center Memorial in New York City, the connections between visitors and the deceased enslaved persons were broken a long time ago. In most cases, unlike the relatives of war victims and the survivors of genocides, descendants of the enslaved who are exposed to walls of names are often not able to recognize the names of their ancestors. Consequently, either for those who identify as descendants of enslaved people or other guests who usually constitute the majority of visitors to plantation sites and museums, the recognition of the humanity and identity of bondspeople requires the...
inclusion of figurative visual representations. In many cases, the walls of names work as a reproduction of the written archive, as a mere inventory listing the names of enslaved persons. In a similar fashion, the proliferation of walls of names can also trivialize this as a commemoration device of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in a context where it remains difficult to tell the stories of the men and women behind the displayed names. In the Whitney Plantation, the new excessive use of walls of names as an instrument to remember and honor enslaved people does not give visitors the required time to freely contemplate and engage with the bondspeople who worked in the site and all over Louisiana. Therefore, the three walls of names do not stand alone. Not only do they depend on the tour guide’s words, but they also heavily rely on the use of figurative representations and narratives of enslaved people whose names are not displayed on the walls. In other initiatives, such as the exhibitions Slavery at Jefferson’s Monticello: Paradox of Liberty originally presented at the National Museum of American History, Slavery and Freedom in the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington’s Mount Vernon in Mount Vernon, the use of walls of names as a background to the immaculate image of the founding fathers fails to honor the enslaved. Instead, they still underscore the supremacy of Jefferson and Washington as dominant slaveholders.

Either on plantation heritage sites or in a national museum, wall of names displays have relied on historical research. Like Haley’s Roots, ongoing memorial projects such as those led by the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary not only draw on genealogy but also increasingly engage with descendant communities, better mirroring existing walls of names honoring veterans of war and victims of genocides and crimes against humanity. Overall, walls of names are valuable attempts to give back enslaved individuals their identities, by publicly recognizing the harm inflicted on generations of enslaved people and their descendants. Naming to pay homage to men, women, and children who were stripped of their original names and remained nameless even after their deaths can be conceived as a modest form of symbolic reparation in contexts where slavery has been only recently recognized as a crime against humanity. Ultimately, walls of names are powerful—although still imperfect—instruments for recognizing the victims of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade.

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