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Migrant black mothers: intersecting burdens, resistance, and the power of cross-ethnic ties

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Dissertation

MIGRANT BLACK MOTHERS:

INTERSECTING BURDENS, RESISTANCE, AND THE POWER OF CROSS-

ETHNIC TIES

by

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DEDICATION

For my mother, Laura A. Taylor, grandmother, Martha L. Taylor and the black mothers,

othermothers, and community mothers of Hartford.

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In my first few months of putting pen to paper, I was told by a family friend that although I wasn't the first doctor in my family, for my grandmother, was known by the Charter Oak Terrace community as the "doctor of the projects." Though Martha Taylor never attended college and did not have the letters PhD or MD behind her name, her arms gathered the wary. She reminded the people of Charter Oak that they were deserving of

solace, laughter, dance, and joy. Although poor and raising 6 children on her own, she always found a means to make room for others. My grandmother passed before my birth. But her hope, visions, and regard for her community continues to live within me and my work. Her greatest gift to me was her first daughter, my mother, Laura Taylor. My mother has molded and crafted every aspect of who I am – all that I was and all that I will be. Her voice, reflections, and intuitions provide the scaffolding of every page and chapter.

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ABSTRACT

Currently, a permeating ethos of racial transcendence mystifies the perpetuity of institutionalized inequality, restrains the dissolution of discriminatory practices, and renders race-based protest unutterable. *Migrant Black Mothers* examines how this apparatus of exclusion unfolds in the lives of native and immigrant black mothers of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The study reveals that these women collectively bear visions of freedom that disrupt the normalization of their oppression. It asserts that while navigating a milieu that relegates their lives, and those of their children's to a precarious existence, black mothers locate resolve on borderlands widely deemed marred by interethnic dissonance. African American, African-born, and Caribbean-born mothers seek one another across ethnic lines and in their migrations jointly resist the co-existing forces of structural and ideological stigmatization.

Utilizing documentary evidence and original ethnographic research in Hartford, Connecticut, the dissertation illuminates and traces black mothers' cross-ethnic ties of resistance over the course of three thematic sections. Part I, "Traversing Borders and Unsettling Distortions," chronicles native and foreign-born black mothers' encounters

with gendered racism. It traces how controlling images that legitimize the violation of black mothers travels, as well as evolves, across ethnic lines. Further, Part I suggests that native and immigrant black mothers stifle gendered racism by co-creating safe spaces. Part II, "Behind the Netted Veil of Racial Transcendence," revisits cases involving the state-sanctioned killings of Aquan Salmon, Amadou Diallo, and Trayvon Martin. It charts how in the aftermath of these cases, African American, African, and Caribbean mothers developed collective narratives of trauma as a means to contest the color-blind assessments of the cases. The last section, "A Motherline Conceived from Disparate Roots," documents black mothers' efforts to instill a racial consciousness in their children in a climate that promotes race neutrality. Diasporic, communal mothering arises as essential to this process.

Fueled by the voices and realities of African American, African, and Caribbean mothers, shaped by interacting systems of power, the dissertation invites the telling of an often unspoken avenue of justice in the face of enduring black disadvantage.

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INTRODUCTION

River of Tears

It is Mother's Day, May 11, 1969 in Hartford, Connecticut. Barbara Evans

Henderson, a wife, mother of seven, and part-time college student leaves her home at 237

Cotswold Street and begins to walk towards Flatbush Avenue. On most Sunday

mornings, Henderson's path takes her through the ABC-side of Charter Oak Terrace as

she proceeds to the nearby church or the local Market Basket. Yet today, she intended to

stop at the bridge where the southern branch of the Park River flowed. Upon arriving to

the overpass, the 34-year-old was met by other mothers, fathers, and fellow residents of

Charter Oak. Like her, they each wore a black band on their arm and held signs that read,

"River of Tears."[1]

By the mid-to-late 1960s, the Charter Oak neighborhood appeared to have fallen

from grace. Constructed in 1941, it was a lauded feat on the part of the Hartford's nascent

housing authority and became the largest defense housing project in New England. The

Hartford Housing Authority declared that the Charter Oak "was built to last 60 years or

more."[2] Yet, in the decade that followed the close of World War II, the project began to

show signs of deterioration. Federal policies that allocated few funds to the rebuilding of

public housing as well as the appointment of increasingly neglectful local housing

authorities, accompanied the arrival of poor, Black and Latino families into the formerly

segregated units. As white families, with the help of post-war legislation such as the G.I.

Bill, took advantage of the state's growing suburban tracts, the residents that replaced

them grappled with the consequences of disinvestment.

The Flatbush Avenue Bridge reflected the neighborhood's adverse conditions. Park River, which divided the ABC and D sides of the 1,000-unit, held the tears of Charter Oak's children and parents.[3] In the years leading up to 1969, seven children drowned in the river including two boys, ages nine and seven who were found together in the eight-foot stream on April 30, 1968.[4] The marred gates that surrounded the river and the ditches, concealed by tall weeds and litter, placed the children at risk for tumbling into the 8-foot water below. Following the deaths, The Association of Concerned Parents of Charter Oak, chaired by Barbara Henderson demanded that the city construct a new fence, clear the fields that lined the water, provide a walking guard, and install traffic lights on Flatbush Avenue. Most important, they demanded that the Flood Commissioner lower the river or bury it.[5]

In the months to follow, the city's leadership followed through with many of these requests. However, due to a shortage of laborers, some of these infrastructural changes were ill-maintained. Moreover, the river's water level was not lowered to the promised level of 1 foot; in fact, it was higher. Highway construction was ongoing on another end of the river. The excavation work required the use of dams to stall the water flow. Barbara Henderson declared that the parents were "kept waiting because no big shot's children got drowned."[6] On the one year anniversary of the double drowning, she told the Concerned Parents, "We waited a year…they've been dead a year today….we'll demonstrate anywhere…the highway department, City Hall, anywhere. They holler about burning, they holler about rioting – this is what causes riots. I look like a fool because I said to wait on the establishment. No more. It's time for action."[7] Thus, with the help of

allies such as the Hartford Chapter of the Black Panther Party, they organized the Mother's Day vigil and protest. Dozens joined the parents on the bridge and their marching feet, speeches, chants, prayers, and enunciations of the song, "We Shall Overcome," resounded throughout the city. Once the sun began to set, they pinned their signs on the fence and returned the next day and thereafter. They vowed to occupy the bridge without ceasing until Governor John N. Dempsey met them at the river and witnessed how the community lived. By the close of the week, he arrived to Charter Oak Terrace and Barbara Henderson, as well as another ACP officer and mother, Mrs. Dorothy Pearl, walked him through the parcel of land and identified sites of grave concern. As he stepped on broken glass liquor bottles and litter, he noticed an abandoned car, tires floating on the river, and vast pieces of land that had not been cleared. At the close of the visit, the Governor issued an official order to the state highway department and flood commission for the removal of the dams and the dredging of the river.[8]

In 1974, Hartford renamed the bridge after Barbara Henderson. The dedication cemented her place on the city's landscape and within public memory. The black mothers of Charter Oak Terrace not only built the Flatbush Avenue Bridge but as they linked arms across the Park River, they became the bridge. The women-led ACP supplied a channel that secured the lives of their children, as well as those of the broader community.

Migrant Black Mothers: Intersecting Burdens, Resistance, and the Power of Cross-Ethnic Ties conceives of the Charter Oak Terrace neighborhood as emblematic of the nation's contemporary racial landscape. Black families remain "no big shot's children." high poverty levels, economic instability, and wage gaps, reflect the formerly

threatening depths of the Park River. Like the isolated "South-End Ghetto," the predominance of minority population in under-resourced schools and prisons point to the erection of racial lines. As a stream of disparity selectively subsumes black Americans, an ethos of racial transcendence asserts that a nation founded upon an inextricable tie between whiteness and citizenship has, at last, defeated racism. This post-Civil Rights ideology grounds political agendas, legislation, state practices, mainstream discourse, and everyday language. It functions to mystify the perpetuation of black disadvantage, the contemporary reproduction of historically rooted racial power dynamics, and renders calls for racial justice both defective and threatening to the pulse of a stable social order. Like the city of Hartford's leadership, whom turned away from the residents of Charter Oak, color-blindness and post-racialism rear inequality to be the result of a neutral force – a river unmoved by racial specificities and legacies. Racial neutrality as an organizing principle and value system creates a milieu that is like, as one Hartford resident used to describe the city in 1969, "a cemetery with street lights on when you want to get something done."[9]

As troubled waters continue to rise, black mothers of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries have not ceased to build bridges. Moreover, as the makings of rugged fences, dams, and ditches have transformed, the means through which black mothers raise bridges has evolved as well. I argue that in the contemporary moment, the formation of native and immigrant ties has emerged as a critical component of black mothers' ties of resistance.

The year 1965 signified the onset of significant changes in immigration policy that opened America's gates to a larger black immigrant population from countries in the Caribbean and Africa. I explore the lives of African American mothers, as well as the burgeoning population of African and Caribbean mothers and trace the ways in which race and gender are mediated by ethnicity. These groups have their beginnings in varying regions, and in their navigation of the nation's landscape, they carry distinct histories, cultures, and memories. Moreover, they tend to hold divergent standpoints on how to contest and debase the systematic subjugation of their families. Yet, I assert that as they and their children find themselves similarly situated on dilapidated bridges, African American, African, and Caribbean mothers locate resolve in community, and the shifting, and crossing of ethnic boundaries. In the throes of a "dead river," they coalesce to mother their children and one another.[10] I show that as a collective they, in the words of Barbara Henderson, "make noise" and breach a public sphere that misrecognizes racism and mutes race conscious dialogue and practices.[11]

Black Mothering and the Raising of Bridges

Black mothering in the United States is a "collective project."[12] Western-derived feminist definitions of mothering understand the practice as a manifestation of dichotomized gender roles and reflect women's confinement to the domestic sphere and their dejection from the working world. Black women scholars have asserted that for mothers of color, the public and private spheres are indistinguishable. As argued by Patricia Hill Collins mothering is "motherwork."[13] Entrapped at the intersections of racial and gender based oppression, black mothers have long relied on one another to procure

resources denied elsewhere. Amid structural and ideological challenges to their bodily and reproductive rights, access to government assistance, and their ability to protect their children's well-being, they form collaboratives that defy spatial and familial bounds. For these women, forging an alternative world is necessarily procreative. Laboring within their racial and ethnic communities to construct mutual and shared mothering is an everyday practice. This mode of mothering comes in the form of political activism, community organizing, and integrated child rearing. According to Collins, in the lives of women of color, "the subjective experience of mothering/motherhood is inextricably linked to the sociocultural concern of racial ethnic communities – one does not exist without the other."[14]

The positioning of black mothering as not simply a mode of resistance, but writes Alexis Pauline Gumbs, a "creative practice defined not by the state, but by our evolving collective relationship to each other, our moments together and a possible future," fuels my study's exploration of the ties between native and immigrant black mothers and its claim that their dynamics carry transformative possibility.[15]

The Possibilities of Interethnic Ties

I place the dissertation's conceptualization of black mothering as mutual, interethnic, and therefore transformative, in conversation with the existing literature on contemporary black communities at large. My focus on the realities and negotiations of native and immigrant black mothers questions and contends with the scholarship's tendency to doubt the relevancy and viability of interethnic ties of resistance on the nation's contemporary racial terrain.

Scholars of the contemporary black experience like to argue that the times demand collective organizing and movement building. Black Americans must continue to cooperatively push the state to implement programs and policies that explicitly account for and target the conditions of the historically disadvantaged populations. Michael C. Dawson states that, "We need not and should not copy the movements of earlier generations, but, as they did build movements based on our own twenty-first-century realities…it takes the mobilization of entire communities to achieve the transformations needed to build a better society."[16] Critically, Dawson and others suggest that, "we must tell no lies." [17] The effective mobilization for institutional practices that intentionally target racial disparity, must accompany challenges to a master narrative that refutes the existence of a racial hierarchy and color-blind approaches to societal quandaries. Resistance must entail making ideological room in the public realm for a recognition and legitimation of race-consciousness as an adequate frame through which to perceive and assess reality. David H. Ikard and Martell Lee Teasley's *Nation of Cowards: Black Activism in Barack Obama's Post-Racial America* (2012) consider "the absence of visible and blatant markers of oppression" to be a "menacing obstacle— the debilitating emotional and psychological consequences of which many African Americans of the Civil Rights generation have themselves yet to fully comprehend or appreciate."[18] They declare that to "press our nation" black Americans must "recalibrate" and "demand through organized agitation that the dominant culture follow in tow."[19] A move towards equality requires shedding light on the glass ceiling widely considered shattered and unraveling color-blind and post-racial thinking.[20]

Although mobilizations against structural racism and state reductionism necessitate a debasement of the ideologies that misrecognize the recycling of black disadvantage, the importance of interethnic ties to this process is unclear. On most mappings of the possibilities of black freedom-making in the contemporary era, compasses tend to point to locales of struggle and resistance devoid of a burgeoning populace – black immigrants. In 1972, in the wake of a groundbreaking influx in voluntary black immigrants, pioneering black studies scholar, Roy Simon-Bryce Laporte declared that the African and the Caribbean populations "suffer double invisibility, in fact-as blacks and as black foreigners."[21] Much of the literature on contemporary black communities reinforces this "double invisibility." The ways in which anti-black practices mark foreign bodies in America and how the negotiations of black immigrants define black agency often go unseen. In light of the unprecedented diversification of the nation's black communities, readings of the black experience as synonymous with the histories, standpoints, and perspectives of the native-born fail to sufficiently capture avenues of racial justice.

As previously stated, the mid-1960s ushered in vast transformation in the ethnic make-up of the nation's black communities. In this transformative year, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 replaced the National Origins Quota system of 1921 and 1952 with a system that placed the reunification of families at the forefront of U.S. immigration policy. This removal of the quota system and the cap it disproportionately placed on populations outside of Eastern and Southern Europe paved the way for the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Immigration Act of 1990. The former granted amnesty to

undocumented immigrants and the latter introduced the Diversity Visa Program. These policy changes led to a notable increase in black immigrant populations from Africa and the Caribbean. In 1960, there were 125,000 black immigrants living in the United States. By 1980, this number rose to 816,000. Demographers find that in recent decades, their numbers have tripled.[22]

Upon crossing on to American shores the legacies of unmitigated inequality throw black immigrants into the depths of blackness. Their race along with the discourses to which it is attached become the primary lens through which they are seen by the greater society. The contrasts between the life stationing of the black and non-black foreign-born residents are telling. They fare worse than white, as well as Asian immigrants, in areas including household income, homeownership, and joblessness yet educational attainment among black immigrants is comparable to other immigrants and the overall U.S. population. However, according to the Pew Research Center, "Black immigrants' median annual household income is below that of all U.S. immigrants ($43,800 vs. $48,000)." The study also suggests that their household income exceeds Hispanic immigrants, "both groups have median household incomes substantially below that of Asian immigrants, whose median household income is $70,600."[23] Also important, detention and deportation are also racialized processes. In a recent report, the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) finds that black immigrants "are more likely than immigrants overall to be deported on criminal versus immigration grounds of removability," and although 7 percent of the country's foreign-born population, "make up 20.3% of immigrants facing deportation before the EOIR on criminal grounds."[24]

African Studies scholar and Nigerian immigrant Olúfẹ́mi Táiwò captures racism through the eyes of black immigrants in his autobiographical essay, "The Prison Called My Skin: On Being Black in America." He shares that once he migrated in 1990, the year was a "pivotal" one in which he "underwent a singular transformation."[25] Táiwò writes, "as soon as I entered the United States, my otherwise complex, multi-dimensional, and rich human identity became completely reduced to a simple, one-dimensional and non-human identity."[26] In America, his African descent stripped him of the right to self-define and mandated that he operate within a new social contract that requires him to sacrifice a complex humanity and assume characteristics that bar him from engaging with the public sphere. For Táiwò and other black immigrants, they emerge from post-colonial, majority black contexts in which factors like family associations, language, ethnicity, and religion affect one's life outcomes as opposed to race. Thus, they find that to be black and of African descent takes on a distinct meaning in America. Identifying, perceiving, and grappling with racism are largely unprecedented experiences.

As they undergo this "singular transformation," the ways in which black immigrants maneuver racial inequality often differs from native-born blacks. Political scientists, such as Shayla C. Nunnally caution against an indiscriminate application of Dawson's "linked fate" theory to contemporary black population. She surmises,

> While Black immigrants may understand that they are "Black," the way that they understand their "Black" identity may differ from what has been constructed as an "American Black," or "African American," identity. Being labeled "African American," yet another ethnic group, implies having an ancestral and historical connection to U.S. slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination, and this connection has influenced a unique cultural and political experience for which African Americans have come to identify with one another and "Blackness," in general.[27]

Garnering an interpretative viewpoint on race developed in a non-American context, their ascription as black and the "sting of racial prejudice" have potential to lead to a psychological attachment to the native-born, but does not guarantee that their advancement of group membership nor the denotation of race-based group action as indispensable to the improvement of their status. Detached from the African American population's shared processes of racial socialization, the meanings black immigrants' home countries apply to race relations are likely to shape the ways in which they judge and respond to ideological containment.

In omitting a discussion of these populations, the literature on "new racism" overlooks the immigrant or refugee dimensions of the black American population and assumes that all black Americans experience and respond to racism in mirroring ways. The absence of the foreign-born from scholarly conceptions of race-based resistance, presents the native-born as black freedom's primary visionaries, and side-lines the formation of black interethnic ties as a possible and viable form of collective agency.

While the literature on black resistance foregoes a discussion of black immigrants, the existing scholarship that does apply a critical lens to the experiences of African and Caribbean communities suggests that the distinct beginnings between natives and foreign-born blacks, militate against interethnic ties. It suggests that while they walk along parallel routes, they fail to cross paths. One contingent of this literature conceives of black immigrants as minimally affected by historical and contemporary manifestations of racism. Social scientists, including Thomas Sowell in the text *Ethnic America* (1981) point to the extent to which they surpass African Americans in a myriad of social and

economic endeavors. Educationally for example, 26 percent of black immigrants hold a Bachelor's degree, compared to 19 percent of native-born blacks. African immigrants in particular, carry high educational levels. Thirty-five percent of this group have a college degree, compared to 30 percent of the U.S. population overall and 28 percent of immigrants.[28] These intraracial differences also appear in their income levels. While lower than the national average, the Pew Research Center finds that "U.S.-born blacks have a median household income of $33,500, a full $10,000 less than that among foreign-born black households."[29] Sowell, points to cultural variations as a cause of these divides.[30] While black ethnic groups share a history of colonization and slavery, the nature of these apparatuses and their long-term impact varied across regions. Sowell maintained that living and developing in societies detached from the structure of slavery and the Jim Crow system to follow, endowed black immigrants with mental, emotional, and psychological advantages. Sowell and others suggest that since they emerge from black led and majorly populated areas, black immigrants display stronger levels of confidence, self-pride, and ambition in the face of obstructive edifices. They also have more experience with garnering, valuing, and practicing independence.

Such assertions, according to sociologist Suzanne Model, lack empirical evidence. Instead, Everett Lee's theory of "selective migration" epitomizes the likely cause of cross-ethnic disparity.[31] Those who migrate are not simply led by push and pull factors, but the tools necessary to relocate. Educational background is among the characteristics that yield positive selection.[32] Model states for example that adults living in the English-speaking Caribbean countries of Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, and Barbados have on

average more years of schooling than black adults in the United States.[33] As charges of

behavioral disparities lack accuracy, they also cast black immigrants as emblematic of a

post-racial society and reinforce notions of black cultural inferiority. In diminishing the

role of race in the black immigrant experience, these texts discount the existence of

shared grievances between black natives and immigrants and the potential rise of alliance

building.

A second group of studies on black immigrants suggests that while the native and

foreign-born both encounter and wrestle with racial discrimination, dissonance persists

among them. These texts doubt the extent to which a minimal race-based group

consciousness among first-generation black immigrants can evolve into unified efforts.

The qualitative works of scholars like Mary Waters, Milton Vickerman, Nancy Foner,

and Philip Kasinitz on Afro-Caribbean immigrants, as well as Violet Johnson, Marilyn

Halter, John Arthur, Shelly Habecker, and Ian E.A. Yeboah on the African-born find that

first-generation immigrants are more likely to cast their lot with co-ethnics.[34] As similar

to other, non-black immigrant groups, upon arriving to the United States, they are likely

to enter existing ethnic enclaves and social worlds. Although the forces of residential

segregation ensure that they live in close vicinity to native-born blacks, as is especially

the case with Caribbean immigrants, they develop and tend to their cultural proclivities.[35]

These families typically attend culturally homogenous religious institutions and join

ethnicity specific social clubs. While these decisions reflect familial ties, as well as a

desire to align with those that share their language, beliefs, and values, it also denotes a

deliberate attempt to set themselves apart from African Americans. As stated by Harriet

Pipes McAdoo, Sinead Younge, and Solomon Getahun in the edited volume, *The Other African Americans: Contemporary African and Caribbean Immigrants in the United States* (2007), immigrants consider black natives the gate keepers of "downward social and cultural mobility."[36] Upon arrival, it becomes immediately apparent to black immigrants that to be black is to be ostracized from the social and economic resources evident among non-black populations. Thus, they aim to avoid association by emphasizing their nationalities. This may include accentuating their accents or culturally specific styles of dress. Moreover, existing research concludes that due to their socialization in contexts in which individual choice overpowered racial structures in determining their conditions, black immigrants tend to subscribe to popular characterizations of African Americans as overly dependent on the state to supply their needs and unmotivated to direct the course of their lives.

Cross-ethnic distancing also unfolds in the political arena. In *Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and the Politics of Incorporation: Ethnicity, Exception, or Exit* (2006) Reuel Rogers critically argues that the tendency of black immigrants to use their institutions within their home countries as frames of reference unfolds in their political orientations.[37] His qualitative research in areas heavily populated by black natives and immigrants such as New York City, reveals that the "minority group perspective" and that expectation that race will override the differences between African-Americans and the new immigrants and encourage them to forge political alliances" does not hold.[38] In fact, "Although race-based coalitions among native-born Blacks and foreign-born minority groups are widely

expected, it turns out that they are actually quite rare."[39] Afro-Caribbean constituents

often determine that,

> Appeals to racial solidarity often implicitly privilege one set of interests over others without any open debate. Even worse, the resulting bias takes cover beneath the rhetorical gloss of "natural" or "collective" racial interests that benefit the population as a whole. Consequently, interests that ought to be debated or evaluated for how they affect different constituents are instead deemed to be settled and beyond question.[40]

This pushback against having their broader interests mitigated by a centering of a race-

based agenda is also evident among African immigrants. For example, Jill M.

Humphries' "Resisting "Race:" Organizing African Transnational Identities in the United

States" (2009) assesses the National Summit on Africa in 2000, as well as other political

moments involving African immigrants and notes that,

> Attempts to deploy a universal "black" identity for mobilizing both African Americans and African immigrants under a unified political slate failed. Immigrant Africans did not respond to calls for "black" racial unity; given their status as black immigrants, they responded instead to calls for African immigrant unity.[41]

Scholars suggest that this breakdown is a departure from past cohorts of black

immigrants. The politically mobilized interethnic ties apparent in the early twentieth

century were particularly valuable due to the small size of the black immigrant

population. However, as they arrived in larger numbers in the late twentieth century, it

became increasingly possible for them to gain political recognition independent of

African Americans and target issues that may be otherwise unaddressed like border patrol

or detainment.[42]

    Observant of these modes of separation, African Americans have questioned the

intentions of black immigrants with regard to issues of racial inequality. In

Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America (2010), journalist Eugene Robinson contends that the native-born "doubt the authenticity" of the immigrant population and believe that these emergent groups use natives and the civil rights opportunities made possible by their efforts as "stepping-stones."[43] They find that they disproportionately benefit from this legislation and in the process displace, harm, and contribute to the stagnation of native-born blacks. Similarly, Zain Abdullah in his interviews with African Americans in the study *Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem* (2010), sheds light on a communal sense that African immigrant merchants penetrate their neighborhood, open businesses, take their money, and climb the socio-economic ladder without a backward glance.[44] Ultimately, the documented perceptions of African Americans present black immigrants as estranged, as well as invasive, exploitive, and unwanted competitors for already finite state resources.

An additional strand of the literature on contemporary black communities and the dynamics between black natives and immigrants, advocates for the existence of amicable inter-ethnic dynamics. Sociologist Milton Vickerman in *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race* (1999) and political scientist Candis Watts Smith in *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity* (2014) has revisited and extended the concept of "pan-blackness" typically applied to earlier generations of black natives and immigrants of the early twentieth century.[45] They suggest that divergence does not prevent native and foreign-born black people from sculpting group consciousness and cooperatively unsettling racial power dynamics. Smith states,

> A theory of diasporic consciousness accounts for the fact that while Black immigrants and African Americans have not shared the exact same legacy

of racial torment, ongoing racism and racial discrimination will be major factors in shaping their racial identities, enhancing racial group consciousness…[46]

As my study re-works understandings of borderlands of black ethnic differences as irrefutably fragmented, it also places itself in conversation with this concept of "diasporic consciousness." Without overlooking or diminishing the ethnicity-based complexities of the black American experience, the study conceives of relationships between black natives and immigrants as not defined by discord alone, but cooperation.

Color-Blindness and Post-Racialism

My dissertation argues that the ties that bind African American, Caribbean-born, and African-born black mothers are visible in their attempts to coalesce to debase ideologies that function to resuscitate, preserve, and maintain, discriminatory structural practices in the post-Civil Rights epoch.

In recent decades, neoliberal governing strategies have ushered in a commitment to short-circuiting the welfare state prioritized by preceding administrations and restraining the government's role in providing social support systems and viable safety nets to the wider populace and disadvantaged groups. Taking root in the 1970s with the Richard Nixon administration, the neoliberal model functioned to expand state's rights and refute the enforcement of civil rights measures like the Fair Housing Act of 1968. This curtailment of federal intervention flourished in the decades to follow in the form of, for example, welfare reform and the utilization of policing and surveillance as opposed to social services, to ameliorate conditions made possible by state neglect and cyclical discrimination.

As it curtails state interventions, the neoliberal agenda emphasizes the free market and accordingly, the privatization of services traditionally provided by the government. As described by political scientist Cathy Cohen, the ascendency of neoliberalism signifies a "move toward fewer economic regulations and more trade that is free of constraints that would protect jobs, the environment, and entities such as unions, in order to produce greater profits for companies that, some would argue, will lead to more jobs." It rests on, "the belief that markets, in and of themselves, are better able than governments to produce, in particular, economic outcomes that are fair, sensible, and good for all."[47] Although its stated goal is to uplift the conditions of all, in practice this governing strategy reinforces race, class, and gendered hierarchies.

The shrinking of federal resources has effectively stripped black communities of the gains sought and achieved during the liberation and freedom struggles. According to David Theo Goldberg in *The Threat of Race: The Threat of Racial Neoliberalism* (2009), the privatization of public institutions such as schools, healthcare, housing assistance, and prisons, "inevitably produces bifurcated experiences of social goods and access…privatized property – equated with nationalist identification and supplementing state enforcement – has functioned to re-homogenize the body politic."[48] For the privatization of property equates to the privatization of race. Goldberg further states that race, "has been placed behind a wall of private preference expression, of privatized choice. The more robustly neoliberal the state…the more likely race would be rendered largely immune from state intervention so long as having no government force behind

it."[49] Thus, the state functions to shield and protect discrimination, exclusion, and practices that yield racially disproportionate outcomes.

The widespread construction, circulation, and application of ideological frames that discount race as a factor in determining one's life outcomes affirm and propel the state's attempts to "purge racism from its domain."[50] Colorblindness lies at the foundation of these reductive strands of thought. This ethos is also referred to in the scholarship as "symbolic racism," as delineated in Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders' *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (1997), "new racism" or "colorblind racism," introduced by sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2001 and 2003), "the practice of inequality," put forth by Imani Perry (2011), and more commonly, "post-racialism," as discussed in texts like "Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward" by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2011).[51] These strands of thought infiltrate American society by way of law, public policy, academic literature, mass media, and individual actions. The tenants that comprise this modern packaging of race include ahistoricism, reduction of race to the level of the individual, and symbolism.

Ahistoricism manifests as a denouncement of racism as continuous and mutable. While throughout the nation's history, racism has not disappeared, but rather transformed as it moved across regions and epochs, colorblindness denies the possibility that it extended beyond 1965. It lauds the collapse of institutional white supremacy, and casts contemporary racial gaps as merely, according to legal scholar Ian Lopez, an "inertial legacy of an otherwise defeated history. The perpetuation of gross disparities, whether through commission or omission-does not count as an evolving form of racism."[52] This

diminution of racism as a relic of the past is apparent in the legal realm. The Supreme

Court's application of the "equal protection clause" epitomizes what Cheryl I. Harris in

"Equal Treatment and the Reproduction of Inequality" (2001) terms as "colorblind

constitutionalism." The court conflates equal protection with equal treatment and "stands

in contrast to longstanding axioms of equal protection that command not only that the

similarly situated should be treated alike, but that those who are differently situated

should be treated differently."[53] The court "disaggregates" historically informed

differences in access between racial groups and thus misrecognizes "group-based claims"

of injustice as "illegitimate and counter to principles of neutrality."[54] This line of

reasoning is evident in decisions such as *Rice v. Cayetano* (2000).[55] The conception of

group differences as incoherent in the modern context also supplies popular concepts

like, "reverse racism" and the rationalization behind attacks on Affirmative Action, as

evidenced in the cases like *Hopewood v. Texas* (1996).[56]

Post-racial thought also suggests that the United States is a meritocracy and that

the conditions under which people live reflect their personal work ethic, values, and

behaviors, as opposed to institutional practices. Scholars note that racist acts are no

longer limited to biological determinism, signs on storefronts that prohibit minorities

from entering, or the black specific terminology utilized in the early twentieth-century. In

fact, the dominant society tends to consider these practices immoral and those who

practice them to be backwards. Currently, the assertion that black Americans find

themselves on the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder because they are devoid of strong

cultural values such as individualism, and desire to depend on state help stands in the

place of "old-fashioned racism."[57] This ideological standpoint, fueled by historically

rooted stereotypes of black Americans as the antithesis of productive citizens fosters an

asymmetrical distribution of responsibility and leaves structurally imposed disinvestment

unscathed. Imani Perry refers to this practice of victim blaming as "correlational racism"

and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva labels it, "cultural racism."[58] Scholars trace these concepts in

the rhetoric of the nation's leaders, media accounts, and in public opinion. For instance,

studies and surveys conducted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina found that in

assessing the disaster white Americans gave little attention to President George W.

Bush's slow response, delays in government aid, or that most Katrina residents did not

have access to a car. They were instead likely to criticize the residents for not taking heed

to advisories to relocate.[59] Reports also show that although black Americans were

predominant among hurricane victims, most white Americans did not believe that race

informed the outcomes of the event.[60] Notions of black choices and behaviors as

pathological and especially prone to disadvantage mischaracterize them as undeserving of

state support. Since these correlations between individual choice and adverse outcomes

do not declare that black Americans are naturally deficient, cite segregationist motives,

nor do they comprise racial epithets, they go unnoticed as a form of prejudice or bias.

Symbolism is an additional element of colorblind ideology. Mainstream discourse

tends to frame high achieving black Americans as evidence of the onset of an era in

which one's destiny is not defined by racial exclusion, but a choice to take advantage of

the country's commitment to egalitarianism. As suggested by Kimberlé Crenshaw, these

figures and emblems of black mobility are ideological weapons that function to divert

attention away from stringent social barriers and elevate racial neutrality as an indisputable component of society.[61] These figures are exceptions and often participate in and concede to state reductionism and the underpinning perceptions of reality. Existing literature finds the political maneuverings of former President Barack Obama to be telling of this. In his 2012 article, "Fear of a Black President," Ta-Nehisi Coates asserts that the mainstream acceptance of African American figures like President Obama into the contemporary public realm depends not just on being twice as good, but on being "half as black."[62] Their ascendance does not indicate the triumph of colorblindness but rather, a capacity to "crystallize" their blackness into something "palatable" to the white majority.[63]

Through its messages, symbols, post-race ideology normalizes unbalanced, racial power dynamics. In concealing institutional negligence, it denies the relevancy of race-based remedies, and mutes calls for racial injustices. Racial grievances arise as dwelling on the nation's past faults and an abuse of the government. I trace the ways in which the various elements of these invasive ideologies infiltrate and harm the material lives of African-immigrant, Caribbean-immigrant, and African American mothers and their children. Moreover, I argue that they shedding light on the glass ceiling widely considered shattered and unraveling color-blind and post-racial thinking.

Project Overview

The study follows the everyday lives of black mothers of the last three decades through newspapers, mass and digital media, city records, and organizational documents. It also rests on ethnographic research conducted from 2012 to 2013, and 2015 to 2016.

Also known as the "Hart-Beat" of Connecticut and New England's "Rising Star," the area is a prime location for the exploration of the state of black borderlands in the face of obstructive edifices. The small urban setting is a majority-minority city. Eighty-four percent of its 124,775-person population is non-white.[64] The Hispanic population, largely Puerto Rican, represents 43 percent of this group and 35.8% are non-Hispanic black.[65] Connecticut has the 11th highest percentage of foreign-born residents and according to statistics gathered in 2006 by the American Community Survey, Hartford comprises 21% of this foreign-born group.[66] The black immigrant population is notable in Hartford. This capital city holds the third largest number of West Indians in the country. Jamaicans are the largest immigrant group and signify 9 percent of the population.[67] Although not dominant and 2 percent of residents (2,300), local demographic surveys indicate that the Sub-Saharan African immigrant population is on a rapid incline. [68]

Larger processes of racial disparity are unmistakable within Hartford's 18 square miles and it epitomizes a "despised city," as termed by Zenzele Isoke and defined in works such as Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton's *American Apartheid* (1993). "Unforgiving histories of racial strife, deindustrialization, white flight, and decayed public infrastructure" shape this city.[69] The highest education attainment level for thirty-seven percent of black residents is a high school diploma or GED. This is the case for 25 percent of white city dwellers.[70] Also, 33 percent of the non-Hispanic whites are college graduates compared to 7 percent of the black Americans. As most of Hartford's residents live in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods, the majority of students attend segregated schools. Mitigated by *Sheff v. O'Neill* (1989), which gave rise to magnet

schools and requires that at least 25 percent of the student body at these schools is non-black or Hispanic, 55 percent of the city's children attend segregated schools.[71] Regarding unemployment, 24 percent of the black community is unemployed and the unemployment rate stands at 9 percent for their white counterparts.[72] Hartford's poverty rates are also jarring. Forty-five percent of households have annual incomes lower than 25,000.[73] The median income for black families is 30,200 and is about 8,000 lower than that of white families.[74]

The data include a total of 51 individual interviews and two group interviews with black mothers living in the Greater Hartford area. Together, the respondents represent a range of ages from 25 to 69. As a group, they have between one to five children and their ages range from the ages of four to the late thirties. This study conceives of motherhood as a role that is held by, but not limited to birth mothers, or what Collins refers to as "bloodmothers." It includes "othermothers" in the form of foster parents, unofficial guardians, and women actively involved in caring for children in their extended families and communities.[75] The women also have varying educational backgrounds, occupations, and income levels. Several them have advanced degrees, while others hold high school diplomas or a GED. The respondents are hair stylists, entrepreneurs, social workers, teachers, and a few are unemployed. The research targets African American women who have lived in the city their entire lives, as well as those with roots in the southern states of Alabama and Georgia. As for black immigrants, the study focuses on Sub-Saharan African immigrants and non-Hispanic, Afro-Caribbean immigrants, also commonly referred to as West Indians. They include those who have relocated to the city within the

last 30 years. Their home countries include, Barbados, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Guyana, Togo,

Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Kenya among others. The study also rests on participant

observations conducted at community town halls, neighborhood meetings, organizational

functions, youth events, and Hartford Public Library programming.[76]

Over the course of three thematic parts and seven chapters, I investigate and

document modes of black mothering that cross ethnic lines and by way of these

collectives, contest structural racism and disentangle its ideological core. Part I,

"Traversing Borders and Unsettling Distortions," which comprises three of the

dissertation's chapters, chronicles the encounters of native and foreign-born black

mothers with gendered racism in the form of controlling images about black women's

mothering, progeny, sexuality, and labor. It discusses the centrality of stereotypic images

in supplying the victim-blame components of color-blind ideology. Further, it shows that

these effigies, which function to justify and normalize the violation and erasure of black

mothers, infiltrate the lives of natives and immigrants in similar ways. Yet it also

demonstrates how these ubiquitous images transform as they travel across ethnic lines.

Most important, Part I suggests that African American, Caribbean, and African black

mothers stifle gendered racism by co-creating safe spaces and strategies with which to

debase gendered racism in their day-to-day lives.

Part II, "Behind the Netted Veil of Post-Racialism and Multiculturalism,"

(chapters 4 & 5) revisits cases involving the police shooting and killing of African,

Caribbean, and African American black children. It gives particular attention to the grief,

trauma, and protests of their mothers. I examine Norma Watts, Jamaican immigrant

grandmother of 1999 Hartford police shooting victim, Aquan Salmon; Guinean-born

Kadiatou Diallo, mother of Amadou Diallo, killed by the New York Police the same year;

and Sybrina Fulton, African American mother of Trayvon Martin, who was shot in

Sanford, Florida by a neighborhood watchman in 2012. I demonstrate that in each of

these highly-publicized cases, the mourning women sought and relied on the witnessing

and testimonies of other black mothers to formulate and project collective trauma. The

text shows that many of the black women they called upon emerged from ethnic groups

different from their own. Together, they wove diasporic narrations of shared, black

trauma that functioned to resurrect the humanity of their slain children from a mainstream

discourse that defined the murders and the court's failure to indict the perpetrators as

justified, reasonable, and detached from racial profiling.

Lastly, Part III, "A Motherline Conceived from Disparate Roots," (chapters 6 &

7) documents the efforts of black mothers to instill a racial consciousness in their children

in a climate that promotes race neutrality. It illuminates community mothering and

"othermothering" across ethnic lines as essential to native and immigrant black mothers'

strivings to prevent their children from being swept up within the "unseeing" of race and

equip them with the tools necessary to detect and detest black invisibility.

By its close, the dissertation shows that as rivers of tears continue to flow beyond

the bounds of Charter Oak Terrace and threaten to consume black children within its

ripples and waves, black mothers build bridges where there were none before.

PART I

Traversing Borders and Unsettling Distortions

"When I was in my country, I was running a hotel. I was the manager of the marketing and public relations department. And they appointed a white man as the director."[1]

"So there was this moment and we were chanting something – oh I know what it was: "No Justice, No Peace," but then I would add on: "No Racist Police." There was a guy who was gonna speak and I guess he kept hearing me say that last part and…he had pointed to me and was like, "Come up, come up." So while he's speaking he had me come and stand with him at the podium…"[2]

"When he comes, he won't greet you. He won't greet. It's you who have to greet him."[3]

"…but he didn't give me the mic to say anything."[4]

"It's like, it is written, that you black, you are always inferior to white."[5]

"That's an issue with black women as well. We're so – so much stereotypes. We're not seen as the classic beauties; we're not seen as the classic smart women."[6]

"Because you are a boss, you don't greet me?"[7]

"It's just sad that we have to create our own spaces."[8]

"We have to prove ourselves."[9]

"I know that if I'm in trouble –"[10]

"We have these stressors, these challenges between work or like, just our own personal - loving our self and feeling good about treating our self…how do we love our self?"[11]

"At least my hope, is that I will look at you, you would see the struggle and you would aid. You would come to my aid."[12]

"If you came and meet me, you have to greet me. He passed and I won't greet him."[13]

"Empowering each other to say okay we're in this common –"[14]

"Sometimes that's difficult when it comes to language barriers and stuff like that. Or, what we identify as – well when I think about the fear factor – If I'm somewhere and there's a Sudanese black woman or Ethiopian black woman, clearly just arriving to the country, she may not readily look for me."[15]

"And he'll come back later and say, "Oh, miss how are you?" And I say, "I'm good." It's how they educated the white people. Like they're always superior to black people. But if you accept that in your conscious, "Okay, okay, okay." Don't accept that."[16]

"But I'm still looking for her."[17]

The thoughts of three Hartford mothers fill the above montage. Represented is Martha, a 45-year-old mother of a young son, whom migrated to the city from the Ivory Coast in 2014. Lea's dictions are also accounted for. She 37-years-old, black American, a Hartford native and mother of three children. Cassandra, a 33-year-old second-generation Haitian immigrant and single mother of a middle-school aged daughter is an additional author of the above epigraph. These women were interviewed separately in different seasons and places, are not acquainted, work different jobs, and live in separate neighborhoods in the Hartford area. However, while the others were not present during the individual conversations, they were seen and heard. For their narratives corresponded with one another as if they were in the same room. Part II extends the dialogue begun by Martha, Lea and Cassandra. It puts forth that that black mothers of different ethnic backgrounds similarly encounter attempts to dispose of their personhoods on the part of those estranged from multifaceted and interacting forces of oppression. Moreover, it demonstrates that not only are native and foreign-born black mothers aware of their devaluation and a need to create empowering spaces, but also look for one another in vehemently denouncing an internalization and legitimation of the racist and sexist expectations that hamper them.

CHAPTER 1

A Diasporic Approach to Controlling Images

"Was it because I'm Haitian?"

On June 18, 2007, ten young men invaded the home of a single mother and her son on the northern side of Florida's West Palm Beach town. At 9:00 pm a young man knocked on the door of her Dunbar Village apartment to inform her that her truck's tires were flat. The woman and her son exited their home to briefly examine the tires. The vehicle belonged to a friend and was essential to sustaining her job delivering phone books. Upon their return to the door front, they were not met by one person, but multiple. Armed with guns and black clothing covering their faces the men forced their way into the 35-year-old's home. For a period of three hours they harassed, beat, raped and sodomized the woman. Unfortunately, her son was not spared during the seizure of their home. The 12-year-old was also physically and sexually assaulted. Both were forced in their bathtub and doused in chemicals such as cleaning fluid and ammonia in an attempt to set them on fire. This method however, failed. They decided to abandon the scene. Yet, before exiting, the masked teenagers robbed the family of money, jewelry and electronics.[18]

Lacking access to a phone, the mother and son walked to the nearest hospital following the attack. While the victim decided not to publicly release her and her son's names, she agreed to interview with a local television station in July. She shared the details of that night, as well as the aftermath. The mother never returned to Dunbar Village after leaving the night of the 18th and her son was battling with temporary

blindness, amidst trauma and emotional distress. Viewers also learned that she was an

immigrant from Port Au Prince, Haiti. The victim shared that she and her son left her

home country for United States "in search of a better life."[19] The interview informed the

community of the severity of the crimes committed and illuminated the importance of

locating the youths responsible. By August of the same year four of the ten African

American youths responsible for the crime were located, arrested and as stated by the *Sun*

Sentinel, "charged as adults in a 14-count indictment."[20] They included 14-year-old

Avion Lawson, 15-year-old Jakaris Taylor, and 16-year-old Nathan Walker. The eldest of

the group and the accused orchestrator of the attack was 18-year-old Tommy Poindexter.

Each were sentenced to life in prison.[21]

      Initially, the incident gained little attention outside of Southern Florida. The

majority of the media outlets that reported on the case, such as the *Palm Beach Post* and

South Florida's *Sun Sentinel*, were local. Yet, in March of 2008 the tide of public

awareness shifted. Once the trial began, the assault and the details of the case became the

subject of mass dialogue beyond Florida's state lines. The protests of the youth's

families, the National Action Network (NAN) and the National Association of Colored

People (NAACP) were pivotal to kindling this exposure. To their dismay, Lawson,

Taylor, Walker, and Poindexter, and spent the last year incarcerated. Following their

arraignment, the Palm Beach court system prohibited the group from posting bail. Al

Sharpton, NAN's founder and representatives from the local branch of the NAACP

proclaimed that holding the defendants without bond deprived them of "equal protection

under the law."[22] On March 11, the local branches of the organizations and the

defendant's parents held a news conference calling for the repeal of this decision. The similarities between the Dunbar Village assault, and a high-profile crime that occurred in the same year in a nearby town, ignited NAN and the NAACP's attention to the treatment of the accused. In December 2007, on New Year's Eve, five white male teenagers raped two, middle-school white girls in Pelican Cay, a section of Boca Raton. Following their arraignment in January 2008, "bail was set for the White defendants from US $40,000 to US $75,000."[23] The disparate treatment of the alleged offenders, despite the mirroring nature of the crimes, sparked concern among Dunbar Village families and community members about the role of racial discrimination in shaping the court proceedings. Before the press, Sharpton declared, "My position is there ought to be one standard. The white kids in Boca Raton ought to be held just like the black kids in Dunbar Village. Why are they not doing the same with the white kids?"[24] President of the West Palm Beach Chapter of the NAACP, Maude Ford Lee, affirmed Sharpton's assertions, stating "Our kids are incarcerated, they can't even get a bond, and it's unconscionable what is happening."[25] In the advocacy campaign to follow, spearheaded by the civil rights organizers, the relatives of the defendants, and Dunbar residents, the teens became known as the "Dunbar 4."

While the teens were named and renamed within the public sphere, the battered were not named at all. A strained discussion of the resources the single, low-income, and immigrant mother would need to attain adequate representation and a form of rectification for the rupturing of she and her son's material and physical lives. The mother was only pulled from the depths of misrecognition and ushered onto the national

stage by black women bloggers, whose assertions that the victims were not receiving the coverage and support that their assault demanded tapped into a far-reaching network of writers, readers, and activists. Within this corner of social media, users and participants recognized and peeled back the blinders that prevented the prevented the wider public and black communities from seeing the needs of the brutalized mother.

The NAN and NAACP's treatment of the case triggered a response from a network of black women's blogs largely dedicated to interjecting mainstream discourse with the too often overlooked issues and concerns of black women and girls. What Laura Rapp, Deeanna M. Button, Benjamin Fleury-Steiner, and Ruth Fleury-Steiner, describe as the "black feminist blogosphere" took notice, of the diminishing and regulation of the mother's trauma as early August of 2007.[26] Gina McCauley of Austin, Texas and founder of the widely popular "What About Our Daughters" (WAOD) blog reached out to a Florida division of the NAACP and asked if the office had plans to offer financial aid to the Dunbar Village victims.[27] According to the blogger, also known as "the Blogmother," the NAACP respondent stated that they do not "get involved in Black-on-Black crime at the national level because it is not the result of racism."[28] McCauley publicized this dialogue on her site and in her assessment of the discussion, told readers, "So it looks like we know which side they are on in the War on Black Women. The answer is NOT OURS![29]"

WAOD, the recipient of 60,000 views a month, returned its attention to the Dunbar case in 2008, in the aftermath of the NAACP and NAN's requests for bond hearings.[30] McCauley and a plethora of black women bloggers joined to create the

"Dunbar Victim's Assistance Fund" and published open letters to the supporters of the newly coined Dunbar 4 on their pages.[31] In her letter, the WAOD creator demanded "genuine victim advocacy" and that the civil rights groups "cease downgrading the gang rape/torture/atrocity of the Dunbar Village by comparing it to an unrelated gang rape, in which guns, maiming, and forced incest were not involved."[32] Soon after the authoring and circulation of these letters, a series of bloggers posted and distributed an e-mail entitled "Stop Al Sharpton and the NAACP from endangering Black women."[33] The message, which quickly went viral, began with the statement,

> Right-thinking black people everywhere are stunned by the recent betrayal of Al Sharpton and the NAACP…it's important for the moral, law-abiding majority of black Americans to understand exactly why Al Sharpton and the NAACP must be immediately stopped.[34]

Following this introduction and a description of the "painful story," the writer shared that despite the "devastating" assault, Sharpton and the NAACP have "disgraced" the black community by standing "in support of the rapists" and requesting their release.[35] The e-mail asks that readers step in by committing to a series of actions. It instructed them to forward the e-mail to their network, cancel their membership with their area's NAACP chapter and call or write a letter to "explaining that you will return when they prioritize the public safety needs of black women and children."[36] For those that were not members of the NAACP and NAN, they were to call the headquarters of each of the entities and express their concerns. Lastly, the message encouraged recipients to contact their local black reporters and radio hosts, encourage them to share the notice with their audiences.

The backlash pushed Sharpton to redirect his course of action. On March 27th, he invited black women bloggers and the authors of extensively read open letters, to join him as guests on his radio show, "The Al Sharpton Show." They included Tonyaa Weathersbee, a columnist for www.BlackAmericanWeb.com and Arlene Fenton of www.BlackWomenVote.com. While sitting beside these media contributors and in ear shot of listeners across the country, Sharpton retracted his pro-bail position and announced that he fully supported the victims and their interests in achieving security and restoration. Shortly after announcing a change in his opinion, the Florida State Conference of the NAACP also released a public statement clarifying their support of the victims.[37] Black women bloggers reared this moment and the changed opinions of the organizations as the dawn of "a new day" for civil rights agendas.[38] "Symphony," an online content creator from the Dunbar Village area posted an advisory to Sharpton on her blog, stating, "You can dismiss bloggers as inaccurate and unreliable. However, that, sir, will be to your detriment…Let this be the alarm for any man, woman, or organization that decides to align itself with those who harm Black women and children…we are an omnipresent force to be reckoned with and respected."[39]

Informed by the Dunbar Village case, two explorations guide Chapter One. "Symphony" and other bloggers surmised that the "black woman's neighbors" turned "a deaf ear to…calls for help from one of our sisters and brothers who are being victimized."[40] The chapter resounds this claim and asserts that the mother's exclusion from the rallying cry of community is a systematic practice and made possible by ideological frames that push the victimization of black women out of the sight and minds

of the public. It returns to the black feminist theoretical concept of "controlling images" and discusses how this cadre of pathological narratives isolate black women from understandings of injustice, and positions them as emblems of the illegitimacy of race-based assessments of state institutions in the color-blind era. Secondly, the text to follow echoes and begins to answer a question posed by the Dunbar Village victim. In an interview with West Palm Beach's CBS news channel, WPTV, the mother wondered aloud if the teenagers targeted her because she was Haitian.[41] It asks if ethnicity converges with race and gender to shapes how controlling images unfold in the lives of black women. The chapter argues that within the scope of much of the scholarship, the ways in which gendered racism travels along ethnic lines and seeps into distinct migratory realities is left unsaid. Resultantly, cross-ethnic solidarity, as exerted by the black women bloggers on the frontlines of anti-rape protests in 2008, arises as unquantifiable. Ultimately, Chapter One asserts the need for conceptualizations of controlling images that recognizes the diasporic facets of black mother's ideological oppression and resistance.

Historicizing Controlling Images

The crime against the mother and child in Dunbar, and the events to follow were symptoms of a myriad of structural forces. The "simultaneous" and "multiplicative" functioning of systems of power including raced, gendered, and class based oppression left the woman and her pre-teenage son particularly vulnerable to the assault.[42]

Dunbar Village's low-rent apartments stand in contrast to the affluent beachfront properties and tourist attractions often deemed synonymous with West Palm Beach. At

the time of the teenagers' plotted intrusion, the majority of the households in the North

Side of the city lived below the poverty line and under 20 percent of the residents had a

high school diploma.[43] Telling of the economic state of the area's residents, the quality of

the neighborhood's amenities and public services were poor. For example, the one and

two story apartments that comprise the Dunbar Village housing project lacked stable

sources of security, such as a locked entry gate and surveillance cameras.[44] The public

schools in the area also struggle to attain sufficient resources and procure positive

academic outcomes. This disparity produces and re-produces an achievement gap

between this poor, predominantly minority area of the city, and the more affluent and

white neighborhoods. As the mother of one, struggled to find stable employment, the four

teenagers, residents of Dunbar and the surrounding neighborhood, spent their young lives

in financially insecure homes and school systems. Nathan Walker for example, according

to the NBC News, "dropped out of school after spending three years in the seventh

grade." [45] His "family sometimes lived in old cars or abandoned houses," had little

income outside of public assistance and "recently had to pawn their television and

radio."[46]

There is a correlative relationship between the destitute state of Dunbar Village

and racial segregation. The predominantly black demographic of the town's northern side

is not a chance occurrence. The West Palm Beach Housing Authority built the 17-acre-

property in 1940 to provide housing for the largely working class black residents barred

from integrating white neighborhoods.[47] In the span of 67 years, despite the passing of

legislation centered upon reversing housing segregation, Dunbar Village maintained its

positioning as a holding pen for poor black citizens. As asserted by Douglas Massey and

Nancy Denton in their 1993 sociological work *American Apartheid*, the state of

contemporary black communities reveals that legal and de-facto segregation practices

birthed a black underclass in many of our nation's cities.[48] Racial discrimination in the

labor force laid the groundwork for poverty among black residents, and housing

limitations ensure that this strife is cyclical. The concentration of poverty is linked to

underfunded schools, the relocation of industries in more profitable factions of the city,

and the reduction of essential social services. Crime, high mortality rates, and the illegal

drug activity that plague the Dunbar community are not the products of poor personal

choices or cultural deficiencies, but rather the practice of bulwarking black residents from

equitable opportunity.

  The teens' decision to enter the largely single mother populated apartment

complex with the intent of executing a campaign of violence also exposes gender based

subjugation as a factor in the Dunbar case.[49] The act encapsulates what race theorist

Kimberlé Crenshaw terms a "patriarchal practice" and a "broad-scale system of

domination that affects women as a class."[50] As posited in the work of feminist theorists

such as Susan Brownmiller, sexual assault is an expression of presumed gender roles and

an enactment of male domination and female subjugation.[51] The dismissal of rape victims

within the criminal justice system made evident for example in the widespread tendency

of courts to free, rather than convict and incarcerate those accused of sexual assault

contributes to this crime's positioning as an extension of gendered power relations.[52]

While institutional practices provided the backdrop for the crime, the minimal

media attention allotted to the case and the mother and child alludes to the existence and

persistence of an ideological value system that produces and affirms black women's

marginality. Narratives of black women as inherently pathological are intrinsic to the

nation's imagination and guarantees that they are barred from justice in ways that their

white counterparts, as well as black men are not. Within the black feminist theoretical

tradition, these rubrics of black womanhood are defined as "controlling images." The

concept, introduced in sociologist Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought:*

Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (1990), makes clear that

the primary lens through which the nation sees black women and assesses their

conditions, is contrived.[53] Refined and polished within each historical epoch by the

social, economic and political interests of the hegemonic majority, the lens yields images

of black women as enemies to the country's progress. In particular, it casts their

sexuality, reproduction, and progeny as deviant, and thus deserving of state regulation, as

opposed to support. The blurring of societal power structures purports that the

impoverished state of the single mothers of Dunbar Village housing project is self-

wrought due to poor relationship decisions and engaging in sexual activities without

regard for the costs. Furthermore, the violation of their bodies, like those experienced by

the Haitian mother, emerge as not violations, but a product of their wanton sexual

proclivities. In the contemporary era, the victim-blaming proponent of a post-racial ethos

finds refuge in the "othering" of black women as it presents enduring inequality as an

individual, as opposed to a structural problem. Accepted as fact, the typecasting of black

women as outsiders, not only justifies their marginalization intact and seals power in the hands of a few, but also authors the ways in which this groups members are perceived in their day to day lives.

The articulations of Sojourner Truth in her 1851 speech, "Ain't I a Woman?," the National Association of Colored Women's protests of the defamation of their character and literary works such as Mae C. King's "The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes" (1973), Michele Wallace's *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1978), Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* (1981), Darlene Clarke Hine's "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West" (1989), and Dorothy Roberts', *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (1998), are representative of black women writers' steadfast commitment to illuminating and confronting an ideological paradigm that structurally contains black women in America. Controlling images comprise this culturally oppressive force as they cast black women as the antithesis of the nation's decreed values of meritocracy and the margins around which a social order must operate, to consider itself a moral one. Notions of difference, originally developed to reconcile the paradox of white freedom and black enslavement, imbued America's cultural and imaginative landscape with conceptions of black women as behaviorally deficient and fitting for a lower social status. The Emancipation unleashed reincarnations of the "Jezebel" and "Mammy." As captured in the literature's emphasis on the term, "controlling," these mythologies entrap black women within the lower rungs of society. The

reproduction of effigies of black women as degenerate, protects and gives refuge to discriminatory policies and legislation. While black women emerge as causalities of a self-inflicted war and their poor conditions read as prophecies fulfilled, the tools responsible for maintaining unbalanced power relations are left undetected.

As aforementioned, controlling images came into being with the birth of the nation and the Jezebel was among the first of these. During the colonial and antebellum eras, the permanent enslavement of Africans, coupled with the opposing temporary bondage of English indentured servants, and the autonomy of slaveholders and farmers required a clarification of the boundaries of belonging. Reconciling a social order that promoted "white over black," called for the inscription of black women and men as outsiders.[54] The typologies of enslaved black women portended that as negroes, their bodies were inherently capable of taxing and exhaustive labor. Moreover, black women slaves were typecast as hypersexual beings filled with unbridled eroticism and in turn, prone to reproducing with abandon. The statements of early America's government leaders, intellectuals and writers revealed that like the biblical figure "Jezebel," the black women that toiled on the plantations and farms of early America embodied lascivious and seductive traits.[55] The imposition of the Jezebel image and black women's estrangement from the ideals of womanhood advanced the commodification of their fertility as reasonable and enforced the view that the raping of female slaves was inescapable. The ordinances passed by the various colonies illuminate the pervasiveness of the Jezebel archetype as well as its role as a systemically useful construct. In 1662 Virginia stipulated

that the children of enslaved mothers would inherit the status of their mothers. Preceded by Massachusetts Bay in 1641, the law catapulted the permanence of black slavery, deeming it a hereditary condition. The definitive role of the mother line sharply diverged from the widely upheld, patriarchal social order and demarcated black women's bodies were an intentional, strategic point of seizure and control.

Routinized within public discursive spaces, the expansion and refining of controlling images continued after the Civil War. During Reconstruction white communities relied on black women's bodies to recapture the vestiges of black subordination and white control. Scholar Hannah Rosen illustrates that the "gendered rhetoric of race" allowed for the demonstration of blacks as unsuitable for citizenship.[56] While post-Emancipation race rhetoric was an extension of a preexisting strand of thought, it also underwent a critical shift. The rise Republican leaders and the passing of Civil Rights Acts incited fear and panic among white citizens. The significance of race was undone, as well as exclusively white economic privilege and political power. The newly minted inclusion of blacks under the banner of members of the republic triggered representations of black women that suggested that their sexualities were not only borderless, but dangerous to the national community in which they were allowed to take part. Popular writers and politically conservative media outlets in the latter half of the nineteenth century drew upon the age's interest in Victorianism and painted black women as defiantly opposed to the Cult of True Womanhood.[57] As stated by Evelynn Hammonds, the doctrine of Victorian sexual ideology presented white women as "pure, passionless, and de-sexed," and black women therefore as "the epitome of immorality,

pathology, impurity, and sex itself."[58] In the thick of Radical Reconstruction on rebel,

Confederate land, the propagation of this devaluing rhetoric enabled acts of terror against

free black communities and elevated rape as a chief strategy in undermining black

mobility. According to Rosen, this is particularly evident in the Memphis Riots of 1866.

Similar to its neighboring cities and urban centers, Memphis' white civilians and

municipal law officers vehemently disagreed with the propensity of federal intervention

and particularly the presence of African American Union Soldiers. Their military service

and role as overseers and enforcers signaled an overturning of the racial status quo. On

May 1, an act of self-defense on the part of black soldiers, pushed white residents to

invade and rob black homes and businesses over the course of 72 hours. The rioters

forced many to flee and abandon their property. Records collected by the Freedmen's

Bureau include the testimonies of black women victims of rape and sexual assault. The

Memphis case proved to be at the forefront of a multitude of racial riots, manifestations

of rage and violent attempts of order during the post-bellum years.[59] The sexual violation

of black women, wives and mothers allowed white men to restore racial inequality and

reinforce the portrayals of blacks as unworthy of political influence and public

engagement. Although no longer property and void of the legal protection afforded white

slaveholders, the justice system was reluctant to lend an ear to the concerns of black

women in physically and sexually threatening positions.[60] As stated by Tera W. Hunter,

in the South in particular, "Rape was a crime defined exclusively, in theory and in

practice, as perceived or actual threats against white female virtue by black men, which

resulted in lynchings and castrations of numbers of innocent black men."[61] In contrast,

the raping of black women on the part of white men, as well as black men, was not considered to be rape at all and thus not punishable. The "rape complex," or the figuration of black men as dangerous rapists, white women as the gatekeepers of purity, white men as valiant guards of this and black women as sexually accessible, reigned as a principle of justice. Black women's physical vulnerability accelerated after the end of Reconstruction with the onslaught of the Redemption period and the implementation of Jim Crow.[62]

The classification of black women as "unrapeable" Jezebels ran parallel to the molding of the Mammy effigy. "Mammy" was a term reserved for black female slaves tasked with the responsibility of nursing and caring for white children. Mammies, also commonly referred to as "aunties," were exceptions to the Jezebel rule. Travel narratives, journals and fictional texts from the antebellum era reveal a patterned reverence for mammies as selflessly devouted to their owners, willfully subservient and asexual.[63] These understandings of black women wet nurses allowed whites to make room for slave labor within the confines of their homes as they settled anxieties about the wonton sexualities of female slaves and assured slaveholders and their families that although black women were ignorant of the rudiments of mothering with morality when it came to their own kin, they were expertly capable of rearing young mistresses and misters. As similar to the Jezebel, the Mammy gradually became a facet of blackness that the Southern, white society expected black female slaves to perform and embody for the sake of preserving the racial order.

This trope of the Mammy did not fully take shape as a national model of African American womanhood until the Civil War, which ushered in what Kimberly Wallace-Sanders refers to as the "mammification" of the American imagination.[64] After a period of costly and fatal estrangement, white northerners and southerners aimed to heal the accrued wounds of the war through reconciliation. Much of this unifying process entailed crafting a memory of the war, its causes, and the preceding years that denied the ailments of slavery. Both "Yankee" and Southern rituals, writers, artists and memorabilia recalled the pre-Civil War period as the epitome of tranquility. These nostalgic articulations represented slaves as cheerful and well cared for by benevolent patriarchs. According to David Blight, within the first half century after the war, the "forces of reconciliation" banished the racist injustices of slavery and the emancipationist goals of blacks from the landscape of memory.[65] Historians point to the activities of organizations such as The United Daughters of Confederacy, founded in 1894, as evidence of the "historical amnesia" that overwhelmed the national culture following the war.[66] Not simply led by a culture of conciliation, but visions of redemption, the "daughters" held celebrations to commemorate the loyalty of the black slaves that fought within the Confederate camp during the war. Also telling, the organization supported a 1923 bill that proposed the construction of a national Mammy monument.[67] Prior to the effective protests of black citizens and institutions, they had committed to funding the project.

Colored mammies were principal casualties of the nation's efforts to romanticize slavery. As black women, they were objects readily available for white, imaginative uses. Commonly painted as a "dark-skinned Madonna holding her precious Saviour to her

breast," the Mammy appealed to longings for the old South and most important, trumped race.[68] She personified the "healing balm" both Northerners and Southerners desired to grab a hold of. This was not an impossible feat. The overriding forces of reconciliation and redemption collided with the processes of modernization, economic expansion, and industrialism. By the 1880s and the 1890s, consumption was a central mode of citizenship.[69] The market place became a vehicle of nation building and through the exchanges of white producers and consumers, the Mammy surfaced as an icon. Imagery of the idyllic female slave filled the pages of late nineteenth and twentieth century novels and memoirs, arose in song lyrics, provided the mold for an array of film roles and supplied the faces of widely distributed and purchased food and household items. "Aunt Jemima" was the most popular among these Mammy-inspired products. After discovering her at a Missouri minstrel show in 1889, the owners of the Pearl Milling Company decided to initiate Aunt Jemima as the face of their latest invention, packaged pancake flour.[70] Entrepreneur Charles G. Underwood's decision to attend a minstrel performance to locate a potentially lucrative muse, and his particular attraction to Aunt Jemima is telling. Similar to the show's white writers and actors, it was clear to Underwood that a black, apron and bandana-wearing cook, would be desirable and recognizable to consumers. His predication proved to be correct and the popularity of Aunt Jemima and the "Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix" only heightened after Quaker Oats purchased the Company in 1925. Plastered on recipe ads, carved into celluloid salt and pepper shakers, encapsulated in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Aunt Chloe," the washer women of the film *Coontown Suffragettes* (1914) or Hattie McDaniel's character in *Gone*

With the Wind (1939), reiterations of the Mammy mirrored the dominant society's racial and gender compass. The undying Mammy reflected a nation of advertisers, content creators, businesses and patrons committed to eschewing a public memory that cast slavery as inhumane, treacherous and arduous for blacks.[71] Mammy, captured as a plump, dark-skinned woman clothed in a smock and apron with a bandana covering her head, she ushered in the recreation the black female house slave. Fixed with broad smiles and exuding contentment with servitude, the mythological figure characterized the fallen institution of slavery as a quintessential state and suppressed it as a cause of the Civil War.

As stated by Melissa Harris-Perry, the Mammy image infiltrated the quality of life of "flesh-and-blood black women."[72] As mass media ensured that the cultural archetype "became a symbol of African American womanhood and a permanent feature of American culture," skilled trades and industries closed their doors to black women. During Reconstruction, the Great Migration, the Depression and World War II years, the marketplace restricted the majority of black women to the bottom rungs of the labor force. Far beyond the walls of Southern plantation homes and kitchens, the Mammy became an expectation and a standard. It established black women as servants rather than laborers worthy of fair pay and treatment. Portraits of faithful and satisfied devout black women asserted that even in freedom, laundress, cooking and childcare services best suited this population.[73]

The reproduction of the Jezebel and Mammy images well into the mid-twentieth century makes clear that these original blueprints defy time constraints. However, they

also reject stagnation. Slavery entrenched and enshrined black women as others, strangers and acceptable targets for structural marginalization and character fabrication. In the 1930s, the nation's imaginative realm drew on facets of the Jezebel to form "Sapphire," also referred to in the literature as the Angry or Bad Black Woman trope. Sapphire Stevens was a character on the radio and televised sitcom "Amos n' Andy" and played the wife of pivotal character and friend to Amos and Andy, George "Kingfish" Stevens. The show ran from 1929 to 1953 and throughout the length of its career the storyline marked Sapphire as determined, hardworking and strong-willed. Greater than this and much to the enjoyment of viewers and listeners, Sapphire's strength reared its ugly head in her marriage. "Millions of Americans watched Sapphire daily excoriate Kingfish's stupidity, ineptitude, and delusions of grandeur," states Cheryl Townsend Gilkes. Correspondingly, Gilkes continues, "She became the most pervasive image white people shared at that time; she became a popular epithet to be used in place of less jovial ones."[74] Sapphire's positioning as a controlling image and not merely a source of comedic relief became clear in the 1960s. Claims that black women were domineering and emasculating appeared in policy and social scientific studies as justifications for the impoverished state of black communities.[75] Take for example, Daniel Moynihan's 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action.* The Assistant Secretary of Labor charged the predominant matriarchal composition of black families with authoring inequality and a "culture of pathology" in black communities.[76] The report notes that in contrast to white women, black women were likely to be the head of their households, the primary financial contributors and single mothers. Moynihan placed them at the helm of the black

community's enduring stagnation by claiming that the women castrate their male partners and push them outside of a sphere of influence. In supporting his assertion that black women widely adopt an overbearing attitude to the disadvantage of their families, Moynihan pointed to black men's high rates of unemployment and the comparatively extensive participation of black women in the workforce. Eluding a discussion of employment discrimination, black men's exclusion from the professional and industrial workforce, the low pay black women received in comparison to black men and the high demand in feminized sectors of the workforce, he suggests that black men's inability to locate work is a direct result of black women's eagerness to garner control and influence. He reminded readers that the society rewards male leadership and that in breaking this natural law black women prevent their families from reaping the benefits of male superiority.[77] Ultimately, they cripple their children and in particular, instill them with the same gender bias responsible for the torn state of the Negro family.

This discourse endowed Sapphire with another name – the "Matriarch." As similar to the operative functioning of the Jezebel, understandings of black women as dictatorial, aggressive and castrating, diverted attention from the glaring absence of structural protection for the historically marginalized. Similar to the Jezebel, the Matriarch explained and justified black subjugation. Aside from its failure to reassess a society that organized itself around male dominance and punished women from stepping outside of the bounds of patriarchal normalcy, Moynihan's government report proved to confine black women in other ways. It disregarded the importance of passing and maintaining civil rights legislation. The vilification of black women and, more

specifically, black mothers, along with the power of these images to regulate their lives continued after 1965.

The blurring of legal equality with equal results gave way to a conservative backlash. In the post-Civil Rights Era, the rollback of the federal welfare system was a major consequence of the predominant call to shrink government spending. The Richard Nixon administration, followed by that of Ronald Reagan determined that the Lyndon B. Johnson led "War on Poverty" and the expansion of public assistance programs drained federal funds and undercut the economic rights of the "silent majority."[78] Although since its implementation in 1935, the welfare system largely benefitted white mothers, the news media and Republican legislatures represented black women as perpetrators to whom the nation's economy fell victim.[79] Congress stigmatized welfare rights activists protests for equal access to the Aid to Families with Dependent Families (AFDC) and disavowal of a labor force that profited their employers, but left their children destitute. The AFDC ascended as an institution that caused dependency, as well as supported the unmotivated and underserving. These derogatory depictions of black welfare beneficiaries heightened in 1976 with the introduction of the label "Welfare Queen." Reagan, a presidential candidate at the time, used the term to refer to Linda Taylor, an African American woman charged with fraud and the mishandling of state welfare benefits. However, Reagan's administration later indiscriminately applied the title to all poor, black dependents. Black women's fixation in the American consciousness as promiscuous and irresponsible household managers, ensured black women recipients' embrace as cheats. To the general public, it was more than possible that black women used their sexuality

and progeny for financial gain and closed their homes to men capable of contributing to their family income.

In the 1990s, Bill Clinton's administration ushered in sweeping welfare reform. These changes included a severe welfare roll cut in the form of the replacement of AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). It also comprised the passing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA), the waiving of federal standards for state welfare programming and "Family Cap" laws. In *Killing the Black Body,* Dorothy Roberts emphasizes that while black women were not the majority among those who received AFDC, they disproportionately relied on the aid to support their children.[80] Thus the close surveillance of recipients on the part of investigators, denial of increased benefits for welfare dependent families with unexpected births, forced birth control, Work First requirements, the child care crises and the increased rates of poverty distinctly affected black mothers. The rhetoric and outcomes of welfare reform underscored black women's stasis on the other side of citizenship. Moreover, it exhibits their use as scalpels in the carving of punitive government policies and sanctions. As social and economic conditions changed, degrading mythologies about black women continued to provide a means to federally gainful ends.

Black women and in particular, mothers were also pawns during the War on Drugs in the 1980s and 1990s. African Americans markedly suffered from the increased policing and imprisonment of narcotic sellers and users.[81] The generative harmfulness of "Crack Mothers" gave the operation a sense of urgency and heightened citizen support. Although statistically black and white mothers used drugs at similar rates, images of

black women addicts, their bulging bellies and ailing babies filled the War on Drug's media campaign.[82] Unsurprisingly, the distortion and exaggeration of black mothers' drug use was not estranged from larger, social and economic goals. As stated by Roberts, the "professed concern for the welfare of the fetus" was questionable.[83] For, the "images that induced pity for the helpless victim were eclipsed by predictions of the tremendous burdens that crack babies were destined to impose on law-abiding citizens."[84] The accounts of hospital personnel and medical reports depicted the babies as irreversibly damaged, while the social scientists concluded that they were likely to be either state dependent or destructive adults. The extension of the "Bad Black Mother" model presented an opening for the criminal justice system's disproportionate incarceration of crack users, a drug highly concentrated in black communities.[85] Moreover, it deemed racial bias on the part of maternal care professionals, the harmful separation of drug addicted mothers from their infants, and the forced sterilization of drug using black women publicly palatable.[86]

Contemporary Traction of Controlling Images

The decreed presence of matriarchs, welfare queens and crack mothers indicate that controlling images signify a "neoliberal social project" and a fundamental piece of the post-racial language largely used to blur the state of racial power dynamics in the contemporary era.[87] The fears of "recession-wounded whites" drove the downsizing of big government as the nation moved into the twenty-first century and representations of blacks as wayward nurtured these concerns.[88] An emphasis on the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and the pronounced presence of pathological black women complotted

to supply an ideological system that suggests that one's conditions depends on their individual choices, as opposed to macro-level inadequacies. Long reared as innately self-destructive, representations of black women as "Bad Black Mothers" uninhibitedly obscured the continuation of discriminatory governing.

Also important and uniquely costly, the contemporary traction of black women's controlling images is historically unprecedented. While the enhanced processes of global capitalism yield public policies that promote the chronic socioeconomic distress among marginalized populations, they also improve the circulation of racial-sexual ideologies that justifies its outcomes. Collins avows that,

> As part of the color-blind racism that has accompanied the erasure of the color line, the ubiquitous inclusion of images of Black sexuality…can replicate the power relations of racism today just as effectively as the exclusion of Black images did prior to the 1960s.[89]

In accordance with technological advancements and the globalization of media, images and characterizations of black women are transferred and exchanged swiftly, as well as frequently. The protected, recognizable and therefore appealing one dimensional images of black women appear in mass media, television productions, music and film. These renderings of black womanhood draw from a shallow well in which "history hides in the shadows."[90] The abundant insertion of black women into the nation's discursive fabric uproots their identities from historical context and its sociopolitical components. A consequence of these "free floating" visuals and materials is the authentication of contorted realities.[91] Various communications mediums promote images of black women under the helm of pronounced commitments to inclusion and diversity. However, they tend to invoke black women beholden to the characteristics long used to qualify their

subordination. This threatens generate an uncritical mode of interpreting black women's lives among consumers that reaffirms gendered, raced and class divides. Ultimately, controlling images, regarded by Harris-Perry as "systemic, state sponsored shame," sustain black women's subjugation as they nurture a value system that pushes black women outside of the perimeters of public recognition and denies them the right to fully participate in the body politic.

The dialectical relationship between ideology and "state sponsored shame," black women's performative expectations and their exclusion from the venues of justice is more than evident in the Dunbar Village case. The Dunbar Village attack failed to raise red flags because the 35-year-old was swept up by a legion of gendered and racialized mythologies. The failure of the National Action Network and the National Association of Colored People to acknowledge victimhood beyond the Dunbar 4 is telling of the existence of another rubric used to define black women's experiences. Political scientist Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd points to the Matriarch trope as the cause of the diminution of the mother's attack. Moynihan's 1965 report suggested that black women refused to accept the assistance of their mates and in doing so erected them as not simply matriarchs, but "superwomen" fully capable of weathering any storm. Thus, in penetrated a racially isolating workforce to support their families, they are not being resourceful, but flexing their strength and willfully emasculating their male partners. According to Michele Wallace, the Moynihan Report and similar publications with narrow caricatures of black women not only presented a template for the creation of policies capable of reversing black inequality, but informed the organizing methods of the mid-twentieth

century black freedom struggle. In submitting that black men were not only suppressed by white men and women, but also black women, this literature furthered a belief that black men personified black oppression.[92] The links drawn between freedom and patriarchy during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras functioned to implant understandings of black men as uniquely effected by racism due to its impact on their capacity to lead and support their families. The societal prioritization of male leadership and the perceived existence of superwomen helped instill within black women and men alike, a framework of social justice that equated black liberation with the autonomy of black men in the greater white society and in their communities. Crenshaw has argued that this outlook continues to lead the practices of anti-racist organizations in the contemporary historical moment. They do not account for intra-group differences and fail to interrogate both sexism and patriarchy as critical components of black subordination. Lobbying against the criminalization of victims of sexual violence and mobilizing for social services capable of targeting the intersectional needs of women of color vulnerable to rape rarely figure into the political agendas of anti-racist organizations.[93] This exclusion is not simply a matter of ignorance, but of strategic neglect. These organizations stray from the politicization of rape and other forms of violence against black women to deflect what Crenshaw refers to as "distorted public perceptions" of people of color. [94] Ultimately, their attempts to undermine antiracist discourse suppresses an engagement with the subject of violence. Dissimilar from cases that comprise black male offenders and white women victims, proponents of black civil rights typically advance that condemning the rape of black women by black men runs the risk of

delegitimizing and countering their claims of racial injustice. Crenshaw states that whether they are sexually assaulted by black men or white men, "The direct assault on Black womanhood is less frequently seen as an assault on the Black community."[95] Thus, rather than expand the scope of their critique of rape law to include its impact on black women, anti-racist organizations stymie their engagement with the issue. Limiting discussions of rape and the silencing of victims is deemed a necessary sacrifice to offset potentially crushing the community's already tenuous integrity.[96] Ultimately, "the plight of black women is relegated to a secondary importance."[97] While anti-racist organizations focus on what they presume to be more pressing issues, black women find themselves trapped in a "chain of violence."[98]

The view of black men as fallen patriarchs and black women as the holders of supernatural resilience secures this chain in place. Within the efforts of anti-racist organizations, these two frames work together to maintain the continued devaluation of black women's encounters with violence. They leave the victims unseen and moreover debilitate interrogations of this invisibility. The 2008 actions of the National Action Network and the National Association of Colored People demonstrate the form that this culture of silence takes. At the March 2008 press conference, organizers distributed fliers at the press conference describing the Dunbar suspects as "voiceless victims" and "endangered species."[99] These categorizations made clear that there is an accessible, well cultivated language for the concerns of black men. Yet, despite this accessibility, the propaganda used to assemble support for the Dunbar 4 also illuminates what bell hooks refers to an "inarticulateness."[100] The importance of the defendants reentering the

community was comprehensible, but the threat that their bail posed to the community and black mothers was unintelligible. The failure of Dunbar 4 advocates to acknowledge the victimized family points to the piercing absence of a language capable of seeing black women as helpless, exposed and capeless.

State of Interethnic Ties in the Scholarship's Explorations of Black Women's Resistance to Controlling Images

By interjecting her Haitian identity into the larger discussion of the contours of the Dunbar Village attack, the victim pronounced an ethnicity informed version of black mothers' invisibility. An assessment of the influence of her Haitian origins on the upsurge of the Dunbar 4 as both assailants and subjects of community support is essential. However, questions such as those posed by the Florida mother are nominally answered in the literature on contemporary black women. In particular, scholarship in the humanities and social sciences centered on the processes of black women's social control, have been slow to investigate the extent to which in recent decades, foreign-born blackness collides with racist-sexist ideologies to construct black women's marginality. While there exists a great deal of research on the gendered and racialized experiences of foreign-born black women in the early to mid-twentieth century, few apply a black feminist theoretical lens to the realities of America's latest black immigrant waves.

Preeminent among the works that open a window into the ideologically oppressive experiences of black women in a society presumed to be egalitarian are the those that prioritize the personal narratives of black women. A myriad of scholars, grounded in the fields of American Studies, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology,

Political Science, African American Studies and Women's Gender and Sexuality, rely on

qualitative methods to write broadly on the harmful discourses and practices that pillage

black women in the everyday world. Building on the theoretical framework and central

concepts established by Mae C. King (1973), Audre Lorde (1978), Cheryl Townsend

Gilkes (1983) and ultimately Collins (1990), a number of texts on contemporary black

women deploy interviews, focus groups and participant observation to identify

dehumanizing images and trace how they unfold in black women's lives.[101]

Through the writings on contemporary black women's navigation of controlling

images, readers learn that although black women find themselves living, operating and

working within spaces that formerly closed their doors to women of color, they contend

with "gendered racism" in their everyday lives.[102] Yanick St. Jean and Joe R. Feagin,

qualitative sociologists on black women living in the 1990s, note that gendered racism

"often hides behind kind-faced, generous looking, sophisticated masks that seem so

refined that the roots in old racist habits are no longer recognizable."[103] The biographical

accounts of the women and mothers featured in these extensive studies suggest that their

interactions with classmates, teachers, employers, store clerks, landlords and more, merge

to construct a mirage of visibility and valuation. The illusion is a fragile one, held

together by the vacancy of explicitly racialized and gendered language and assertions that

legacies of oppression have no hold on the present. Beneath it lies the execution of

preferences, notions and biases inculcated by tales of grotesque black women. Scholars'

profound conversations with black women and a nuanced reading of their tribulations

demonstrate that this group's entanglement in a web of mythologies takes shape within

multiple spaces. Controlling images surface in educational institutions when colleagues undermine their intelligence, are laced in the sexual advances of employers and materialize in black women's relationships with their spouses. Moreover, black women confront mechanisms of social control in their interactions with popular media. The entertainment industry debases their status as consumers and transforms them into the consumed as they constantly encounter the condemnation of their skin tone or hair texture and the fetishism of their body types.

Studies grounded in the truths and testimonials of black women also reveal that as U.S. conceptualizations of black womanhood are psychological and visceral, their consequences are not limited to this population's disproportionately capped political and economic opportunities. The emotional health of black women is also telling of their experiences as "marked women."[104] A range of epidemiological studies and clinical literature find that women exhibit greater levels of depression than men. However, these reports also make clear that structural conditions tied to race and class compound to distinctly elevate black women's experiences with distress.[105] Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden label this psychological warfare, in which controlling images vie to colonize and occupy black women's emotional stability, the "Sisterella Complex."[106] After the implementation and close analysis of original interviews and surveys, Jones, a journalist and Shorter-Gooden, a psychologist share that at multiple points in their lives, black women become "Sisterella." Analogous to the eminent fairy tale character Cinderella, they live in an environment committed to revoking them of the right to name their own realities. Utilizing interviews with black women and the collection of surveys

completed by this population in a wide range of number of states, the text concludes that

contemporary black women practice "shifting." In order to avert the suffocating and

debilitating impact of the bricolage of stigmatizing interpretations of their character,

black women regularly alter their self-presentation to accommodate their environment.[107]

As they transition from one space to another, they transform their disposition to deflect

the racist and sexist assumptions likely to emanate from their current surroundings. This

includes changing their behavior, social mannerisms, dress, speech and interpersonal

relationships. Shifting is epitomized by a black woman that distances herself from other

black women in her predominantly white work place to temper potential concerns about

the gathering of "angry black women." It may also include deliberate attempts to distance

oneself from identifying as queer and aligning with heteronormative relationships to

evade being viewed as a threatening matriarch, detrimental to black family life. The text

makes clear that shifting is not only behavioral, but cognitive. For example, consistent in

the data is the tendency of black women to "scan, survey and scrutinize" their

environments.[108] They constantly anticipate, prepare for and dissect their encounters, and

their own responses.[109] An additional form of shifting is emotional detachment and the

downplaying of discrimination as a means to soften its blow.[110]

  Shifting exhausts black women physically as well as mentally. During this

habitual process of they often slip between the cracks created by the stark contrasts

between reality and expectation. They run the risk of losing sight of their authentic

selves, internalizing their cultural designations and in turn, embracing self-loathing and

feelings of inadequacy.[111] This depressing state is exacerbated by the myth of the

Superwoman, also referred to in the literature as the "Strong Black Woman." Caricatures

of black women as uniquely capable of persevering nurtured the notion that, in the words

of Barbara Smith, "the black woman is already liberated."[112] Viewed as "towers of

strength who neither feel nor need what other human beings do, either emotionally or

materially," their families, communities and the greater social and political world are

blind to their weaknesses and demand that they sacrifice their faculties to be of complete

service to others.[113] While Sisterella attempts to stand and climb onto level ground, those

unaffected by the Strong Black Woman imperative gaze at her from above. They do not

see a fallen woman, but instead, her "mythical counterpart."[114] Interestingly enough,

while she is denied respite, she also refuses to extend her hand or call for a rope.

According to Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant's recent discussions with a sample of 58

black women, this group elevates their casting as imperviously strong to a symbol of

endearment.[115] Consequentially, to abandon their role as self-less caregivers within their

communities, is to accept failure.

The aforementioned studies and similar works grounded in the day to day

experiences of black women, generate important insight into the intricate ways in which

controlling images latch on to this group's personhood and subsumes both their public

and private lives. These works push the post-racial envelope that threatens to conceal the

perpetuity of black women's objectification. However, they also impose limitations on

understandings of this group and the extent to which narrow renderings of black women's

citizenship remains useful in propelling racial inequality. The majority of the studies give

attention to native-born black women. Black immigrant women's, such as the Haitian

Dunbar Village victim, encounters with the destructive racial-gender ideologies intrinsic

to the nation's public memory and imagination is left unspoken. The epigraphs, narratives

and personal histories captured and examined in the literature does not reflect the

ethnically polyvocal makeup of the black women and mothers of the late twentieth and

twenty-first centuries.

For example, in detailing the "seamy side of a whitewashed society that labels

women as deviants and misfits," St. Jean and Feagin used an "intensive bottom-up

approach," and held interviews and focus groups with over 200 African American

women and men between 1988 – 1990, as well as 1995 – 1996.[116] In an attempt to move

beyond the field's emphasis on the realities of lower class blacks as manifestations of

gendered racism and illuminate the co-existence of progress and regression, the authors

focused on the middle-class, those with at least a few years of college and employed in

professional or managerial positions. Respondents ranged in age from twenty-one to

sixty. The text does not offer details on the participants beyond these characteristics.

However, a close examination of the accounts that fill the pages of *Double Burden*

harkens to realities, views and interpretations deeply entrenched within the American

landscape. Countries outside of the United States appears in the chapter "Motherhood and

Families," which in an attempt to emphasize the particular demands the nation's racial

context places on black women, contrasts the socialization practices of black mothers in

the United States with those in Caribbean countries. However, in establishing this line of

demarcation, the authors do not consider the ways in which Caribbean-born mothers

living in America potentially blur or complicate these group differences upon their

transition to a wholly racial context. Also telling of the study's native-born black vantage point are the respondents' references to Africa. A number of the women refer to the continent as a home they have not explored, yet deem a mythical site of empowerment that allows them to envision themselves outside of racial-sexual stereotypes. The rearing and romanticization of Africa as the "motherland" is indicative of a pillar of native, black American cultural memory.

In 2004, six years following St. Jean and Feagin's investigation of black women's "double burden" in America, Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden explored their "double lives" and their need to assume a second, substitute identity to repel controlling images and gain control of their conditions. *Shifting* is the product of the African American Women's Voices Project. From August 2000 to April 2002, the writers and a team of research assistants accrued surveys from 333 black women, ages 18-88 and conducted interviews with 71, ages 18-80.[117] The surveys posted open-ended questions regarding the participants' knowledge and awareness of stereotypes, the difficulties they believe result from their race and gender, the attributes of black womanhood and their behavioral choices in predominantly white environments. The individual interviews also provided an opportunity for women to openly reflect on and disclose aspects of their lives that hinged on their positioning as black mothers, daughters and sisters. From this data, the African American Women's Voices Project presented valuable information on the state of racist and sexist attitudes in the twenty-first century context. The authors note for example that "97% of the women surveyed acknowledge that they are aware of stereotypes, 80% believe they have been directly affected by them, 10% specifically

remember being called a "nigger" at some point in their lives."[118] In ensuring that *Shifting* presented findings that sufficiently reflected the country's black female populace, the Project drew respondents from Washington, DC and 24 states. At the time of the study the women resided in cities such as New York and Los Angeles, suburban areas like Maryland's Prince George County as well as rural areas, including those in Texas and Kentucky. The respondents also varied in class and educational background. While the text's pool of respondents is far reaching and multi-faceted, very few of the voices included are foreign-born. Of the respondents, 60% of whom were mothers, 96% were born in the United States and 3% identified as foreign-born. Among the women surveyed, 91% are African American, 5% bi/multicultural, 2% Caribbean and the authors mark 3% as others. Similarly, 94% of the interviewees are African American, 1% bi/multicultural, 3% Caribbean and 1% other.[119]

Harris-Perry has devoted attention to black women's relationship to the state and defines the derogatory assumptions of black women's character as "systemic, state sponsored shame."[120] She resubmits controlling images as a "crooked room" that insulates black women, bombards them with a "warped image of their humanity," and ultimately removes them from public recognition. In offering a coherent depiction of the "crooked room," Harris-Perry held focus groups with 43 women living in Chicago, New York City and Oakland.[121] She uses their discussions and responses to exhibit the viscosity of the Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire tropes in the social worlds of black women. The text also draws from Harris-Perry's 1999, "Chicago African American Attitudes Study," which comprised the distribution and collection of a questionnaire and

two-page survey to 194 black women and men in three neighborhoods in Chicago's South Side. The study aimed to draw conclusions about the weight the Strong Black Woman cultural myth holds in black communities by assessing the role of this rubric of black womanhood on black women's self-perceptions of their citizenship rights, notions of deservingness, state rights and government intervention.[122] Harris-Perry's descriptions of these respondent groups and their backgrounds, does not suggest the presence of foreign-born blacks nor does the text note ethnic variations among the participants.

In divorcing immigrants from the empirically supported assertions of the hardships wrought by controlling images, existing studies constrain the convolution of black women's objectification. Moreover, this exclusion delineates inter-ethnic ties void of the possibility of sparking black women's collective denouncement of the Bad Black Mother and her associates. As studies on racial and sexual ideological hegemony foreclose an analysis of the diasporic dimensions of the nation's black female population, they emit forms of shared resistance that are ethnically and culturally limited in scope. Literature within the black feminist theoretical tradition posits that black women's attempts to stand "upright" in the "crooked room," maneuver around the channels of thought that blockade black women from recognition with the public sphere and destabilize the narratives that assert their treatment as outsiders as justified, is a dialogic process.[123] In resisting the material and bodily containment made possible by a colonizing gaze, black women largely find credence and a means to overcome through their engagement and interactions with one another – those similarly bound and isolated by a distinct set of circumstances.

"Safe-spaces" exemplify the collaborative nature of black women's everyday acts of resistance and are a centrifugal matter around which the black women's ability to claim the power to self-define revolves. According to black feminist theorists, they are created and occupied by black women. Informal relationships, professional networks, historically predominant black churches, and black women's artistic productions such as the "blues" are among the various forms that safe-spaces take. They are ulterior realms impenetrable to external assaults because they provide an opportunity for black women to retain the aspects of their inner lives that they relinquish and disassemble to protect themselves from oppressive forces. Safe-spaces teem with the validation they are too often denied in the greater society. Together, on these planes, black women craft a climate defined by recognition of the widespread cultural beliefs about them as simplistic and destructive untruths. They are marked by opportunities for black women to express their frustrations and issue societal critiques to individuals capable of hearing and seeing them beyond the delegitimizing guises of sexual deviance, servitude, pathology, and unquestionable strength. Critically important, safe-spaces set the stage for black women's ability to "come to voice" in the face of the severe silencing that lies outside of their private, concealed spheres of interchange. As they learn that the accepted models of black womanhood are contradictory, cross-cutting expectations and irrational, they also sustain an awareness of interlocking systems oppression and stimulate the development and sharpening of tools of subversion, such as forms of shifting that do not foster harmful, self-depreciation but allows them to call out and "talk back" to subtle and curbed, yet no less impactful, racist and sexist assumptions.[124]

Scholars largely depict these collectivities among black women as an organic process and "home-grown." Black women's writings, for example, illuminate the pivotal role mothers, grandmothers, and mother-figures play in laying the foundation for, mobilizing and fashioning safe-spaces. In *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, Smith states that black women "witness" and "inherit" hope, as well as the fear and shame associated with being a black woman in a "white man's country."[125] In the same breath, in *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990) bell hooks recalls, "In our young minds houses belonged to women…there we learned dignity, integrity of being…this task of making homeplace was not simply a matter of black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe place."[126] The black women respondents of Beauboeuf-Lafontant's study, share that they "picked up strength" from their mothers.[127] Their accounts invoke mothers, whose directives served as essential to not only their existence, but their ability to subsist. Relatedly, Katrina Bell McDonald's sociological inquiry into the state of black sisterhood in the twenty-first century shares the reflections of older black women that consider it their responsibility to educate younger generations on means of endurance.[128] The literature suggests that black women's responses to unrelenting systems of oppression a repertoire passed down and developed through the generations by way of cultural traditions, child-rearing practices, oral histories, and colloquial expressions. This heavy exposure to the freeing possibilities of intraracial and intragender relationships in their families or communities prompts black women to look for and form these ties with kin, as well as those they do not know. As stated by Alice Walker, black women recognize that they are fully aware that their

"combined energy" is necessary to "scrutinize" a common, "oncoming foe."[129] The voices of the participants in the aforementioned qualitative studies create a portrait that mirrors the novelist's assertion.

Although unquestionably true, an emphasis on black women's collective routes to self-definition as a habitual pattern leaves little room for understandings of the role that inter-ethnic ties play in the advancement of a black women's collective forging of autonomy. Assessments and articulations of black women's shared knowledge production and construction of a consciousness that exceeds their devaluation emerge as the culmination of relationships among women cut from the same cloth, beholden to a shared memory of the "othering" of black women, extensively tutored by traditions of resistance and reared by "mother lines" that indisputably saw the greater dominant white society as one that treated black women like "mules."[130] This primary interpretation erases the presence of and abridges the role of immigrant black women around a table that cripples the power of ideological restraints, emboldens black women, brings about self-authentication and fosters preparations for visibility.

Distinct from their native-born counterparts, black immigrant women and mothers are less likely to have a strong, innate and well cultivated hold on the nation's racialized landscape history. Consider anthropologist Philomena Essed's groundbreaking study on black women at the turn of the twenty-first century, *Everyday Racism: Reports of Women from Two Cultures* (1990). The text is among the first to place black women's voices at the center of an exploration of the nature of discrimination after the passing of major civil rights legislation, and moreover, its transformations. In addition to "individual racism"

and "institutional racism," Essed covers black women's encounters with "cultural racism." To develop her study, Essed interviewed 25 women between the years of 1981-1982 and 1985-1986.[131] In positioning "everyday racism" on a global scale, the author conducted worked with 11 black women living California's Bay Area, and 14 Surinamese women living in the Netherlands.[132] Despite structural differences between the regions, the text notes that racism is a customary experience for both groups of women in the areas of mass media, employment, housing, public transportation and interpersonal interactions on public streets. However, Surinamese and African American women's preparedness and responses to these assaults differ. Other than one woman, who lived in the Netherlands the majority of her life, for the majority of the Surinamese women interviewed, living in a predominantly white society and facing the prejudices of the Dutch was a new reality and called upon the deployment of tools of defense they did not yet own. In contrast, Essed finds that the black women of California, had a "sophisticated knowledge of racism and the behavior of whites."[133] Based on their viewpoints, the author came to the conclusion that, "Since African Americans have had to deal with the racism of white Americans in their daily lives for many generations, they have integrated education about racism into the socialization of their children."[134]

The lines of demarcation Essed detected between black women in America and Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands can always be drawn amid United States' contemporary native-born blacks and foreign-born black women from the West Indies and Africa. The construction and exertion of a strict, discernable racial hierarchy in the states in the social, political and economic arenas is also unfamiliar terrain for recent

black immigrants. Although Africans, West Indians and African Americans share a history of colonization and slavery, the nature of these institutions and their long-term impact varied among these regions. Caribbean countries have an extensive record of black leadership and autonomy following the defeat of colonial rule. As stated by Reuel Rogers, Afro-Caribbean immigrants "come from small island nations where the history of systemic racial domination by whites is somewhat more remote and not nearly as extensive as it has been in the United States."[135] Countries within Africa have a more formidable past of European colonization but as early as the mid-twentieth century, a vast majority of African countries had begun the process of independent, nation building. Ultimately the black-white dichotomy that visibly characterizes the United States has no place in the majority-black societies from which this wave of immigrants originates. As a result, "the sting of racial prejudice is especially painful," states Nancy Foner.[136] She continues that in the case of West Indian migrants, "Blackness does not have the same stigma that it does in the United States, and blackness is not in itself a barrier to social acceptance or upward mobility."[137] As blackness is the standard, one's life outcomes in the West Indies are largely determined by class, educational background and familial ties.[138] Similarly, in the experience of contemporary African immigrants, subjugation is not inextricably tied to race. Nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, class and gender standardly outweighs the salience of race in sculpting a division between the ruled and rulers, and marking the livelihoods of those living in African countries.[139]

Although pushed to the shadowed end of the color line, black immigrants do not indisputably find establishing connections with native-born blacks to be formidable in

their aim to reclaim their, as articulated by Olúfẹ́mi Táiwò, "rich human identities." The group consciousness evident among native-born black women and men and historically essential to jointly organizing around the deleterious challenges wrought by systems of racial marginalization is unfamiliar to black immigrants. This dimension of black identity is best defined as a politicized, "in-group identification."[140] It is, states Candis Watts, a "set of ideological beliefs about one's group's social standing as well as a view that collective action is the best means by which the group can improve its status and realize its interests."[141] A cross-generational witnessing of racial discrimination and a collective memory of the acutely racial mechanisms of control such as Jim Crow segregation and the violation of black protest in the mid-twentieth century fuel conceptions about the correlative relationship between oppression and their depreciative conditions, and establishes a sense of "linked fate" among native-blacks.[142]

The different racial geographies and histories of foreign-born blacks complicate and makes tenuous the relationship between racial classification and group consciousness. Notably, the secondary role of racism and a collectivity defined by shared racial oppression in the original societies of black immigrants often translates to "distancing strategies" during their time in the United States.[143] The existing qualitative research on black immigrants notes that in deterring the threat of being categorized as underserving and immortal citizens, they do not bind themselves with natives, but often attempt to represent themselves to the public in ways that set them apart from African Americans. This distancing involves accentuating their nationality by wearing culturally specific clothing and sharpening their dialects or accents. Methods of separation also

comprise the propagation and pronouncement of a value system that prioritizes work ethic and educational achievements. Aligning with these behaviors allows immigrants to isolate themselves from American blackness and the effigies of that undermine the group's commitment to labor, diligence and productivity. Compounded and made urgent by the weight of the African American or Black American identity, black immigrants find their sending nations and ethnic counterparts as havens for a holistic, non-degenerative concept of self. However, distancing is also a product of their deep-seated, homespun belief that individual merit is more influential in one's life opportunities than structural oppression, making the denunciation of natives valid and defendable.

On the part of native-born blacks, group consciousness also wavers when confronted with differences across ethnic lines. Qualitative works on their negotiations of the changing racial landscape suggest that they largely consider immigrants to be contributors to their ideological containment. These relations are partly informed by the hierarchy that is the racialized social system.[144] Scholars observe that on the whole limited state-allocated resources and political power induces competition among minority groups.[145] The growth of the black immigrant population, as well as their economic and entrepeneuriship successes concerns the native-born. This is especially the case in historically, majority native-born black nieghborhoods and cities. Moreover, the documented distrust African Americans direct towards black immigrants stems from the immigrant group's comparatively minimal engagement with and neutral stance on race. Their distancing strategies, gravitation towards sociopolitical agendas that do not center racism, and outward deviation from group consciousness, cause distrust on the part of

native-born blacks raises critical questions and doubts within native black communities about their sincerity and proximity to the cause of black valuation and uplift. [146]

While the literature on the effects of harmful discourse on contemporary black women evades a discussion of the dynamics of ethnicity, the work on recent black immigrants minimally accounts for gender-specific racial effigies. They extensively address the impact of racial and ethnic narratives on women sojourners, but nominally account for the specific ways in which their gender and sexuality ensnares them in a net of modified assumptions, planted at the intersections of the American experience, that do not affect foreign-born black men.[147]

Migrating Across "Homeplaces"

Bearing in mind the absence of foreign-born populations in the literature on controlling images and the overwhelming evidence of the stark contrasts between the experiential frames of the native and foreign-born, contemporary black women's elucidation of an interethnic, "diasporic consciousness" when toiling with "new racism" is uncertain.[148] The role cross-ethnic amity plays in empowering a group incessantly shelled with not only racial, but also gendered tales of indiscretion is illegible. The voluntary, yet indispensable ties that conventional narratives suggest binds black women appear to exist on a plane void of black immigrant women. Agents such as Gina McCauley, who see black immigrant women, such as the Haitian-born Dunbar Village mother as similarly affected by a centrally American process of gendered racism, emerge as anomalies. Further, the fissure the literature places between native and foreign-born black women and its reductionist approach to controlling images, asserts that black

women are unable to identify the cross-ethnic reach of ideological subjugation and utilize

black borderlands to remove their carefully knitted cloaks of invisibility. Ultimately, the

literature on contemporary black women's struggles with gendered racism, as well as the

lack thereof in texts on black immigrants, discount interethnic ties as a viable sphere of

collective action against ideological channels that validate their structural

marginalization.

Using original ethnographic research conducted with African American,

Caribbean-born and African-born mothers in Hartford, the following chapter offers an

account of colorblind, victim-blaming effigies that seats black women from sundry

"homeplaces" at the same table. Chapter 2 presents controlling images and the

normalization of black mothers as the bearers of racial inequality as deflective messages

that dually impact black natives and immigrants. It traces how notions of deservingness

occupy the lives of native and immigrant black mothers in similar ways. Yet, it also

illuminates how these frames evolve and transform as they cross ethnic lines and enter

different migratory and ethnic spaces. A portrayal of controlling images as an apparatus

that materializes within multiple black ethnic groups, bolsters and necessarily

foregrounds the dissertation's argument that black women claim ideological resolve

through the formation of an interethnic collective.

CHAPTER 2

Natives and Immigrants as Bad Black Mothers

Gendered Racism as a Migratory Reality

Led by the voices, remembrances, and perspectives of black native and immigrant mothers of Hartford, the chapter vigorously recognizes and brings to the fore both the temporal and ethnically transgressive reach of the Jezebel, Mammy and Bad Black Mother imaginaries. It accomplishes this by chronicling their interior lives, familial histories, beliefs, values and their assessments of the greater public's view and treatment of black women and mothers. The study situates native and foreign-born black mothers within a unified narrative of defacement as well as addresses the culturally specific forms controlling images appear to take. A portraiture of the gaze under which Caribbean-born, African-born and African American women function lays the groundwork for Chapter Three's assertion that interethnic ties are not only formidable, but a central part of contemporary black women's "habits of surviving."[1] Their efforts to free themselves from the prisons called their skin, gender, sexuality, and progeny possess intraracial dynamics.

As elucidated in the beginning of Part One, the pivotal qualitative scholarship on black women's attempts to weaken their ideological containment does not fully address ethnic differentiation. Most summarizations of the harmful effigies placed upon black women center the experiences of the native-born. Coupled with this oversimplification, works on black immigrants present a limited gendered analysis of the nation's historically transcendent racial narratives and the ways, if at all, they uniquely bind black immigrant

women with natives. Thus, this chapter's excavation of a "black women's standpoint" that traverses ethnic boundaries necessarily begins with an exploration of the ways in which the lives of native and foreign-born are similarly saturated with mirroring assumptions about their personhood and citizenship in spite of their ethnic differences.[2] Supplied by the voices of black women and mothers from the United States, the Caribbean and Africa living in Hartford, Connecticut, this chapter will provide a diasporic depiction of the contemporary vestiges of controlling images.

The majority of the respondents, although varying in national origin, age, and length of time in the United States, demonstrated an awareness of racial and gender archetypes.[3] They recognize the extent to which these images have affected black women throughout the nation's history, and assert that this stigmatization infiltrates their present realities in noticeable ways. They identified a number of interpersonal interactions in which covert forms of gendered racism pilfered their relationships and exchanges with employers, colleagues, relatives, friends, social workers, and other city dwellers. The mothers also disclosed that occurrences marked by hostility not only occur in Hartford County, but in other parts of the country as well.

Their reflections epitomize what anthropologist John L. Jackson refers to as, "racial paranoia." As the contemporary social climate conceives of racial prejudice as intentional and banishes it from the public sphere, it streamlines racism into inexplicit, and thus more socially acceptable practices. Race, presently defined by "euphemism and innuendo, not heels-dug-in pronouncements of innate black inferiority," is, states Jackson, "about emotion, affect, intuition."[4] Its perpetuity is not simply apparent in the

face of "irrefutable evidence," but on what black Americans "sense."[5] Their attempts to locate "the difference between what people do and what they say, what people do and why they do it" and question the "public niceties and politically correct jargon" are telling expressions of inequality.[6]

Chapter Two engages the lived realities of the respondents and documents the emotions, affects, and intuitions that result from their routine engagement with individuals and institutions. The text suggests that their reflections speak to the Jezebel, Mammy, Sapphire and most important, the Bad Black Mother as frequent inscriptions in the lives of contemporary native and immigrant black mothers.

A Shared Place in the ~~Sun~~ Shadows: Controlling Images Among Native and Foreign-Born Black Mothers

Many of the respondents' expositions of their struggles with racist and sexist notions allude to the presence of the Mammy ideal and a form of labor that demands their selflessness, yet denies them respite and compensation. The workplace emerges as the hub of this foundational image's perpetuity. Civil Rights legislation and intensified measures against employment discrimination in the late twentieth century paved the way for an increase in the percentage of black women in professional and managerial positions, and the reversal of their entrapment in domestic service occupations. Elizabeth Higginbotham has noted that the 1970s experienced an increase of black women in specialties from which they were once exempt. Utilizing the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the essay documents that, "in 1984, 14.3 percent of full-time, year-round employed Black women were in professional, technical, and kindred specialties, and 5.4 percent were

managers, officials, and proprietors."[7] More recent reports by the federal government state that black women's participation in the "white-collar" sector increased by 79 percent in the mid-1990s. As of 2013, 34 percent of black women worked within well salaried, management and professional jobs.[8]

Although more black women find themselves free from the homes, kitchens and nurseries where exploitative dictations of their labor capacities are cultivated, fed and ripened, it follows them to their cubicles, boardrooms and conventions. The Mammy did not dissolve with changes in their socioeconomic status, but clung to them as they entered predominantly white spaces of another form. For the burgeoning group of middle-class, professional black women, the Mammy evolves to become what black feminist theorist Wahneemha Lubiano refers to as "The Black Lady."[9]

This template calls on black women to be hard-working and apply the diligence necessary to maintain her position. However, in earning her keep, serving her employers must remain foremost before her own goals and interests. Patricia Hill Collins advances that aggressive ambition is, "acceptable, just as long as it is appropriately expressed for the benefit of others."[10] Black women run the risk of overstepping the boundaries of acceptability if they are not "subordinate to white and/or male authority" and, instead, prioritize personal, financial and familial concerns.[11] The lingering fear of the recreant and despotic Welfare Queen keeps the harmful Black Lady axiom intact and is pivotal to the indictment of black women operating within the skilled professions. "Modern mammies" possess the level of achievement and respectability their lower-class sisters are despised for lacking, yet they remain vulnerable to devaluation and, relatedly,

exploitation. White-collared Black women receive lower earnings than white men, white women and black men in the same roles. They are also underrepresented in higher ranked executive and managerial positions.[12] Moreover, professional black women are largely limited and clustered into feminized occupations. Higginbotham writes, "They are employed in a variety of occupations, but the majority – even today – are primary and secondary teachers, social workers, librarians, school counselors, and nurses."[13]

In addition to their job titles, access to promotions and salaries, the Mammy standard is also traceable in the quotidian tasks they are expected to complete, the commonplace instructions they receive from supervisors, as well as the treatment they receive from co-workers, business partners and patrons. A sizable portion of this dissertation's respondents hold Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees and have experience in a myriad of jobs and settings. Signs that lead to The Black Lady are consistent across these occupational terrains. Irrefutably evident are utterances that, in the words of a 39-year-old African American mother Sammayah, request black women to "work and slave and do the dirty work that nobody else wants to do," but they still do not "have as many opportunities to go to the ball."[14]

A single parent to an 8-year-old son and case manager at a non-profit, Sammayah's invocation of Cinderella and affirmation of the "Sisterella Complex," captures the reality of Christine, an employee for a hospital just outside of the capital city limits. The 58-year-old is from Kenya and spent much of her life in the country. However, a work opportunity brought her to the Greater Hartford area in 2005. Upon arriving to the United States, Christine began to readjust and modify her practices,

tendencies and knowledge base. The mother of five had to familiarize herself with the area's grocery stores and schools, as well as learn how to drive on the correct side of the road. Christine also spent time adjusting to tools and equipment similar to, yet different from those used in the health facilities in Kenya or England, where she lived for three years prior to relocating to Connecticut. She also confronted dynamics and processes formerly unseen. These include the nation's struggle with racial inequality.

Christine professed, "Yes. I just find it so overwhelming…Because I think even in England, there was racial tension, you can't miss them to some degree, but it in the US I just find it really overwhelming."[15] When asked if this apparatus and more specifically, discriminatory profiling informed and shaped her day to day life, she mentioned her three sons without hesitation. All in their early 20's, Christine divulged that she often fears that white, authority figures will treat her sons with hostility. Interviewed in the aftermath of multiple, nationally publicized cases of police brutality in 2014 and 2015, most of which comprised the deaths and beatings of young black men, Christine believed that her son immediately represented her most lucid tie to identity-based mischaracterization. After a pause and consideration of the ways in which the concerns she has for her sons could very well pertain to her own life, she began to link the power of perception and a work-related dilemma. Christine shared that in recent months, it's become clear to her that she rarely receives the contractually mandated time off. Although there is little to no difference in their hours, efforts and credentials, Christine is consistently overlooked by the institution's managers when they select those in need of relief. Among a staff of primarily white women, she is one of few black women.

> You know sometimes things will happen, but they will not tell you. You
> know there are those things you put two and two together. Like for
> example, when they're making the schedule you find that you are
> supposed to have like alternate weekends off, but you find that your
> weekends off are being taken away. Because of shortage, but it's being
> given to this person who has been weekend off three times in that month.
> What does that mean?[16]

Christine did not wait for an answer to this inquiry before offering additional thoughts on

the matter. It was clear to her that the cause of her indiscernibility was hushed and lay

somewhere betwixt the "two and two" and a range of other broken pieces. She reasoned

that if she dedicated just as much time and effort into the job as her white women co-

workers, and in numerous cases more, her stationing a black woman played a role.

Arguably, she carries a currency that her fellow staff members did not. As if cloaked by

The Black Lady, the supervisors failed to see all, but Christine outside of her

commitment to serving the hospital.

Jacqui, a Ghanaian immigrant and programming director at a large university,

also found herself at the will of a standard of labor that demanded her silent loyalty to her

employers and correspondingly, her subordination. The 44-year-old migrated with her

parents and siblings to the United States, and, in particular New York City, at the age of

10. Although she's lived in the United States for the greater portion of her life, an

awareness and understanding of racism and the way in which it intersects with sexism to

affect one's life outcomes was not an instant and natural process. Her parents rarely

discussed race in her household. She concludes that this was due to their uncertainty

about the nation's racial polarities and their commitment to maintaining and deploying

Ghanaian values. Jacqui also attributed her household's isolation from the forces of

discrimination to her parent's affluent status. She detailed that in Ghana, her family is

among the elite. She recalls going to the President's son's birthday parties. Upon

migrating, she left one gated community and entered into another. Her father worked in

diplomacy and attended Fordham University, while her mother studied and graduated

from Pace University. According to the mother of two middle-school aged children,

> One of the things that I was unaware of was the racism…I was always
> accepted because of my socio-economic background. So when you heard
> about the stuff that my parents did, certainly, compared to whites they
> were doing very well, so there was no - you couldn't discriminate. Does
> that make sense? I don't know how to articulate it. "You have your
> house?" They have their house. "You're an expert in your field?" So are
> they. "You went to a prominent, great school?" So did they – you see, so
> you could not discriminate because they could match you in anyway – on
> any level. You know, we had certain people coming into our house – we
> were having parties at the plaza hotel – goodness, the Waldorf Historia. So
> many of our neighbors, would be invited to these events. So they really
> got to see my parents in action.[17]

During Jacqui's childhood, she did not know that avowals of black inferiority awaited her

outside of the walls her parents managed to build. Once she transitioned into adulthood,

moved beyond her mother and father's reach and began college in the 1990s, she

realized, "there was something different about me growing up in America."[18] When

asked to describe whom she was different from and the channels through which this

difference was communicated, she began discussing the trajectory of her career in higher

education. Jacqui states that when she held entry-level positions, she did not "pose a

threat to anyone." Jacqui remembers that for many colleagues, she was, "a friendly

African American woman."[19] She continues,

> I was easy to get along with - certainly when I became a director, then certainly I
> saw the changes, and the challenges that I faced and I started to understand why
> some of the African American women I knew, I came to know why they were

> frustrated – because of the passive aggressive behavior by white women. Does that make sense? So I think for young African American women who are like myself – who conduct themselves the way I do - they are very much accepted until a certain age, where you start to face the racism more. I think that usually happens at about 30 when you really start to move up the career ladder and it is seen as like affirmative action. And you're made to believe you're there because of your race.[20]

It appeared to Jacqui that once she earned her Master's degree and ascended to directorship, she lost the respect and acknowledgement of others in the field. Her status atop the "career ladder" and far from the lower rungs made her an outsider. According to the intersected doctrines of racism and sexism, black women workers are to follow as opposed to lead. If they transcend this, they could not have applied their own abilities, but as similar to the black women of the lower and working classes relied on state assistance to thrive. This perceived relapse into "authentic black womanhood," induces rejection and shaming.[21] These categorizations deemed Jacqui's achievement within the higher education network unintelligible and questionable to those she formerly considered comrades. As Jacqui declares, these circumstances bound her to native-born, black women. She found that the trepidations they expressed as college students and working professions, we hers as well.

A respondent named Cassandra, a divorcee and mother to a 9-year-old daughter demonstrates the extent to which both individuals and places of employment create room for the collection of ideologies that shape The Black Lady in their relationships with black women in the interstices. The 33-year-old is a 2nd generation Haitian immigrant, born and raised in Washington, DC. As a native-born child of black immigrants, she embodies the juncture where the identities of Sammayah, Christine and Jacqui meet.

Cassandra is a Fund Development manager and admits that while her time contributing to the financial stability and advancement of elite colleges, a renowned museum and presently, a national organization made possible and continues to allow for her professional growth, they also stymie her emotional wellness. Almost ceremoniously she is pressured to enact tropes of black womanhood. Cassandra cited a number of occasions where she discovered that her pay was lower than her white counterparts. However, in addition to this, she's grappled with the close surveillance and inspection of her work related choices. This is evident in a series of questions her current supervisors asked her during her interview a few months prior. In order to save money after resigning from her previous job, Cassandra moved in with her sister, one of the eldest of her parent's four children. Single and equipped with a government appointment, she lived in a prosperous neighborhood. When Cassandra shared the location with her potential employers, they were visibly surprised and pondered aloud how her sister managed to afford the home, her age and occupation. Cassandra vividly described her reaction to the unexpected direction of the interview. Although she answered the questions, the honors college graduate desired to proclaim, "You wouldn't ask any white person this question!"[22] After she successfully received the job and accepting a salary rate lower than the one stipulated in the job posting, Cassandra endured additional encounters she considered to be peculiarly invasive. She explained that due to common colds or on the days that she was running late to work, she utilized a cab, as opposed to public transportation.

> I showed up to work in an Uber taxi and when I run into colleagues, they see me getting on or showing up in there, I always have to – at least once a week someone says, "How close do you live to here? You do this all the time?" And I'm like, "Do you ask a white person who got out the cab in

> front of me? Am I supposed to be walking to work, because you walked into work and didn't take a taxi in? Are you questioning my income? Why are you asking me these stupid questions?[23]

Particularly striking about both of the aforementioned events is that, as similar to Jacqui, Cassandra senses that her predominantly white colleagues are anxious about her level of income and standing in their company. Akin to Christine, her contemporaries did not consider her need and right to ease or reduce the stressors attached to her work and living conditions. Cassandra's frustrations following these probes is indicative of her contact with a relentless convention that marks black women as unqualified to not only receive equal and full benefits for their labor, but also unload the charge of subservience and take up their own subsistence. Although Cassandra works in an office environment, the words and actions of those around her beckon her to fill Mammy's shoes.

Like the Mammy in its original form, The Black Lady's call for an overpowering degree of altruistic devotion to industry denies the capacity of black women to mother their children. Additional episodes in Cassandra's work life are telling of the continued pervasiveness of such a principle. At her former job, at a small Connecticut college, the Development Department dismissed parents to pick-up their children from school during inclement weather conditions. Cassandra noticed that as one of two black women in the department and the sole black mother, the leadership repeatedly disremembered her need for early departure. She observed,

> When it's snow days, it's very quick and easy for most white moms to get the quick response. "Oh, you need to get your kid? Are you fine?" And you're standing there as a black mom and you're like, "Is anyone going to ask me?" Did they forget I had a kid? It's like, "Hello?" That's how I was at Trinity, "I need to leave to pick up my daughter." Let me add that in as

we are discussing people leaving. "Her school called at 12:30, sorry." The sad part is that I always say "Sorry" when I have to go, as if it's a shameful thing that I have to leave work to get my daughter. And I don't know if it's my assumptions that its unacceptable for a black mom to bring her kid to work, looks wrong or if it's unacceptable for a black mom to leave work to take care of her kids...[24]

Cassandra concluded that while parenting is reared as a basic and unquestionable duty for her counterparts, her maternal duties on the other hand elicited belittlement and disgrace in the work context. She strongly believes that her department should afford her the same attention allotted her co-workers and attempts to act on this. Yet her reservations and doubts point to the endemic presence and validation of black maternal devaluation in the realm of labor.

Recreations of the Mammy are not limited to the white-collar workforce. As argued by Higginbotham, there is a tendency in media reports and social science research to emphasize the ways in which black women have surpassed other groups, including black men in the areas of degree attainment and income.[25] An emphasis on black women as more capable of pounding and breaking the glass ceiling than other systemically oppressed populations feeds the myth of the "Strong Black Woman" and, in effect, is misleading. The sociologist makes clear that, "This is not a population exempt from problems on the job."[26]

Signs of a plight unfettered are evident in their unemployment rates. A return to the 2013 findings of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal that 93 percent of black women hold high school degrees. They were competitive with white and Asian women in this category, and exceeded Hispanic women.[27] Twenty-nine percent of black women continued their education beyond high school, achieving an Associate's degree or higher.

Fifty-six percent of Asian women, 38 percent of white women, and 20 percent of Hispanic women fit this description.[28] In the 2013 fact sheet, "The Economic Status of Women of Color: A Snapshot," The Department of Labor's Women's Bureau report that "Black women's unemployment rate consistently declines with each higher level of education."[29] However, at all levels, whether credentialed with solely a high school diploma or a Master's degree, their unemployment rate ironically soars above that of their peers of other ethnic backgrounds. Thus, black women in professional and managerial positions not only find themselves on the underside of adequate and equitable benefits, pay and career mobility, but have difficulty being hired to begin with. Outside of this small, selective class and occupational group, black women's earnings are meager; the state of their employment is far less stable. Based on their compilation of data, the Women's Bureau deduces that, "a large majority of Hispanic women (63 percent) and Black women (58 percent) worked in lower-paying service, and sales and office occupations, compared to 51 percent of White women and 47 percent of Asian women."[30]

A considerable number of the respondents have experience in service positions as childcare workers, senior housing and assisted living personnel, as well as live-in or home based medical assistants for the elderly and disabled. It is also important to acknowledge that a few of the women and mothers interviewed are Registered Nurses (RNs). Although they hold a degree and title that distinguishes them as participants of the professional branch of the labor force, they often manage cases and direct other caregivers in the aforementioned household settings. This particular group's thoughts on

the existence and supplication of unwritten terms of service reveal that the rise of The

Black Lady did not accompany the wholesale removal of the Mammy model from the

domestic sphere.

Henrietta and Yvonne are among the women interviewed that built their careers

within the medical assistance field. As Jamaican-born women, they occupy an economic

niche developed and occupied by West Indian immigrant women. Milton Vickerman has

surmised, "Following the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965, they carved out niches

for themselves in two main areas: as domestics and in the healthcare field."[31] Amid this

landmark decision, the employment activity of native white and black women began to

shift and, consequently, created a labor demand in the domestic arenas.[32] Black women

migrants managed to root themselves in this market and establish a West Indian network

of job sharing, training, and education.

Yvonne, 62-years-old, is a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). She arrived to

Hartford from her home island in 1983 with her husband and three children. Prior to their

move, she never considered building a life in the United States. Yvonne was a school

principal settled in her career path and content with the social, academic and economic

security she was able to provide for her children. However, her son Andre suffered from

a congenital kidney disease. Due to the increasing severity of his condition and the

limited treatment options available in the West Indies, doctors referred Yvonne to

specialists in Hartford. The Hartford Hospital housed a successful program for children

with kidney disease. The move allowed Andre to receive the treatment necessary to

improve his life chances, but it throttled the former educator into a depressed state. The

family's early years in the city were financially trying and Yvonne mourned the home life

and community she left behind, and the certainty that came with these familiarities. She

and her husband rented a small apartment and their landlords, a fellow Jamaican couple,

gave them a used table and a few chairs that Yvonne remembers wiggled and nearly

collapsed under their body weight. Other than these items, the apartment was void of

furniture. The family also lacked a car. Moreover, Yvonne found it difficult to gain an

income. To her disappointment, few employers recognized the education and credentials

she accumulated in Jamaica. Thus, she became the nanny for a family in the suburb of

West Hartford and balanced the position with other small, service-related jobs. Yvonne

put this stage of her life into words, stating,

> It was a lot of walking and a lot of working and I - many a times wanted to
> go back home. I felt like the prodigal son. I should just return home and go
> back to the things that were convenient and easy for me because I had a
> good life. I had a good life. When I came here I was literally a domestic,
> taking care of a child and that didn't do much for my self-esteem.[33]

While grappling with a decline in her external and internal well-being, her father's oft

repeated insight regarding what it took to survive in America replayed in her mind as she

determined a route to the "good life" she once claimed. Yvonne's father, who lived in

New York City, told her, "When you come to America, you can be two things. You can

become wort-less, a croff, or you can work and become successful. And work, at what

you know, and do the best you can."[34] Yvonne stated, "I decided that I wasn't going to be

wort-less so I worked." In abiding by her father's decree, she dealt with the weariness

and began to pursue a nursing assistance certification. The birth of a fourth child and a

waning ability to depend on her husband pushed Yvonne to take the next step beyond this

and become an LPN. Over the course of her time in Hartford, Yvonne gradually seized the success her father spoke of. After spending many years living in precarious flats and living quarters, the family purchased their own home. Her son, Andre, although periodically disabled, lives as an adult – a feat that doctors feared would not be his reality. She also protected, disciplined and educated his siblings despite the long work hours, minimal transportation and her ultimate status as a "single married woman," partnered to a husband whom was minimally present in the home.[35] With pride, Yvonne declared that her kin are "gainfully employed."[36]

Although the mother came to embody her family's measurement of success and vehemently refused to be a "croff," it did not prevent others from thrusting these shameful titles on her. The Mammy image allowed the contradictory characteristics of "wort-lessness" and success to intersect and simultaneously occupy Yvonne's life. In conveying her encounters with raced and gender based misjudgments she shared a myriad of her experiences as a childcare worker and health professional. Her time as an LPN strongly conveys the machinations of the Mammy in her day to day as a black woman service provider and the forced interplay of progress and regression. One incident of many named by the working mother is especially striking. According to Yvonne, although Licensed Practical Nurses support and receive instructions from Registered Nurses, upon demonstrating a mastery of the terrain, they may be assigned a supervisory role. This was the case for Yvonne at a large, residential geriatric health care organization in the late 1990s and early 2000s. She presided over and scheduled nurse aides. She continued;

> I had a white nurse's aide on my floor and they would come to the floor and they would go directly to her to ask her questions and I remember Donna would say to them, "That's the nurse, do you see her standing over the med cart? That's the nurse." She would say, "That's the nurse there." And I remember her [visitor] looking at me once and saying that, "All black people are good to do is to carry bedpans."[37]

Upon inquiring about her reaction to this exchange, Yvonne emphasized the absence of these forms of prejudice in Jamaica and replied, "It was a nasty, nasty feeling being not recognized for who you are…"[38] Next to Donna, Yvonne was undoubtedly misrecognized and moreover, unseen. Similar to the assistant, she wore an identifiable badge and uniform, yet residents, guests and visitors bypassed her and assumed Donna was the primary nurse and a nexus of medicinal and procedural information. They were both in domestic roles, but as a black woman domestic, Yvonne surfaced as more limited in her abilities. Similar to respondent Jacqui, and shown in one of the guest's reference to "bedpans," Yvonne's position as a superior incited disbelief. The Mammy, a benefactor dependent on the direction of a white other, undoubtedly materialized each time an individual walked by Yvonne or failed to look her way.

Jamaican-born mother of three, Henrietta, can identify with what Yvonne came up against throughout the trajectory of her vocation. In 1976, after taking some time to settle and adapt to Hartford, Henrietta's mother sent for her and her two sisters to join her. The siblings went on to attend middle and high school in the Northern end of the city. Now, at 51-years-old, Henrietta remains in the state capital and established a business in the same neighborhood that became home, after leaving her grandmother's house in Jamaica's St. Thomas parish. In 2004, Henrietta and her sisters began a staffing

agency that works closely with Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), LPNs as well as

RNs. They strive to assist these practitioners in finding work and places them in

temporary posts at nursing homes. Henrietta claimed that her clients, most of whom are

Caribbean-born or native-born blacks, face low expectations on the job. Henrietta

relayed, "It's so many times we have send them into the nursing homes and all these

people sees is them as a person that can wipe the floor or wipe their butt and fix their

bed."[39] An example of this came to Henrietta's mind.

> I remember I sent one of my nurse to Jerome Home one night. She was to
> be the supervisor. When she walked in, one of the residents says to her,
> "Are you my aid for the night?" She looked at her and she just continued
> to walk to the desk. When she got to the desk-- it was bad enough that the
> resident said that but she's a resident, she's allowed to say anything she
> wants to say-- when she got to the desk, the supervisor that was on the
> shift said to her, "Are you the aid-- are you the aid from the pool tonight?"
> She said, "No." She says, "Why is it that the first thing you think that I am
> the aid for the night?" Only because she was a Black woman, in a white
> neighborhood doing nursing. So she says to her, "I am the relieving
> supervisor but you know what? I feel like I'm going to go home, so you
> can continue to work as the supervisor for the night." And she stepped out,
> and I don't blame her. Don't make assumptions…[40]

Like Yvonne, Henrietta and the trained nurse assigned by the agency consistently learn

that black women's positioning in the service sector leaves them vulnerable to a label that

refuses them access to a form of domestic labor that entails autonomy and dignity.

Issuing care on their own terms and self-cultivated skill sets are regularly inhibited by the

neglect and at times, the brash behavior of patients and colleagues. Henrietta described

the cause of this monotonous and predictable isolation as an "avenue of thinking" that the

society must relinquish.[41] Remnants of Mammy, held together by a set of resilient

expectations of black women's labor, line the curbs of this avenue and firmly overshadow and impede native-born, African-born and West Indian-born in mirroring ways.

In addition to Mammy and The Black Lady, the mothers pointed to the Jezebel and Sapphire images/stereotypes as imposed, organizing principles of their everyday. Several observed that their sexualities, bodies and appearance are often objects of overt fetishizing on the part of their white male employers, clerks at their local grocery stores and city bus drivers. Others complained that many within and outside of their racial and ethnic communities often condemn them for being uniquely belligerent, irrational and unjustifiably angry, especially in the aftermath of familial and work related dilemmas.

The Bad Black Mother

The gravity of the Bad Black Mother is especially clear in the respondents' renderings of their public and interior lives. This formulation suggests that black mothers reproduce with abandon, ineffectively parent their children, and poorly manage their families. Narrations of the Bad Black Mother ultimately position this group as the bearers of black degradation in the after-math of Civil Rights gains. Most of the respondents lamented that pre-conceived notions about their mothering abilities routinely interfere with quality of their family's lives. Traces of the Bad Black Mother are especially apparent in their accounts of white and/or male authority figures, colleagues, or neighbors who disrespect and challenge their parental choices.

For 44-year-old Evelyn, her small hometown of Abernathy, Alabama embraces a belief system that the Hartford community lacks. The part-time college student and temporary office and retail worker, relayed that her community instilled her with self-

pride and encouraged her to reject reductive and disparaging notions of black Americans.

Her teachers were a central apart of this affirming environment and like her mother,

uncles, and church family, were black. These instructors never doubted her intellectual

abilities, were deeply invested in nourishing her academic skills, and considered her

future worthy of protecting. Although it's been 26 years since Evelyn lived in Abernathy,

the lessons she gained during her childhood and young adulthood are neither worn nor

ragged. She continues to utilize her past educators as a compass when raising and caring

for her only child, Marcus in the predominantly white staffed New England school

system. Unfortunately, Evelyn's attempts to enhance her son's confidence levels and

educational experiences are often interrupted by teachers that, she contends, misread, and

erroneously assess his educational needs. She finds that the 14-year-old's teachers often

disregard her knowledge of his academic strengths and weaknesses, and accordingly,

discourage her involvement in his education. Evelyn detailed her son's second year in

elementary school to illustrate this. His teacher, Ms. Rice, observed that he avoided social

interaction and more frequently than his peers, he struggled to stay on task.

> They were trying to label my son autistic. But they couldn't do it without
> my consent, but they were going to try to do it…they were going to violate
> my consent anyway. She [teacher] did violate my consent; she was still
> doing things I asked her not to do it. So the best way for me to get out of
> it, was for her to sign him out. Because they weren't giving him a fair
> deal.[42]

While Evelyn did not deny that it was possible that her son was autistic, she did not want

to move forward with this conclusion without first, researching other mental and

psychological explanations for his social and academic performance. After conducting

research and receiving guidance from the black mother-led social services organization, African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP), Evelyn discovered that the program her son's teacher, Ms. Rice, sought to implement was not ideal. Thus, she brought an alternative diagnosis to the teacher's attention, as well as suggested other instructional tools that would best benefit Marcus. Despite these efforts, Ms. Rice privileged autism-based intervention methods and attempted to proceed with a developmental evaluation without Evelyn's consent. Upon realizing this, she decided to remove Marcus from the school to pursue other options, including home-schooling. Ms. Rice warned Evelyn that this was a decision that she could not "afford" to make.[43]

During the interview, the Southern-raised mother stressed that Ms. Rice's actions and views reflected a widespread contention among the district's teachers that, "parents are incompetent in the city, that we don't know how to do research."[44] Evelyn avows that distinct from her own teachers in Alabama, many of those charged with educating Hartford's children and engaging parents, "segregate" themselves and "have these taboos…as though we cannot see."[45] According to Evelyn, the city's educators are well-intentioned and passionately support social and economic racial equality. However, though society, has deliberately severed ties with the blatant discriminatory practices she was exposed to as a child, the mother detects racial meaning in the actions of Ms. Rice and her peers. It appears in ways that do not reflect the customs of the originating racial regime and are far more insidious. Although positioned in a way in which "we cannot see," she spots it as they complete their ordinary and unsuspecting instructional duties and in their everyday interactions with families. Evelyn finds that their behaviors gesture

towards their belief that black parents, while not inferior to those of other racial

backgrounds, are unaware of what is advantageous to their children's well-being.

Post-racialism suggests that in the absence of a declared intent to infringe upon

the rights of black parents, Ms. Rice was simply doing her job. School boards require that

teachers and specialists check for disabilities in their classrooms and craft instructional

techniques that adequately addresses the student body's needs. Within this framework,

Evelyn's angst is unwarranted, and her sparred relationship with Ms. Rice is simply the

outcome of a difference of opinion. Yet, her suspicion that Marcus' teachers uphold

"taboos" that alert them to dismiss black parents as valuable partners in their strivings to

educate the city's children, is a "nonfalsifiable" one.[46]

As previously stated, the teaching staff in Hartford is predominantly white.

According to the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), as of the

2012-2013 academic year, youth of color represented over 40 percent of the student body

of the state, and about 8 percent of the teachers and 13 percent of the administrators are

of color.[47] Data issued by the State Department of Education reveals that in Hartford, as

of 2013, 77.24 percent of the teachers are white, 9.77 percent are Latino and 10.72

percent are black.[48] Moreover, while the percentage of white teachers are increasing, the

teacher of color population is decreasing.[49] Scholarship on white teachers in largely

minority districts such as Hartford and those in white schools with small populations of

color, illuminate the prevalence of racialized instructional strategies. Not only are black

children overrepresented among the misdiagnosed, but also, states Wanda J. Blanchett,

"2.41 times more likely than White students to be identified as having mental retardation,

1.13 times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled, and 1.68 times as likely to be found to have an emotional or behavioral disorder."[50] The literature suggests that funding disparities, and the minimal presence of qualified personnel in black school districts contributes to the high and uncritical pooling of black children into special education programs. It also pinpoints cultural misunderstandings and racial stereotypes as a cause.

Evelyn is cognizant of these disparities and often sees them materialize in the Greater Hartford region. In her travels, she's observed vast differences between the educational experiences of Hartford students, and their peers in the towns that Marcus' teachers drive in from every day. For her, the dichotomy is a familiar one and mirrors her home state. Racially motivated white retrenchment and degradation was one of the critical reasons why her community emphasized black uplift and autonomy. Thus, Evelyn was hesitant to take Ms. Rice's actions at face value. She considered it a foregone conclusion that the teacher's judgements could have an adverse effect on her son's education. Evelyn spotlights controlling images as an ongoing phenomenon and recognizes that her stationing as a black mother carries meanings that have the power to incite a project of exclusion. For this Hartford parent, what she and other mothers in the city could not afford to do was "wait on any one to educate your child."[51]

Foreign-born black mothers are among those that see the proliferation and execution of misguided "taboos" when they and their children enter schools, as well as parks, family facilities, and public squares. Consider Senegal native Kadijah, also 44-years-old. The mother of four migrated from West Africa to Hartford at the age of 22 in 1993. Within months of joining her husband in this country, she decided to braid hair full

time and eventually opened her salon, Kadijah's African Braiding. On a Saturday

afternoon while twisting a client's hair, Kadijah articulated a response to a question about

the challenges, if any, of functioning as a mother, and more specifically a black mother in

the United States and Greater Hartford Area. She shared that racial discrimination has

proven to be an unmistakable barrier for her and her children. While there are only a few

cases that came to Kadijah's mind, they were no less stirring and impactful, as it "really

doesn't happen in Africa."[52]

     One of the moments she described occurred a few years prior, when she brought

her children to a pool in the town of Windsor. The ex-burb borders the northern end of

Hartford. One of the swimmers, a white woman, complained that Kadijah's son and two

daughters were exceedingly loud and rambunctious. Kadijah found the woman's words to

be untrue and her tone cold and biting. She responded in defense of herself and her

children.

> My kids were not even talking to be loud and I said to her, "I know," –
> because me, when I have something to say, I just say it straight out – I said
> to her, "You know very well that my kids are not talking. The reason why
> you are like this, you know it, is because you're racist. But guess what, if
> you don't like it, you can go. We're not going anywhere." She said she
> was going to call the police. I don't want to tell you what I told her. But I
> told her call "you know what" police. I'm not scared of the police. And I
> cursed, oh God forgive me! This woman that was there – she was in the
> pool, so she said, "Oh…," – there was a lot of white people – she said,
> "Oh you know what, we don't want to hear those kind of language in the
> pool over here." … Anyway, she did not call the police and I was not
> going to go. I was not going to go anywhere, even if she called the CIA. I
> wanted to teach my kids that just because somebody doesn't like you
> doesn't mean that you should avoid them.[53]

Upon noticing the conflict, the pool's manager, who knew Kadijah and her children, walked over to the opposing parties to neutralize the conflict. The woman responsible for charging the family with misconduct, apologized. Despite this, Kadijah drew racial meaning from the day's events. Many families were at the pool, and a multitude of children were active and boisterous. Yet, the woman saw fit to bypass the others and targeted Kadijah's children. No one, outside of the manager, interjected and stood in support of the family. Instead, they agreed with the accuser, critiqued the nature of Kadijah's response, or remained silent. Their race was the only visible characteristic that set the mother and her children apart from others. Their entrance into this otherwise homogenous space appeared to incite anxieties among the pool goers that were not present before. For Kadijah, the pool's patrons sent the message that her family did not belong, and in doing so drew a stringent racial line.

The Senegalese entrepreneur's stationing at the pool as a Bad Black Mother is evident in the vocal and silent protests of the families that surrounded her. They deemed the children a nuisance and considered Kadijah to be the root of the problem. As evident in the threats to call authorities to remove her from the property, the pool's patrons read her attempts to protect her children as immoral and threatening to the youth-friendly environment. Distinct from Evelyn, Kadijah was not reared in a society marked by race-based inequality. Yet, in this she recognized that she was racially and culturally different, and that being a mother of African descent in the United States made her particularly vulnerable.

When they departed a couple of hours later, Kadijah asked her children, "You know what, did you guys do anything?" They replied, "No." She continued, "The reason why I stayed, I'm teaching you guys, just because of the color of your complexion, nobody is better than you."[54] Although Kadijah could have left the pool during and following the quarrel, she decided to remain. She hoped to show her children that in navigating white populated spaces exclusion is a possibility. Kadijah also wanted to make clear to her son and daughters that this treatment is underserved, and informed by ideologies not of their own design.

While Evelyn and Kadijah point to the prevalence of broad conceptions of black mothers as unfit, The Bad Black Mother image entails a spectrum of specific raced and gendered constructions. Two points on this continuum include the Matriarch and the Welfare Queen. Many of the respondents reported that these expectations often fill the spaces they occupy and influence the opinions and actions of people they exchange with in the everyday.

Janet, is one of many exposed to and aware of the grip of the Matriarch. The 41-year-old is a Hartford native, a community organizer and a mother. More specifically, she is an "othermother" - an exemplification of a traditional facet of black family life defined in the Introduction and further explored in Part Four. Although Janet does not have biological children, through the years she has taken on the children of her kin and community as her own and contributes to their well-being. Motherhood knocked on Janet's door, in her darkest hour. She and her five siblings, grew up in the Charter Oak Terrace housing project. In 1991, during her senior year of high school, her mother

passed away from an illness. Unable to rely on their absentee father, Janet, the second

eldest of the siblings, and her older sister, became co-parents. Before her mother's sudden

death, Janet made plans to attend Wesleyan University in Middletown. However, her

family's needs required that she postpone these plans. After graduation, Janet "hustled,"

worked and attending Hartford's community college. She would spend the next 10 years

completing her Associate's degree. Janet raised her youngest sibling Amber, 9-months

old at the time of their mother's passing, as her daughter. Now, her baby sister has

children of her own, whom Janet rears as her grandchildren. In her retelling of her

personal and family history, Janet discussed the trials that accompanied the shift in her

household structure and responsibilities. While picking up where her mother left off

catapulted Janet's leadership abilities, an invaluable necessity in her career, the journey

was not without mourning, missteps, financial woes and yearnings for what could have

been. Janet also averred that her life's turning point wrought distortion and

misrepresentation.

> Here it is I did everything right, right? I went to school, and then I was
> prepared to go to college, I beat all of the statistics, the teen pregnancy, the
> drugs, or whatever. But I would get these ill looks because, I had this kid
> who was 10 calling me "Mom" and it was clear that I was in my teens, but
> no one really knew the story.[55]

In this portion of the interview, Janet offers a window into her first few years as a parent

and the eruption of warfare between herself and a society that insisted that it "knew her

story" better than she did. The presence of controlling images was so thick and perhaps

laced in the experiences of her mother and the other women of Charter Oak, that as a

black girl in the 1980s and 1990s, Janet anticipated that they would smother her. Thus,

she made a pointed decision to distance herself from practices that those who distributed, read and consumed the "statistics" accepted as naturally deficiencies among black women, as well as men. Yet, her carefully developed plans were in vain. Trips outside of her home and neighborhood to run errands, with Amber in tow and no male partner in sight, almost always meant staring back at eyes that assumed she was a nascent matriarch, trained and determined to lead a life of single motherhood defined by loneliness and destitution.

Ghanaian higher education professional Jacqui and mother to 11- and 12-year-olds offers an account that echoes Janet's. After describing her parents and family's distance from deliberate interrogations of race, she began to compare and contrast her parenting methods with those of her mother and father. According to Jacqui, she shares their disciplinary approach, standards of academic success and prioritization of Ghanaian values. The most explicit difference, she deduced, was status as a single woman. She puts forth that this not only uniquely shapes the way she molds her children, but the contraptions non-black women utilize to sculpt and define her. Jacqui stated, "There's a certain stereotype that comes with being a black woman who's divorced – well in my case they assume its single – not divorced. So you're put in that category of a single mother."[56] According to the African-born mother, a partition prevents acquaintances and strangers from seeing her as an individual capable of marriage or birthing and raising her children with a partner. Conceptualizations of black women as domineering and coldly resistant to building and sharing a kinship network with a partner are evident throughout this partition's structure.

The continuum of archetypes reserved for black mothers also contains the welfare dependent mother that, true to her allegedly innate sexually deviant tendencies, recklessly bears children as a means to claim financial stability from the state and bypass the exertion of her own efforts. Respondents within each ethnic group named the trope as a punctuation in their lives. After Haitian-American respondent, Cassandra, described the differential treatment of white and black mothers at her job, the unbalanced distribution of time off to parent their children, and the shame she feels when the needs of her daughter clash with work demands, she determined that anemic empathy for black women and mothers in and beyond the workplace facilitated this gap. She lamented,

> I feel like they [white women] go through the burdens, but I feel like they're given more opportunities to relax or the compassion…they're given more resources. Access to resources – no one's second thinking or double checking their paper work to make sure they're a lie. Like who's going to lie about being a single mom? Who's going to really fake that they live in a struggling neighborhood. One of my things used to be with people who, questioning, "Oh does she really live - is it really that hard?" No one enjoys having a low income. No one – people want better – they're not going to lie for food stamps. Well, okay, let me correct that, I haven't met one person who has. There's a percentage out there who will lie for food stamps, okay (Laughs). But most of them are not lying for food stamps. But when it's a black woman it's a shame on you, but when it's a white woman situation it's a compassion.[57]

Indicative of the tangled and inseparable web of controlling images, Cassandra's elucidation of her perception that her work life is informed by an expectation that black women provide an altruistic, self-depreciative form of labor led to a discussion of her sense that black mothers are viewed as a group prone to cheat the system. She expressed that although black women are not the only population that receives food stamps, they are the sole demographic accused of falsifying their economic status and living conditions. In

Cassandra's opinion, there exists in plain sight a class-specific, misguided view point of low income black women as untrustworthy and not in actual need of support that bulwarks the entire group, including those such as herself who are not in dire straits, from accessing tangible goods, as well an ethics of care.

Hartford mothers Tina and Marai are, like Cassandra, knowledgeable of this contortion of their behaviors and principles. Their sketches depict what making certain black women are "a lie" looks like in the context of state assistance. A 57-year-old mother of three adult children, grandmother and Hartford-native, Tina, situated the government benefits and assistance programs as essential to her attempts through the years to excel educationally, locate steady employment, and regroup after a series of life changing events. In the 1980's a federally funded Adult Basic Education program in Hartford facilitated her completion of her GED and catalyzed her career as a records keeper for the Aetna Insurance Company.

On the cusp of the 1990s, after the gang-related murder of the eldest of her then four children, 15-year-old Kevin, she moved to Marietta, Georgia. After the loss of her son, functioning in the only city she had ever known, became unbearable. Moreover, one of her other son's participation in troubling activities began to escalate. She moved to the Southern city in 1993 and lived there until the early 2000s before returning to Hartford. While there, Tina was an Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipient. Prior to President Bill Clinton's signing and passing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, Georgia implemented a statewide welfare to work program entitled, Positive Employment and Community Help (PEACH) in

1987.[58] The obligatory job training program assigned Tina to the state's family and children services department. After a number of years of volunteering and on-site skills training, the office hired her as a receptionist. She worked in this position for 13 years.

Although Tina regarded the AFDC and later TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families as a well-spring for the positive reformation of her and her children's social and economic conditions, she evinced in the interview that it did not shelter her from ideological harm or from being cast as a foil of a deserving citizen. While maneuvering Marietta's agencies as a beneficiary and employee in the 1990s and 2000's she experienced, "little subtle stuff."[59] She witnessed, for example, white recipients visibly frustrated about administrative mishaps or their ineligibility for particular benefits, grouse about people of color "getting everything."[60] Some deployed racial language in their complaints. Although the offenders did not issue their statements to Tina directly, she was alert and aware that she was a target and that they did not mind catching her in the cross-fire. According to Tina, tales about the women, men and children who share her lot, "never goes away, it never do and every once in a while it pops up."[61]

Distinct from Cassandra and Tina, 43-year-old Sierra Leone-born mother Marai does not refer to elements of the Welfare Queen trope in her portrayal of dysmorphic ideas about black women and mothers. Rather her depiction of her first few years in the country, and in particular her portrayal of her time as a welfare recipient is informative in capturing the ways in which controlling images expand and spill over ethnic lines. Born in the city of Freetown, Marai migrated to Hartford in 1999 with her husband and 3-year-

old daughter. Since their arrival, she gave birth to another child, earned a Master's degree

in early childhood education and gained a managerial position in the city's library youth

department. Marai attributes her family's strides to the faith-based, Connecticut

conference of the United Church of Christ and one of the city's historic, African

American churches. However, Marai recalled the transition, "wasn't easy," as she and her

husband were unemployed. In her home country, as well as in Gambia, she was a

certified teacher and earned a BA in English and Sociology. Yet the state mandated

evaluation of her credentials and the re-certification process was arduous. She shared,

> I'm grateful because in my case I wasn't out of a job that long. Yet, still, it
> still wasn't easy staying home and – one thing – not that I didn't
> appreciate it – because we had the, you know? The state help? The EBT
> card and things like that. And, what is it again? The food stamps. But for
> me, the fact that I had been working and taking care of myself, my family,
> my kid – you know how you go into the stores and – I just never feel full,
> whole, you know? Just living on the state. So I never ever had the full
> feeling because sometimes you would see the expression on people's face
> – "Now here you are lazy bone, feeding on the state." So you know once I
> started earning my own and just being independent of the state it was the
> most satisfying feeling for me. It was really full and complete, because
> now I can take care of myself. Now I can take care of my kid. And help in
> whatever case I can…. but I mean, I really appreciate what the
> government does for people. You know when you're coming in and you
> can't make ends meet, and if you need that help definitely welfare is -
> people shouldn't be proud enough to receive that (Laughter).[62]

Marai narrated this phase of her life and articulated the terms "food stamps" and "EBT"

with indecision and hesitancy. She put into words the visceral impact of a public

discourse that denounces welfare recipients. Her self-criticism during her first years in

Hartford was not simply due to her removal from the economic independence she had in

West Africa or her home community's standards of success. Mari's sense of shame and

embarrassment, evident in the 1990s as well as during the interview, make clear that an

American-specific expectation, traceable in the facial expressions of her new country-women and men, struck the immigrant mother of two and repealed her of "fullness" and "wholeness." Her use of the phrases, "lazy bone" and "feeding on the state" denotes her exposure to a rhetoric about welfare dependents in majority-minority areas such as Hartford durably upheld as factual.

The Bad Black Mother by Another Name

As both the native and foreign-born black mothers interviewed pointed to a cognizance of and toiling with victim-blaming, institutionally pacifying mythologies, the black immigrant mothers noted that their ethnic and cultural identities deepen the lacerations caused by racial and gender formations. A return to the experiences of Khadija and Cassandra, and elucidation of the thoughts of respondent, Pauline, illustrate the distinctive ways ubiquitous deductions of black womanhood and motherhood permeate the lives of foreign-born black mothers.

While in route to the pool, Khadija received a phone call from a close friend. Unless communicating with her largely black, English-speaking client base, conducting business with her bank or a retailer, or meeting with her children's schools, Kadijah largely speaks her native language. She was still on the phone when she entered the outdoor facility. While on the phone with her friend, they conversed in Wolof, the dialect of their home country and region. The pool attendee made her accusations shortly after Kadijah's conversation ended. When the manager arrived, she proceeded to claim that Kadijah was loudly shouting profanities into the phone. Kadijah shared with him that she was not speaking harshly nor using foul words, but rather speaking in her first language.

She also asserted that it was her right to speak a language other than English if she desired.

The Senegalese wife and mother maintained that her audibly immigrant origins contributed to the woman's discomfort. Her charge that Khadijah was using expletives in a family oriented environment was not merely a matter of misunderstanding Khadija's language, but grounded in a belief that it was inappropriate to use. The foreignness, coalesced with archetypes of black motherhood to animate Khadija as an imposter. She emerged as a wildly, uncontrollable black mother with like-minded children amid morally superior, white mothers and as a stranger in a land and amongst people that were not her own.

An event that Khadija interpreted as an ousting and expatriation is an enactment of Cassandra's contention that black immigrants are not desirable additions to the nation's shores. She believes that this is especially the case for the Haitian-born, such as her parents, aunts and uncles. Cassandra asserted that the stereotypical de-legitimization of the work ethic of those of African descent affects African immigrants and that for Haitians, this opening lens of analysis is exacerbated and extended by the particular state of Haiti as a rebellious country. Cassandra calculated,

> Take the Mexicans' experiences and put black on them and that's a Haitian person. You know with crossing the border in a sense, and it's just stereotypes. That's one of my biggest things because if they were white, they would have a different experience. Haitians would have a different experience. The other thing is they're known to be – history put them as the rebellions in all the stages of war, like the civil war that they had there over the years, with rebels going against government, they have the ability to team work, work together and overthrow a government. They have the experience. And to me, when I think of another reason why not - if I chose not to embrace that country is because shoot, they have shown that over

the years that they're able to change their government by rallying together. They don't follow - the culture doesn't respect rules and regulations. So why do we need them here? To me, it's a lot - their confidence keeps them out. Their blackness keeps them out. For the most part, I think those are the stereotypes that comes with being black, keeps them out.[63]

The unique black stereotypes applied to Haitians plays out in Cassandra's life in which she senses that she has to shield herself from assumptions tied to black motherhood, but those tethered to her stationing as a black mother of Haitian descent. Upon learning of her Haitian roots, friends and colleagues often assume that her parents have a proclivity to stagnation, are entrapped in impoverished conditions, stripped of their insurrectionary vigor and irreversibly downtrodden by the stigmatization of European world powers. In reclaiming the humanity that these molds deprive her and her family of, Cassandra inserts her parent's legacy into these conversations. In doing so she emphasizes her parent's credentials. She described an occurrence at work that captures her attempts to transcend these images.

Cause it was the assumption that…I was poor, that I didn't really have income. I was able to do a lot of stuff. And I kinda fit in. I had to prove – it sucks – but until I prove people otherwise, I'll automatically hear, "Oh Haitians…" and I'll automatically be filled with all these stereotypes and then I gotta prove all that stuff wrong, right? Even at the job I'm at now. I turn in my birth of certificate – as proof of my – I didn't have my social security card, and the guy at HR was like, "Oh, your parents Haitian?" And I was like, "Yes, my parents are Haitian they came here in the 70s." but then I always, always, I'm telling you…I hate that, but I always follow up with, "My dad retired Library of Congress, my mom retired department treasury." Because I have to empower my parents again. And they're like, "Oh okay." You know what I'm saying? They're like, "Oh, that's what your parents did? Okay." Don't stereotype my parents. I shouldn't have to do that, but because you want to question mark or want have a down moment or whatever you're going through, let me tell you my parents wasn't no regular black persons. My parents worked hard. But it sucks. It really does.[64]

Her objectification was tri-fold, and her Haitian identity undoubtedly raised the stakes. Cassandra, in addition to a range of the other mothers, demonstrate the difficulties at work. Many of the black immigrant mothers have trouble finding a job that fits the experience gained in their home countries. They must endure the processes of revaluation and even pursuing a new career path. Their limited employment opportunities and minimal professional respect from employers and co-workers illuminate the working world as a terrain particularly fraught with black specific stigma and prejudice.

This was the experience of Jamaican immigrant, Pauline. 56-year-old Jamaican immigrant and mother of two, Pauline arrived to Hartford in the early 1980s to pursue college. Due to the lengthy waiting lists at the few universities in the West Indies, her older brother encouraged her to migrate to the United States. The 22-year-old, single woman applied for multiple clerical and administrative positions but was not successful in locating a job. She stated that this was a result of her minimal work experience in the United States. Pauline also asserted that discrimination played an important role in the few call backs she received. When she spoke to potential employers on the phone, they were enthusiastic and asked her to come in for an interview. However, she remembered, once arriving for an in-person meeting, the direction of her candidacy changed "right away."[65] While her accent did not prompt interviewers to inquire about her birthplace and the location of her past employment over the telephone, it did once she was face to face with her prospective employers. Pauline gathered that her race caused employers to hesitate and bust their originally high hopes for her. Her racial categorization seemingly revoked her accent of its original appeal and suitability.

She located her ethnicity as an additional base of derailment. As if placed on the two opposing pans of a balance scale, in select cases Pauline's blackness carries more weight in fashioning Pauline's employment outcomes and in others, her foreign origins and associated countenances cause the scale's imbalance. She shared that on one occasion she successfully conducted an on-site interview and was promptly hired by a major hospital in the city, but released shortly thereafter. Pauline explained,

> I went in and they offered me the position, sent me a letter and said I had the position, how much I would make when I would start, and a week later, they called me back and said they needed to give me a second interview, I went in for the second interview and was told that I wasn't able to start because I have an accent and the patients coming in would have a problem with my accent, so I wasn't given the job… If then, I had the knowledge that I had now, I would have gone on with a lawsuit…I think that this should be discrimination.[66]

Pauline, and a speaker of Jamaican patois, learned that her usage of the English language, although tutored, practiced and refined, threatened to tarnish her marketability. All the while her race and the ideas linked to this, undoubtedly hung, albeit quietly, on the scale's beam. Her race and foreign-born roots worked in tandem to raise a wall between her and the position she sorely needed.[67]

A Will to Survive

Black mothers are firmly committed to destabilizing the veracity and palpability of flawed norms and interpretations that foster their omission from subjectivity and their appointment to castigation. They embark on the invalidation of monotonously re-written rules of engagement in analogous ways. For example, the mothers of Hartford convert elisions of their humanity into opportunities to directly confront and interrogate the bearers of their pathology and the channels that aid their momentum and flow. African

American mother Evelyn, informed her son's teacher that she refused to follow her counsel and acted upon this declaration. Khadija countered the pool goers that pinned her and her children to misdemeanors they did not commit and without a moment of hesitation announced that the woman's imputations were racially and ethnically motivated. While at PEACH and other branches of government assistance, Tina inserted herself in dialogues that damned her as a black woman welfare beneficiary. She often interrupted and denounced grumblings that delineated people of color as unworthy citizens, or worse yet, not citizens at all. After a number of failed interviews, Pauline began to question interviewers when they raised doubts about the "slight-clip" in her voice and questioned her accent's cultural origins. She now, customarily asks them, "Why?" The Jamaican-born mother imparted, "I always ask why. Does it matter? I never ever answer. I don't deny where I'm from, but if I go into an interview and that is a part of the interview, I will not answer."[68]

Caught up in a vortex of debilitating expectations, native and foreign-born black mothers strive to harness the capabilities that controlling images winch from their grasp. Their attention to bettering their lives and those of their children is a quest that entails perforating the domains from which the nation's ideological ropes hold them hostage. Black mothers living in the United States affix themselves to self-defined ideals, traits, resignations and desires irrespective of their aversion to the terms of normalcy established by a discourse that both admonishes and places a currency on their downfall as members of society. Recall that respondent Sammayah discerned that, "As a mother, as a black woman, I think that society portrays us as – we are the Cinderellas."[69] Shortly

following this statement, she offers a thoughtful meditation on how she negotiates her

casting as a Cinderella in a social services job marked by a high demand for her time,

tenuous compensation, slighted treatment and few opportunities for promotion as well a

community of family and friends that expects Sammayah to extend herself to meet the

needs of all, but herself.

> I always remind myself when I'm having some struggles in whatever
> capacity that I am a descendent of a slave. I am the descendent of someone
> who endured the journey from Africa to the states. They survived. And so
> as a result of that, I know that their blood, their strength, their endurance
> runs through my veins. So for me to throw in the towel? I'm like, that's
> not in me.[70]

The single mother's refusal to "throw down the towel" in the name of her enslaved

ancestors does not connote a romanticized perpetuation and shouldering of the Strong

Black Woman imperative. Rather it constitutes Sammayah's faith in her capacity to

invent a ballroom and a pair of glass slippers that she can call her own. She stays abreast

of her desires and ambitions and actively applies her ingenuity and public administrative

skills to arenas outside of her workplace. Also important, she supports her city and

neighborhood on her own terms. Sammayah's family raised her to take up the gauntlet of

the self-effacing caretaker, yet she continually ejects this standard from her day to day

judgements and reckonings. She admits that although she does not have the time to, "sit

on a therapist's couch once a week right now," she ardently works towards unashamedly

allowing herself to hurt, cry, and seek help when she and her son are in need of resources

she is unable to deliver or afford.[71]

Sammayah intends to win the ideological war waged over black women's

representation as the stakes are undoubtedly high. Her son's frame of opportunity, as well

as his measurements of the cross-cutting relationship between race, gender, class and sexuality depends on it. She asserted, "I'm trying to model for him a good upstanding black woman." According to Sammayah, an "upstanding" image of black womanhood is not Cinderella, neither is it one of as phrased by Barbara Smith, "an already liberated" Strong Black Woman. Her self-constructed motif is also one that lends to the abashment and penalization of unmarried, dependent black mothers. Sammayah emphasizes, "I'm human. And I feel like, he's gotta understand."[72] For this Hartford mother, explorations and renderings of her identity must acknowledge her humanity, if they do not, it is not her at all.

The Kenya-born health professional, Christine, also espouses a sense of self void of controlling images. This is apparent in her repulsion and disposal of imposed invisibility. When asked if she talks with her supervisors regarding their tendency to forget to allot her time off, she replied that she does bring the issue to their attention because she refuses to "play into their hands."[73] Christine resists allowing herself to be a slab of clay cut and scored by socially determined mandates of black women's labor and leisure. In describing her rationalization for requesting reevaluations of the staff schedule she stated, "You have to look through what do you call it? – through the glass hole?"[74] Echoing Sammayah's use of glass imagery to capture the containment of black women as tough, but translucent and not impossible to break or be refurbished for another use, it is possible that Christine was searching for the words, "look through the looking glass," rather than "look through the glass hole." Nonetheless, both adages, the one articulated and the other lodged in the crooks of her memory, appropriately convey her practice of

examining and assessing her needs as a black woman employee in a way that is antithetical to the white, hegemonic gaze. She punctures a hole in the hard glass frame that comprises the staple conceptualizations of black women or sees through the contrived reflection of herself in order to step into an alternate reality that turns systemized categorizations of black women and mothers on their heads. Christine's deflection of the viewing tendencies of her hospital's leadership places her in a position to request equitable access to the essentials offered to her white women co-workers.

By unifying the second-person with her first-person, autobiographical account, Christine transforms her reflection into a dictation and lesson for other black women in their assailment and inversion of representational dysfunction and its material costs. Native and foreign-born black mothers' individual acts of protest, bound by the pejorative scripting of their bodies and likened instruments of demystification, give way to a collaborative process of resistance that defies ethnic boundaries. Preceded by a depiction of contemporary black motherhood that does not ignore the cross-ethnic salience of controlling images and gives credence to black women's cognizance of and willingness to survive these ideological trappings, the following chapter ventures into a discussion and depiction of the collective resistance Christine rears as an imperative to sculpting a glass hole.

CHAPTER 3

Black Women's Interethnic Self-Definition

"*We are an omnipresent force to be reckoned with and respected." –* "Symphony,"

Dunbar Village Blog, 2008.[1]

  In 2007, the nation's influential and leading civil rights organizations sacrificed a

battered, black mother and child on the altar of the Dunbar 4 to restore equal protection

before the law. The victims did not factor into their pursuit of a higher purpose. It is

possible that she would have perished there if not for the insurgent thoughts and actions

of black women. For they often found themselves thrown at the base of a similar altar,

primed to secure the humanity of others while forsaking their own, and seen as unfit for a

liberated existence. These very experiences provoked them to use the blogosphere to

develop an "omnipresent force" that arbitrates and contests another – the routine isolation

and discarding of black women into oblivion. The black women bloggers saw their

reflections, and that of their children's in the Haitian-born women and son. If they did not

act, their own neglect was on standby. The women envisioned and practiced oneness and

community as they lifted the Dunbar Village mother from the cutting weight of

invisibility. Historically rooted, racist-sexist ideologies overrode ethnic boundaries and

incited the actions of the women. Their recognition and response to mirroring images and

realities are indicative of a larger trend. This chapter traces the type of interethnic

resistance displayed in the aftermath of the Dunbar Village assault in the everyday lives

of both native and foreign-born black women and mothers.

Creating Safety in Barren Spaces

Patricia Hill Collins writes that safe-spaces are a "a necessary condition for Black women's resistance."[2] Safe-spaces, birthed and sustained by black women's dialogue, exchanges, and relationships, keep their subjugation at bay. Their unimpeded self-expression thwart an internalization and acceptance of controlling images. Moreover, whether they be visual, oral, or organizational, safe-spaces stimulate and exude a consciousness that runs to counter to a discourse that threatens to leave them and their children powerless.

Native and foreign-born black mothers' beginnings in distinct "homeplaces" has the potential to militate against productive collectivity. These groups share histories and lineages shaped by a global black experience of enslavement, bondage and exploitation. Yet, their regional locales harbor distinctive reverberations of these systems. Having resided within varying apparatuses of power, the footsteps native and immigrant black mothers are accustomed to following towards self-definition are distinguishable, as are the realms they consider to be shelters from deprecation.

Traditional mappings of black mothers' safe-spaces represent civil organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women and historically black congregations like the African Methodist Episcopal Church or the National Baptist Convention as crucial sites for the authoring of an alternative black women's discourse. [3] These maps also pin-point black women-owned hair salons and shops as protective realms for this group. Foregrounded by the industrial efforts of twentieth century black women culturalists such as Annie Malone of Poro Hair Company and Madame C.J. Walker's self-named network

of products, sales operations, beautician training schools and stores, this entrepreneurial plane, detached from white proprietors, allows black women to not only come together to give and receive services, but freely talk about their concerns and community dilemmas and in the process rely on one another to formulate solutions.[4]

On a map attuned to the diasporic dimensions of contemporary black womanhood, the trails of native and foreign-born black mothers in pursuit of safe-spaces diverge and do not always fully connect. African American, Caribbean, and African mothers look for and experience dialogical refuge in marketplace niches unhampered by cultural and linguistic barriers.

Consider African-owned hair braiding shops. These braiders are a formidable part of the women-led enterprise that is black hair care as early as the latter half of 20th century.[5] Their clientele is largely African American. During a typical braiding session, the stylist intertwines and weaves hair pieces together, while her client tilts her head. In the process both enact an African diaspora-centered tradition and ritual. Collectively they insert and validate their hair textures and styles in a society that primarily valorizes Eurocentric standards of beauty. Although the value of this exchange cannot be overstated and the creation of safe-spaces are not limited to verbal communication, language barriers often mitigate against dialogue outside of appointment scheduling, monetary exchange and hair preferences.[6]

Coupled with the social and cultural nexus that is hair care, faith communities emerge on the nation's ideological plot of deprecation as core centers of black women's self-definition. Yet, native and foreign-born black mothers of shared faiths and

denominations pray, worship and gain their spiritual bearings in church homes populated

by those attuned to the customs, traditions, and service structures of their home

countries.[7] In the same way, it is also evident that while native and foreign-born black

mothers similarly find resolve in historically black civil societies, black immigrant

mothers, desiring semblances of home in an unknown place, gravitate towards island or

country-specific clubs and associations.

Notably, black mothers' decisions to remain within their ethnic ranks in their day

to day relationships and associations are not alone a result of their interest in preserving

their cultural practices. For them, an environment within which they can escape

misrepresentation is one occupied by individuals that measure their personhoods and

their relationship to the larger society in a fashion similar to their own. Whilst steering

through organizational, religious, and public spaces, native and foreign-born black

mothers' varying understandings of the societal implications of their race and gender are

at play. Recall that black immigrant men and women alike consider race to be one of

many barriers capable of being overcome. Existing studies indicate that black immigrants

distance themselves from natives and the deficiencies to which they seem to be helplessly

attached. This impels distrust among the native-born and suspicions about the social,

political, and economic intentions of the immigrants who reside in their neighborhoods,

who may be co-workers, local business owners or fellow parents at their children's

schools. While black immigrants underestimate the stronghold that is institutionalized

oppression, African Americans tend to minimalize the non-American contexts that shape

the ideologies of black immigrants. According to the existing scholarship, the stirring and

deployment of pessimistic and cynical assessments can prevent voluntary unity, and among black mothers the birth of interethnic safe-spaces.

The present chapter argues that although ties between native and foreign-born black mothers appear to be fragmented and incompatible with traditional counter-publics like churches or hair salons, they are not insignificant to this group's processes of interethnic self-definition. The ways in which black women's devices of collective self-definition have evolved with their unprecedented diversification. As native and foreign-born black mothers have common experiences with and a shared awareness of their subjugation, they also locate power in collaborative efforts of resistance.

In the 1983 article, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger," Audre Lorde states that a necessary condition of black women's safe-spaces is an unraveling of the tangled webs that inhibit their capacity to see one another's full, uncompromised humanity. In order for black women to create an alternative realm that dispels controlling images and allows them to determine ways to counter these outside forces, they must first subvert the views and practices that make them complicit in casting other black women as unworthy members of the public. Transgressive ideological work among native and foreign-born black mothers' and their capacity to cooperatively lessen the power of "external manifestations of racism and sexism" are only conceivable Lorde writes, if they "deal with the results of those distortions internalized within…our consciousness of ourselves and one another."[8] The text to follow suggests that although the homeplaces from whence native and foreign-born black mothers originate are set apart and their blueprints for safe-spaces differ, black mothers actively extend the critical lens they apply

to controlling images to their treatment and assessment of black mothers of ethnic backgrounds that differ from their own. The current chapter traces the deliberate and conscious attempts of ideological reorientation among black mothers and posits that therein lies their cultivation of safe-spaces.

Concrete Wall

An outline of the methods through which native and foreign-born black mothers "see eye to eye," and a full recognition of the inventiveness of their strong opposition to the post-racial trafficking of controlling images, requires an exploration of the factors that inhibit their collective development of safe-spaces. Although strapped by homologous models of black womanhood that stall racial equality, African American, Caribbean, and African mothers harbor viewpoints of one another that quell, as opposed to lead to a concerted undertaking of gendered racism.

Respondent Pauline, sentient of her "fights" and "struggles" as a black mother, maintained that African American women do not share her resolve to thwart and override the barriers wrought by racism and sexism. While I interviewed Pauline in the living room of her home in Hartford's Blue Hills neighborhood, her daughter Amber, a 24-year-old recent college graduate, sat nearby attentively listening to the conversation. As her mother passionately shared her take on the vast differences between schools in the United States and those in Jamaica, and her thoughts on the parenting styles of natives, Amber interjected,

> Why do you think, we, as West Indians differentiate ourselves from black Americans? I know a lot of people that are West Indian and they are very quick to say, "I'm not black, I'm West Indian. I'm from…" - and I don't

really understand. I feel like blacks have advanced over the years, but why are they so insistent on just separating themselves from that group?[9]

After pondering the inquiry of her eldest child, whom she birthed and raised in Hartford, Pauline posited that because West Indian immigrants had little opportunity to gain financial assistance from the government in their home countries, they are more likely than native blacks to practice self-sufficiency when building their lives. They were unable to look beyond themselves for sustenance before migrating, and they are not prone to do so after. Pauline gathers that due to this, Jamaican immigrants are particularly willing to locating work opportunities, regardless of the size or the conditions. She explained, "So whether you are paid 3.75 or 40 dollars an hour, all we know is that this is a job that is available and I am going to work. Once I'm in, I'm going to try to work to a point so that I can advance myself further ahead."[10] For this immigrant group, their future can go as far as their work ethic does. Thus low wages and gritty tasks are not considered to be end points, but steps towards a potentially greater calling. According to Pauline, "I think that's where the separation is – where I see the separation when I started."[11] She shared with Amber that immigrants from the islands find natives to be disappointingly averse to independent labor. A considerable portion of African Americans, she observed, appear to be content with depending on the government and indifferent to using their own faculties to support their families. Pauline suggests that their lack of industriousness and comparatively low tendency to apply a forward-thinking approach to employment, is a consequence of their overzealous devotion to the wrongs of slavery and Jim Crow. She theorizes that this causes natives to abandon self-responsibility and place the dilemmas of black inequality at the feet of the government, the source of these past violations.

Karen also sees a line of separation between West Indians and African Americans. The 60-year-old, who moved to Hartford from Jamaica at the age of 19 with her parents, maintained, "Do I know that there's prejudice in this world? Absolutely. But I don't use this as a crutch or an excuse." She continued, "African Americans, I think that they look at their disadvantage…and they haven't built a bridge to overcome that."[12] In her statement, Karen mounts a divider between herself and African Americans. She suggests that not only does she respond to her minoritization differently from native-born blacks, but does so in a way that does not lead to her defeat. The fate of her African American counterparts however, is not guaranteed. Like Pauline, Karen gathered that while West Indians detect progress in tireless labor and educational attainment, African Americans heavily weigh and thus are distracted by the role of oppressive forces in their lives. From Karen's perspective, while West Indians do not hesitate to gather the available tools and materials needed to build a bridge over race, African Americans tend to fret about the equipment they lack or may be deprived of.

The African immigrant respondents did not insist that the African-descended natives are, as one second generation Caribbean immigrant respondent declared, "hung up on the race thing."[13] However, they demonstrated a belief that native-born blacks, and native-born black women in particular, are bereft of self-determination and reluctant to take the lead in change their social, economic and political conditions. Christine, the Kenyan-born health professional, reported that she observed many differences between herself and the native black women she encounters at her job, passes by on the street or meets at her children's schools in the Greater Hartford area.

> I think for my own view, I think the African American woman should really educate herself. I just feel that they have a lot of privileges here but they don't want to take those privileges. I feel that when you - I think it's just the culture, I don't know. But maybe I'm wrong. Mine is just from observation, that our African American women - I don't know for some reason, not – I don't know, maybe I'm wrong? But I don't see them going to school, pushing themselves to educate themselves, you know? They just want to be stagnant...[14]

Martha, who migrated to Hartford in 2014 with her son and husband from Côte d'Ivoire offered a reflection that aligns with Christine's. The 45-year-old stated,

> It is like the black, they are abdicated – the word in English? Abdicate? They don't want to fight for their right, you see? In olden days there were some people that would stand and fight for their right, and they need to continue that by doing what? By going to school. Look at you – you're going to school. But most of African, black American, they don't like go to school. But look at where you are now. You understand better some things. But if you don't want to go to school and be educated, how are you going to have a good position in this country and change things?

Clear in Christine and Martha's assessments, as well as in the thought of the West Indian women interviewed, is the sense that the African American population has their priorities out of order. They point to education and employment as the nexus around which change will undoubtedly occur.

Negative conceptions of the ethnic other are not limited to immigrants. Native black mothers also develop ideas that have the power to funnel derogatory meanings that perpetuate a mystification of reality and breed self-imposed separation. 44-year-old Evelyn disclosed that she does not trust West Indian women. She declared that in recent years, it became apparent to her that they prefer to "compete with us for opportunities" and dismiss "helping the community collectively."[15] Another respondent, Gloria, has similar observations and finds that, "they just don't wanna associate with us."[16] A

resident of Hartford and active member of an array of civic associations, the 54-year-old came to this conclusion upon noticing the relative absence of immigrants at programming and events committed to improving the state of the city's black families and children. Gloria believes that multiple factors contribute to this distance. She asserts that the inner-city is "at a standstill or in a rut" and among African Americans, there is a prevalence of "young kids and young mothers, and fathers that's not there for their children." Gloria stated that black immigrants desire to avoid this fate and avoid natives, "'cause they wanna work hard, they wanna achieve things. They wanna have something."[17] However, she continued, they should not allow "what they see" to deter them from building relationships with native blacks and contributing to the health of the city in which they all live. For African Americans, she argues, are not merely a people that "don't want to do anything."[18]

Vanessa takes the thoughts of native-born black women a step further and suggests that underneath the assertions that foreign-born blacks are untrustworthy, and not committed to joining in a collective fight against systemic marginalization, is envy. She presents a unique perspective as the daughter of an African-American mother from Virginia and a second-generation, Bajan-American father. She was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts before moving to Hartford in 1980. Vanessa recounted that the contrasts between her maternal and paternal family, "just the personalities, the strengths, the weaknesses, the way in which we see ourselves," are apparent. She describes her father's parents and siblings as having "brought with them the sense of pride in their culture, in their traditions, in their foods, in their music, and knowing that where they

came from, they were the majority. They were in public service, they were government."

She asserted that they came from beginnings that starkly contrasted to her mother's

predominantly white and racially hostile surroundings. In an attempt to fully capture their

distinct origins she shared, "My grandmother remembered that her mother was a child in

the home, she was a house slave when Emancipation supposedly happened for blacks in

the south."[19] Vanessa asserted that as her mother's kin "were very close to the atrocities

of slavery," they were and continue to be damaged in ways unexperienced by her Bajan

relatives. In ways similar to the allusions of the black immigrant mother respondents,

Vanessa argued that systematic racism not only impacted the material conditions of

African Americans, but their perceptions of society and themselves. While her father and

his siblings were highly educated, her mother spent much of her life working as a

domestic. Her other relatives, including her mother's brother, were entrapped in cycles of

alcoholism and poverty. The confidence exuded by the Barbados-born family was not

traceable among her African American ancestors who in comparison, were

"downtrodden." Vanessa, in a tone of certainty and sureness, declared, "Slavery has

really been so detrimental to African Americans in this country."[20] She surmised that a

lack of exposure to the opportunities that Bajans and other West Indians in particular

from the Caribbean had, for example, living in majority-black nations undefined by white

supremacy causes African Americans to "have a sort of envy." According to Vanessa

"They misread that pride and self-esteem that they see people coming here with and they

want to think "you're haughty," "you think you're better than me."[21]

Native and foreign-born black mothers' divergent stances on societal power dynamics, and accordingly, their antipathy to one another can rupture the possibility of their coming together to fashion a safe, protective discourse that repels the dehumanization they experience in the greater society. The roadblocks that intraracial misconceptions have imposed on their capacity to build shared safe-spaces are evidenced in a myriad of the respondents' encounters and exchanges across ethnic lines.

In Sammayah's experience, the constant subordination she faces as a black mother does not completely disappear when she is in the presence of black immigrants. She prefaced her description of her relationships with this group by recollecting her college study abroad trip to Ghana, West Africa. Before recollecting a time in her life that preceded the birth of her son and her case manager position in the building in which she sat, she released an exhale and glanced at her clasped hands, as if preparing to share a reality that she wished was not her own. Sammayah disclosed, "This hurts my heart to no end, because I was not loved when I was in Africa, for the most part. By the women. I was not accepted by the women."[22] According to the former-California based college student,

> When I was in Ghana it was hard not to be embraced by the people who looked like me. The women who looked like me. Generally speaking - there were a few here and there who loved us and embraced us, but we couldn't walk into a room and sit down and be welcomed by a bunch of women from Ghana or Africa for that matter. We were outcasts and that hurt. That hurt us tremendously. Myself and my peers that I went to Ghana with.[23]

Her expectation of communion with Ghanaian women, of an intrinsic connection on the basis of what she perceived to be a shared racial and gendered identity, fell

through. Sammayah suggested that her experiences during those six months in Ghana replay in her exchanges with African as well as Caribbean immigrant women in Hartford. She noted that foreign-born black women, "snub nose" her. Heavily involved in the community through her employment at a non-profit agency, but also through her volunteer work with local organizations, the mayor's office, church bible groups, the neighborhood's block watch and more, Sammayah, akin to Gloria and Evelyn, notices that black immigrant mothers fail to consider her a source of guidance for their concerns and grievances. Although she considers herself to be in tune with the pulse of the city and its marginalized groups, black women of other backgrounds "don't necessarily value anything that I have to say because I'm beneath them, generally speaking," said Sammayah. Instead, "they go seeking help from resources that don't look like me."[24] Her sentiments nod towards the misconceptions both groups tend to have of one another. The crooked room, which yields images of African American mothers as exploitive, enemies of the state, push foreign-born mothers to seek white men and women for assistance.

Janet also offers an account that uncovers black borderlands as potentially incapable of yielding safe-spaces. In 2009, the neighborhood organizer, and at the time, part-time college student decided to found Women of Color United (WCU), an organization centered around promoting dialogue among minority women in the Hartford area. Periodically throughout the year, she invited solely women of color of different ages, professions, and class groupings to come to her home to examine, discuss and formulate solutions for issues that affect them and their families. These include mass incarceration, government assistance, public housing management, the public school

system, and the agendas of members of the city government. Over drinks and food, largely black and Latina women raised one another's awareness as well as challenged and sharpened each other's attitudes and perspectives.

As an older, non-traditional student on a predominantly white campus, Janet began to think more about her voice as a woman at the intersections of multiple oppressions and the nominal space available for her to openly articulate her positionality. In 2012 Janet expanded the organization's mission to include a public arm, in which they transformed their deliberations into action. Janet and the other group's leaders recruited and trained members as community workers. As a unit they acted as consultants for a number of the city's school administrators and public officials, spearheaded voter registration, facilitated public forums in Hartford to provide families an opportunity to dialogue, and shared their concerns with politicians running for office. All the while, they continued to work closely with individual women of color to supply their day-to-day needs. In the interview, Janet stated that she is pleased with the organization's growth. She declared, "I humbly say, no one - no one in this city possesses that much power but a bunch of women from projects – that I developed."[25]

The othermother and daughter of one of the largest housing projects in the city's history, admits that bringing foreign-born black women into the fold, is trying. She cited "cultural divisions" as the cause of this. Janet elaborated on this concept by describing an incident that occurred in the organization's second year of existence. By then the convenings that took place in her home grew in popularity and drew women of color from other metropolitan areas in the state, such as New Haven. According to Janet, in one

of the conversations, a native-born black woman from the city of New Haven queried,

"You know I'm originally from New Haven and – Hartford is different in the sense that

you have Jamaicans who don't identify as Black. Their ethnicity is playing more than

their race and I just wanted to know why is that?"[26] The listeners found the woman's

observation to be accurate and according to Janet, it provided them with an opportunity to

address and hopefully work through questions of identity. A number of black immigrant

women in Hartford, not present at the gathering, learned of the question posed and took

issue with the claim that they did not identify as black. A cohort of West Indian women,

members of one of the city's Caribbean associations, decided to hold a meeting to discuss

the claims brought forth at the meeting Women of Color United meeting. Janet asserted

that upon learning of this scheduled assembly, she decided to attend with a few other

WCU members. Yet, those not of Caribbean or West Indian descent were not permitted

to enter. Janet recalled, "We go, and they decide they didn't wanna let us in." She told the

woman leading the meeting,

> This is a public space…and I know you don't want me to tell people that
> you're not allowing us in the building because this is an all West Indian--
> there's no such thing in city public spaces as an all West Indian building."
> Needless to say I got up and I said to them that, "We have to have these
> conversations and although some of us want to sit in here and act like we
> haven't heard this before, it's true and so how do we get beyond it?" And I
> left…I wanted to respect their space but I also wanted them to know that
> we can talk about this.[27]

Although Janet created an intentional safe-space for women of color, it was one

that many West Indian women in the community did not consider to be a realm of

security for them. Although many of the women refuted the claim that they rejected

aligning with native black women, they closed their doors on Janet and other American

women. Janet shared that she was not surprised to later learn that during the meeting,

"they had a bunch of West Indians saying, 'I'm not Black.'"[28]

The extent to which the internalization of racist and sexist images often prevent

black mothers from occupying the same spaces is also conveyed by entrepreneur,

Henrietta. She vividly remembers that in the 1980s and 1990s, simply driving in your car

or walking down the street as a West Indian could cause the onslaught of conflict with

black natives in the form of tense interactions and at times physical altercations.

According to Henrietta:

> I remember years ago American black used to fight against Jamaican
> black a lot! Because they felt that we would come to their country and take
> from them - if we had a good house, a nice house, they would be jealous
> of it. But it's something that we work hard for. If we had a nice car, they
> would be jealous of it, but it's something that we worked hard for. It
> seems to me that they would want to sit and have things come to them...[29]

The small business owner's recollections point to cross-ethnic dysfunction and the extent

to which distancing strategies, distrust, and competition prevents black native and

immigrant mothers from productively navigating and interacting on the same terrain

Seeing "Eye to Eye"

If unaddressed, cross-ethnic notions can rupture native and foreign-born black

mothers' interdependency. Yet, this dissertation contends that where the possibility of

safe spaces appears to be dormant, black mothers are pressing against the borders that

divide them. The data to follow traces safe-space building in native and foreign-born

black mothers attempts to challenge the outlooks and perceptions of blackness and

womanhood that prevent them from thriving within the same somatic and imaginative

milieus. Within their formal and informal networks, dominated by co-ethnics, black

mothers interrogate and smother the internalization and reproduction of intraracial misrepresentation.

The study's investigation of black mothers' crucial process of safe-space building begins with the Hartford's West Indian Social Club, founded in 1950. One of the largest Caribbean-based associations in New England, WISC's members and supporters are "dedicated to the mission of preserving the cultural heritage of the West Indian community in the Greater Hartford area."[30] Housed in a 40,000 square foot facility, the club holds educational and finance related workshops, community service projects, youth enrichment programs, community meetings, and events including their annual, "Miss West Indian Scholarship Pageant." The club is also home to a cricket team and holds promotional events for small business owners in the West Indian community. Further, it is not uncommon for their entertainment and banquet hall to be filled with community members and city dwellers dancing to Reggae on a Saturday night, enjoying a West Indian-infused play or celebrating at Gala or awards ceremony. Indicative of their commitment to protecting and securing the place of their Afro-Caribbean influence in Hartford, the West Indian Social Club maintains their archives and collaborates with historians in organizing exhibits and presentations.[31] The majority of the club's leaders are women and more specifically, mothers. This includes the Jamaican-born President, Nicone Gordon, elected in 2015.

During a group interview with a number of the club's women members, a consciousness of the caricatures of black womanhood and motherhood was lucid. The WISC members and Greater Hartford residents were also aware that black women of

divergent backgrounds often author debilitating conceptions of one another. However, also consistent in their expressions and thoughts on these ideological separations was the assertion that while many may deploy distancing strategies, they could not say the same for the social club in which they spend much of their time. Inciting head nods and sounds of affirmation, Dionne, a member, mother and 41-year-old attorney, stated, "I don't see that within our organization there's been a significant distinction between American and West Indian born-women."[32] The women, most of whom were foreign-born and one of which was a second-generation immigrant, articulated a fidelity to building relationships with African American women and working against the perpetuation and reincarnation of controlling images within their heavily women-populated domains. For, according to many of the members, internal divides are misconceptions and the result of a larger, racially discriminatory discourse that haphazardly disregards the conditions and lives of native and foreign-born black women and men. One woman announced that the misunderstandings and false impressions that lie between the groups, were "created to divide the community and really had nothing to do with the people that are living within the community."[33] Thus, while the group is knowledgeable of inner-working stereotypes "out there somewhere," they believe that there persists a greater, more tenacious discursive force that binds them to native-born black women more than it sets them apart.

The women expressed a commitment to working against what one member, Sharon, referred to as, the "us versus them mentality."[34] This quest to counter misrecognition has its roots in the organization's history. Welcoming native-born black women into their quarters as equal partners in a shared struggle are imperatives that the

women of the West Indian Social Club take up. African American women are an important part of the legacy that fuels their day-to-day activities and the history that refuses to "fail to carry on."[35]

The founders of the originally men's organization were tobacco farmworkers. They were among the thousands of Jamaican men transported to the country under the auspices of a labor recruitment program formed by the United States and Jamaica governments during World War II. More numerous in the country than Jamaican women, a multitude of the farmers settled and formed relationships with native-born, black women.[36] Familiar with the city's policies and garnering access to resources that their immigrant partners did not have, the native-born wives and mothers to their children played a pivotal role in establishing the club and helping the migrant workers recreate their home communities in Hartford, hold true to their traditions and build a formidable support system. In 1954, African American and Jamaican immigrant women decided to establish an auxiliary in order to formalize their involvement. After piecing together this history and describing the women involved in WISC's development, Dionne stated, "A lot of the movers and shakers around this club were those American women and they pretty much – to this day, they say the women take care of stuff around here."[37] Although, the efforts of African American women are a part of their cultural heritage and history that they could make invisible, conceal or disregard, the women of the West Indian club consider it to be a legacy they want to hold strong to and claim as their own. They center these pioneers in their narratives as members and more specifically black

women members. Although not written in the rule book or mission statement, for them,

constructing the club as an interethnic safe-space for black women is an imperative.

Much of the leadership and club body's particular positioning as mothers,

grandmothers and aunts also contributes to the organization's dejection of a discourse

that centers the Bad Black Mother and its associated images. As the group gave thought

to their views and perceptions of native-born black women and their place in the West

Indian Social Club, 62-year-old mother of one, Sharon, interjected,

> If you go to the history of where it started in the 30s or the 40s is that the West Indian or Caribbean men marrying American women now have children that are truly American from two different cultures like yourself. So now we're dealing with 2nd and 3rd generation. So we can't discriminate, because we're discriminating against ourselves. Even us in this room in terms of our children, even if we were - let me pick on myself, even if I'm a Jamaican-born, my son was born here. So it's hard for me to discriminate against the American blacks, because I'm discriminating against my child. So you have that inter-dynamic where the outside world would say we don't help each other we don't get along but we take it for granted, because that is our world.[38]

After this statement, others, many with American-born children, agreed and offered their

take on the matter. Having and raising children in a nation that categorizes them as black

made these mothers acutely aware of their interconnectedness with native black mothers,

in ways that they may or may not have known before. To reproduce narrow narratives of

native black mothers has the potential to contribute to their entrapment as well as to the

degradation of their native children. Encouraging one another, as West Indian women, to

apply a critical lens to the othering of native-born black women is critical in the "world"

they share. For the women of the West Indian Club, a part of their ethnic and island-

based community efforts is ensuring that through their work and dialogue, they hold themselves accountable to native-born black women

In addition to formal settings, black mothers also embark on the process of destabilizing cross-ethnic stereotypes within their personal and familial networks. Consider for example, Terry, a mother of one, originally from the island of Aruba. In her first conversation with a city of Hartford employee, she swiftly and fervently answered a question regarding foreign-born black women's perceptions of their native-born counterparts. She criticized black women from the Caribbean for their judgements of native-born black women. Terry shared that she often hears foreign-born blacks complain that African Americans are "lazy" and "don't like to work…they would rather stay home."[39] She complained, "I have a problem with that, I don't like to hear that." The 64-year-old-mother suggested that the lack of historical knowledge among members of her immigrant community is a contributing factor to their blanketed misjudgments.

> I believe that when you understand the history of African Americans in America you would have some understanding of what struggle they went through…they never studied American history period. They don't understand a lot of the struggle- a lot of the – most of the migration came in the 60's when the Jim crow laws were going away and they came here – a lot of them have third generation children living here and still don't understand the history of what blacks went through in America.[40]

Terry finds that her familiarity with African American history puts her in a position to stand apart and call into question the racial critiques of other black immigrant women. Although she migrated to the United States in 1992, she lived in the country temporarily during her teenage years. She completed high school at the age of 16 and sought to continue her education in New York City. Before beginning college, she had to complete

high school level American history courses. Yet, while these courses were advantageous

to Terry, she owes a great portion of her awareness of the complexities of race in

America to "first-hand" experience. She gave a riveting sketch of her time in New York

in the 1960s:

> Living on an island, you're really sheltered from a lot going on in the
> world back in those days. We didn't have cell phones and a lot of TV's
> and you know to really get information on what was going on. But when
> we – being exposed to Americans and seeing how African Americans
> were treated in this country I got a real distaste of what was happening.
> And so I spent four years here and I moved back to my aunt in Aruba. I
> was totally disillusioned by what was happening, by the movement. And
> after they – they killed – they assassinated Martin Luther King two years
> after I moved here and I was – I mean, I was really happy to hear that all
> the work that he was doing and finally that they just shot him up. It was
> really hard for me to accept that people would go the distance. And all he
> was doing was speaking on behalf of his people.[41]

Her exposure to this moment in African American history continues to inform her

negotiations of a contemporary racial landscape in which the issues that gripped

minorities in the 1960s have not dissolved. It also shapes the nature of her relationships

with both native and foreign-born black women and mothers. She often invites her

foreign-born black women friends, acquaintances and colleagues to stand with her, in that

particular moment of time in an attempt to consider the ways in which they are

complacent in channels of domination. She also advises them to register for college

courses within the African American Studies Program at Trinity College or the

University of Connecticut. If this route is not possible, she invites her friends to attend

public events throughout the city that address issues of race, gender and the role of these

constructs on shaping their lives.

Ghanaian immigrant Jacqui resists and quiets intraracial prescriptions of native black women and mothers by combatting semblances of this dialogue in conversations held among her immigrant family. Forming and establishing bonds with African American women and mothers as early as her college years and benefitting from their support throughout her career, she promptly questions the women of her family amidst and in the aftermath of what she perceives to be derogatory statements. In painting this portrait, she described a vacation she spent a few years ago with a close, African American girlfriend. They spent a weekend at her aunt's home in Florida, which Jacqui described as large and within a wealthy neighborhood. Struck by the design of the home and its features, such as the fine artwork and outdoor water fountain, her friend began to take photos of the property. Her cousins approached Jacqui and expressed their distaste for the photo taking. Jacqui shared that her friend's actions led her cousins to draw conclusions about her character, background and family life. This included the postulation that she was from a poor, inner-city neighborhood. Jacqui grew frustrated at her cousins' inability to see their Connecticut guest beyond the bounds of the archetypical black woman – low-income, uncultured and an interloper. For the mother of two, it felt as though her "two worlds were clashing with one another." One was the sphere in which she and women such as Sharon resided. There, she did not retort or deform the humanity of native-born black women and mothers. The other world was the one she left behind when she moved onto college. This was a realm that forbade productive ties and dialogue between black women of distinct ethnic backgrounds as it was covered in interrogated race, gender and class specific narratives. Jacqui did not

passively stand-by as these worlds collided. She informed her cousins that they were spewing untruths and that as long as they maintained those simplistic categorizations, all of the native black women they meet would somehow fall short. Jacqui declared that her friend should not be made to feel invisible in a home that they were all to share.

Role-Modeling New Narratives

Coupled with the erection of safe-spaces, African American, African and West Indian women's interethnic efforts toward self-actualization and circumventing ideological oppression become visible in their acts of cross-ethnic "role modeling."[42] Behind their seemingly mundane and ordinary actions lie native-born black mothers' deliberate attempts to demonstrate for black immigrant counterparts the best practices for contesting pathological prescriptions of their characters when navigating and operating within the nation's institutions. Whereas the previous section focused on black women's ideological laboring "behind the mask" and their efforts to generate an interior and intraracial process of crafting a critical view of mainstream discourse and making room for the validation of one another's humanity, the current section depicts what it looks like for native and black immigrant women to cooperatively remove the mask in public spaces, whilst standing before those responsible for applying it.[43] At their places of employment or their children's schools, native-born black mothers are committed to embodying and demonstrating effective ways of responding to and combatting controlling images for women not socialized under the pressures of The Bad Black Mother. The section illuminates the presence and viability of this practice through the accounts of the black women of Hartford.

Lea, an employed sexual assault victim advocate, poet and mother of three small children shared that she is part of a caucus comprised of women of color throughout the state that work to combat sexual violence with the particular consequences of intersectional identities at the fore. When asked if and how her leadership and organizing ameliorate the concerns and stressors of black immigrant women she relayed,

> The socio-political climate in the United States is so different from you know black mothers coming from Cuba or Ghana or London. You know what I mean? It's just going to be different! And so many of…just like anyone else-- black immigrants tend to cleave to their nationality versus this oneness in color…so not that we would be teaching Black immigrant mothers to not claim France…or being Rwandan or anything like that, but it's more so like…in this country and in the territories a lot of that doesn't matter. It's unlearning that stuff. It's showing them how the enslavement process took that off of us, it was meant for it to come off of us and in such, white folks don't really care about that. I mean they see you might have a accent so they might be a little inquisitive about that or you know, what you wear on your head might be different so they might be a little inquisitive about that but outside of that you just a nigga. That's all you are girl. It's unfortunate…I was just telling one of my colleagues that I wonder if we should make a series of fact sheets and one of them that came to mind was like, how do women of color thrive in predominantly white organizations and spaces? So I think there could be an agenda and it would have to be something on how to survive in this country. And in those areas where we're not thriving that maybe would be the pushback as our demands.[44]

The Hartford raised, 37-year-old did not doubt that foreign-born black women encounter mischaracterizations at work and beyond. Her interactions with black immigrant women have shown her that in comparison to African Americans, they have low-levels of racial consciousness. However, she considers this to be an opportunity to not denounce their commitment to their ethnicities, but rather incite an understanding of a terrain fraught with oppression and present a template for recognizing and confronting disporportionate enactments of hypsersexualization and bodily annihilation.

Lea's stance could very well be that of Denise, one of the few African American woman administrators at respondent, Cassandra's alma mater. The daughter of Haitain immigrants began college in her late 20's to support her former husband's career and focus the couple's financial capacities on raising their daughter. Throughout her four years at the college, Denise directed the program for non-traditional students, of which Cassandra was a part and gradually became someone Cassandra considered to be a superior, but also a "parent" and "protector." While her own mother was a continual source of guidance and support, when Cassandra noticed that she was being treated differently by professors from her younger white male classmates she grew concerned and thought that Denise was the ideal person with whom to share this. This inclination was not only because Denise was a respected employee of the college and determined ways to address Cassandra's dillemma, but because she had experience in navigating this deeply racialized and gendered landscape. Denise proved to be an effective guide for Cassandra. This is captured in an incident that occurred in Cassandra's second year. She was majoring in Public Policy and Sociology. During a meeting, her interim advisor for Public Policy encouraged her to select another major. She warned Cassandra that the work load would only increase in the upcoming two years and that it may be in her best interests to shift the focus of her studies to avoid this challenge. Cassandra recounted, "She goes, being that you're a mother, this major requires a lot. And I just sat there and I was just like, are you kidding me? And I think for me honestly, if a male said that, I would think differently, but for another woman who I knew had kids, I can't say that."[45] While Cassandra expected a white or black male faculty member to underestimate her

ability to balance mothering with attending school, the articulations of her white female professor shocked her. What she perceived as an inability for them to connect mother to mother was the result of the assumptions about her socioeconomic status and work ethic, both of which are labels intricately tied to her positioning as a black mother. According to Cassandra, following this meeting, she rushed to Denise's office in tears. Denise invited her in without hesitation. She instructed her to return to the professor's office. Cassandra remembers her words clearly. "She said, 'No, you take yourself back to her office and you tell her, what major you supposed to be doing then and why can't you?'"[46] Cassandra shared that she returned to the professor's office with a newfound confidence in her ability to make the best decisions for her educational career and her daughter. She ultimately maintained her double major. In this exchange, Denise demonstrated a refusal to passively accept the labels forced upon black women. She emphasized the importance of not cowering down, but seeing yourself in ways that others may be incapable of.

Respondent Marie's experiences strongly demonstrate the ways in which motherhood lends itself to the expedition of the borderlands of blackness and an interethnic authoring of a counter-narrative. The 54-year-old arrived to the greater Hartford area in 1997 from the French-speaking country of Togo with her 4-year-old daughter. They joined her husband whom arrived to the United States a few months prior. The mother and wife owns, "Marie's Beauty Square," a small store in one of the many plazas located in the city's West End. Hair weaves for braiding, colorful waist beads, as well as African print garments, outfits and accessories hang on the walls. Near stacks of West African movies, incense, containers of shea butter, bottles of Jamaican black castor

oil, and individually plastic wrapped chunks of black soap sit on wooden tables and shelves. Before opening the store, Marie worked at West Hartford's Westfarms Mall and sold merchandise imported from her country out of her home for many years. An elderly, African American woman from the neighborhood watched her daughter during the day while she and her husband worked. According to Marie the grandmother of three, considered them family and treated them as such. When asked if her daughter and American-born, middle school aged son have dealt with social alienation of any form, she imparted that her daughter did while in elementary school. According to Marie, she did not learn of this until the babysitter shed light on a string of misdemeanors.

> A couple of times the teacher kind of treated my daughter differently. And she [babysitter] kept it for herself for a while because she wanted to make sure she was sure that what she's thinking is really happening. So one day she blew up. She just blew, like --. And after that, when she brought my daughter home. That's what she told me about it, that she noticed that the teacher wasn't treating my daughter that way she was treating some of the other kids. Maybe it's because my daughter is from Africa. I don't know at that time. But then she bring it up. She just jump on her, told her the truth. From that day, she say straight with my daughter, the teacher…she told me that she told her straight, do not mess with her. I know you trying to discriminate her. She told her the honest truth. That if you don't stop it, I will jump on you and I will go to jail for this girl.[47]

The grandmother's actions made clear to the immigrant mother that her daughter was prone to misjudgment and depreciation in a public school system that was to offer all of its students a quality and equitable education. Marie learned that her child's gender, dark brown skin tone, and known African origins had the power to incite and justify unfair treatment. Through her neighbor, who has lived and raised black children in the Hartford area for decades, Marie came to understand the ever-present role of socially constructed, unbending narratives in her shaping she and her kin's lives. Further, the grandmother

showed Marie the rudiments of marginalization and demonstrated the importance of formulating a response. According to the Togo-born business owner, the actions of her children's former day-time guardian, is the impetus behind her on-going commitment to closely examine her children's classroom settings and the performance of their educators. She customarily visits the schools, particularly if her son or daughter are reprimanded for actions that appear to be out of their characters.

Conclusion

In defense of themselves, contemporary black mothers cast their lot with those tied to other origins, nations, cultures and beliefs. Frequented by codes and mores that place them within a perilous social status, African American, West Indian-born, and African-born black women choose to venture into the borderlands of black ethnicity. They combine their individual will to survive with the strivings of others similarly bound by misrecognition. This process of transcending ethnic differences and elevating the point where race, gender and motherhood as a site identification is trying. A myriad of tensions and criticisms, fueled by dissenting levels of racial consciousness, divergent social, cultural and political histories fasten black women of variant ethnicities to opposing tracks. Many are hesitant to step outside of their homeplaces and as all others appear to be danger zones.

Contrasting definitions of oppression and adequate avenues of subversion also reside on the terrain of black motherhood. However, their distinguishable communities do not prevent them from launching a collective struggle against mechanisms of raced and gendered control. They do not deny the persistence of an asymmetrical power

dynamic and its reliance on distortions of black motherhood. Additionally, they do not

refute the power of mobilization. As the oppositional thinking of native and foreign-born

black women comprises imaginings of self-defined realities, it also ferments a capacity to

envision interethnic ties as antithetical to disequilibria. Black mothers actively consider

the ways in which parcels of the hegemony responsible for compromising their humanity

appear in their individual, day to day politics. Encounters with severe isolation whilst

attempting to excel at work, access public services and ensure their children's

development, pushes them to not only pursue safe-spaces, but also reassess, question and

treat the interethnic dilemmas these spaces and their agents pose. Native and immigrant

communities also play a decisive role in influencing and shaping the measures of

resistance taken by the black mothers with whom they befriend, pass by on their way to a

meeting, report to at work, or meet in the minutia of daily life.

The present chapter understands contemporary black motherhood as a composite

of identities. A movement beyond reductionist and conflating interpretations of

controlling images and the ethnic associations and derivations they travel across reveals a

weighty degree of reconciliation, deliberation, reinterpretation and interchange that

inflates traditional conceptions of black women's group-derived autonomy. Thorough,

ongoing and in some locales, incomplete, native and foreign-born black mothers'

interethnic refutation of a coded, yet harmful language and discourse, undoes the

limitations imposed on black women's collective resistance by accounts of uncritical

unity or objectionable synthesis. Mediums of coercion place their labor, bodies,

sexualities and progeny on a sacrificial altar. While they could alone see the others that

lay beside them as strangers from unknown lands or threats, complicit in the defilement of their personhood, black mothers establish their resurrection as bonded sojourn.

PART II

Behind the Netted Veil of Racial Transcendence

"Now, I'm wondering if it's such a good thing. Who's the next victim? Could he be the next one? Am I, as a black mother, having children just so police can kill them?" – Brigitta Rainey to Hartford Courant's Helen Ubinas on April 15, 1999.[1]

After Police Officer Robert C. Allan shot and killed Hartford, Connecticut teenager Aquan Salmon in the spring of 1999, city resident Brigitta Rainey mourned alongside the other members of her Hartford community. Fear replaced the excitement the pregnant mother felt for the approaching birth of her second child. She regarded her pregnancy as a positively life-changing event, however this suddenly changed with the murder of Aquan. While her unborn child had yet to take his first breath, she could already picture him taking his last. The murder of Aquan indicated to the 27-year-old mother that she lay underneath the suffocating weight of an institution that had the power to recast her children as victims. She describes a fear rooted in the knowledge of the mortality of her unborn son and the frightening possibility of her progeny being targeted. Yet, the dread captured here also derives from the overwhelming expression of a strand of public opinion that insisted that the volatile policing of black youth in the city was just and that black mothers, as well as the wider Hartford community brought the grief upon themselves. Part III examines ideologies and practices together and details their power to knit a net of distinct grief for those at the intersections of blackness and motherhood. Moreover, it reveals the ways in which interethnic ties allow the traumatized black mothers of those slain by the state to reclaim motherhood as a "good thing."

CHAPTER 4

Racial Terror and Black Mothers' Collective Trauma

Cultural Trauma as a Tradition of Black Mothers' Resistance

Under the headline, "Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped Chicago Youth," the September 15, 1955 issue of *Jet Magazine* featured images of the mutilated body of Emmett Louis "Bobo" Till.[2] A little over two weeks earlier, during a family visit to Money, Mississippi, the 14-year-old Chicago native was kidnapped, murdered, and thrown into the Tallahatchie River by two white men, Roy Bryant and T.W. Milam for allegedly whistling at a white woman. The lynching of Till was a central instigator of the Civil Rights Movement and widespread resistance against the nation's sanctioning of racism and the devaluation of black life.

This mass and collective mobilization began with Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley and her declaration, "Let the people see what they have done to my boy."[3] Till-Mobley held an open-casket funeral and invited the thousands in attendance to look upon her son while he laid in the satin-lined coffin and clothed in a pressed white shirt, suit jacket, and tie. Placing three recent photographs of Emmett on the coffin's lid, she reminded that her child, though mutilated and unrecognizable, was human and for a time had veins that pumped blood, breath, and life.[4] When and where Mamie Till-Mobley and her son's final resting place entered, the nation entered with her. The funeral ignited the publication and circulation of images of her deceased son and widespread media coverage of Bryant and Milam's murder trial and acquittal.

In lamenting the murder of her son, Till-Mobley asserted that Emmett "was taken away from us all."[5] The "us" in Till-Mobley's proclamation encapsulated African Americans – a community established within the "primal scene" of the white, slave-holding world and affirmed by the perpetuity of racism far after.[6] When the photos of Emmett and news of the case reached African Americans in Money, Chicago, and beyond, they recalled kin – blood and fictive – extrajudicially stolen and killed on account of imagined deviance. They were also reminded that the Till family's suffering could very well be their own. Emmett Till's murder did not solely represent an individual loss, but a communal one and a "tear in the social fabric" that tied black communities together across region, space, and time.[7]

Till-Mobley sought to awaken this group consciousness and found refuge within the citadel of the black collective.[8] They were her witnesses. Voices from the African American public, shaped by a collective memory of previously lynched African Americans and their hunters, joined, and emboldened Till-Mobley's claims that her son was innocent. Their testimonies interrogated the derogatory and inhumane representations of Emmett's character and contested a nationally accepted narrative that convinced the judicial system that the lives of his murderers were more valuable because they were white.[9]

The grieved mother's public rendering of her son's death and the responses of black communities epitomize the process of collective trauma creation. According to sociologist Jeffrey Alexander, collective or "cultural trauma," materializes when a group membership recognizes and deems an event as responsible for leaving "indelible marks

upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways."[10] This treatment of massive disruption is not an innate or natural response to massive disruption, but molded and constructed.

The voices that merged with Mamie Till-Mobley demonstrate that crafting collective trauma initiates a healing power capable of sealing the fragemented pieces of one's identity. For African Americans, articulations of a common injury have the capacity to dramatically change how an event and those affected are remembered within the national imagination, bring attention to the bridles of cyclical inequality that encase their communities as well as the social, political, and institutions that command the reins. Yet, the healing capacity of cultural trauma relies on its instillment of "cultural (re) classification."[11] A web of meanings long accepted by the dominant society and mediated by a myriad of hiearchical power structures threaten to misrecognize, silence, and invalidate a claimes of shared and systemic suffering. In light of this, a group's projection of collective trauma necessitates the "construction of a compelling framework of cultural classification," that challenges the existing framework.[12]

A particular set of social agents within the collectivity are at the fore of this process. Agents "have both ideal and material interests, they are situated in particular places in the social structure, and they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims — for what might be called "meaning making" — in the public sphere."[13] In order for a group's claims of collective trauma to be effective, the articulations of the agent or "carrier groups" must not only penetrate the public sphere and offer a modified

system of cultural classification, but also, compel audiences to align with their assertions. The speech acts of carrier groups must directly debase, interrogate and overturn the meanings that outside, polarizing forces standardly employ to define the group's suffering and anguish within the public sphere.

Particularly important, the viability of cultural trauma is only possible if agents can kindle a sense of collective trauma among those whom are not apart of the community. This is possible by illuminating a correlative relationship between proclaimed communal suffering and the public's value system and cultural classification framework. This suggested relationship provokes participation and leaves the wider audience subject to the limitations of the existing master narrative. The crystallization of a relationship between the wider audience and the victimized group gives way to a restructuring of formerly unchallenged values and limited understandings of cultural trauma. Ultimately, the "meaning struggle" that ensues between carrier groups and the dominant society has the power to unsettle the way in which the traumatic event is understood, and pave the way for restitution – emotionally, socially, and institutionally.

Following Emmett Till's murder, Mamie Till-Mobley arose as an agent of collective trauma. Her speech acts came in the form of public interviews with media sources, speaking tours and her book, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America*, published many years later in 2003. As Emmett's mother, Till-Mobley's voice was particularly equipped to speak to the black community's collective trauma. She experienced Emmett's life and death in a sanctuary, that although fragile, housed images of her son's identity, immune to dominant and invasive white supremacist

narratives. Endowed with moral legitimacy and a knowledge that ran contrary to the status quo, only Till-Mobley was capable of imagining and articulating the trauma tied to her son's death in a way that would place a stronghold on existing structures of cultural classification.

By disseminating the photos of Emmett's body, Till-Mobley reclassified and reordered the nature of the crime, the victim and the perpretrator, its compelling factor. As these images awakened black Americans to the ways in which Emmett's death bound all of their lives, they also functioned to allow the wider, white audience to participate in and share the trauma harbored by the African American community. In the past, the process of witnessing differed across racial lines. For the most part, up until August 1955, whites hung black bodies on tree limbs and consumed them as sources of pleasure and entertainment. These "strange fruit" were often revered by way of widely distributed postcards.[14] In the case of Emmet, Till-Mobley sought to initiate a different form of witnessing. Till-Mobley determined that, "This would not be like so many other lynching cases, the hundreds, the thousands of cases where families would be forced to walk away and bury their dead and their grief and their humiliation. I was not going quietly."[15] Refusing to go quietly, she decided to initiate the white public's witnessing of black violation and stood on the other side of the lens. The mother coopted a position traditionally occupied by the white gaze, those presumed superior. As she leveraged control of her son's public representation, Till-Mobley crafted a trauma claim that forced a standardly indifferent population to acknowledge her son's humanity and grieve it's eradication.

Chapter Four recognizes black children slain at the intersections of systemic racism and silencing ideological schemes as systematic. It offers an account of how these mediums have evolved since the passing of Emmett Till and documents the rise of police brutality as a contemporary vessel of racialized violence. The text demonstrates that the use of racial neutrality as a value system and organizing principle, play a critical role in manufacturing and justifying the disproportionate surveillance and abuse of black Americans on the part of law enforcement.

As the chapter recognizes anti-black violence as continual, it declares that Mamie Till-Mobley's actions are powerfully representative of a model of resistance built and sustained by generations of grieving black mothers. The black mothers of children killed by forces supported and protected by the state have and continue to uncover and claim a form of trauma that demands reform and intervention. It argues that in the throes of mourning, the mothers of policie brutaltiy victims have positioned themelves on the front lines of a polarizing struggle over meaning and representation and have transformed their grief into an opportunity to challenge the very system of cultural classification that legitimized the death of their children.

Critically, at its close, the chapter posits that both native and immigrant black families are effected by police brutality, and their tears similarly fill a stream constructed by racism and flooded with the sorrows of black communities. The chapter suggests that African American, African, and Caribbean black mothers have expanded this maternal tradition. In a climate that deligitimizes the existince of a hegemonic order, these groups

find the sculpting and development of interethnic ties to be critical in displace reductive, mainstream framings of their children's murders.

Historical Trajectory of Racial Terror and the Ascendency of Police Brutality

The murder of Emmett Till signified the apex of racial terror for African Americans and in the oft quoted words of literary scholar Clenora Hudson-Weems, the "sacrificial lamb" of the Civil Rights Movement.[16] Yet, his death signified a turning point for other reasons as well. It marked the emergence of policing as a vehicle of racialized violence, and a transition from non-police force, vigilante mob violence. For African Americans in 1955, Till's death and the exoneration of the men that abducted and killed him was a glaring marker of the fatal consequences of their presumed criminality and the absence of protection and redress on the part of the justice system. Not only did a history of virulent and unregulated white mob violence fuel their agitation, but also increased levels of maltreatment on the part of police officers.

The conflation of blackness and criminality began long before the birth and passing of Emmett Till. Following the emancipation of nearly 4 million slaves in the 1860s, white Americans desperately grappled with how and where to place African Americans within the "fabric of national life."[17] Throughout the post-bellum era, instruments of lethal force such as lynching and widespread attempts among southern white democrats to reverse radical reconstruction were cyclically fueled, conditioned and justified by not only a fear among whites of the economic and political costs of black independence, but also a widespread and deep seated social belief that blacks were unsuitable for citizenship and unworthy of the right to participate in the republic.[18]

Journalists, writers, and more specifically social scientists rose to the task of studying the "Negro Problem" and ultimately made doctrine the presumptions of blacks as threats to societal stability and progress.

Experts called on social scientific methods to extend the naturalist, hereditarian and pseudo-biological findings of previous years. As made clear in Khalil G. Muhammad's *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (2010), in the postbellum years, it was no longer enough to merely prove black inferiority, but one must demonstrate the ways this population's inherited degenerate qualities could potentially wreak havoc on the civilized society when outside of the bounds of slave-based structure, control and containment. Statistical analysis of census data collected in 1870, 1880 and 1890 emerged as particularly effective in measuring the severity of the Negro problem, on what prominent scholar Nathaniel Southgate Shaler referred to as, "surer ground."[19]

The racial demographic data collected at the turn of the twentieth century was analyzed and published in widely distributed journals, and in turn subsumed the comparatively abstract abolitionist theories of the antebellum years. Black deficiencies were revealed in the areas of morbidity, disease, intelligence, and most significantly, criminality. Without regard for the looming misrecognition of black citizenship and its disparaging spatial and economic conditions tied to the collapse of reconstruction and the rise of redemptionists, black codes and discriminatory laws, the disporportionate presence of blacks within the penal system was considered by scholars to be evidence of black proclivity for crime and a clear marker of an inherent imposing danger to civilization.

Motivated by a demand to provide "hard scientific numbers," the eventual zeroing in on black criminality within not only regional, but national race-relations discourse, is evident following the 1896 publication of German-born statistician Frederick Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*.[20] This work signified the first "statistical study of the negro criminal."[21] Utilizing the 1890 census and newspaper accounts, Hoffman presented data that compared black criminals with prisoners of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. He found that their number were greater and the nature of their crimes more grave than other populations. Hoffman also drew a correlation between black migration, urbanization and the rise of crime in Northern citites. His analysis read the high rates of black criminality as measurement of inferiority. This assertion was supplemented by a comparison between the exceedingly high black incarceration rate and the growth of black religious and educational institutions. Studies such as Ida B. Wells' *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892–1893–1894* (1894) and the rebuttals of W.E.B. DuBois illuminated the inadequacies of Hoffman's logic and pinpointed his neglect of environmental influences.[22] However, *Race Traits*' assertion of the just discipline and regulation of black men and women was largely echoed by other scholarship, and informed the dominant society, political agendas, the implimentation of stringent race relation laws, as well as the practices of the criminal justice system. The targeted imprisonment and punishment of African Americans ran parallel to lynching, segregation, disenfranchisement and were considered intellectually justifiable acts of repression for the sake of the freedom of rightful citizens. For the scholars at the fore of the newly

coined human sciences, the empirical evidence made clear that in the coming decades, the colored populations, completely lacking "all instincts of freemen," made the laws of Jim Crow "imperatively necessary" and their "death sentence" inevitable.[23]

While the nation progressed into the twentieth century, anxieties tied to the rupturing of the racial status quo continued to manifest themselves into material realities. The spatial, cultural and political boundaries between the free and enslaved were legally reworked and reinstituted to form the first wave of state-wide segregation in the 1880s and ultimately, the Jim Crow laws. The carceral system emerged as a linchpen of social order and the death as well as the life sentences formerly deemed inevitable were deployed. Although blacks were not disproportionately represented in the imprisoned population, they were more likely to be charged with crimes they did not committ and serve an exorbitant amount of time wholly unfit to their offences.[24] This is particulary evident in the convict-lease system. The black population, which was up to this point, unquestionable menaces to society and deemed justifiably criminal by nature, offered a vital source of labor. Within the context of democratic redemption throughout Southern states, black disenfranchisement, and economic demands, Southern law enforcement departments were encouraged to wrongfully arrest and sentence African Americans. Considering the particular interest in circumscribing black mobility, blacks were not only arrested for theft and gambling, but also vagrancy, trespassing and violating the steadily expanding separate but equal laws. As convicts, with a debt owed to the state, their bodies were prime for free labor. These erroneously minted criminals were legally leased

to plantations, railroad and mining companies, as well as timber camps.[25] This sytem of unvoluntary servitude continued uninterrupted until it was made a crime in 1951.[26]

In the post-war years, frequent and volatile encounters with law enforcement accompanied the criminalization and imprisonment of black citizens. Historians draw strong correlations between urbanization and the rise of police brutality as a central facet of the black experience in America.[27] The Great Migration and the mass exodus of blacks from the rural South to urban centers during the World War I era, reconstituted the nation's cultural, class and racial dynamic.[28] As unprecedented amounts of African Americans moved to metropolitan settings such as Newport, Virginia and Chicago, Illinois to claim the diverse, industrial employment opportunities made possible by the war, police departments became increasingly useful in maintaining the surveillance and management of the nation's black population.[29] However, racialized police brutality rose to distinct prominence in the post-World War II era, following the the second wave of the Great Migration. As argued by scholar Leonard Moore, police departments completely replaced the functioning of white supremacist organizations as the "protectors of white privilege and the opponents of black progress" and the primary executors of extra-judicial violence.[30] Due to demographic and spatial shifts, police officers amassed the responsibility of guarding racial boundaries and were beset with the expectation "to control black activity and limit their use of public space," states Moore.[31] In doing so, they garnered support and rewards from the state, politically powerful constituencies, judges, the business elite and attorneys. High crime rates in congested, black working-class residential districts were also deployed to justify extensive police presence in black

neighborhoods. As black communities entered and traversed urban settings, they also struggled with the failure of law enforcement to protect them as war veterans, law abiding citizens, and tax payers amid massive race riots, assaults, property destruction, and home invasions.[32] If they did not condone these assaults, police officers could be found as the perpetrators. Thus, a critical driving force behind the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, was the aim to challenge the institution responsible for picking up the torch of unjust and unregulated black terrorization.

In responding to this urban crisis President Harry S. Truman administered a law and order mandate in 1947. As documented by Naomi Murakawa in the *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (2014), the Committee on Civil Rights sought to target "white mob violence and racial prejudice in the criminal justice system" and "designated the "right to safety and security of the person" the first condition of all rights."[33] Their goal was to "build a better carceral state, one strong enough to control racial violence in the streets and regimented enough to control racial bias in criminal justice administration."[34] Murakawa states that this approach to criminal justice provided "scaffolding" for the "tough on crime" approach to policing of the later twentieth-century and twenty-first centuries.[35] Truman's *To Secure These Rights* report "criminalized the race problem" and affirmed the expansion and professionalization of the carceral state as an adequate response to societal strife.[36] Moreover, it aimed to stifle black lawlessness and the emotional and psychological consequence of racism. Although these conceptions of black behavior, also captured in publications such as Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944) bolstered civil rights

messages and attempted to procure sympathy for the oppressed, they reinforced notions of black people as inherently criminal.[37] This rhetoric would contribute to the blueprint utilized by the coming administrations. Within the scope of this discourse, racism appeared as an individual and personal dilemma, salvageable with enhanced and modernized state authority.

Law and order remained paramount to governmental responses to racial tensions and inequalities as the country moved into the 1950s and 1960s. Black resistance in the form of black led protests and riots, such as those in Watts, Los Angeles, California in 1965 were met with state enforced regulation in the aftermath of civil rights legislation. President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. The order issued more funding to law enforcement programs and enhanced federal control of criminal justice proceedings on the state level.[38] Again, black insurrection emerged as more of a reflection of rage and aggression that demanded state rehabilitation, rather than the implementation of practices that countered black unemployment and pushed back against state and local mechanisms of housing segregation.

In 1971 Richard Nixon declared the War on Drugs and ushered in the conservative wing's extension of law and order. Policy makers were informed by, as well as mobilized disparaging representations of black criminality and determined that black unrest and crime was not indicative of a failed social order, but a threat to national security. The onset of civil rights legislation further jettisoned a look towards racial inequality as a cause. In fact, they declared that the expansionist, welfare state was to blame for creating a culture of irresponsibility.

Enforced as federal policy by Ronald Reagan in 1982 and impelled into the 1990s by the Clinton administration, the war proved to be a critical impetus to mass incarceration in the contemporary moment. Reared as a response to the rising tide of illegal drug use, trade and trafficking, this nationwide anti-drug campaign ushered in legislation committed to a zero-tolerance approach to crime. Two of the most damaging laws, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and the 1988 Omnibus Drug Act enforced mandatory sentencing for drugs and increased the length of prison sentences for these offenses.[39] Legislation also extended the power of police officers through the execution of the "Stop-and-Frisk Rule," made possible by the 1968 *Terry v. Ohio* Supreme Court decision. The rule permits law enforcement to stop, question and frisk citizens if they have "reasonable articulable suspicion" that a citizen is engaged in criminal activity and dangerous.[40]

As a result of the aforementioned policies "drug offenses alone account for two-thirds of the rise in federal inmate population and more than half of the rise in state prisoners between 1985 and 2000."[41] As "drug arrests have tripled...more than 31 million people have been arrested for drug offenses since the drug war began."[42] Most interesting, although statistics suggest that all races and ethnicities violate drug laws at similar rates, African Americans were distinctly targeted. According to Michelle Alexander, between 1983 and the year 2000, the prison admissions of African Americans increased twenty-six times the level at the start of the drug war.[43] In comparison, by 2000, the number of whites admitted to prison for drug offenses was eight times the number admitted in 1983.[44] The sentencing policies accomodated due to the War on

Drugs also reflect a process that makes the overrepresentation of African American prisoners inevitable. Drug offenders signify the majority of the nation's incarcerated population. They are more than likely void of a violent past, first-time offenders, and charged with posession as opposed to sale. For their petty crimes they are charged to serve at minimum, 5 years.[45] African Americans are likely to receive harsher sentences than their white counterparts. Consider crack sentencing laws. Federal laws, as stated by Alexander, "punish crack offenses one hundred times more severely than offenses involving powder cocaine."[46] While the majority of crack cocaine users are African American, powder cocaine offenders are largely white.

The contemporary capacity of the practices of the criminal justice system to recreate and sustain a racial caste system is evident in the state of the communities in which the punitive legislation is disproportionately applied and in the lived realities of the offenders that return to them. Over time, as the prisons system expanded, this door emerged as a revolving one. Upon reentering their communities, the prior circumstances of the drug offenders that fill the nation's prisons are exacerbated. Within the realm of public assistance, for example, employers have the power to discriminate based upon one's criminal past and federal bans, such as the Higher Education Act of 1998, prevent drug offenders from receiving educational funding and grants. Despite this, social redistribution is not an option. Ultimately, the War on Drugs and restrictive welfare policies instituted by President Clinton in the 1990s worked together to ensure the disproportionate shattering of the stability of families of color. For example, section 115 of The Work Opportunity and Personal Responsibility Reconciliation Act of 1996

imposes a lifetime ban on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for those

convicted for selling or using drugs. In addition to their inability to access cash assistance

and food stamps, ordinances deny narcotic offenders housing. Legislation such as the

"One Strike and You're Out" policy passed by Clinton in 1996 permits housing

authorities to evict residents convicted of drug-related offences.

The minimal capacity of parents to provide for their children is also infomed by

the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act. This additional pillar of welfare reform

mandates states to terminate parental rights if children are in foster care for 15 out of the

most recent 22 months. This 15 out of 22 provision is severely limiting to incarcerated

black mothers, particularly since the majority of them are serving sentences that far

exceed the 15-month limit.[47] According to Wacquant's 2005 piece, "Race as Civil

Felony" and Patricia Allard's 2002, *Sentencing Project* study, "Life Sentences: Denying

Welfare Benefits to Women Convicted of Drug Offenses," the loss of welfare

disproportionately affects African American women, the fastest growing prison

population and overrepresented among convicted parents. The welfare ban affects 92,000

women and 135,000 children and over half are African American and Hispanic.[48]

Disenfranchisement is an additional marker of the prison system's contemporary role as a

"race maker." Not only are prisoners disenfranchised, but also, a number of states prevent

those under probation from voting, while others prohibit former convicts from

pariticipating in civic politics at all. Wacquant states, "of the 1.2 million state and federal

prisoners kept from the polls, some 632,000 are African-Americans; of the 1.6 million

ex-felons denied the franchise, over one half-million are blacks."[49] This "severe blow at

the electoral capacity of blacks" rivals the level of black disenfranchisement in 1870, preceding the 15th amendment.[50]

Shackled by socioeconomic instability and positioned on the margins of citizenship, ex-offenders often return to illegal sources of income and again, are vulnerable to detainment in their already extensively surveillanced communities. For millions of individuals, the "revolving door" ceases as the Three-Strikes Law imposed by Clinton in 1994 ensures that third time offenders receive up to a life sentence.[51]

Amid these transitions in the prison system and the emboldening of crime control, the role of law enforcement as an entry point to the resurgence and emboldening of the color line intensified. Consider the use of "Stop-and-Frisk." This model of policing, which gives officers the freedom to search civilians without warrants is evidence of this. A recognition of "pretexual stops" as constitutionally permissable is one of its components. Pretext stops gave law enforcement the right to use minor traffic violations to embark on "consent searches" which under the Fourth Amendment, allowed police to search parties deemed suspicious of carrying drugs when given consent.[52] Given full discretion, offered by the anti-drug laws, to define the perimeters of criminal and suspicious behavior, law enforcement predominantly traversed, searched and policed poor black and Latino individuals. In alignment with the Supreme Court rulings following the *Ohio v. Robinette* (1996) and *Atwater v. City of Lago Vista* (1999) cases, police in the War on Drugs stopped and searched motorists for minor traffic violations and arrested them if consent was refused. Police were also permitted to deploy drug-sniffing dogs to incite probable cause for reluctant or non-cooperative motorists.

Motivated by studies conducted on racial profiling in the 1990s on major roadways such as the New Jersey Turnpike, revealed that police officers stopped and arrested black motorists at higher rates than their white counterparts.[53] While minorities on the turnpike only represented 15 percent of the drivers, black motorists represented 42 percent of all stops and 73 percent of all arrests.[54] Few of the interrogations of black Americans resulted in the discovery of drugs. Drugs were more often than not found in the possession of white motorists.

Coupled with the distinct treatment of black motorists, law enforcement focused much of their attention on locating and crippling disorder in poor, black neighborhoods and commmunities. By the 1980s, processes of deindustrialization, suburbanization, underfunded public housing authorities, and real estate practices that closed minorities off from residential expansion, funneled African Americans into particular city districts and left their neighborhoods overcrowded, destitute, impoverished, and severely lacking in public resources, employment and insufficient educational opportunity. This ghettoization, evident as early as the urban migrations of the early to mid-1900s, was reinforced with the ascendence of the Reagan administration. Due to an inability to access employment and educational opportunities, "under-ground" and "illegitimate" routes to income, such as the drug trade, heavily relied on impoverished communities in the decades leading up to the anti-drug campaign. Their resulting vulnerability to the federal initiative offered an opening for the construction of a door between poor communities of color, law enforcement and prisons. Yet, the susceptibility of poor black neighborhoods to anti-drug "roundups" is not tied to an engagement of illegal drug use

unmatched by white communities, but rather, their hypersegregation. The historically transient reification of urban spaces as gatekeepers of racial isolation, holding cells for lawlessness as well as social and physical disorder, and as politically powerless allowed police offers to occupy these areas without questions of irrationality or "political backlash."[55] Throughout the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, war was cyclically waged in largely black arenas.

The development and implantation of the "broken windows" theory, a policing strategy rooted in New York City in the 1990s and ultimately adopted by other cities, such as Baltimore, New Orleans and San Francisco, captures the spatially discriminate practices of police officers. This additional branch of the nation's crusade against crime, spearheaded by New York Mayor Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton beginning in 1994, redirected "police tactics, resources, and attention…toward the removal of visible signs of social disorder," such as public drinking, unlicensed vending, fare beating and graffiti.[56] In accordance with the "Stop-and-Frisk Rule," "minor quality of life offences" were reasonably suspicious behaviors and justifiably led to "aggressive street-level interdictions and searches of citizens."[57] At the core of the government's decision to displace community policing and examine crime through "broken windows," was the assertion that addressing misdemeanors had potential to halt the progress and facilitation of more serious offences, such as drug and gun centered acts of violence. Statistical analysis offers insight into the racialized boundaries of "order-maintenance policing" (OMP). [58] Driven by an incline in the late 1990s, of racial profiling allegation, statisticians, Jeffrey A. Fagan, Andrew Gelman and Alex Kiss, analyzed data from the

New York Police Department's (NYPD) pedestrian stops over the course of a fifteen-month period, from January 1998 through March 1999. They found that black and Hispanic New Yorkers were, "three times more likely than their white counterparts to be stopped and frisked on suspicion of weapons or violent crimes relative to each group's participation in each of those two types of crimes."[59] They found this disparity to be true "even after controlling for precinct variability and race-specific estimates of crime participation."[60]

In the article, "Street Stops and Broken Windows: Terry, Race, and Disorder in New York City" (2000) Fagan and Garth Davies also note that racialized perceptions of criminality defied reality in the 1990s. They make clear that the intensity of "broken windows" policing in areas with high concentrations of poverty and minority citizens is "not about disorderly places, nor about improving the quality of life, but about policing poor people in poor places."[61] Fagan and Davis declare that crime rates, not social and physical disorder, account for the concentration of stop activity in poor, majority minority neighborhoods.[62] In the 2000's, racially targeted policing under the tenants of order-maintenance persists. "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited: The Demography and Logic of Proactive Policing in a Safe and Changing City" (2009) locates ongoing inequalities in the practices of the NYPD from 2002 to 2006. This examination of the continuation of OMP and "stop and frisk" tactics in the current decade, notes that at this historical juncture, the black population was declining; crime rates were lowering and stabilizing, and the social and economic health of New York City's neighborhoods, including the poorest and the most segregated, were improving. Also important, fewer

stops have led to arrests. Yet, despite improvements in crime and disorder, stops have

increased considerably. The study reveals that African Americans are the majority among

those whose stops ended in detainment and minority neighborhoods continue to have

disproportionate contact with law enforcement. As similar to reports from the late 1990s,

the authors of "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited" arrived at these conclusions

after controlling the "situational context" and "demeanor of suspect" and ultimately

isolating the "different outcomes that could only be attributed to race."[63] While on the

surface, the decline in crime suggests the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policing, the

data suggests otherwise. Incarceration attributes only 3 to 25 percent of crime reduction

in modern America.[64]

Racial marginalization at the hands of enforcement is not only evident in who

they searched, seized and detained, but also in who they chose to brutalize. The 1980s

supplied a blueprint for contemporary policing that consisted of the construction and

maintenance of a matrix of violence within communities of color. The "tough on crime"

position garnered by the government in the late twentieth century was mobilized through

the formation of "military policing."[65] The Reagan administration allowed police

departments to access military equipment, weaponry and bases. Coupled with this,

Special Weapons and Tactic (SWAT) teams, standardly used for emergencies, were

regularly used to conduct drug raids in schools, homes and businesses. Considering the

unequivocal and disproportionate police interactions with communities of color, the

militarization of policing was centralized in the nation's ghettoes and targeted African

American individuals. Again, although illegal drug activity was not limited to this group,

and in fact, more evident among white Americans, black and brown communities became "occupied territories" gripped by harrassment, maltreatment and physical abuse on the part of police officers.[66] The broad discretion legally afforded police officers, the government's zero tolerance approach to drugs and crime, the militarization of police force tactics and the normalization of fears of black criminality within instituions and the greater public worked together to not only heighten black incarceration, but relatedly, craft a culture of violence between law enforcement and African Americans.

In the 1980s and 1990s, police brutality incidents and complaints escalated to unmarked heights. Between 1975, the year the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) placed African American male motorist Adolph Lyons in a near death chokehold following a pretext stop and 1983, when his lawsuit against the LAPD reached the Supreme Court, 16 people were killed by the police force's use of the chokehold. Twelve of these victims were black men.[67] Police brutality was particularly evident in major cities such as New York, the city at the helm of "broken window" policing. Reports such as the 1994 Mollen Commission report, document the prevalence of police corruption and brutalization in black and Latino neighborhoods. In 1992, Mayor David N. Dinkins established the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Police Corruption and the Anti-Corruption Procedures of the Police Department. Under the leadership of Milton Mollen, deputy mayor, a staff of 30 investigated patterns of misconduct within the New York Police Department (NYPD) over the course of two years. Their report, issued in 1994, revealed police involvement in the theft of drugs and money, the tampering of evidence, bribe-taking – and brutalization.[68] Of critical importance, the report located the "pockets

of corrupt police officers," secured by a "code of silence," in "several precincts covering black and Hispanic neighborhoods."[69] In the year that the Commission released its indictment of the NYPD's policies and following the election of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, police brutality claims and complaints increased by 62 percent.[70]

The 1980s and particularly the 1990s were marked by repetitive incidents of police brutality against black Americans and correspondingly, immense social protest. Signposts of the contemporary criminal justice system's mode of policing include the beatings of Rodney King (Los Angeles, CA, 1992) and Abner Louima (New York, NY, 1997). The era also consisted of the police killings of Michael Stewart (New York, NY 1983), Eleanor Bumpurs (New York, NY 1984) Clement A. Lloyd (Miami, FL, 1989), Malik Jones (New Haven, CT, 1997), Johnny Gammage (Pittsburgh, PA, 1997), Amadou Diallo (New York, NY, 1999), Tyisha Miller (Riverside, CA, 1999) and Aquan Salmon (Hartford, CT, 1999). This trend continued into the millennium with the police-caused deaths of Patrick Dorismond (New York, NY, 2000), Rekia Boyd (Chicago, IL, 2012), Michael Brown (Ferguson, MO, 2014), Freddie Gray (Baltimore, MD, 2015), among others. Recent studies on the proclivity of police brutality against people of color find that not only are blacks more likely to be victims of these attacks, but also unarmed and void of the presupposed suspicious or threatening intent.[71] Also important, the majority of police brutality incidents lead to the acquittal of the officers responsible. In the aforementioned cases, the court did not prosecute any of the officers responsible for the lethal outcomes of their policing.

The Master Narrative

The carceral state is a manifestation of neoliberalism, as it accompanies a shrinking of federal social support services, privatization, free market practices, and is fueled by the populace that state retrenchment disproportionately disenfranchises.[72] Colorblindness and post-racialism as an ideological and political framework does not lag too far behind these institutional mechanisms and its racialized consequences.

The reach of colorblindness, and its role as a protector and shield of questionable practices and repercussions, is most evident in the court of law. Existing ideological strands function to seal the door on effective legal remedies for subordinate groups grappling with racial inequality. As a system that purports to operate under the governing principle of colorblindness and a focus on crime, as opposed to race control, the criminal justice apparatus deems claims of racial profiling on the part of law enforcement legally inarticulable.

Colorblind thinking not only confines racism to the pre-welfare state era, but also narrowly assesses and measures racism through this isolated, historical lens. The Supreme Court misrecognizes racial profiling allegations under the Fourteenth Amendment and federal civil rights laws unless the accused cites racial motivations.[73] Alexander states that "the court has closed the courthouse doors to claims of racial bias at every stage of the criminal justice process, from stops and searches to plea bargaining and sentencing."[74] The decisions made in *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* (1975), *City of Los Angeles v. Lyons* (1983) and *McCleskey v. Kemp* (1987) were centrifugal for setting precedent for the delegitimization of racial grievances in the court of criminal law. In each of these cases the Supreme Court declared that in the absence of overt racial bias,

the law enforcement's encounters with and treatment of black and brown bodies are grounded in reason and well-informed discernment.

The invocation of a conceptual framework that, "serves to render racism simultaneouly more invisible and more virulant," is also circulated by way of charecterizations of black people that denounce structural racism, dismiss the importance of racial remedies, and point to cultural pathologies as a cause inequality.[75] In accordance with forerunning systems of racial control, the carcercal system of the post-Civil Rights era is in conversation with characterizations of black Americans as threats to the civic order if unregulated. Refusing to lay dormant, historically rooted anxieties about black criminality resurge with each historical context and remain useful to the state apparatus. For example, images of black Americans as prone to breaking the law ran throughout War on Drugs propaganda. Print and television media in the 1980s and 1990s largely featured images of non-white drug criminals and, in particular, black crack users and dealers.[76] Following the launch of Reagan's media campaign, drug users and poor black communities became one in the same. Although, as of 1988, only 3 percent of African American women used cocaine during their pregnancies, images of black "Crack Mothers" proliferated.[77] Evidence of the depiction of blacks as the enemy of the domestic war is located in the language employed by television networks. Studies reveal the use of an "us against them frame," which cast the "us" as "white, suburban America" and "them," as blacks.[78] Within the realm of the U.S. imagination, opinion and practice, law, order and state intervention were necessary to protect criminals from themselves and others. The racialized disadvantages of mass incarceration and public discourse are

mutually reinforcing. While the immense representation of African Americans in the nation's prisons justifies the association of blackness with criminality, race specific rhetoric and imagery heavily shape which behaviors, locations and actions law enforcement considers to be reasonably suspicious.

The War on Drugs media campaign buttressed the anti-drug initiative and erroneously cast blacks as the majority among the nation's drug exploiters while the scholarship disseminated in the 1980s and 1990s asserted that individual and family disfunction appropiately explained the growth of black prisoners, as opposed to racially discriminatory policing. Examples of these works include Charles Murray's *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980* (1984) and Myron Magnet's *The Dream, and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass* (1993).[79]

Within the realm of post-racial rhetoric, the "blackening of the prison population" is not orchestrated nor a consequence of laws that exploit and exacerbate the consequences of historically rooted institutional oppression, but due, instead, to the disproportionate failure of this indicted population to abide by societal expectations and values.[80] The mainstream discourse certifies the view of prisons as a "system of crime control," as opposed to a "racial caste system."[81]

Indicative of the cyclical nature of black containment, the predominance of African Americans among offenders continuously supports conclusions about the propensity of black crime and offers rational and demographically based reasoning for the intense policing of these populations.

Grieving Black Mothers and the (Im)Possibilities of Trauma Creation in the Carceral State

While the prison system represents what Michelle Alexander refers to as the "New Jim Crow," police brutality functions as a modern-day vessel of racial terror that perforated free black communities throughout the 20th century. Akin to these preceding forces of violence, the police force functions as the frontline of institutional oppression. The slain women and men of the modern era emerge as embodied reverberations of Emmett Till – killed in the name of color-coded conceptions of civility and shut off from paths to legal justice. For the victims' families, the locus of their mourning, rage and pain lies not simply in loss, but dispossession.

In the words of Audre Lorde, in "Man Child: A Black Feminist Response" (1984), "raising black children – female and male – in the mouth of a racist, sexist, suicidal dragon is perilous and chancy. If they can't love and resist at the same time, they probably won't survive."[82] After the murder of their children, black women must contend with this powerlessness and their inability to ensure the survival of their kin. Black maternal powerlessness continues far after their children take their last breath. Vessels of public discourse, whether overtly or intentionally, protect and advance the interests of the hegemonic majority. Against the backdrop of colorblindness and post-racialism, the brutalized become public spectacles, used to deflect race-based evaluations of policing practices. With each case, reports disassociate racial injustice from the crime, scrutinizes victims' characters, and charges them as responsible for their own demise. The discourse's organization around race-neutral arguments erases the individual bodily histories of black Americans killed by police.[83] Media, newspapers, and televised reports plays a central role in constructing a "national historical memory" of policing that

excludes the structural and ideological forces that pin the physical vulnerability of victims.[84]

"White-authored national narratives," as phrased by Elizabeth Alexander, do not exist without alternatives from the minority populations it aims to silence.[85] "Sensational codes" that substitute racial profiling with reasonable suspicion and cast brutality as community protection, contradicts, as well as fails to "talk black people out of what their bodies know."[86] Conceptions of the brutal actions of law enforcement as rational and just were uprooted throughout the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The black artists that took to blank canvasses in commemoration of the suffocated Michael Stewart in 1983, and the protesters that filled the streets of Miami in 1983 and Los Angeles in 1992 after the acquittal of the officers responsible for killing Lloyd and King changed the positioning of defiled black bodies in the national memory. Black mothers have played a critical role in this as well.

Flames of protest standardly follow racially tinged, policing atrocities and as black bodies are the spark, their black mothers are the flaggers that signal others to the blaze, its origin, and threatening nature. Recall that in 1955, Mamie Till's collective trauma creation released Emmett's death from the fixtures of a discourse that deemed his name unworthy of recognition, and "resurrected" him as the "catalyst of the modern civil rights movement."[87] Similarly, in recent decades the black mothers of police brutality victims have represented their mourning as cultural and brought to the fore a bodily history of their deceased children that illuminates rank injustice as systemic and ongoing. Collective trauma creation is a central component of black women's traditions of

resistance. Speech acts in the form of oral and written articulations have long been a vehicle through which they affirm they and their children's subjectivity and oppose dominant, Western discourse.[88]

Yet, with each historical and social context, the "oppositional power" of black women's speech acts encounters a different set of challenges and the steadily growing sophistication of racism.[89] The black mothers of children slain pre and posthumously at the hands of law enforcement navigate a racial landscape similar to, yet set apart from Till-Mobley and her contemporaries. The late twentieth century signified the onset of a strand of American consciousness that recognizes the murder of Emmett Till as a racial act but fails to see Emmett's reflection in the faces of black victims of police brutality. The entrapment of black mothers and their children in an ideological apparatus that paradoxically, states Cheryl I. Harris, "infused race with a particular meaning in order to assert its irrelevance," debases traditional models of resistance, and in particular, claims of shared black trauma.[90]

The remembrance and recollection of the nation's racially violent past has long been useful to black Americans in their assertions of cultural trauma. Black memory is in itself, a discursive space, "mediated through recollection and reflection."[91] This transgenerational, conversational process secures the black American "we," and re-asserts the importance of the structural sites of identity formation from whence they came. Also important, it provides a "temporal map."[92] Collective memory, as surmised by Bernhard Giesen, unifies a community "through time as well as space."[93] With each time period and modification to the society's tools of degradation, collective memory

offers a groundwork for a new line of defense. Thus, the mediation of collective memory

entails transforming the past to fit, interpret, and actively address contemporary needs.[94]

However, in the post-racial milieu, the "net of language" and "meta narrative"

that is group memory is not an adequate path of resistance if left to stand-alone.[95] The

ahistoric, victim-blaming facets, and symbolic facets of post-racial thought limit the

transformative potency of black recollections of the nation's racist past. In *Legacies of*

Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory (2004), Jonathan Markovitz examines the

mainstream, white press' interpretations of major cases such as those tied to Tawana

Brawley in 1987 and Charles Stewart in 1990. Markovitz's analysis reveals the tendency

of the media to cling to tropes and images of black criminality, yet approach claims of

racism grounded in collective memory with skepticism. Reporters believed that black

Americans relied on their past as a "crutch" to avoid individual responsibility and that

"past racism has had the effect of blinding them to the particulars of contemporary

reality."[96] This system of classification reflects, as stated by African American Studies

scholar Imani Perry, an aversion in the post-Civil Rights epoch to "taking the blame" for

the visibly poor state of people of color despite progressive measures.[97]

Central to conceptions of black recollections of the past as irrational is the belief

that identity is fluid and no longer bound to racial groupings. The recitation of

multiculturalism as a value and reality has a great deal to with the dismissal of group

based differences. According to bell hooks in *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural*

Politics (1990), within the contours of multiculturalism,

> Black and white in some circles are…perpetuating what some folks see as
> stale and meaning-less binary oppositions. Separated from a political and

historical context, ethnicity is being reconstituted as the new frontier, accessible to all, no passes or permits necessary where attention can now be focused on the production of a privileged, commodifiable discourse in which race becomes synonymous with culture. There would be no need, however, for any unruly radical black folks to raise critical objections to the phenomenon if all this passionate focus on race were not so neatly divorced from a recognition of racism, of the continuing domination of blacks by whites, and (to use some of those out-of-date, uncool terms) of the continued suffering and pain in black life race becomes synonymous with culture.[98]

Partner to colorblindness and post-racialism, this discursive assemblage points to the ability of people to step outside of their traditional racial and ethnic identities, access spaces previously inaccessible, and evade discrimination. Multiculturalism suggests that globalization and the increasingly diverse demographic, has accompanied integration, interaction, and intermixing. Since racial and ethnic lines are constantly crossed and shifted, belonging is no longer the privilege of a select few.[99]

Collective Trauma on the New Frontier

An alternative to the "white-authored national narrative" capable of breaching the public sphere and redirecting the course of socio-political action, relies on the formation of claims of shared trauma that stretch narrow understandings of racism. Black carrier groups of the present have the distinct task of casting the pairing of "post" and "race" as tenuous and unfounded. The application of a diasporic lens to their articulations and maneuverings suggests that the mothers of police brutality victims have responded to this call for an extended and modified tradition of oral and written collective trauma creation.

Much like Till-Mobley, in recent history, mourning black mothers have relied on the oral and literate methods of naming, witnessing, and testifying to recall the black past and qualify their assessment of the nature of the violent acts performed against their

children's bodies. They make use of one another's speech acts to affirm their subjectivity, as well as that of their children's. Yet, distinct from their predecessors, these women are natives and immigrants and "craft a coherent narrative of mourning" that rests on the "transfer of cultural property" across ethnic lines.[100] In conjuring a volatile black past they draw from the confirmations of black mothers from other homeplaces. This process of community building entails exchanging and merging distinct, national, and cultural histories and memories of state violence and subjugation. In doing so, these mothers broker a collective memory of anti-blackness in a way that destabilizes oppressive ideologies.

As noted by Jeffrey Alexander and others, in order for claims of cultural trauma to compete with the existing framework of cultural classification, the wider audience must have an opportunity to relate to assault of the victimized group. The dialogue between African-born, Caribbean-born, and African American mothers implodes multiculturalism, as they pair border-crossing with group based claims of injustice. Pages within the biographical accounts of these black mothers epitomize the nation's lauded success in escaping "the house of racial construction."[101] They are American-born grandchildren of black citizens bogged down by segregation and the announced benefactors of the Civil Rights Revolution. These women are also Caribbean and African immigrants, whose entry into the country was made possible by the state's rejection of restrictive quota systems. However, their similar encounters with policing and their decision to weave interethnic narratives of trauma, allows them to reposition racial egalitarianism arises as illusory.

 The following chapter illustrates the relevance and power of black mothers' cross-ethnic collective trauma creation by revisiting the efforts and protests of Norma Watts, grandmother to Aquan Salmon, Kadiatou Diallo, the mother of Amadou Diallo, and lastly, Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin.

CHAPTER 5

Lifting One Another's Veils

Let the People See What They Have Done

Chapter Five follows the determinations, consciousness, and movements of native and immigrant black mothers that have witnessed modern vessels of racial subjugation abject their children from the world of the living and misname them. It spotlights the efforts of Jamaican-born Norma Watts, Guinean-born Kadiatou Diallo, and American-born Sybrina Fulton to question the criminalization and murder of their children, as well as interrogate the failure of the court system to indict the officers and watchmen responsible. The section shows that in their attempts to effectively disrupt pervasive readings of their children's deaths as justified and dislodged from a national archive of black disposability, these mourning mothers cross native and immigrant lines to project collective black trauma.

While the legal and organizational forms of activism that followed these tragedies left their mark, the voices of mothers were critical in making room for a discourse capable of combatting the ideological apparatus responsible for claiming the lives of their sons, as well as revoking their access to justice. My examination and analysis of literature print and media sources on these cases, reveal immigrant and native narratives that echo one another, call, respond, and merge. Through their conjoined voices, multiculturalism emerges as partner to the persistence of racial grievance evidence as opposed to racial transcendence.

Norma Watts

At 2 am on April 13, 1999, a 48-year-old woman approached police officers in the vicinity of Hartford, Connecticut's Barbour and Westland streets. She shared that one of four black males robbed and pistol-whipped her and that the group left the scene in a white Cadillac. Minutes after the officers relayed the woman's complaint and the license plate number of the vehicle over the Hartford Police Department's radio transmission, another officer reported that a similar incident occurred just a few hours before. In moments, four-year department member, Officer Robert C. Allan, spotted the "caddy" and thereafter chased the driver and occupants into a lot on Enfield Street. The car, reportedly exchanged for drugs, held African American youths, Dennis Faniel, 14, Robert Davis III, 15, Ellis Thomas, 15 and Aquan "Quanny" Salmon, 14. The car rolled to a stop and the driver, Thomas, was the first to flee. As Allan demanded him to "freeze," he scaled a near-by 6-foot-fence. While Faniel and Davis split in different directions, Aquan Salmon sprinted past the officer towards the chain link fence. Upon noticing a second suspect, Allan yelled "police, freeze or I'll shoot!" Salmon continued to run, and with 10-feet between them, Officer Allan fired one shot. This bullet struck the 14-year-old in the back and killed him. Salmon was unarmed. Officers only recovered handgun-shaped cigarette lighters and authentic-looking toy guns at the scene.[1]

The sight where Officer Allan apprehended a bleeding Aquan Salmon became a memorial created and visited daily by family, friends and neighborhood residents. Adjacent to a brick wall with the spray painted words, "RIP Quanny," a tree covered with newspaper clippings and amidst one of Salmon's football trophies, teddy bears, candles

and flowers, people gathered, wept, prayed, as well as grappled with the complex causes of Aquan's death and conversed about potential paths of justice.[2] The police shooting of Amadou Diallo in the neighboring state of New York earlier that year and the local deaths of Franklyn Reid in Milford, CT in 1998 and Malik Jones of New Haven, CT in 1996, were touchstones for Hartford's largely black and Latino community. The city's mourners were acutely aware that it was not Salmon's assaults or refusal to "freeze" that triggered his death but rather his positioning as a young black male in a low-income, divested neighborhood. Moreover, these preceding events made clear to the city's mourners that the reasonability and necessity of Allan's actions would be doctrine. While Salmon's murder signaled their confinement in a power structure that severely compromised their livelihoods, the community was also conscious that the aftermath of the incident was bound to foretell their fate.

Within 48-hours of Salmon's death, chants, including, "we will survive no matter what, my people will stay alive!" and calls for the firing of Officer Allan and Police Chief, Joseph F. Croughwell Jr. resounded from nearly 200 students, parents, ministers and civic leaders as they marched from the Chappelle Gardens housing complex to Enfield Street. As the group walked and encouraged residents to join them, a number of teenagers carried a coffin to commemorate their friend. While Salmon's peers asserted their right to life, the empty pine box also evoked the fragility of their humanity.[3]

The "solemnity" and "anger" that moved the feet of the residents that filled the streets of Hartford's North End on April 16th, foregrounded the rallies, petitions, conferences as well as the building of task forces and strategy sessions that would endure

the course of a year. While the community's opposition to the shooting took many forms, residents uniformly sought legal vindication for the actions of Officer Allan as well as changes in the Harford Police Department's policies that would function to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

With haste, representatives from each of the North End's service agencies, including ONE/CHANE, the Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative and the Blue Hills Civic Association, came together to form the "North Hartford Citizen's Public Safety Commission."[4] Aware of what James E. Willingham, Sr., president of the Urban League of Greater Hartford referred to as, "a natural fear that exists between the neighborhood and the police department," the commission planned to hold state officials accountable to the concerns of Hartford locals during the investigation of the shooting.[5] Thus, leaders contacted the prosecution daily to discuss case details. The city's black clergy ensured that the gravity of the case and its entrenchment in injustice were not lost on the police department. Rev. Cornell Lewis (North End Church of Christ), Rev. Nora Wyatt (Greater Hartford African American Alliance), Rev. James Walker (Phillips Metropolitan C.M.E. Church), Minister Naeem Muhammad (Hartford Mosque No. 14) were among those that vigorously led the community's pursuit of justice. They prayed over the 500 people present to lay Salmon to rest, spiritually covered and protected his family and acted as counselors for the city's angered and bereft young adults. What's more, they conjoined their unfurling prayers with weekly rallies outside of the Hartford Police Department headquarters.[6] The signs and voices that appealed to Officer Allan's departure from the force placed the police department "on notice" and enforced that the

murder of the teenager was not subject to cultural amnesia or passivity but rather an incident that required questioning and rectification.[7] The ministerial alliance's commitment to having the community's unrest weighed on a public scale is evident in their plans to hold a protest during the televised "victory rally" for the championed University of Connecticut basketball team on April 17, 1999. This strategy was effective, as Governor John G. Rowland agreed to hold a news conference with the organizers after the parade, if the blueprint for the protest was cast aside. On the day of the meeting, Rev. Nora Wyatt declared, "Sometimes people assume that we will holler, kick and scream for a minute and then we disappear into the sunset. "We want it fresh in their minds every day that we're there, and we're not going away. This young man's death shouldn't be what it took to cause the city to rise up and open its eyes, but that's what's happened."[8]

Informed by the massive protests during the Amadou Diallo case, two days after Officer Allan shot and killed Salmon, Rowland revoked the Hartford Police Department of investigative control. The governor and Chief State Attorney, John M. Bailey, appointed New London State Attorney Kevin T. Kane as prosecutor. Rowland also requested the assistance of the Public Safety Commissioner and lead forensic scientist, Henry C. Lee, the State Police Forensic Laboratory, Connecticut State Police, and the Eastern District Major Crime Squad.[9] While these diplomatic decisions as well as Rowland's detestation of racism presented Hartford with a semblance of justice, they refused to assume complacency. Also affected by patterns of police misconduct, Latino residents, leaders and organizations were central to validating the grievances of people of color and redressing the tenuous relationship between the community and the police.

Prosecutor Kevin T. Kane and deputy Paul E. Murray's decision rested on the accordance of Officer Allan's defense and claim that his life was jeopardized by Salmon with Connecticut's "Deadly Force Law." Section 53a-22 of this statute suggests that a police officer,

> …is justified in using deadly physical force upon another person only when he reasonably believes such is necessary to: (1) defend himself or a third person from the use or imminent use of deadly force; or (2) effect an arrest or prevent the escape from custody of a person whom he reasonably believes has committed or has attempted to commit a felony which involved the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical injury and if, where feasible, he has given warning of his intent to use deadly physical force.[10]

La Casa de Puerto Rico took particular issue with this resolution and decided to intervene. Considering the centrifugal role of the Deadly Force Law in determining the results of the case, this Latino-led civil rights organization urged Kane and Murray to consider the City of Hartford's 1973 Federal Consent Decree regarding police interactions with civilians. The guidelines, which build upon the standards outlined in the state law, emerged out of *Cintron v. Vaughn* (1973). The urban insurgencies that greatly defined the black freedom struggle in the 1960s erupted in Connecticut's small capital city from 1966-1969. African Americans and the growing Latino population called for an end to overcrowded and poor housing conditions and the persistent poverty tied to employment discrimination. The antagonistic, repressive and violent actions of police officers sparked as well as fueled the rioting and reoccurring moments of upheaval that marked the decade. The Hartford community met the intensification of police abuse with organized opposition. In 1969, the shooting of a Latino youth compounded the long-running fears and inhibitions of residents and led La Casa de Puerto Rico and four other

organizations to file a federal discrimination suit against the Hartford Police Department.

The plaintiffs asserted that the police "have conducted [a] campaign of violence,

intimidation, and humiliation against blacks and Hispanics." The case resulted in a "code

of police conduct," which among a number of stipulations prohibited the shooting of

those 16 and under, unarmed suspects, and those fleeing the police.[11] La Casa and

collaborating organizations believed that consideration of the language of the decree

offered an additional "layer of protection" and had potential to delegitimize Officer

Allan's actions in ways the state law could not.[12]

Community leaders also relied on the preceding settlement to call for the

strengthening of the police department's check and balance system. Representatives

defined Salmon's death as largely a reflection of the failure of Chief Joseph Croughwell

to remain compliant to the instituted code of ethics. After months of planning, on

November 22, 1999, hundreds of community members filled the Council Chambers to

express their concerns regarding police standards and governance.[13] They pushed for the

city's re-committal to the decree it signed twenty-six years prior. The following day, the

community groups present re-convened with the Hartford City Council and at the close of

the negotiation, the city representatives passed a resolution in which they reconstituted

the original decree's law enforcement standards. They agreed to hire a "civilian monitor"

and voted to resurrect the Firearms Board of Inquiry, charged with evaluating "whether

the discharge of a firearm conformed to the Police Manual."[14]

Ten months after Dennis Faniel, Robert Davis III, Ellis Thomas and Aquan

Salmon sprinted from a white cadillac in pursuit of corners unlit by flashing cruiser lights

and Officer Robert C. Allan halted Salmon with a bullet to his back, the Divison of Criminal Justice closed the investigation and delivered a ruling. Although the community worked tirelessly to bring attention to an enduring rift between the community and the officers designated to protect them, highlighted by the implications of a 63 percent white police force within a 68 percent black and Hispanic city as well as exposing the unjust facets of Allan's actions, Kevin T. Kane stated:

> Based on all the evidence we conclued that Officer Allan reasonably believed it was necessary for him to use deadly force to defend himself from the imminent use of deadly force. Officer Allan's use of deadly force was, therefore, appropiate under Section 53a-22 f the General Statutes. Accordingly, no further action will be taken.[15]

The prosecution issued a 200-page report on the shooting, comprised of witness statements, graphs, photos, maps, and the evidence collected by commisioner and forensic scientist Henry C. Lee.[16] Within the document, Kane surmised that while Salmon was unarmed and neither of the gun-shaped lighters found were in his posession, Allan was "alone and confronted with people who he had ample reason to believe were armed with at least two guns and now were desperately attempting to escape."[17] The report shared that Allan heard what he believed to be a gunshot from the area from which Salmon was running and that after shouting "freeze," the teened turned towards him in a manner that according to his training, was indicative of a firearm being drawn.[18] This claim was supported by Ellis Thomas. In his testimony, Aquan's friend recalled that, "The cop had his gun out and yelled to [Aquan] to stop and [Aquan] turned around real fast towards the cop, and the cop must have thought [Aquan] had a gun too and shot him."[19] In asessing this singular act, the report reads, "Almost any sudden movement by

him that was not an absolutely clear compliance with Officer Allan's order to freeze, would reasonably be perceived by a person in Office Allan's position as an attempt to shoot him."[20]

The declared reasonability of Allan's decision to pull the trigger was also shaped by *United States v. Sokolow* in 1989, which declared that the "calculus of reasonableness [must allow for the fact that] police officers are often forced to make split-second judgements – in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving, about the amount of force necessary in a particular situation."[21] In the report, Kane declared that the descriptors, "tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving" understate the predicament Officer Allan found himself in on the dawn of April 13, 1999. In October, the majority of the voting members of the newly minted Firearms Board of Inquiry affirmed the State Attorney's ruling and found that, "Officer Robert Allan was justified in the use of his firearm in the incident that resulted in the death of Aquan Salmon."[22]

Far after the courthouse forced their doors shut, the community continued to push for institutional protection and justification. In the days leading up to the release of Kane's report, community leaders planned roundtables to funnel, concentrate and transform reactions to the forthcoming decision into courses of action. A diverse set of spaces, largely traditionally black and Latino cultural centers, such as the San Juan Center Sports, The Artists Collective, The Rambuh Family Center and Mount Olive Baptist Church, held these discussions.[23] Protests also followed the clearing of Office Allan, including a rally based at the University of Hartford with over 50 people present. The demonstrators, which encompassed students as well as long-term residents of the

Hartford's North End community, revived the call for Allan's resignation. In refusing to

waver on the assertion that Salmon's death was constitutional, on April 13, 2000, Norma

Watts, Aquan's grandmother and estate administrator, filed a lawsuit against the City of

Hartford, former police chief Joseph Croughwell and Officer Robert Allan. The suit rests

on the claim that Allan deployed excessive force and violated Salmon's Fourth

Amendment rights. Moreover, the suit charges Allan and the city with negligence,

evident in their failure to supervise officers accused of misconduct and abide by the terms

instituted following *Cintron v. Vaughn* (1973).[24]

Alphonzo Robinson, a friend of Salmon's and fellow Enfield Street neighborhood

youth, shared his reactions to the decision with the *Hartford Courant*. He professed that,

"People are not happy with the decision. This thing has gone so beyond Quanny. People

are sick and tired of this disrespect and that's what they are going to react to. There's a

whole lot of people out here who aren't going to accept that decision, and that is going to

affect everyone."[25] Robinson's words illuminate the presence of a black collective

identity comprised of individuals that consider their lives interchangeable. In particular,

Quanny's friend speaks to a group identity grounded in a shared sense that the state has

incessantly failed to protect Hartford's black and brown communities. A "traumatized

collective historical memory" and the first and secondhand witnessing of the inextricable

link between inequality and black violation heavily informs the ways in which African

Americans interpret and understand "contemporary sites of conflict."[26] As Hartford

residents bemoaned and contested the justification of Salmon's death, they diagnosed the

incident as a "symptom of the disease of racism," decried police violence as a modern

substitute for the "lynching of black men" and believed that they shared a dimension of struggle with the civil rights activists of the mid-twentieth century.[27] The community's invocation of black memory through oral references to cultural images, bodily practices, memorialization and social action interjected a narrative of collective trauma that inverted the state's definition of "reasonability." Residents garnered a lens of analysis that placed moral responsibility on the shoulders of Officer Allan and the Hartford Police Department and cast Salmon as a stark reminder of a need for critical sociopolitical action against racial prejudice.

Salmon supporters were in the midst of not only a structural battle, but also an ideological one. They were in conversation with a dominant discourse that vehemently denounced their protests and declared that race had nothing to do with the case. Within hours of the shooting, the *Hartford Courant* released an article that attempted to offer a chronology of the boy's life leading up to April 13, 2015. The probationary electronic bracelet that encircled the bleeding boy's ankle was the axis around which this article turned. The piece, "Teen Fatally Shot by Police Had Promise and a Temper," illuminated Salmon's troubled past with the law. He was easily angered and regularly in fights at school. This led to his transferal to a transitional school for Hartford's behaviorally challenged students and his placement on house arrest the preceding year for breaching the peace. Community members shared that Salmon preferred a wayward life on the streets and was missing from his home in the two weeks leading up to his encounter with Officer Allan.

On April 19, a contributor to the *Boston Globe* begged the question, "A Teenager

is Dead, Whom Can We Blame?" Author Roger P. Cayer continued,

> Where were all the activists and concerned community leaders
> when Aquan Salmon was on his crime spree at 2 a.m. on a school night?
> Where was his mother and father during those two weeks that he was
> away from home? Weren't they concerned that he was getting behind in
> his schoolwork, and that his future (that they say was cut short by a police
> officer's bullet) might be in jeopardy? This may sound cold and uncaring,
> but after reading the rest of the article, it seems to me that the only thing
> cut short was a life of continued crime and a future in the penal system at
> best.[28]

Other journalistic accounts agreed that Salmon's family and community made the

teenager's death inevitable. For example, the newspaper article, "Aquan Salmon's Life of

Contradictions: Why City Teen Died Is Not The Only Question," reveals that in 1996,

Donnett Salmon, Aquan's mother, was arrested on multiple charges, including harboring

a murder suspect, her oldest son. Consequentially, Salmon was placed in foster care and

ultimately under the guardianship of his grandmother. After citing the concern-filled

observations of Salmon's teachers, former football coach and neighbors, *Hartford*

Courant reporter Helen Ubinas concludes that, "Although those around him were

sometimes full of good intentions, just about everyone in Aquan's life seemed to fall a

little short."[29] Assessments of Salmon's family and community as dysfunctional gained

momentum after Officer Allan's exoneration. In February of 2000, due the community's

effective petitioning, the Hartford City Council requested that Officer Allan resign from

the police department. This decision and the council's decision to maintain a Firearms

Discharge Review Board received immense criticism. Many suggested that the council's

responses to the incident were misguided and that Salmon's death was the result of

societal issues made possible by his community, not law enforcement. The article,

"Hartford City Council Looks For; A Scapegoat," argues that:

> Aquan Salmon was dead to the community long before his encounter with Officer Allan. He died from a community disease of neglect, indifference and irresponsibility… Hiding behind the "race card" further exacerbates the issues involved in this tragic case. It's easy to cry racism and ignore the real issues of education, meaningful employment, family responsibility and community interaction. Though these may be the appropriate functions of the city council, they are not the responsibility of Officer Allan.[30]

"Someone Talk Back to the Hysterics," a piece by Chris Powell in New London's *The Day,* echoed these sentiments and charged the community and council for refusing responsibility for Salmon's criminality, and thus, his demise. The local editor admonishes the family for "abandoning" their son, only to "reclaim" him when he was dead.[31] He also discounts the family's proclaimed ties to preceding black families affected by police brutality and their assertions that the "hoodlum's" death was a manifestation of racial abuse.[32]

These channels of public discourse focus on Salmon's deficiencies, as well as those of his family and community. They give less attention to the practices of the police department or the contours of racial inequality. The justification of Officer Allan's actions partnered with an ideological system resistant to a language capable of conceiving of Salmon as a victim. Nestled within the paradigm of colorblindness, the press and mass media rejected the community's expressions of black collective trauma. These domains forewent the placement of Salmon's death within a historical context and, instead, thought the incident could best be explained by behavioral failures, as opposed to institutional choices. This in turn framed the racialized arguments and protests of

Salmon's supporters and their narratives of black collective trauma as unacceptable sources of resolve in determining Allan's fate.

Throughout the trial and after its close, periodicals and news stations flocked to the home of Salmon's 70-year-old Jamaican immigrant grandmother, Norma Watts. Watts who family friends referred to as a "proud woman," invited reporters into the home many deemed "ill-equipped."[33] In agreeing to enter the public arena, she aimed to challenge the derogatory images assigned to her and her grandson. In February 2000, after Allan's exoneration, *Hartford Courant* staff writer, Tina Brown, interviewed Watts in her Blue Hills Avenue neighborhood. Watts told Brown that Salmon was, "good." While showing the teenager's football trophies and the perfect attendance awards that lined her dining room wall, his grandmother expressed that despite Salmon's nightly activities, "It didn't give that man no right. He didn't deserve to die."[34] In the interview, she also mentioned the support and praise Allan received from the police force, and referenced a letter she received at her home from Boston, which maintained that "the kid got what he deserved."[35]

Amidst the perception that justice was appropriately served on April 13, 1999, Watts believed that, "Allan should be in jail for killing Aquan. If I did it, I would never see the streets again. He never spent one day in jail. We are the ones suffering."[36] After referencing the store owner that sold the youth the lighters and the robbery victim that retracted her statement, Watts further states, "You don't see their faces on the news. They were involved. They should go to jail. They put my Quanny on the news. Every time I saw him on TV, it stabbed me in the heart. This can never set right in my mind."[37] As

Watts allowed her voice and home to occupy the public's eye, she spoke to her dispossession. While Salmon was hypervisible, he was shamed and his humanity was largely out of her reach.

Watts also professed the existence of a criminal justice code that defined reasonability as well as deservingness across racial lines. Watts suggested that distinct from Allan, she and her grandson shared a racial identity that assured their surveillance regardless of their actions. Thus, pointing the public eye to his Legos, marching soldiers and the "Biggie" and "Sean Puffy Combs" posters on his bedroom wall was only a starting point to her construction of a new master narrative. Healing her dispossession and pulling together the remnants of Salmon's innocence lay in her ability to overturn the moral code that sheltered Allan and left her grandson bare and exposed to societal manipulation. In accomplishing this, Watts, as similar to the city's black community, suggested that her trauma was not hers alone but endured by a multitude. Moreover, she claimed her misery had historical precedence. Watts raised Aquan Salmon's death to the level of a cultural crisis and did so by resting on the testimonies of native-born black mothers whose children previously died under the watch of law enforcement. In establishing a narrative of collective black trauma, Watts crossed ethnic boundaries and called for witnesses. Her pleas received responses.

On February 17, 2000, state law officers privately briefed the family on the verdict before Allan's exoneration was made known to the public. In hopes of halting media participation and an uprising within the majority-minority city, Kane and Murray planned to hold the meeting in a state Supreme Court conference room. Watts declined

the invitation and made plans to stay home. She refused to be "taken by police to an unknown location" wanted the briefing held in her North End neighborhood. [38] After negotiation, the meeting location switched to the Phillips Metropolitan C.M.E Church on Main Street. Across the street from the historically black denominational church, a housing project housed largely minority residents and neighboring the holy meeting place were black-owned barbershops and financially deprived non-profit organizations. Police officers stood outside of the church doors and only welcomed those on the approved guest list. While it included Norma Watts, it did not comprise her family members, supporters, and the Nation of Islam ministers that accompanied her. When the officers did not admit them, Watts stated, "If everyone can't get in, I'm not going either."[39] After tense discussion, the legal team informed the officers to step aside. Once Watts and her companions entered and sat in the chapel's front pew, the meeting commenced. They began by displaying the evidence that supported the claim that Allan feared for his life. Forensic scientist Lee and state officials reenacted the night's events and replayed the radio calls Allan made to the headquarters while chasing the vehicle and after the shooting.[40] While the prosecution made their case, Watts abruptly stood and walked out of the church.

In performing this action, the grandmother leveraged control over the judiciary system's interpretation of the shooting and cast the ruling as illegitimate. She made clear that a rendering of the shooting that managed to denounce Salmon's innocence lacked legitimacy. In calling for the trial to be held in the city's historically black neighborhood and before members of the community, she declared that the makings of Aquan's story

did not belong to Allan, the police force, or the prosecution. Rather, in the wake of his murder, Watts asserted that the rightful authorities of his bodily history were the men and women that looked like and formerly shared a life with her grandson. She deemed their presence and voices in the church and the surrounding built environment critical to her attempts to detest the ruling that Officer Robert Allan was justified in killing Salmon.

After the press conference, Norma assured a *Hartford Courant* contributor that, "we will not rest until we have justice for Quanny."[41] The restless "we," and the "we" upon which she relied included emotionally beset, yet transformation-seeking black mothers. In her public statements, Watts asserted that her acts of resistance were on behalf of and alongside other black families and mothers affected by police brutality in Connecticut. These families, of which maternal figures were at the fore in the struggle for legal justice, included those of, "Malik Jones, Franklyn Reid, Hector Colon, Jeffrey Grant, Darrell Holeman and Victoria Cooper."[42] The act of naming, a central facet of black women's oral traditions of resistance, as argued by historian DoVeanna Fulton Minor, "recalls the presence and existence of the individual every time the name is voiced."[43] Through naming, Watts legitimized the families and correspondingly, affirmed Salmon's subjectivity. Among the mourned families, Watts procured witnesses capable of speaking to her grandson's point of view on the morning of his death. While there was a range of evidence as well as testimonies to support Officer Robert Allan's need to act in self-defense, there was little to no support for Salmon. Emma Jones, native-born black woman, arose as a witness.

On the evening of April 14, 1997, East Haven police informed Officer Robert Flodquist of a motorist driving erratically and at high-speeds on Interstate-91. Once spotted, Flodquist chased the motorist into the bordering city of New Haven. Once motorist Malik Jones came to a halt, police cruisers gathered and surrounded his vehicle. Flodquist shattered the driver door window and within point-blank range directed multiple shots at Malik. At least four bullets struck the 21-year-old, killing him. Flodquist claimed that Jones attempted to reverse and run him over with his car. The event occurred three blocks from the home Malik shared with his mother, Emma Jones. During my interview with Mrs. Jones, she shared that the events of that night, including how she managed to arrive at the scene of the crime and the local hospital are not clear, but she recalled that she saw, "what no mother in the world should." She continued, "My son was on a stretcher and he had all of these bullet holes in his body."[44] She yelled for help and remembered that no one seemed to respond. Her cries rang out in demand for medical assistance, as well as from the stripping of the normalcy she had come to know and would never see again.

In the days after the shooting, she mined for the strength and realism necessary to plan her son's funeral. She buried Malik Jones in a white suit, and vowed that she too would only wear white for the remainder of her lifetime. This seemingly personal, corporeal act signaled a transformation and re-birth of the New Haven region's racial landscape. Jones' death sparked a number of protests throughout New Haven. This included a 500-person march led by Mrs. Jones from the site of the shooting to East Haven's city hall in July of 1997. A week after Flodquist's assault, she founded MALIK.

The organization was a coalition of black advocacy groups and leaders committed to holding police officers accountable for their abuse and violation of civilians.[45] By 1999, the group successfully pushed for the development of a "civilian review board to oversee police activities."[46] The group deemed liability as central to bringing due process to those harmed by those in traditional positions of power.

In September 1997, after a five-month investigation, State Attorney Michael Dearington found that there were no grounds to prosecute Officer Flodquist. Dearington penned that the officer acted reasonably. He stated, "reasonableness" from the perspective of a reasonable officer at the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight."[47] In response, the community argued that the investigation failed to include key witnesses. This prompted Governor Rowland to initiate the involvement of the state grand jury.[48] This secondary investigation ended in 1999 and carried the same results as the one conducted two years prior. The conclusive report refuted claims of racism by suggesting that there was minimal chance that Officer Flodquist knew of Jones' African American identity during the car chase. A few days before Officer Allan took the life of Aquan Salmon, Emma Jones filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the town of East Haven, the East Haven Police Department, the city of New Haven and Officer Flodquist. Jones filed the suit on the basis that, "Flodquist used excessive force and violated her son's civil rights."[49] The suit also made a case for racial profiling and cited a series of previous events that alluded to the East Haven Police Department's hold on racial bias. For example, Jones and her lawyer brought attention to previous instances of police violence against black residents. 1999 marked the beginning of a 14-year legal battle and

an array of appeals and trials would ultimately fail to conclude in Emma Jones' legal success.[50]

When asked about Salmon and her involvement in the community's effort to hold the Hartford Police Department responsible for the youth's death, Jones stressed, "You can't talk about Aquan Salmon without talking about me. Because I was there, I went there, I was in Hartford all of the time with the grandmother."[51] Published accounts of the Salmon case emphasize the presence of black male community leaders. In the articles, men emerge as Watts' primary source of political effectiveness and spiritual sustainment. However, as Jones' statement denotes, black women also stood by the grandmother's side and added an additional layer of protection and opposition. Mrs. Jones made the first of many trips to Norma Watts' Hartford home in February of 1999. Adorned in white, the Alabama-born daughter of a Gee's Bend quilt maker, stayed there "for many days."[52] Emma Jones and Norma Watts shared Jamaican dishes, joyous, yet pained memories of their children and potential routes to justice. Jones also publically demonstrated her alliance with Watts and indignation at Officer Allan's conduct. At Salmon's funeral, she expressed to the press that she was weary of police shooting black boys like "dogs in the street."[53] She continued, "Fear is the magic word for police. When we're sitting in our cars, they have fear. When we get out and run, they have fear. When we put our hands in the air, they have fear."[54] Through her articulations, Jones assumed the role of a witness. Malik was a "black boy" like Aquan. The 14-year-old was not a stranger and the police interaction that led to his death was a road she traveled before. On these grounds, she outwardly supported Watts' defense that Allan's presumed reasonability was

questionable. Jones also refuted the widespread claims that Salmon was in a position to induce fear. Like magic, this fear was imagined and could not be qualified in reality. The dearth of police claims to reasonability was evident in the case of her son. Not only did a forensic report reveal that Malik's car did not reverse to target Officer Flodquist, but the media's claims that Jones had a lengthy criminal record and was intoxicated before his death were unfounded.[55] In an interview, Jones stated,

> Everytime a black male is shot, tasered to death, beaten to death or if there is any excessive use of force, the first thing that happens is that there is this theory that I call "the public policy of police containment" where all of these agencies that are connected to each other come together in support of whatever is being portrayed…. I say to people, don't tell me, he should've been home, don't tell me nothing about the mother wasn't taking care of him, and he was living with his grandmother, irrelevant! Don't talk to me about that. Talk to me about psychologically, what in the name of God was wrong with a grown man with a gun, who was authorized to serve and protect a community, who can shoot a baby in his back, as he runs past him. How do you reconcile that kind of action? You can't.[56]

Jones' response to Watts' call fueled her own process of collective trauma creation. In 1998, Jones penned a letter to her son on the first anniversary of his death. She transformed this into an annual tradition, up until the early 2000's. After signing these letters with "Love, Mommy" and placing her phone number and address at the top of the page, Jones distributed the pieces to members of the community.

The stirring letters are all entitled, "Notes to my Baby Son," and are nearly identical in content. They reveal avowals of unceasing love, a family's unending war with an "unimaginable terror," the muted state of Malik's older brother, an explication of weekly visits to the cemetery, and a myriad of social justice declarations. Each of Jones' writings garner two statements, underlined, emboldened and placed in numerical order.

The first reads, "**<u>Your death is not in vain</u>**," and the following, "**<u>We will never ever forget you, who you are, your gentle, kind ways and therefore, no matter what, you cannot be redefined.</u>**" In these assurances to her son, present in "memory and in spirit," Jones expressed her commitment to ensuring that Malik's death terminated passive and non-interrogative treatments of police violence. She also conveyed her insistence on preserving her son's identity. The "no matter what" and the unstated source of his sneering redefinition harken back to a lamentation placed at the start of the letters. In this, Jones shared that "horrifying reports and decisions intensified our agony and demonstrated a total lack of regard for us as human beings with civil and human rights." Taken together, Jones' pronouncements make clear that she was retaliating against the institutional practices that nurtured Officer Floudqist's actions and a public sphere that misrecognized Malik and the preconditions of his death. Throughout the letters, Jones refers to this multidimensional, oppressive apparatus as "racist." She grounds this assertion in a black traumatic past. She wrote,

> Since April 14, 1997, I've felt an unusually close connection with our ancestors and all the slaves who suffered severely at the hands of the worst kind of cruelty, injustice and inhumanity ever perpetrated against an entire race of people.... What happened to you is essentially the same as what was done to our ancestors…the cruelty is done I believe with every expectation of not being held accountable by the government.

In linking the state supported violence slave holders imposed on black bodies in the colonial and antebellum eras to the police violence against black women and men in the modern period, Jones presented the number of black civilians shot and killed by police officers in the state of CT since Malik's death. Moreover, she made clear that the court did not indict the law enforcement involved in the murders. In the letters after 1999,

Jones' included Aquan Salmon in her account, as well as Franklyn Reid, an additional

victim of police brutality and child of Jamaican immigrants. "I am standing," Jones

writes, "as a witness before God for what's right and just, for all of humanity." By way of

her son, Emma Jones emerged as a witness for Salmon. Through this public speech act,

she functioned to affirm Norma Watts' claims to a black collective trauma. She

accomplished this by publicly presenting a narrative that echoed Watts', and attaching

Salmon to a turbulent black past that far preceded the shooting of Malik Jones.

As discussed in Part One, race consciousness is uncharted terrain for black

immigrants. In speaking to the adjustment experiences of black Caribbean immigrants,

such as Norma Watts, Milton Vickerman states that, "the everyday lives of West Indian

immigrants reveal to them that "blackness" carries a more severe stigma in the United

States than in the West Indies. It takes them a long time to get used to this. In fact, the

process of getting used to it tends to be quite painful."[57] He suggests that West Indian

immigrants "have enjoyed greater freedom to self-define their identities," due to the

emphasis on class differentiation in their home countries.[58] Yet, upon arriving to the

United States, society strips Caribbean immigrants of these complex identities and

imposes the label, "black." Overtime, encounters with racial inequality and

discrimination, such as police brutality, indoctrinates Caribbean immigrants with an acute

awareness of their African ancestry and its positioning as a site of marginalization.

Distinct from their European immigrant counterparts, they come to know that their

blackness delineates them as societal outliers, unworthy of the rights of citizenship, such

as state protection.

Sociologist Mary Waters finds that in the post-Civil Rights era, West Indians have more identity options than immigrants of previous generations. Shifts in the nation's demographic landscape overall and their growing numbers, have allowed West Indians some flexibility in the ways in which they self-define.[59] Much of the research on contemporary foreign-born blacks suggests that these groups decided to subvert racial categorizations and identify according to their nationalities. Within the public sphere, they accentuate their ethnic and culturally based languages, practices, and traditions in their interactions and engagements with institutions and members of the wider society.

Yet, these tensions are not wholly representative of the black interethnic dynamic in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Vickerman finds that Caribbean immigrants, particularly those that have lived in the United States for a number of years, actively move from a position of group classification to group identification with native-born blacks, as well as develop a group consciousness and embark on a path towards collective political action.[60] The experiences of Norma Watts and her call to Emma Jones epitomize this painful process of radical identification, as well as its capacity to reverse the course of political and moral responsibility. With racial dejection at her finger tips, Norma Watts decided to cling to a group that refused to deny the role of race in distinguishing their lives. The assault against her American-born grandson's body and personhood led the grandmother, to contribute to the ongoing remembrance of racial violence evidenced in the actions of Emma Jones and Hartford residents. This offered her an alternative system of classification with which to fill in the gaps that pervaded

depictions of Salmon and a praxis fit to challenge the city police force and their failure to protect and serve the city's black neighborhoods.

The dispossession that consumed Norma Watts after she learned of Salmon's death, barreled as the public avowed Officer Allan's decision to pull the trigger as inevitable and rightful. The trauma-filled expressions of the city's black community validated Watts' critical questioning of the treatment and result of Salmon's case. It was clear that she was not experiencing dispossession in isolation. More specifically, it was evident that this group not only mourned the loss of a youth, but the resurrection of a system that refused to recognize Salmon's humanity as well those that looked like him. Chronicles of previous generations of blacks in America, shrouded in shame and executed without state intervention, indoctrinated the community with an ability to recognize the society's system of cultural classification as warped and thus, repudiated the public sphere's reduction of Salmon. The propositioning of a narrative that fully claimed her grandson's victimhood led Watts to define black collective trauma as a safe space, in which she could plant seeds of repossession. She did so by deliberately calling on Emma Jones and other native-born black mothers as witnesses. For they too bore black children similarly and distinctly targeted by an officer's bullet and denied restitution.

Together, Watts and Jones activated a form of memory that defied ethnic and regional boundaries. Although North American-based slavery, lynching and Jim Crow laws branded and shaped Watts' life outcomes in the United States, they signified cultural properties, images, and a repertoire that she could have refused to accept as her own.

However, she decided to align with this past and retell it. Her retelling of the past produced a narrative of collective mourning that effectively reversed her dispossession and undermined the dissemblance of Salmon's victimization. Watts managed to defy the mainstream discourse's assertions that Salmon supporters were non-interrogative in their acknowledgement and application of a race-based analysis of the case. Her speech acts fulfilled widely accepted standards of rationality as they disengaged the blinders of post racism. In merging her orality with Jones, she destabilized monolithic and essentialist notions of identity and traversed a path of cultural transmission. In a way, Watts took on a multi-cultural lens to make sense of her grandson's murder. She appealed to society's post-racial sensibilities only to discount their cogency. Her orality, that of Jones, and the slain children they represented refuted a discourse that cast post-racialism as a realm of liberation. The persistence of their misery and its capacity to seep through ethnic boundaries called into question the validity of the contentions that racial neutrality mapped Aquan Salmon's bodily history. It became clear that although the state upheld the banner of multiculturalism, it deferred to the reproduction and maintenance of trauma.

Kadiatou Diallo

On February 25, 2000, a week after the state of Connecticut's Division of Criminal Justice decided to take no further action against Hartford Officer Robert C. Allan in the shooting of Aquan Salmon, an Albany, New York court decided to acquit the four officers indicted for killing Amadou Diallo. A year prior, on the evening of February 4th, Ed McMellon, Sean Carroll, Kenneth Boss and Richard Murphy of the New York Police Department directed 41-shots at Diallo in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment.

The 22-year-old collapsed to his death after 19 out of a total of 41hailing bullets struck him. The plain-clothed, undercover officers claimed that Diallo matched the profile of a criminal-at-large and as they approached him, he reached into his back pocket, and pulled out what appeared to be a gun. After Diallo lay lifeless, the officers found that what they thought was a gun was a wallet. It became clear that he was not searching for a weapon, but rather a source of identification.

In March of 1999, a grand jury indicted McMellon, Carroll, Boss and Murphy on six counts. These included, "intentional murder, depraved indifference murder, first- and second-degree manslaughter, criminally negligent homicide and reckless endangerment."[61] The outcome of the trial relied on the extent to which the use of deadly force was justified within the parameters of the law. Similar to the Salmon case, the court dismissed the role of racial profiling in shaping their conception of reasonability. More specifically, the jury's task was to determine if the officers were reasonable in their assertion that they were in "mortal danger."[62] Recall that according to the law, deadly force is legal if the person involved acts in self-defense and "reasonably believes that such use of deadly physical force is necessary to defend himself…from what he reasonably believes to be the imminent use of deadly force against himself or a third person by such other person."[63] After three-days of deliberation, the 12-person jury concluded that the material evidence and testimonies suggested, "Diallo's demeanor and gestures created a context in which the officers might reasonably form a perception that he was armed."[64] The dimly lit vestibule, the wallet's nearly identical appearance to a starter's gun, and Diallo's failure to respond to the officer's call for him to freeze were

among a slew of arguments held up by the defense team that positioned the officers'

actions as reasonable. As stated by sociologist Beth Roy in *41 Shots…and Counting*,

Diallo's perspective, in contrast to that of the "four living, breathing men," was

"secondhand, arguable, theoretical." The coroner's report, which resulted from an

examination of the bullets that penetrated Diallo's body, as well as those that hit the

apartment foyer, posited that the shooting continued after Diallo had fallen. In support of

this claim, the report pointed to a bullet wound in his foot. However, a forensic expert

countered the coroner's findings and supported the defense's contention that Diallo was

in a "combat-like crouch position."[65] Also crucially important in shaping the outcome of

the trial, the court required the jurors to evaluate the officers' reasonability during and in

the moments leading up to the shooting. Thus, consideration of Diallo's innocence lay

outside of the bounds of analysis. As made clear by Roy, "knowledge after Diallo's death

of his innocence had no relevance to the four officers' belief at the time that they were

justified in shooting him."[66]

After Judge Joseph Teresi passed down the verdict and proclaimed, "The book is

closed, it will open to no man and no woman," Kadiatou Diallo, Amadou Diallo's

mother, held tight to her brothers. She remained seated as the officers, their families and

observers exited the courtroom, and Diallo's supporters gathered outside of the building

for peaceful protest. Mrs. Diallo, "thought of standing and saying," as she writes in her

memoir, "Judge, you have not introduced your guests. Let me introduce myself, I am the

mother." Yet, she decided against it. She shared, "I was afraid he would look down at me

from the bench and see nothing more than a bewildered black woman. I did not budge."[67]

Diallo encountered what Melissa Harris-Perry described as a "crooked room," a space

filled with tilted images of her humanity, slated to justify her misery.[68] She was aware

that while the tearful testimonies of the four white police officers were readable as signs

of sincerity and honesty, as a black woman, her desperate cries of her son's innocence

would emerge as wayward and irrational. Diallo's decision to "not budge," does not

reflect inaction, but rather a refusal to stand up and tilt herself to "accommodate

degrading stereotypes."[69]

"Kadi" Diallo received a call from the states informing her that her son was

murdered on February 4, 1999, while in her home country of Guinea. She kicked, fought

and screamed against the rising tide of a crushing reality.[70] In that moment, weakness

overwhelmed her, and a sense of maternal strength that she laid claim to for over 20 years

appeared to escape her. She pleaded to Allah, "Do not make me a child again." Five days

later, she arrived to New York City and the Bronx borough that her son immigrated to

almost three years prior. Once on Wheeler Avenue, Kadiatou and family members

pushed through a crowd of onlookers, reporters and cameras to the site of the shooting.

She knelt where her son previously laid, wailed "Amadou, Amadou," and proclaimed,

"Your mom is here." She paused, as if waiting for a response. After departing the bullet

hole riddled vestibule, she entered her son's small apartment. Mrs. Diallo observed

photos he took at the Super Bowl, drew in the familiar scent as well as the memories his

clothes carried and held his prayer cloth close. Upon leaving the dimly lit hallways of the

apartment, the tearful and feeble mother asserted that her son came from a "good family,"

and "justice must be done."[71] Diallo's first articulation within the nation's public sphere

made clear that her conception of justice was not limited to holding the implicated members of the New York Police Department accountable. It also relied on an adequate representation of her son within mainstream discourse. A mode of social and cultural thought encased the nineteen bullets that took her son, and would prove to not only affect the outcome of the oncoming legal battle, but also threatened to isolate him and those like him, from the publics understandings of innocence, criminality and restitution.

As similar to Norma Watts, Kadiatou Diallo was at the fore of a meaning struggle with the dominant and widely dispersed interpretations of the shooting and her son's character. Mrs. Diallo was particularly troubled by the widespread depictions of Diallo as an "unarmed West African street vendor," and she, as "the mother of an unarmed West African street vendor."[72] While the term unarmed implied that "armed" was her son's natural state, the media coupled the street vendor title with depictions of him as financially deprived, minimally educated and a poor English speaker. In light of this, his mother interjected these characterizations with delineations of her young son's middle-class upbringing, prominent Guinean family, extensive educational background, multilingualism and innumerable travels. She also listed the books that her son avidly read and was sure to bring along with him on his journey to the States. These included works on computers, the Koran, texts on Martin Luther King, Jr. and *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims*.[73] She carried these books with her to the protests that filled the city's streets after her son's death, and lifted them up in order to give the audiences a deeper understanding of her son's character. Amadou Diallo arrived to America with high hopes of expanding his career in the computer sciences and like

many in New York City's small, yet burgeoning African immigrant community, located

the selling of a variety of goods in Manhattan as a method for saving money.[74] In her

memoir, *My Heart Will Cross This Ocean: My Story, My Son, Amadou,* published in

2003, she declares that she failed to recognize her son under the tags the public applied to

him. Diallo states,

> This label stole his story. To call him West African revealed nothing. He
> had lived in three different West African countries, in five different towns
> or cities, with subtleties that made each one distinct. He lived in two
> difference cities in Asia, had studied in the best schools in these places,
> and had been part of a neighborhood in New York for nearly two and a
> half years, selling, buying, eating, rooting for teams…didn't that give him
> even the slightest claim to being not just West African, but a New Yorker,
> too?[75]

The police department's assertions that Diallo acted "suspiciously" and "agitated"

buttressed the strangeness that became synonymous with Amadou Diallo's identity.[76]

Media sources rarely discussed or interrogated the officer's mistaken presumptions. In

turning these crooked images upright and in shedding light on the dominant

interpretations of the murder as a "reinvention" of reason, Mrs. Diallo clung to a narrative

of collective black trauma.[77] In the months leading up to the trial she made numerous

public appearances and as previously alluded to, attended many of the daily, mass

protests and rallies that overtook the city throughout 1999 and 2000. In one of her

speeches before the National Action Network's Brooklyn Chapter in April 1999, Mrs.

Diallo declared,

> Amadou's blood will feed the battle for justice…we need people to come
> more and more, without any difference of races and religions, because we
> need each other to have strength…We know what is happening is not
> right, but they have the power. But God has his own power. We don't
> want any violence. We need to go with dignity and pride.[78]

Mrs. Diallo's comments to the predominantly native-born black audience reveals that she

found a race-conscious lens essential to understandings of her son's death. She

understood that the establishment wielded a form of "power" she and the audience were

deprived of. The mother proclaimed that her son's bloodshed was a product of systemic

inequality and stimuli for a struggle upon which all of their lives depended.

The Guinean mother's positioning of her trauma as entrenched in a project of

racialized exclusion is more evident in her diagnosis of the police force's practices. After

the acquittal of the four officers in 2000 and more specifically, the failure of NYPD

Police Commissioner Bernard B. Kerik to punish the officers, Mrs. Diallo tells the *New

York Times*,

> This has sent a signal that a black child's life has no meaning. We need
> accountability until we get that, we will not rest. We will continue to seek
> justice. I will never give up on my son…I think the racial profiling needs
> to end…I think the racial stereotyping needs to end. The mayor and the
> police commissioner must answer why they have to profile the people in
> the neighborhood.[79]

As similar to the aforementioned statement, "we" runs throughout Mrs. Diallo's analysis

of the police department. However, in this case, her use of "we" and the "they" is

deliberately clear. Diallo posits that her son's death was racially motivated and that the

non-indictment of the perpetrators involved demonstrated a devaluation of black

children's lives. She casts stereotyping as a long-running, costly issue that took the lives

of multitudes far before 1999.

In her public articulations, Mrs. Diallo authored a narrative that overturned

standard and accepted definitions of reasonability. In *My Heart Will Cross This Ocean*,

Diallo offers a portrayal of the moments leading up to the shooting that runs counter to

officers McMellon, Carroll, Boss, and Murphy's accounts,

> Hunched in their car, peering out from their hooded jackets, everyone they saw – every black man they saw – looked sinister. Those frantic, horrid moments when they say they took Amadou as a threat, were not something that just happened. The officers, through everything they did before even seeing Amadou, created these moments. It was a story in their heads that they brought to life.[80]

She argues that the group's fear of Amadou was rooted in long standing and

fabricated notions of black criminality What proves to be particularly transgressive about

Kadiatou Diallo's application of a racial lens and identification with African Americans

are her informants. The majority of the images and reports on the case suggest that her

adviser, Reverend Al Sharpton or her attorney, Johnnie Cochran, shaped her racial

consciousness. Reverend Al Sharpton, civil rights activist and founder of the National

Action Network (1991) was one of the first supporters Kadiatou Diallo met upon her

arrival to the United States. Members of the Guinean Embassy and the immigrant

community helped lay the groundwork for this connection. Sharpton gathered organizers

and spearheaded a great majority of the acts of civil disobedience that filled the city in the

year that followed the shooting. These included the "10 Point Plan March" in April 1999

on the Brooklyn Bridge and the daily vigils outside of the Bronx County Court House.

Sharpton also gained the public support of acclaimed civic leaders and politicians.

Furthermore, Sharpton offered his assistance to the Diallo family by providing protective

measures, public relations services, and managing their estate. Sharpton also introduced

Diallo to Johnnie Cochran and the "Dream Team," the group of lawyers responsible for

the acquittal of O.J. Simpson in 1994. Many lauded the attorney for efficiently

transforming due process into a realm of protection for minorities such as Abner Louima, another black immigrant victim of police brutality. The Amadou Diallo estate hired the team to represent the estate and lead the pursuit of a wrongful death lawsuit against the city of New York. Attorney Robert Conason was later replaced the six-member legal team. The estate filed the suit on April 18, 2000 and in 2004 the city agreed to a 3-million-dollar settlement. [81]

Yet, by the fall of 1999, it was clear that Diallo was actively distancing herself and her son's case from these civic leaders. In August, the Diallo family replaced Cochran as their legal representative of Diallo's estate and the administrator of their budding wrongful death lawsuit against the city of New York.[82] Her public appearances alongside Al Sharpton also declined. After the March arraignment of the NYPD officers responsible for killing Diallo, Sharpton organized a 16-city-tour. Kadiatou Diallo and public civil rights leaders such as Jesse Jackson were the designated thrust of the tour and central to its goal of garnering widespread support in the debasement of police brutality.[83] Diallo only attended two of these events.

From the perspective of existing scholarship on African immigrants, Kadiatou Diallo's separation from the activists reflects ambivalence on the part of the black immigrant population to align with and support race-based protest.[84] Marilyn Halter and Violet Showers Johnson in *African & American: West Africans in Post-Civil Rights America* (2014), suggest that the break-up was the result "a discrepancy in ideologies concerning American racism and black protest" lay at the root of Kadiatou Diallo's retraction of her endorsement of the tour.[85] Media outlets covering the Diallo case echoed

these interpretations. Consider *New York Times Magazine* contributor, Ted Conover's the

January 1999 article, "Kadi Diallo's Trial." The text is based on conversations between

the journalist and Mrs. Diallo in the days leading up to the trial. In describing the

mother's earliest days in New York City, Conover states, "In a flurry of interviews over

six days in the United States – and always with Sharpton – she assailed the injustice of

the killing…" This statement is the first of a multitude of references to Reverend Al

Sharpton. The author stresses the National Action Network founder's role as the

orchestrator of not only the protest movement that followed the shooting, but also of

Diallo's travels, appearances, speeches and public images. Conover depicts Diallo as an

unsuspected victim of what a myriad of other commentators deemed to be Sharpton's

clamor for public recognition. He defines Diallo's public statements, such as her

declaration that her son's blood would "feed the battle for justice," as "apparently

spontaneous," and thus, cued and provoked by Sharpton's "political agenda," as well as

the "inchoate anger" of protestors. The article conveys her decision to separate from

Sharpton, as well as Johnnie Cochran's "Dream Team" as an expression of "self-

possession." He speculated that, "the rift between Sharpton and Kadi seemed to be about

a built-in fork in the road, the place where an immigrant narrative of opportunity and fair

treatment diverged from an African-American narrative about civil rights and historical

injustice."[86] Conover shares that in Chicago, on April 10, 1999, on Diallo's last stop on

the tour, Sharpton stated that the belief among black immigrants that America was a land

of opportunity, open for the taking, was misguided. Jackson shortly followed and told the

crowd that, "it's open season on blacks" in America.[87] According to Conover, Diallo

disclosed that some of these viewpoints did not sit right with her. He informs readers that Diallo, was of the belief that "the time for fighting was past" and that "reconciliation was important to her own goals of healing."[88] In the days leading up to the trial she wanted Amadou's supporters to "come in peace…rallies are not necessary."[89]

Indicative of a colorblind rhetoric, Conover delineates calls for racial remedies as untrained, insincere, and a performance void of meaning. In describing the differences between the goals and organizing principles of Diallo and African Americans, he presents the mother as the holder of a comparatively enlightened standpoint due to her foreign roots. According to the writer, the nation's caste system was a historical phenomenon that she and her son were estranged from. The writer posits that the organizing principles of Sharpton and other African Americans was irreconcilable with her immigrant son's optimism and his capacity to see the nation beyond its historical pattern of injustice. Like her son, Mrs. Diallo, distinct from the native-born, could solely see America as it was at the turn of the twenty-first century, an imperfect, yet progressive society. Her arrival to peace and reconciliation was only possible when she escaped the grasp of a community that resolved to remain within the bounds of olden hurt.

Contrary to Conover's assessment, Kadiatou Diallo's ultimate decision to part ways with Sharpton and Cochran was not indicative of a rejection of collective black trauma. The role of African American women in Diallo's responses to the case escaped Conover's notice. Diallo's consistent ties with native-born black mothers makes clear that well-known and visible black male leaders did not alone propel "Kadi" to see herself and Amadou as part of a "battle for justice."

In 2000, when Diallo channeled her interest in "racial healing" and "reconciliation" into the formation of the Amadou Diallo Foundation, she did so with black mothers Alma Rangal and Kathy Jordan-Sharpton as board members.[90] Yet, just as important as their organizing efforts, African American mothers publicly resounded when Mrs. Diallo's asserted that her grief and dispossession was a function of black inequality.[91] When Diallo raised her fist in self-determination at gatherings, protests and rallies, she faced black mothers doing the same.[92] They broadened the public reach of the racial grievances revolving around Diallo's murder and shared with those willing to listen that law enforcement also disproportionately cloaked their black sons and daughters with criminality. Together, their voices constructed a narrative of black motherhood as a distinct site of burden.

Diallo's relationship with "Queen Mother," Delois Blakely is particularly telling. The Fort Lauderdale native and Harlem activist "kept watch on Diallo," observed a *New York Daily News* reporter.[93] She was among the first to visit and comfort Diallo on her first night in the Bronx and helped orchestrate Amadou's burial in Guinea. The day of her son's New York City service, she traveled with the Diallo family to the village of his birth. From this point forward, she was at Kadiatou Diallo's side at most of the engagements she attended.

In her autobiography, Diallo expresses, "Joining up with the black community in New York was not second nature for me." However, she continues,

> "Delois Blakely told me that for many years she had worked with Queen Mother Moore, a legend in Harlem who had fought for reparations from the United States for slavery. Miss Moore's grandfather had been lynched, and her grandmother, a slave, had been raped by a white man."[94]

This retelling of Audley Moore's family history ingrained Mrs. Diallo, or "mama," as Blakely called her, with an awareness of the landscape that mapped her son's life in the country he began to call home. Kadiatou Diallo pens,

> The anger expressed by people at rallies for Amadou was built on a history that I did not have and could not know, no more than they could know the specific terror of hiding in a pit, thinking that soldiers with guns and machetes were on their way. But the distinctions in our suffering were based more on fate than anything else….Our pasts and futures are now intersected through Amadou. As parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters of black men, we shared that same anger and fear. If my grief was more immediate, theirs had lasted lifetimes and become their companion, something that walked with them always.[95]

Through her conversations with Moore's predecessor, Diallo came to realize that her son inhabited the middle ground between two organs of annihilation limited to people of African descent. As an African-born New Yorker, Diallo's experiences were informed by those who "stayed free, and lived to suffer the hardships of Africa" and those, "taken away to suffer the horror of slavery."[96] Amadou's killing as a benchmark of institutional black dehumanization was a revelation for Mrs. Diallo, birthed by her dialogue with Blakely.

As Kadiatou Diallo sought a language through which to retell her son's story, Mother Blakely's remembrance of violence against black bodies as customary practice, provided a blueprint. Her retrieval of these haunting archives allowed her to construct a bridge between herself, Amadou and the African American community. Intent on challenging the gross misrecognition of Amadou's character, Diallo wanted the public to see this conduit. Kadiatou Diallo's speech acts and her ties with native-born black

mothers reveal that her call for the deceleration of rallies and interest in retreating from the public eye did not reflect a complete rejection of the usefulness of a narrative of collective black trauma. Rather, she found that this discursive space carried the possibilities of reconciliation and actively sought to expand this framework. For "Kadi," self-possession meant reclaiming Amadou Diallo's subjectivity.

 She deemed the validation of her son's black immigrant experience and the distinct point of view it nurtured as essential. Comments such as those of Sharpton's that downplayed the ambitions of black immigrants and as she reveals in her memoir, Cochran's propositions that she return to Africa, threatened to contribute to the gross misrecognition of her son's character.[97] Diallo envisioned a counter-narrative that fully represented black New York and melded the histories and contexts of Guinea and the United States. As she found it important to mold a narrative that spoke to her son's entrapment in a pattern of racialized state-imposed violence, she also found it critical to give voice to his beginnings, points of view, and life journeys. Effectively raising her son up as a symbol of innocence in a society that denied the salience of racial discrimination, necessitated a recognition of his avowal of America as a breeding ground for the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr., inter-faith unity and multilingualism. Like his mourning mother and the voices of the African American women that echoed hers, Amadou Diallo's past and desired future fully represented the ideals of multiculturalism. In emphasizing this, Mrs. Diallo positioned her first-born child's victimization within a space of recognition. In binding his embodiment of colorblind ideals with the termination of his life, she also forced the wider public to face the limitations of the multicultural ideal. If not with

prominent male symbols of black civil rights, Kadiatou Diallo's articulations of black trauma found a home with African American mothers. They supplied her with the discursive tools necessary to extrapolate Amadou from obscurity. As they traveled with her to Guinea, as was the case with Queen Mother, or carried Amadou's books as she traveled to protests and rallies, native-born black mothers made clear to Mrs. Diallo that their collective memory of black degradation was hers to claim, retell, and alter. *Sybrina Fulton*

On July 13, 2013, a six-person jury acquitted George Zimmerman of the charge of second-degree murder in the killing of Trayvon Martin one year prior. The court found that Zimmerman's actions were justified under the state of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. In shooting the 17-year-old, the white and Latino neighborhood watch captain claimed that he acted in self-defense. He argued that he pursued the teenager in the town of Sandford's Retreat at Twin Lakes Community because he acted suspiciously. Before the shooting, the two physically tussled and Zimmerman believed Martin was attempting to reach for his gun. Public outcries of racial profiling followed Martin's death and the verdict. Yet these claims proved to be unsound within the court of law. As stated by Professor of Law Cynthia Lee, "In most criminal cases involving a minority defendant or victim, race is a background factor but is not something either party tries to highlight."[98] Lee affirms the assertions of her peer Michelle Alexander and posits that this is due to the absence of mechanisms that recognize, "the operation of racial stereotypes in the creation of fear salient."[99] She declares that the perceived onset of post-racialism foregrounded the denial of implicit racial bias within Zimmerman's conception

of reasonableness. Within the context of self-defense, assumptions of black male criminality more than likely played a role in shaping his assertion that Martin was, "up to no good."[100] However, the ideological movement towards recognizing race only when it is explicit regulated the stereotypic facets of Zimmerman's response to the margins.

At the close of the trial, Sybrina Fulton faced a jury of women, five white that failed to see Trayvon Martin as a child and potentially, their child. Their point of view was not unlike the majority of Americans, who believed that Martin posed a threat to Zimmerman's life and denied the possibility of race-based mischaracterization. The majority of the nation's constituents banished racial profiling as a possible contributor to the murder. Polls and surveys taken in the aftermath of the verdict reveal this assertion. In a national survey taken in July 2013 by the Pew Research Center, 52 percent of the 1,480 adults targeted, "say race is getting more attention in this case than it deserves" and 36 percent "say the case raises important issues about race that need to be discussed."[101] Assessments of the case differed across racial lines in which 49 percent of the white respondents expressed satisfaction with the case, compared to 5 percent of black Americans.[102] Further, 78 percent of black Americans "say the case raises important issues about race that need to be discussed" compared to 28 percent of white Americans.[103] Coupled with indictment of the unarmed teen's behavior and fabrications of a criminal past, the poll results point to a cultural acceptance of limited conceptions of racism. It is only present if Zimmerman utilized racial epithets or proclaimed that he targeted Martin because of his race. Without evidence of this, it is likely that Martin's actions or posturing were a cause. The de-racialization of the shooting is unsurprising

considering that it occurred in the aftermath of a President Barack Obama's re-election.

For many, his ascendency in 2008 represented the arrival of post-racialism and his return

to the White House for a second term, was confirmation of this. With the ascendency of a

black American in an ultimate position of state power, the reduction of racism to the level

of the individual gained momentum.

A week after the verdict, Fulton declared at the 2013 National Urban League

Conference, "The verdict is not going to define who Trayvon Martin was. We will define

his legacy. We will define who he is and what he was all about."[104] While Zimmerman's

decision to shoot her African American son violated her ability to protect her child's

breath, she refused to relinquish authority of his memory and representation. Fulton was

determined to reclaim her child's innocence from a discourse that denied the possibility

that he feared for his life on the night of February 26, 2012. In embarking on this path of

repossession, Fulton developed a campaign against the "Stand Your Ground" law and

developed the Trayvon Martin Foundation.[105] She constructed and presented to

neighborhoods, families, congregations, organizations, activists and the press strategies

on the way forward in combatting violence, guaranteeing accountability and ensuring

safe communities. Throughout her public articulations, Fulton made clear that her son

was "a hero," and akin to Till, at the fore of transformation and the debasement of a false

reality.[106] Recollections of a traumatized black past grounded her speech acts. Akin to

Norma Watts and Kadiatou Diallo, Fulton called on other black mothers to bear witness

to her claims of the injustice acted against Martin's body. Foreign-born black mothers

were undoubtedly in the number.

Emblematic of her navigation of the borderlands of ethnic interaction is the relationship she formed with Doreen Lawrence, a Jamaican-born mother in Great Britain. In April of 1993, a mob of young white youths attacked and stabbed Lawrence's 18-year-old son to death in Eltham, South London.[107] Similar to Trayvon Martin, Stephen Lawrence was on his way home. However, to onlookers, he emerged as an intruder on a spatial ground that was not his to traverse. Although the teenagers revealed that they attacked Lawrence because he was black and witness accounts supported these confessions, the Crown Prosecution Service acquitted the group of all charges. Yet Doreen Lawrence's steadfast protest and assertion that the police investigation was infiltrated with racial bias led to the case being re-opened in 2012. Two of the original suspects were "convicted of murder and jailed for up to 15 years."[108] A few months after Martin's death, Lawrence invited Fulton and Trayvon's father, Tracy Martin to London. Upon their arrival, she brought them to her son's memorial, and as documented by United Kingdom's *The Sun* told Martin's mother, "I know where you're coming from."[109] The dialogue between the two women as they stood before the revered marble plaque validated Fulton's sense of depravity and conviction that morality and evenhandedness were rights not intended for her son.

The two mothers orchestrated a public meeting at the University of London on Mother's Day. As they stood before the large audience, filled with Occupy London and Million Hoodies supporters, the mothers discussed the perpetuation of, as well as the costs of racial profiling.[110] Before the countless posters and in the midst of the now iconic, "I am Trayvon Martin" chants, Fulton courageously declared,

> Until you have lost a child, it's very difficult for you to understand how we feel, and the hurt and the pain that we have…nobody can bring our children back, but it would bring us comfort if we can help spare other mothers the pain that we will feel on Mother's Day and every day for the rest of our lives.[111]

In her speech, Fulton situated her grief and her son's death on a historical continuum that included the racially motivated killing of Stephen Lawrence. The emphasis on Trayvon and Stephen as "our children," and hurt and pain as a part of "our lives" reveals loss and tragedy as characteristics that Fulton and Lawrence share. In joining forces with Lawrence's mother, Fulton invoked an interethnic and transnational legacy of racial violence and trauma. As she crossed ethnic and regional borders, Fulton rallied support for her campaign against the "Stand Your Ground" Law. She also produced a narrative that paired Zimmerman's actions with explicitly stated racialized intentions of the UK teenagers and placed Martin's bodily history within a global, cross-cultural, and racially fluid context. This move interrogated the charge that an evolution in the conditions of societal inclusion, did not and could not co-exist with the reproduction of black exclusion.

Conclusion

Black mothers, the parents of children killed by law enforcement with impunity and no legal reprise, are the co-creators of a collective black memory and usable traumatic past that gives birth to the legacies of their deceased children and breathes life into a code of justice fatally latent. They accomplish this by embodying ethnic borderlands. Seemingly estranged narratives appear in the speech acts, language and rhetoric of mourning African American, African-born, and Caribbean-born mothers.

They create a mosaic that pairs seemingly contradictory concepts in light of neoliberalism's post-racial veneer: black trauma and racial transcendence, as well as dispossession and multiculturalism. The root of this loss was not the presumed inability of blacks to move beyond race, but rather, the state's use of multiculturalism to manage racial inequality, as opposed to erase it. Contemporary mourning black mothers are, as coined by black women's literary scholar, Mae G. Henderson, "speaking in tongues."[112] The heterogeneous voices comprise a dialogue amongst themselves, and with society. As a collective, they assert black subjectivity in spite of a public discourse that cyclically violates its value. Their pluralism is emblematic of multiculturalism and it allows their avowals of injustice to invoke the nation's self-proclaimed ideal as the bearer of a suffocating silence. The mirroring trauma claims of native and foreign-born mothers of black children revoked of life propel racial protest into a space of recognition as tongue and language that demand interpretation.

This black, maternal tradition of resistance does not lose its fervor with time. Lezley McSpadden was not left to endure her misery alone after police officer Darren Wilson murdered her son Michael Brown, Jr. in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014. As in the cases of Aquan Salmon, Amadou Diallo and Trayvon Martin, the Department of Justice deemed Wilson's use of force lawful. Whilst declaring "Black Lives Matter" and asserting "Stop Killing Us," communities, activist and clergy called for Wilson's acquittal and an overhaul of the nation's law enforcement practices, black mothers were among them, yet also at the fore of a movement of their own. They positioned themselves as witnesses and bolstered McSpadden's assertions of wrongful death and assertions that

her son was not the threatening, violent and overbearing teenager Wilson claimed him to be. These included native-born black mothers Emma Jones and Sabryna Fulton, as well as black immigrant mothers, such as Kadiatou Diallo. They joined hands with McSpadden before solemn, yet rallying crowds, and publicly detested the media's appraisal of Wilson, and their distortion of the 18-year-old Brown's character. They saw their children in Brown and themselves in his mother. As the deception that is post-racialism, and relatedly justified deaths continue, black mothers do not abandon the borderlands of cross-ethnic interaction, but insist on existing therein for corroboration and rectification.

PART III

A Motherline Conceived from Disparate Roots

"We are the mothers, we are the ones who feel the pain, we are the ones who carried them for nine months, we are the ones who wake up in the middle of the night and feed those children, we are the ones who have the strength, we are the backbone of the family. We are the creators. You understand? Our voice has power." – Ernestine, 50-year-old Hartford mother from St. Lucia[1]

For Ernestine, to carry, birth, and nourish black children, is to cultivate power. Part III traces how black mothers attain power through child raising, and what this power functions to influence, transform, and disrupt. It follows black mothers' voices as they emanate from the stories, messages, and lessons they hand down to their children and finds that their socialization processes rear a generation intent on dismantling systemic inequality. Black mothers arise as the bearers of racial consciousness in the face of ideologies that discount the persistence of racial oppression. Critically, the section illuminates that in alerting their children to the hidden mechanisms of their containment, African American, African, and Caribbean women, like Ernestine, mother in community. They cross ethnic borders and embolden one another's capacity to prepare their children to maneuver and challenge external assaults on their lives. Together, they construct what I call a "motherline" of "creators" that produces, teaches, and models resistance.

CHAPTER 6

Black Children and the "Villages" That Raise Them

The Emergence of a Collective

"Ashe, Power! Ashe, Power! Ashe, Power!" This summoning of a spiritual and

imminent force that creates and restores, pounded against the walls of a still University of

Missouri at Columbia in the fall months of 2015. The litany cut through the vibrating

sounds and rhythmic steps of the marching band, running motors, the flapping of bright

yellow flags in the wind, and the cheers of an eager crowd at the annual homecoming. It

resounded outside of the Office of the President and echoed in the staircases of the

administrative buildings. Shouts of "Ashe" and "Power" also rang from Tiger Plaza, Mel

Carnahan Quadrangle, and the brick walkways between classroom buildings and student

centers. The voices behind the permeating expression were members of "Concerned

Student 1950." Through planned and sustained protest, this black student-led

organization aimed to suspend the 177-year-old institution's campus climate. For the

routinized management of "Mizzou" made their degradation and isolation permissible.

The students named themselves "Concerned Student 1950" with Gus T. Ridgel in

mind. In 1950, after the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) and the

historically black college Lincoln University in Jefferson City filed the fourth of a series

of lawsuits against the University of Missouri, calling for its desegregation, the school

admitted nine black students. They included Ridgel, a Master's student in economics and

the first of this cohort to graduate from the institution. Brown v. Board of Education,

Affirmative Action policies, the 1966 establishment of the Legion of Black Collegians,

the black student union, a range of cultural centers and diversity task forces separated

Ridgel and his peers from the black students of present. However, vestiges remained of a

1950 Mizzou resistant to assuring an environment conducive to the full inclusion of black

students remained. Just as in the 1950s when white students declined to live in the same

quarters as Ridgel and public businesses refused to service him, in 2015, enactments of

racial discrimination toward black students have persisted. At the start of the academic

year, the president of the student government, Payton Head, wrestled with criticisms

draped in racist and anti-homophobic epithets.[2] In the days leading up to the October

homecoming, a white student harassed members of the Legion of Black Collegians

during their activities committee meeting and taunted them with racial slurs. Weeks later,

four white males called two black women "niggers" while they stood outside of the

recreation center.[3] Others, such as senior Ayana Poole and junior Andrea Fulgiam,

reported being told by peers to leave events because they were black and having

classmates and professors charge that they were only there as a result of affirmative

action.[4] Drawings of swastikas also appeared on campus in October and in April of the

previous semester were just a few of many to occur on the campus in recent history.

Poole, Fulgiam, and nine of their peers developed CS 1950 because they refused

to reside within and learn from an institution that considered their preservation, growth,

and development to be expendable. They insisted on existing in deliberations and

conversations that rarely considered them. Further, the group endeavored to confront and

disable the sources of their alienation. In early October, the 11 students pinpointed a

range of institutional changes that, if executed, would ensure the safety of black students

on campus and procure an inclusive environment. They channeled these postulations into eight demands and issued the list to offices of the President and Chancellor on October 20th. The document requested Tim Wolfe's resignation as President of the University of Missouri system, due to his "gross negligence" regarding the concerns of students of color.[5] It also enjoined the university to mandate "racial awareness and inclusion" curricula and training for students, faculty, staff and administration, an increase in black faculty and staff, implementation of a "strategic 10-year-plan" committed to improving the retention rates for student of color, hiring mental health professionals of color, and bolstering the "funding, resources, and personnel" for the school's social justice centers.[6]

On November 4th, a week after Wolfe convened with Concerned Student 1950 and decided not to meet their demands, the black student-led group and their allies organized a sustained organized protest. Graduate student Jonathan Butler embarked on a hunger strike, bands of students transformed the Carnahan Quad into a commune and camp site, and held demonstrations at University events. Particularly critical to CS 1950's aims, the predominantly black football team declared that they would not participate in football related activities until the president stepped down.[7] After 7 days of consistent unrest and less than 24-hours following the Division I athletes' announced boycott, Wolfe resigned.

The militant activism of Concerned Student 1950 and their supporters signaled the onset of a nation-wide campus movement. Students of color from other colleges and universities stood in solidarity with the Mizzou community. Moreover, they spotlighted a tolerance for the ostracizing of black students as intrinsic to their college experiences.

Like their counterparts, they established demands for their distinct administrations and pledged to build non-violent agitations, cross-racial, inter-organizational networks of support, and educational programming on manifold levels of oppression in the academic realm until their universities responded to and implemented their appeals. As the "tent city" swelled, opposition inhabited the anti-gentrification petitioning of students of the Atlanta University Center (AUC), traveled to the University of California and encapsulated the #BlackBruinsMatter movement, defined Princeton University's Black Justice League's demands to remove Woodrow Wilson's name from its buildings, and unfolded on the campus of the University of Cincinnati during the group "Irate 8"'s calls for the removal of the UCPD officers who seconded Officer Ray Tensing's assertions that he shot motorist Samuel Dubose in self-defense. By December 2015, students at nearly 100 of the country's schools merged their campus-specific aims to forge the umbrella organization, "Black Liberation Collective" (BLC). Three demands of the nation's institutions of higher education guided the BLC. They requested a percentage of black students and faculty that corresponded with the black population of the resident state, free tuition for students of African and Native American descent, and divestment from prison corporations.[8]

Beyond its success in triggering sweeping institutional transformation, the intraracial and interethnic linkages that have supplied its foundation are striking features of this movement. The Missouri black student body's unceasing rendering of the West African prayer "Ashe" signified their realization and affirmation of a diasporic consciousness. Those that birthed and took on the same name, Concerned Student, were

African American, as well as 1.5 and second generation African and Caribbean immigrants. At Mizzou and elsewhere, Black Student Unions, African, Pan-African, Caribbean, and West Indian Student Associations coalesced to develop action plans, organize meetings, engage administrators, seek out potential allies and the media, orchestrate teach-ins on racial justice, and spearhead campus-wide sit-ins and marches. During the Black Liberation Collective's national walkout on November 12, 2015, "Blackout Day," native and immigrant descended black scholars alike assumed a position on the frontlines of anti-racism. The Boston College organizer was Afua Laast, a senior and second generation Ghanaian American.[9] In North Carolina at Guilford College, the organizers included junior Brandee Craig, who is African American and Cameroon native Teresa Bedzigui, a senior. The pair also co-created the school's "Black Lives Matter Week."[10]

The present chapter traces the multiple ways in which young black people, such as Craig and Bedzigui suffer from racial inequality. Further, it outlines how color-blind and post-racial ideologies not only conceal discriminatory practices, but also threaten to subdue black youth's racial awareness and withhold the tools essential for them to cope with, respond to, and interject the disparities that circumscribe their lives. The section contends that native and immigrant black parents craft racial and ethnic socialization practices that function to quash a climate that intent on restraining their children's ability to see and contest the unjust makings of their lives. It gives attention to the communal socialization methods of black mothers and posits that cross-ethnic motherlines are a

hidden seedbeds of black youth's racial consciousness and in particular, their diasporic modes of resistance.

"Racism lives…and so do we!" – Concerned Student 1950[11]

A discussion of black mothers' socialization practices first requires an elucidation of how contemporary vessels of a long standing racial hierarchy vie for a dominant position in their children's lives. This circumstance takes shape in the nation's educational systems, colors the media, popular culture, and literature they engage, and frames their interpersonal relationships.

Spurred by the incorporation and enforcement of affirmative action in admissions processes and the steadfast labor of advocates for equal educational access in communities and in the policy realm, the college enrollment and degree attainment for black students have increased exponentially since the mid-twentieth century. As of 2014, black students represented 15 percent of the population ages 18-24 attending a degree-granting institution – a 5 percent increase since 1973.[12] Also important, just within the last decade, Bachelor's degree attainment for black Americans has increased by 54 percent.[13] The children of black immigrants, encompassing 12 percent of the country's black college students, have claimed notable collegiate success. The African community's rate of degree attainment exceeds the natural average and although a small fraction of the total black population, 1.5 and second generation immigrants constitute 41% of the group's Ivy League attendees.[14] Yet, The Black Liberation Collective's assertion that their institutions have failed to ensure that academia is a site of opportunity for black communities is not unfounded. While the sons and daughters of natives and

immigrant blacks are excelling, overall the proportion of black students attending and

graduating from college is significantly smaller than the ratios for white students of

native and immigrant origins.[15] Consider how black students fare in completing their

undergraduate careers relative to their white counterparts. Recent studies of graduation

rates reveal a significant and growing gap across racial lines. In the 2016 report, "Rising

Tide II: Do Black Students Benefit as Grad Rates Increase?," Andrew Howard Nichols,

Kimberlee Eberle-Sudré, and Meredith Welch of The Education Trust, conclude that

although, "two-thirds of four-year public colleges and universities have increased

graduation rates in the past decade… graduation rates for black students have not

improved as much as those of white students." In 2003, the 38.2 percent of black

undergraduates graduated and in 2013, this number increased to 40.3 percent. Their white

peers garnered a 55.4 percent completion rate in 2003, and as of 2013 this stood at 60.7

percent. While black students improved by 5.3 percent, black students experienced a 2.1

percent jump. Correspondingly, the breach between the groups in 2013 is wider than it

was in 2003.[16]

Their enrollment in distinct post-secondary institutions is a contributing factor to

the differential gains of black and white college students. Selective institutions, such as

public universities, private liberal arts colleges, and Ivy League universities, garner the

funding and services necessary to foster student success. However, these schools enroll

black students far less than they do their white peers.[17] For example, black Americans

comprise 5 percent of the undergraduate student population attending flagship public

universities that, according to *The Atlantic,* is "less than half of what their share of the

population might suggest."[18] Typically, the percentage of black students on these campuses is significantly lower than those represented among the region's public high school graduates. The University of Virginia epitomizes this imbalance. While 22 percent of the state's college bound students are black, they represent 8 percent of the university's student body.[19] As the numbers at UVA reflect the demographics of top universities nationally, it is no surprise that most black youth pursuing post-secondary degrees attend lower-ranked BA-granting institutions.[20]

As reflected in the demands of the individual BLC institutions, a range of other factors support a widening racial divide in collegiate success. During a Concerned Student 1950 demonstration in which nearly 50 students with linked arms lined a room where an alumni meeting was in progress, one of the organizers shouted, "Thank you ladies and gentlemen for finally waking up and seeing the real MU – what it feels like to be a black and brown body in a sea of white faces."[21] In this declarative statement, he spoke to their immersion, an undergraduate and graduate body of 2, 544 students, in a mass of 35, 448 white classmates. [22] He was also referring to a sea of white faces filled with white faculty, staff, and personnel. Black faculty comprise 5 percent of the nation's full-time faculty on college and university campuses.[23] Well performing institutions, such as the University of Missouri where black Americans account for 3 percent of Mizzou's educators, fall under the national average.[24]

The black collegiate experience points to voids in the system of higher education, as much as it does to structural inequalities in the secondary and primary school strata. Although the racial gap in high school graduation rates and in the percentage of student

that move on to two and four year colleges is closing, there are stark contrasts in their

college readiness.[25] Educational studies scholars, like Wanda J. Blanchett, argue that the

American public school system, the learning environment for 9 out of 10 secondary

students, is composed of a number of subsystems.[26] The white students who enter

productive, four-year institutions largely emerge from the most effective of these

subgroups. Their schools are likely composed of, states Blanchett, "highly educated and

credentialed teachers," in addition to "rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, including

advanced placement classes, travel-abroad programs, access to three or more foreign

programs, the latest technology, and state-of-the-art science labs."[27] In contrast, black

students commonly ascend from under-resourced institutions. They often work with a

team of teachers that have a high turnover rate and garner "emergency licenses" through

teaching corps programs, as opposed to advanced degrees.[28] The schools also lack

rigorous curricula, have minimal access to up to date learning equipment, tools, and

technologies, as well as limited opportunities for global enrichment.

Residential segregation by way of and correspondingly, racially homogenous

schools are central causes of disparate school subsystems. While the Fair Housing Act of

1968 outlawed explicit forms of racial discrimination in the housing market, many race-

neutral state practices, such as exclusionary zoning and sub-prime loans, have a

"disparate impact" that function to cluster most black Americans into racially

homogeneous areas.[29] This pattern affects black Americans across income brackets, as

well as ethnic lines.[30]

The strained economic state of much of the country's black neighborhoods has consequences for the quality of education students receive.[31] Segregation not only ensures that students of color attend predominantly black or Latino schools, but also that schools are weighed down by financial burdens rarely felt by their neighboring, majority white educational systems. Public schools largely rely on district taxes and property wealth to supply their school's infrastructure, transportation, classroom materials, programming, as well as fund and attract sufficiently trained teachers and specialists. If parents are unable to send their children to private institutions, school choice programs, or enroll them in schools outside of their counties, funding inequities stand to hinder their children's post-secondary possibilities.[32]

Epitomized by the black-white achievement gap, the educational experiences of black students yield math and reading skills that lag behind non-black and Latino children their age.[33] Displacement also stalls and re-routes the academic pursuits of black students. It is wrought by school closures in the name of "failing" test scores, "under-utilization," and budgetary concerns.[34] The "school-to-prison pipeline" also removes black and Latino students from their classrooms. The U.S. Department of Education reports that, "Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students. On average, 5% of white students are suspended, compared to 16% of black students."[35] These dissimilar rates of suspension begin as early as pre-school and affect students attending white or racially diverse school subsystems. Out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, as well as an administrative reliance on security officers and

"zero tolerance" policies to handle behavioral dilemmas channels black students into law enforcement custody and juvenile detention centers.[36]

Coupled with the structural practices that constrict the educational opportunities of black students, racial inequality also manifests in the media they encounter and read. On their way to school, while completing work in their classes or amid recreational activities, black youth interact with films, television, advertisements, magazines, newspapers, and novels in which young black women and men are underrepresented or linked to qualities that flatten the breadth of their characters. Apart from music, a realm in which black youth have claimed residence, continuously embark on invention, and encounter a range of artists that fully reflect their backgrounds, other performances and portrayals of reality defy their own. Indeed, popular culture and mass media has reached a level of diversity unexperienced by preceding generations of black children. Black operated shows, cable networks and studios, the rise of the internet as a space of uninhibited exposure for black creators, television networks' insertion of diversity executives, and actor's guilds dedicated to pushing networks to hire people of color, are among the conduits that have fostered inclusivity.[37] However, these measures of progress have not unequivocally led to the defeat of inadequate representation.

Media productions are not only inclined to overlook black artists, but also generate and expand racial stereotypes. Black youth materialize as a monolith and synonymous with negative traits. Like their mothers, what Dionne P. Stephens and Layli D. Phillips refer to as the "ghosts" of foundational postulations of black women's attitudes, sexualities, and bodies follow black girls. Modern iterations of Jezebel and

Sapphire appear in mainstream depictions of young black women as "ghetto girls," "baby mamas," and "gold diggers."[38] In the same way, scripts of black men consistently associate them with hyper-masculinity, illegality, and societal dilemmas. As brought forth by The Opportunity Agenda's work on media representations of black boys, if they are not paired with "criminality, unemployment, and poverty," they are associated with a "limited range" of positive qualities, including "physical achievement," "virility," and "musicality." Also, both fictional and documentary pieces excessively frame them "intractable problems."[39]

Distorted and exaggerated narrations of black life also comprise ethnic and culturally specific dimensions. African and Caribbean immigrants struggle with images reared from the realities of African Americans, in addition to a range of other damaging, yet sanctioned stereotypes. The media, including children's movies such as Walt Disney's "Tarzan" and documentaries that give primary attention to civil war, crisis, and health epidemics, paint Africa as a "Dark Continent" and its descendants as uncivilized.[40] Apart from commercials targeting tourists and travel brochures, depictions of Africa are not estranged from representations of the islands. Televised images of the Caribbean often zone in on poverty and shanty towns, as news reports on immigrants give measurable attention to police accounts of drug raids and trafficking arrests. [41]

Studies by social workers and psychologists note that black youth's consumption of popularized renderings of their identity can lead them to internalize these expectations and accept them as reality. This process of alignment fractures their self-regard, weakens their assessment of their capabilities, and leads to self-destructive behaviors. It also

infiltrates and degrades their views and conceptions of one another.[42] The consequences of popularized negative images and their internalization of these ideas on their material life outcomes are far reaching.[43] For instance, the circulated messages place them at risk of "stereotype threat," or the unrelenting fear of being reduced to black archetypes.[44] This social-psychological condition often manifests in school and work settings where ideologies that question the competence and work ethic of black adolescents loom. An acute sense of their objectification yields anxiety, wariness, and self-doubt that work against their ability to apply their skills.[45] The ties between stereotypes and the quality of black children's lives is not only a result of how they come to view themselves through these images, but a consequence of the tendency of others to view them through this lens as well. In the case of black girls, scholars find that there are correlations between perception of black girls as hyper-sexual and their risk for both interracial and intraracial sexual assault.[46]

Noted in the measurable correlations between images and treatment of African American, African, and Caribbean youth, racial marginalization also operates interpersonally. Empirical and ethnographic studies of the experiences of this demographic indicate that they routinely reckon with both elusive and direct forms of racialized exclusion, silencing, and harassment. Their narratives reveal assertions that their white teachers view them differently because they are black. Black students in secondary and post-secondary schools perceive that they receive unwarranted discipline relative to their classmates of other racial groups and recount moments in which they felt that their instructors underestimated and questioned their knowledge base. In *Immigrant*

and Native Black College Students: Social Experiences and Academic Outcomes (2013), sociologist Audrey Alforque Thomas' interviews with native and immigrant college students attending the University of Southern California system capture frustrations and angst caused by professors that cast them as spokespersons for the black experience and classmates that assume that they are student athletes.[47]

The research also shows that places outside of the school walls are rife with strenuous dynamics. In *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* (2008) by Philip Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway, black and Latino young adults living in New York City informed the authors of a series of troubling encounters in which they perceived that an individual or group treated them with contempt and disregard due to their race.[48] While the results make clear that race "has lost its potent punch in many spheres of life," they also illuminate how "racial prejudice remains alive and well in twenty-first century New York."[49] The study's respondents reported "at least one lifetime discrimination experience."[50] In addition to being "discouraged by a teacher from seeking higher education" or "denied a scholarship," the youth mentioned, "not being hired for a job, not being given a promotion, denied or refused service…being hassled by the police, being prevented from renting or buying a home…being denied medical care, or forced to leave a neighborhood."[51] These tumultuous interactions register emotionally and on the body. They threaten to leave corporeal scars, as well as mental, in the form of self-devaluation, trauma, stress, depression, and anger.[52]

The extent to which black adolescents track and document encounters replete with diminishing assumptions depends on their gender, age, and the socioeconomic stationing of their parents. Perceptions of prejudice populate inner-cities, and condense in the suburbs.[53] They are readily traceable in the outlooks of boys, and concealed in the accounts of girls and young children.[54] Even with these distinctions, the assertion that ethnicity-based contrasts nearly dissipate in this population's assessment of subordination has been consistent in the scholarship. Moreover, African American, Caribbean, and African youth's levels of perceived discrimination, sense of racial mistrust, and belief that outsiders unfavorably regard their group exceed their non-black native and foreign-born peers.[55] The National Survey of African Life (NSAL), a study of 810 African American and 360 Caribbean black teenagers from 2001 to 2003 determined that, "Eighty-seven percent of African American youth and 90% of Caribbean Black youth indicated that they had experienced at least one discriminatory incident in the past year."[56] Similarly, in Thomas' quantitative and qualitative study of African, Caribbean, and African American students within the University of California system, "instances of subtle racism were reported in equal numbers by native Black (12 of 19) and immigrant Black (13 of 20) respondents."[57] While there were slight intraracial differences in Thomas' findings, she affirmed that class was a primary determinant of differences among black students. Furthermore, she found that the "crucial cut of the colorline" was between the black student body and the non-black student body, composed of white, Asian, and Chicano/Latino students. The black respondents were "less likely to believe that students are respected regardless of race or ethnicity," than the other UC students

interviewed.[58] *Inheriting the City* depicts a similarly cut colorline. Their study, which

included interviews and surveys of 3,415 young adults, compared white, black, and

Puerto Rican natives, with the children of Russian Jews, West Indians, South Americans,

and Dominican immigrants, uncovered a myriad of inter-group differences. The authors

argue that "African Americans and those who 'look like' or could be confused with

African Americans, such as West Indians and dark-skinned Latinos," report more

incidents of discriminations than native and foreign-born whites. Moreover, they found

that "they face more systematic and authoritative racial boundaries than do Asians and

light-skinned Latinos" and "more formidable obstacles to full incorporation."[59]

Black Youth and Color-Blinding

Although race shapes the worlds of young black men and women, the matrices of

color-blindness and post-racialism insist that factors other than the perpetuation of

structures, policies, and images that fail to wholly uproot racial inequality induce their

academic marginalization, map oppressive geographies, and mitigate against their sense

of belonging in the public realm. These ideologies assert that while racism had the power

to defer the aspirations of earlier generations of black children, their social ills are no

different than those that infect other communities. The effectiveness of one's journey

toward adulthood is not shaped by a history of racialized exploitation and the continual

disregard of minority groups, but an individual's will or failure to persevere and clinch

the prosperity unavailable to their grandparents.

Symbolism is a crucial site where the fallacy of a raceless society is manufactured

as reality. The corporate branding or what communications scholar Ralina L. Joseph

refers to as the "post-racial packaging" of influential black figures as a discursive practice

that encourages black youth to un-see race.[60] Media producers present the prowess of

athletes, entertainers, or politicians as triumphs made possible by positive individual

choices and unaffected by racism, classism and sexism. Communications streams

regularly feature and retell the life stories of black individuals whose determination to

overcome their circumstances allowed them to escape a dilapidated public housing

project or graduate college. These accounts tend to conflate racism with "unreconstructed

bigotry" and a mere shell of its historical form. [61] Meritocracy appears as an undisputed

structural practice. Ultimately, states Joseph, these successful figures "are taken as

concrete evidence of a so-called level playing field."[62] They also affirm that the embrace

of post-racial thinking yields rewards. The commercial and universal acceptance of black

figures casts racial critiques as arbitrary and socially irrelevant. Marked by the media's

marginalization and chastisement of public black figures who dare to question the status

quo, to dwell in this perimeter is to perish.[63]

The controlled and partial treatment of racism in K-12 classrooms is another

conduit that espouses post-racialism to black youth. Research such as Keffrelyn D.

Brown and Anthony L. Brown's assessment of representations of racial violence in

official school textbooks in history and social studies, illuminate the propensity of school

curricula to frame race as an "essentialized construct."[64] Captured in works including

Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), Asante Molefi's "The

Afrocentric Idea in Education " (1991), Ellen Swartz' "Emancipatory Narratives:

Rewriting The Master Script in the School Curriculum" (1992), and Tara J. Yosso's

"Toward a Critical Race Curriculum," educational scholars, teachers, activists, and parents have unceasingly challenged official textbooks to repeal partial, uncritical, stereotypical, and sanitized portraits of the black experience in America, Africa, and beyond.[65]

Although official textbooks have shown improvement throughout the years, the announced commitment to multicultural education has translated to the obscuring of racial disparity in the present moment. Texts conflate racism with the egregious acts of "bad men" and, accordingly, disassociate it from structural mechanisms.[66]

For example, according to Brown and Brown, many texts "position slavery as a practice that was barbaric (or not) only with respect to how it was enacted by individual slaveholders and overseers."[67] There is minimal reference to the companies and industries that profited from slavery, and the laws that ensured the social immobility of blacks. Thus, "the reader is left to assume that those enslaved Africans who resisted the violence of slavery did so only in retaliation to specific acts of violence perpetrated against them, rather than in response to the entire system of human bondage that rendered them as less than human."[68] In the literature's review of slavery and the periods that followed, black resistance appears to be a series of reactionary and isolated events, rather than continual, systematic, and multi-faceted. While "bad men," like slaveholders, are time-period specific, the nation's economic and political institutions are not. The oversimplification of racial inequality, combined with historical timelines that confine it to the eras preceding the new millennium, curtail students from comprehending its social relevancy in the present.

State legislation and school district policies also contribute to the erasure of discussions of the social meaning of race from school curricula. Several states consider ethnic and race relations studies as optional subjects, while other prohibit them.[69] In Arizona, the now former superintendent Tom Horne banned the Tucson Unified School District's K-12 ethnic studies program in 2011 as a means to teach children to "treat each other as individuals and not the race they were born into."[70] He determined that offering classes that focus on the travails of minority groups outside of the primary social studies courses had potential to cause resentment, separation, and conflict. Horne asserts that individualism and moving past identity is the way of the present and the future. He endorses and exercises the belief that a fluency in racial inequality is insignificant to the life courses of the predominantly black, Latino, and indigenous Unified District.

Collectively, a tapestry of symbols, texts, images, and messages that devalue racial consciousness submerge black youth and stifles the capacity of this rising generation to harness a critical perception of reality. The active repudiation of an awareness and knowledge of the reproduction of stratification does not free black youth to pursue the American Dream, but instead binds them to the legacy of racial injustice that this promise ignores. The promotion of a race neutral society does not simply leave racial disparities unchecked, but also denies black youth the tools to gather an understanding of the complex factors that shape their lives and ways to adequately address these conditions.

Raising Children, Raising Racial Consciousness

"Ethnic-racial socialization" is an essential practice for black communities. Mothers, fathers, guardians, and families link arms, encircle their children, and seclude a discourse that misnames their suffering and deprives them of reprieve.[71] Utilizing various modes of communication, native and immigrant parents of color teach their children how to decipher the indecipherable and unlock the codes that enshroud racialized language and practices. They inform them of ways to not accept, but refute unfair treatment, safely navigate hostile environments, wrest stability from institutions that intend to ostracize them, and cope with the internal struggles racial violations yield. Diana Hughes and Lisa Chen (1997), among other social scientists determine that in constructing this alternative and resistant ideological space, black parents practice at least four methods: "preparation for bias," "cultural socialization," and "promotion of mistrust" of other racial groups and "mainstream socialization goals," like educational achievement.[72]

A central practice that emerges in studies of black parents is their commitment to preparing their children for discriminatory treatment. They direct them to the pitfalls of color-blind ideology, and make them cognizant of the structural and ideological presence of racism in society. Parents brace their children for the potentiality of unfair treatment, equip them with a lens that allows them to detect and perceive inequality, inform them of ways to push back against charges against their humanity, while preserving their lives, safety, and sense of self-worth. Preparation can be proactive, in which parents warn their young about entering certain places, or intentionally grapple with their own experiences of discrimination in front of their children to model possible responses. When reactionary, parents may explain the racial components of a highly publicized, racially

salient dilemma and walk them through how they should manage such an event if it occurs in their lives. Helping their children mentally and emotionally rebuild after a traumatizing event, and guarding against an acceptance of the ideologies that condone their invisibility, also signifies a form of reactionary preparation.[73]

Bias preparation is closely tied to and intertwined with "cultural socialization." Parents attempt to protect or help their children recover from the depressed self-esteem wrought by racial discrimination by dispelling pejorative notions of blackness and exposing them to black culture and the breadth of their humanness. The objective of cultural socialization, is to instill youth with a sense of pride in their racial and ethnic groups, and ultimately, themselves. For black immigrant parents this process entails pushing their children to see themselves through the eyes of those from their home countries, societies unmarked by a system of racial stratification. They place their children in ethnic-based social spaces, and if financially able, send them abroad for schooling and summer breaks. Ian E. A. Yeboah describes the socialization of the second generation as "more intense in Ghanaian spaces and less intense in non-Ghanaian spaces." Ghanaian churches are paramount among this ethnically defined realms. Yeboah's interview with fifteen parents and twenty-five children reveal that "apart from attending Sunday service," Ghanaian congregations "organize joint activities such as soccer galas, picnics, parties, and children's week."[74] In addition to surrounding their children with adults and peers that share their ethnic background, black immigrant ensure that are proficient in their native tongue, and partake in cultural music, dress, food, and holiday celebrations.[75]

By way of articulations of collective memory, family history, literature, the arts, and culturally-grounded programs native-born black parents embark on cultural socialization by teaching their children about black history. They recount the ways in which their ancestors struggled to claim full recognition in the wider society. Parents emphasize the strength and endurance of African Americans, as well as their role as equal participants in the country's founding and development. Further, black families show their children that they are the keepers of a wellspring of traditions, principles, and originations independent of white America. These portrayals of black life and culture, allow black children to see themselves as deserving members of society and incite them to call forward a realization of their humanity. Through these lessons youth learn that they are cut from a different cloth – a fabric of intentions, values, and capabilities set apart the one society throws upon them. [76] Parents also hope that with the raising of their self-pride, they will come to see change-making as a part of their cultural inheritance. Dissimilar from their school history books, which, writes James Loewen, "indoctrinate blind patriotism," black parents do not shy away from illuminating democracy as historically seated in contradictions and the racial hierarchy as structurally contrived. Critically important, they present black opposition as not limited to select strategies and leaders, or confined to select moments in time, but as radical, controversial, multifaceted, and necessarily constant.[77] Native-born, as well as immigrant black parents, point their children to well-known black figures to procure racial pride and self-esteem. Guardians do not venerate these famed individuals to discount the persistence of racial inequality, but rather to displace mass media's tendency to pair whiteness with intelligence, beauty,

and superiority. Bringing popular and celebrated black men and women to their children's attention has the power to heighten their confidence in their physical features and overall abilities.

Informing their children to be wary or cautionary in their interactions with non-black groups is a major part of black parents' attempts to establish a race-conscious foundation in their homes. Not unlike other families, black parents celebrate the nation's improved race relations and are hopeful for the complete implementation of its egalitarian values. On the ground level, they aspire to see distinct racial and ethnic groups give each other full recognition and they contribute to this vision by discouraging their children from being prejudiced. Many parents speak to their children in-depth about building relationships with people from an array of backgrounds. Yet, they also know that all households do not promote this attitude, and that even if they do, it does not fully prevent their children from replicating racial bias. Thus, they attempt to strike a balance between promoting diversity and advising their children to approach other groups with caution to avoid potentially harmful encounters.

Lastly, the guardians of black children promote academic success. Measurements of achievement vary across families, however consistently, they intend on their children completing a higher level of education than they did. For some families, this means attending college, and for others, this means pursuing a doctorate. This goal is not unique to black families. However, the driving force behind this aim is. Parents find that education enhances one's ability to maneuver around racial barriers and claim socioeconomic mobility. They are of the belief that it also allows them to enter spaces

shut off from the disempowered, and bring about change in their communities from the top-down.

The extant literature on ethnic-racial socialization gather that the nature of messages parents send to their children varies across families. As stated by Chase Lesane-Brown in "A Review of Race Socialization within Black Families" (2006), "Sociodemographic variables included marital status, gender, geographic region, neighborhood, age, education, and family income" inform parental choices.[78] For example, black parents display greater concern for their sons than their daughters. They believe that boys will experience discrimination more than their sisters, and in turn suffer greater consequences. In contrast, they gather that their daughters will primarily experience discrimination in the form of attacks based upon their appearance, bodies, and insolence from Eurocentric beauty expectations. Thus, they often give particular attention to racially socializing their sons in the form of bias preparation. When it comes to their daughters, parents tend to focus on enhancing their pride in their physical features.[79]

In conjunction with their children's gendered identities, the socialization of black parents also shift according to the age and cognitive abilities of their children. Parents with young children whom have yet to reach middle-school, largely rely on cultural socialization. They manage to cast black representation as normal and the ideal by exposing them to black dolls and educational shows with diverse characters. Teaching their pre-school and elementary aged black children to value, practice, and expect equality is also a priority for these parents.[80]

As they consider the ages and gendered identities of their children, their own social positioning shape their socialization patterns. For example, in their study on how black parents aim to prepare and shield their sons from the consequences of racism, Lionel C. Howard, Oscar A. Barbarin, and Jason C. Rose determined that middle and upper-class black parents are more likely than their counterparts of lower socioeconomic statuses to utilize racially and culturally "affirmative environments," such as well-established membership organizations dedicated providing a positive environment for black youth and fostering their development in areas such as cultural knowledge, academic development, and civic engagement.[81] These parents have more access to these spaces and networks more so than their counterparts of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Scholars also find that the tendency of parents with higher incomes to embark on racial socialization with more intentionality than others, is due in part to their residence in predominantly white or diverse neighborhoods.[82]

In conjunction with socioeconomic status, race-related communication patterns among parents also shift according to their gender. Mothers tend to participate in cultural socialization, whereas fathers tend to focus on bias preparation.[83] Black children also report receiving ethnic-racial socialization messages from their mothers, more so than their fathers. This gendered contrast in child socialization is reflective of a national trend. Statistically, women are predominant among child caretakers and spend more time with children than their male counterparts.[84]

For all its gradations, racial consciousness raising is a mainstay in the majority of black households and proves to viably supply their children with a memory, viewpoint,

and lexicon that directly opposes staple notions of race in the society at large.[85] While the body of work on ethnic-racial socialization determines that racial inequities compromise the welfare of black youth, and lead to a degraded self-image and academic regression, they have also found that racial awareness functions as a protective shield.[86] Consider "Patterns of Racial Socialization and Psychological Adjustment: Can Parental Communications About Race Reduce the Impact of Racial Discrimination?" (2008). Enrique W. Neblett Jr. and colleagues surveyed a sample of 361 black adolescents on their socialization experiences and found that those who reported receiving frequent and positive messages about race, displayed "a healthy vigilance against racism."[87] Those knowledgeable of racism evidenced strong racial and ethnic identities, as well as a positive self-concept, a sense of preparedness in various social settings, and stable educational outcomes. In contrast, the youth whose families did not talk about race or communicated mainstream portrayals of black Americans, "higher levels of depressive symptoms, more perceived stress, and lower levels of psychological well-being."[88]

As brought forth in "Social Stigma: The Affective Consequences of Attributional Ambiguity" (1991) by Jennifer Crocker, Kristin Voelkl, Maria Testa, and Brenda Major, an awareness of structural racism allows black youth to attribute the visibly asymmetric and unremitting obstacles they face to systemic prejudice, as opposed to individual defect, a natural, culturally wrought inferiority to their white peers.[89] Without an alternative causal framework, the possibility of black youth uncritically accepting post-racialism and rationalizing their stigmatization are greater.

As ethnic-racial socialization holds the socioemotional threats of racial discrimination at bay and endows black children with viable coping mechanisms and routes of endurance, it also empowers them to bring about social change. The network of individuals that have a hand in raising black children provides them with a knowledge base that enables them to contest discourses that renounce racial justice as a point of inquiry and action. The lessons supplied in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities emerge when they alert peers to their endorsement of stereotypic images, build protest movements, or develop verbal appeals for institutional transformation.

Garnering mirroring experiences of erasure, African, African American, and Caribbean youth fashion interethnic relationships in their attempts to resist the racial state. Epitomized in the activities of young people such as the Black Liberation Collective, they deem solidarity a necessity. Together, they assess the dynamics that shape their realities and co-create forms of cultural and political expression. The scholarship on second generation black immigrants traces a generation that holds identities dually informed by their race and ethnicity. As Sherri-Ann P. Butterfield observes in her essay, "We're Just Black: The Racial and Ethnic Identities of Second-Generation West Indians in New York" (2004), "for these second-generation immigrants, having a racial and an ethnic identity is a salient part of their lives. It is not an either-or proposition…" She continues, "being black and being West Indian are identities that coexist and greatly inform how the adult second-generation conceives of race and ethnicity for themselves and for other racial and ethnic groups in American society."[90] Similarly, in his Boston-based qualitative research, *Necessarily Black: Cape Verdean*

Youth, Hip-Hop Culture, and a Critique of Identity (2015), P. Khalil Saucier surmises

that, "Cape Verdean youth have come to see themselves, racially, as black and,

ethnically, as Cape Verdean."[91] In the eyes of Cape Verdean, Jamaican, and other black

youth of diverse backgrounds, their decision to identify as "black" does not alone

represent an embrace of their imposed, racial categorization. Rather, it indicates that they

self-define as members of, notes Saucier, "an abject population both locally and

globally."[92] It is a choice to engage in a cultural and political process of

"being/becoming/belonging" – an "honorable commitment, a signifier of insurgent

meaning."[93]

Black Women's Ethics of Community Mothering

Black women are pivotal to the assemblage and elevation of black youth's

unlearning of dominant racial ideologies. Not only are they a centrifugal source of racial-

consciousness, as the statistics on socialization make clear, but they also burrow their

children in a supportive community of maternal figures and caregivers that hold and

guide their hands as they draw back society's post-racial curtains. Indicative of their

shared beginnings in pre-colonial West African societies defined by consanguinity, black

native and foreign-born guardians rear their children within a communal structure.[94] As I

have described in the Introduction, African American, Caribbean, and African mothers

and fathers gained their bearings in contexts in which youth socialization is not the sole

responsibility of parents. Within the nuclear family model, a conjugal pair are the

"building blocks" of a family unit, the core around which the operation and management

of a household revolves, and are the primary determinants of their young's

socialization.[95] However, across the African diaspora adults and children are strands of an

interdependent web shaped by elders, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family

members, and non-kin who have associations and ties to the lineage. Residences are not

insular, but intergenerational and tightly wound with others. Moreover, the parent-child

relationship does not signify a dyad or a triad, but instead comprises multiple and

interchangeable parts. Contemporary black women are among the architects and

inheritors of these interdependent units. They mother and share their time and resources

with children other than their own when needed, and expect that their children may be

"kept" or "minded" by other women as well.[96] In African societies, notes anthropologist

Niara Sudarkasa,

> Women may be assigned or "given" children who are not "theirs" in an
> exclusive sense, but to whom they relate "as a mother." Women who have
> not given birth, or those whose children are no longer living with them
> might be "given" (or "assigned") a child who will remain in their care for
> an unspecified period of time in return for the usual affection and
> assistance parents receive from their children when they are growing up.[97]

The "informal adoption" that Sudarkasa observes in regions like Nigeria, Ghana, and the

Bight of Benin is also common practice in the West Indies.[98] Christine G.T. Ho states that

"The Caribbean "household" is not an autonomous, self-contained, corporate behavioral

unit whose members act in concert. Household composition expands and contracts with

the addition and subtraction of kin, fictive kin, friends, and children of kin and friends."[99]

Thus, women, Ho continues, "are embedded in networks of exchange and mutual support

based on kinship, as kinship is organized along the network principle rather than

nucleated corporate groups."[100] Upon their immigration to the United States, African and

Caribbean mothers lose direct access to these systems of mutual support, and struggle to recreate a semblance of the security and stability their familial networks offered. However, they attempt to recreate these arrangements by forming transnational kinship ties. Women may leave their children behind with family members so that they may grapple with the challenges of living in a new environment, adjust, find a home, and locate work. They also produce multigenerational households, and call on kin, such as their mothers and siblings, to join them and assist in the rearing of their children amid intense work and school demands. Furthermore, women immigrants bring the children of others along on their journey to improve their educational prospects. Ethnic and cultural organizations play an essential role as they allow black mothers to thrive in an environment that rests on inextricable links.[101] The value that black women from Africa and the Caribbean place on communal mothering is held by the African American women, with whom they now share a country and a home. Works such as Harriette P. McAdoo's "The Village Talks: Racial Socialization of Our Children" (2002), and the classic text, Andrew Billingsley's *Black Families in White America* (1968), make clear that the interconnectedness exuded by African slaves, and made particularly crucial amid the exploitive and vehement institution of slavery, remains visible in contemporary black families.[102] An array of maternal figures are ever-present in the lives of African American children. Much like black immigrant youth, these may include their grandmothers, aunts, older siblings, and the women that live in their neighborhoods and attend their family's church. Whether they are living together, or apart, these women hold unquestionable roles as disciplinarians, leaders, and nurturers.

Within the American context, where color-blind racism thrives, the kinship structures of native and foreign-born black women are key to the growth and sustenance of black youth. As stated by Patricia Hill Collins, amid scarce resources, black mothers "can draw upon an Afrocentric tradition where motherhood of varying types, whether bloodmother, othermother, or community othermother, can be invoked as a symbol of power."[103] In yielding these alternative sources of power, native and foreign-born black mothers extend their familial circles, blend households, and supersede bloodlines to combine their strengths. The resulting kinship structure sustains mothers and their children through a reciprocal exchange of materials, time, shelter, and opportunities. Beyond this, black women's maternal communities contain the construction, merger, and transmission of race conscious directives and imperatives.

Separate Villages

Although the "villages" responsible for rearing black youth cultivate their fruition of an "honorable commitment" to the struggle for racial inequality, the literature on this generation, questions the role of their mothers and othermothers in foregrounding their conception of interethnic ties as pivotal to freedom-making. Investigations of how African, Caribbean, and African American youth arrived to like planes of racial consciousness and a common pursuit of pan-blackness in their attempts to displace the edicts that facilitate their stagnation, rarely cite their parental communities as impetuses.

Readings of native and immigrant black women's enactments of communal mothering tend to treat these populations separately. These accounts depict black women parents and guardians that coalesce with women in their families or co-ethnics to weave a

lineage of childcare. Few texts document the presence of diasporic forms of communal and mutual mothering.

The literature on how black mothers prepare their children to refute hegemonic discourses focus on African American women and leaves little room for a discussion of ethnic variations and their use of intraracial, cross-ethnic ties in their ideological work. This is evident in descriptions of their cultural socialization practices. Their narrations of cultural legacy often entail a recognition of their continental, African heritage. Through photos, artifacts, educational materials, and the arts they black parents tell their children of black led kingdoms, globally groundbreaking inventions, and recount the revolutionary acts of leaders like Haile Selassie. If able, parents travel to the continent with their children as well.

In deciding to embrace Africa as their "homeland," black families limit the possibility of their children accepting and justifying their invisibility.[104] "A symbolic return to the continent and its achievements, preferably guided by loving mothers and other relatives," observe Yanick St. Jean and Joe R. Feagin, "allows a broader view of one's ancestry, and permits an understanding of today's experiences in light of yesterday and an envisioning of a future where one has more control because of that cumulative experience."[105] While *Double Burden* and similar works highlight the value black mothers place on acknowledging and elevating their children's connections to Africa, they limit their actions to the "symbolic" or "mythical" realm. The extent to which African American mothers build relationships with African immigrant women and

expose their children to the culture, traditions, and family histories of those with immediate ties to the continent is unstated.[106]

For African American, African, and Caribbean mothers, building relationships with those who share their culturally grounded backgrounds, histories, and principles is a familiar process. Families and communities that reflect their identities have long defined their residential and social spaces. Accordingly, these are the sites that they are prone to gravitate to. Yet, the scholarship on the dynamics between these diasporic communities, suggests that the crafting of separate villages is not simply a natural and unthinking process, but deliberate.

In the case of black immigrants, creating an environment in America that mirrors their sending countries provides them with a sense of belonging. As indicated in Ian E.A. Yeboah's study on Ghanaian immigrants in Ohio, foreign-born black mothers are intent on raising their children in a way that ensures they maintain a Ghanaian identity in America. Yet, their emphasis on cultural socialization is not only an attempt to preserve their children's knowledge of, engagement with, and pride in their ethnic backgrounds, but it is also an attempt to prevent them from attaining the qualities they observe among American youth. Such a viewpoint is not dissimilar from non-black immigrant parents. They are hopeful about the life they can potentially construct in America and anticipate taking advantage of economic opportunities void in their sending countries. However, they do not want their children to stray from the values that that they believe American children lack.

Although conducted outside of America, Adesay Adelowo's dissertation, "The Adjustment of African Women Living in New Zealand: A Narrative Study" (2012) presents reflections that echo the opinions of black immigrants on youth in Western societies. She interviewed 15 women from Southern and Western Africa to gage their wellbeing in the country and noted that, "Most of them spoke about the 'freedom' that youth have in New Zealand." They asserted that while, "from the western perspective youth need to be independent and are expected to make their own decisions…there is not an 'independent' individual youth within an African setting. Regardless of how old you are, you are expected to be guided by people that are older."[107] Adelowo's respondents expressed concern for example, that their teenage children have legal rights that overrule their parental influence. Caribbean black parents also observe an environment that appears to allow children an exorbitant amount of "freedom" in selecting the course of their lives, and devalues parentally enforced structure and control.

In *Pride Against Prejudice: Haitians in the United States* (1998), Alex Stepick observes that Haitian parents believe that a child should not "improperly question authority or worse yet, misbehave." In comparison, they "find American children to be disrespectful and ill-behaved."[108] He quotes mothers that as similar to the women in New Zealand, find that the society procures an environment that bolsters and ordains youth autonomy, and undermines parental authority. They commented on the threat of school teachers and children's services whom have the right to strip them of the ability to discipline their children as they see fit. To the dismay of black immigrant parents, their children often attempt to replicate the rebelliousness of American children. Thus, their

enactments of cultural socialization, is in many ways an attempt to counter the mainstream promotion of uninhibited, independence on the part of minors.

As they assume a place in the country as American and black, immigrant women, as well as men, believe that potential issues can come from their children's involvement with African American youth. For those living within or adjacent to historically segregated, financially challenged, lower income cities and neighborhoods, such as the Miami based Haitian families in Stepick's study, they express concern that their children will engage in self-destructive activities. Parents recognize that the negative effigies often assigned to black youth by the wider society as societal threats and nuisances are deceptive. Moreover, they understand the role of state neglect in foregrounding the pervasiveness of drugs dealing, gun violence, and minimal educational involvement in minority neighborhoods. However, they also consider the child rearing practices of African American parents to be responsible for the issues that plague black youth.

Captured in the voices of African immigrants in John Arthur's *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States* (2000), the first generation diagnoses the native black community's treatment of racial inequality as a major cause. They assert that they overzealously consider "the perils of discrimination," and as a result, lose hope, struggle to see themselves as agents, and "quit trying."[109] According to Mary C. Waters in *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (1999), Black immigrants from the West Indies also find the level of awareness among African Americans to work to their disadvantage. They assert that African Americans are "overly concerned with race" and that it cripples their commitment to

debasing the systems that contain them.[110] Black immigrants find that ethnic-racial

socialization practices of the native-born, while instilling a sense of the paucity of an

equitable society, damages, as opposed to bolsters their children's ability to reimagine

and transform the social order.

Resultantly, when black immigrant parents deploy the ethnic-racialization method

of alerting their children to avoid or approach outside groups with caution, their messages

apply to both white Americans and African Americans. Moreover, in diverging from

what they perceive to be the downfall of their native-born counterparts, black immigrants

opt to concentrate on instilling racial and ethnic pride in their children, and stress

academic achievement to prepare their children for racial barriers. The scholarship finds

that they are less likely than their native-born counterparts to utilize bias preparation and

hold explicit conversations about racial discrimination.[111]

The socialization choices and practices of black immigrant parents ignite rifts

between the first and second generation. Works like Khalil P. Saucier's document a

generation of African and Caribbean youth frustrated by and gravely disappointed in their

parents' treatments of race and racism. They consider their views of African Americans

misguided and harmful. In their reports, youth note that they often feel the need to teach

their parents about the history and contemporary makings of the country's racial

hierarchy and color-line. The children of immigrants also complain that in comparison to

their African American peers, they are less able to make sense of the contradictions that

shape their lives, prone to internalizing their denigration, and unprepared to resist racial

discrimination. In *Inheriting the City,* Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway, state

that their West Indian respondents, "often thought their parents had underestimated the degree of racism they face…"[112] Differentially, the thoughts of the African American participants suggest that their parents "have frequently spoken to their children about discrimination and tried to prepare them to fight for their rights when facing it…"[113]

Using the existing literature as a frame of reference, the strivings of black natives and immigrants to encase their children in an alternative and oppositional ideological frame, occur in estranged villages. Although their children uniquely struggle to access quality educations, are surrounded by assumptions that declare their inferiority, and deal with racialized assaults and alienation, black mothers prefer to guide them apart. Moreover, within the scope of much of the scholarship, their children's cross-ethnic solidarity emerges as self-taught, and a gateway to equality that their parents failed to model and embody.

The following chapter complicates this portrayal and asserts that African American, African, and Caribbean women mother in community. It depicts native and immigrant black women that are unwaveringly committed to stirring and awakening their children's racial consciousness. It shows that their strategies are not only similar, but interdependent. They model the diasporic consciousness and cross-ethnic ties scholars find ever-present in black children's negotiations of racial prejudice and detestation of color-blindness. It suggests that native and immigrant black women establish interethnic motherlines. To utilize the words of writers Toni C. King and S. Alease Ferguson, a motherline is "a collective mural of mothers who have envisioned human solidarity," and raise kin able to "join the venture of world making."[114] A motherline manifests when,

> Be it a grandmother, an adopting nonbiological mother, a collective of community mothers…pass on values of an African-centered worldview…help daughters learn to read the social clime, heal from dominant culture oppression, fashion a culturally grounded identity, form and carry out resistance aimed at a particular social context or institution.[115]

Black mothers paint this collective mural when they align with women within and outside of their bloodline to sculpt an intergenerational line of communication and knowledge for their children. The lineal foundation upon which native and immigrant black mothers raise their sons and daughters is not solely defined by their co-ethnics. Their children's othermothers – the women that help teach their kin about racial stratification, the material implications of their identity, and ways to access autonomy often live on the other side of their ethnic borders. In examining the experiences of Hartford's mothers, Chapter Seven will capture the composition of these interethnic ties. As it describes these maternal relationships, the chapter asserts that black youth use their mothers' tools when they mobilize their racial consciousness and cross ethnic boundaries to spotlight and unearth unresolved machinations of exclusion that contemporary ideologies attempt to bury.

CHAPTER 7

Othermothering on Black Borderlands

The Motherlines From Which They Came

Gwendolyn Samuel's journey as an advocate for children's right to a quality began in 2008 after President Obama's election. Founder, as well as president of the State of Black Connecticut Alliance and the Connecticut Parent's Union (CTPU), the 48-year-old mother of four recalls that before this monumental shift, she was an "everyday parent, doing what the system said." [1] However, amid celebrations about Obama's election to the White House, she observed burgeoning discussion on "two Connecticuts," a phrase that she had never heard of prior.[2] Parents and educational activists argued that Connecticut, a state known for its wealth and socioeconomically prominent residents, was torn by the achievement gap and the school-to-prison pipeline.

A parent to three sons, ages 16, 24, and 25, Gwendolyn was particularly drawn to reports that announced the poor educational outcomes of young black men in the state. She admits that, that although her two eldest sons dropped out of school, she did not fully understand the institutional dimensions of their seemingly personally-motivated choices. She came to find that her children, along with others living in and attending public schools in the predominantly black and Latino areas of the state, wrestled with a lack of school resources, harsh disciplinary measures, among other issues. The New Jersey native states, "I started to learn about this achievement gap I just wasn't happy at all with what was happening in Connecticut and I love Connecticut. I just realized we don't treat people

equally."[3] Her investigations led her to conclude that heightened parental involvement in the school system, and laws that allow parents to contribute to and alter their children's educational experiences were pivotal to improving schools, regardless of their "zip code."[4] She argues that parents are in the best position to represent their children's concerns, and thus need as much support and leverage as teachers' unions. Further, Gwen sought to create space in the state's educational sphere for discussions of racism and of race-based solutions to disparity. "No one wants to talk about race," she laments. "You know Connecticut is a messaging state, it likes to say "unconscious bias" – it doesn't want to be called racist. Whatever it's called, you need to change your way of thinking or you shouldn't be in the field of educating."[5]

In 2009, Gwendolyn implemented her parent empowerment framework by establishing the State of Black Connecticut Alliance. The nascent organization aligned with The Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, and others to campaign for the passage of a "Comprehensive Education Reform Bill." The proposed mandate included a "parent trigger law," which "allows a majority of parents (51%) in a 3 or more-year failing school to petition for a school reform…replace administrators, reconstitute a school or make other major reforms to ensure academic success for ALL children."[6]

Hundreds gathered in Hartford's gold domed capital building to present the bill to state representatives. Gwendolyn was struck by the mass resistance on the part of the American Federation of Teachers and policy makers. She figured that they were up against institutional racism, as well as the notion that parents of color are uninformed and

incapable of properly caring for their children. "We're up there and they were fighting us so bad and I'm like, "Wait a minute? Why are your children entitled and it's a problem or misunderstanding when we're fighting for ours?"[7]

In the face of detestation, the parents continued to stand by their call for their right to rectify the failing schools of Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, and other counties in Connecticut heavily populated by students of color. In February 2010, the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus announced the successful passage and enforcement of the reform bill. The following year, Gwendolyn established the CTPU, a membership organization that focuses on continuing the work of securing and protecting the legal rights of minority and low-income parents in their active pursuit to actively supply their children's learning needs, in addition to expanding parental knowledge of the system and personal involvement. Since its founding, the union has managed to provide legal support to parents arrested and receiving a felony charge for enrolling their children in schools beyond their district lines, and accordingly breaking the state's residency laws. They are currently working on ushering in a law that prohibits these arrests and ultimately redraws these district boundaries. Additionally, CTPU provides programming to improve parent literacy, holds informational meetings that educate families on school dilemmas, runs leadership workshops, orchestrates grass-roots organizing trainings, and plans meetings with administrators and elected officials.

As the CTPU travel across and between cities, schools, and homes to unionize and inform Connecticut's parents of color, the organization rests on consistent conversation and engagement between guardians and caregivers of distinct linguistic,

cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. This borderwork does not come without difficulties. Communication barriers, misunderstandings, and pre-existing judgements aggravate relationship building. Parents often rely on their perceptions of outside ethnic groups to measure one's commitment to their children's educations. Gwendolyn, an African American, especially observes rifts between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic black populations, as well as between African Americans and West Indians. West Indians often question the extent to which African Americans parents are dedicated to standing on the frontlines of school reform and helping their children academically thrive. There are also concerns that some groups – such as the Hispanic population, which constitutes the majority among people of color in Hartford and Connecticut more broadly – tend to receive more support and acknowledgement on the part of local politicians. For the founder and its key organizers, sustaining the union and building a consensus thus necessarily entails making room for parents to talk about their differences, challenge their cross-group assertions, and learn from one another. While they encourage parents to re-orient their views, they remind them of their goal to bring about quality schools, and the centrality of communities working together to accomplish this feat. Gwendolyn notes, "the system hopes you fight. Because if you fight one another, then you can't focus on the bigger issue." She asserts that their power to function as a collective, is key to countering a state filled with "people negotiating our children's well-being." She continues, "my favorite motto is, I don't negotiate."[8]

The Connecticut Parent Union's nonnegotiable call for racial justice in a willfully color-blind society and Ms. Samuel's insistence on detesting "two Connecticuts," as

opposed to accepting, "this is just the way it is," parallels the demands of the Black

Liberation Collective. Their aim to transform systems of higher education, and do so,

"through unity, coalition building, direct action and political education," echoes the goals

of New England's unionized parents of color.[9] In developing the parental network,

Gwendolyn seeks to center the voices of those who value the youth that schools function

to marginalize. Yet, moreover, she strives to demonstrate to her children and others that

they will not survive without a fight – and without fighting, together.

This chapter recognizes the mirroring viewpoints and strategies of the parent's

union and the BLC as indicators of a motherline, defined by intergenerational exchange

and continuity. I assert that the racial consciousness of contemporary black youth as

demonstrated in the Concerned Student 1950, Irate 8, The Black Justice League, as well

as the role of diasporic ties in their enactments of this consciousness, has traceable

beginnings. To the contrary of conventional perspectives, African American, African, and

Caribbean black mothers, collectively and interactively raise their children's racial

awareness. The notion that native-born and foreign-born black women not only see race

differently, but also seek to equip their children with a critical lens that is imperceptive to

and runs up against the viewpoints of their peers of other ethnic groups is a limited

understanding of this group's socialization practices. The interethnic group consciousness

that scholars observe among black youth is evidenced by black mothers whom coalesce

to guard, protect, and prepare their children for the racialized world. Mothers, like

Gwendolyn, do not mother in isolation. They recognize the continuing significance of

race and see shared mothering, and cross-ethnic parenting, as an imperative and

necessary route to radically improving their children's conditions.

Drawing on the voices of parents in the Greater Hartford area, this section offers

vignettes of native-born and foreign-born black othermothers and community mothers. It

sees othermothering in the work of community organizers, educators, and state

employees. However, the chapter also sees communal mothering as it is enacted by the

late-night city bus driver that ensures her teenage passengers make it inside of their

homes or the clerk standing behind the counter at a bodega, talking to her kid customers

about their school day. Collaborative mothering and racial socialization is planned and

organizational, as much as it is unstructured, interpersonal, and seemingly mundane. The

narratives reveal that black mothers' interethnic methods of racial conscious raising are

evident in their "bias preparation" and "cultural socialization." The chapter closes with an

exploration of the ways in which black mothers socialize their children across ethnic lines

by developing alternative institutions for youth that center race-based solutions.

Rites of Survival

The realization that the election of President Obama did not necessarily equate to

a promising future for her children sparked Gwendolyn's activism. While she rejoiced,

the concerns brought forth by other parents of color gave her pause. She learned that her

daughter and son's race and zip code still determined the effectiveness of their schools,

curriculum, and teachers. Gwendolyn thought about two of her sons, and reflected on

their school experiences. The numbers on the school-to-prison pipeline in Connecticut

revealed that while they represent 35% of public school students in the majority white

state, they account for 62% of school arrests and are predominant among suspensions and expulsions.[10] After learning of and interpreting these numbers, Gwendolyn, the now "walking 4-1-1" on educational equality, remembered that throughout school, teachers often disciplined her son Jamel. "They kept saying my son was misbehaving and I'm thinking like, "What is he doing?" And they said, "He's fidgeting in his seat," and I said "Is he bothering anyone?"[11] She later learned that her son tended to be irresponsive or unfocused in class due to bullying and constant sparring with classmates. Gwendolyn hypothesizes that the teachers either did not notice the strained dynamics between her son and other students, or deemed suspension to be more useful than working with students to build positive relationships.

Gwendolyn's dismay at Jamel's treatment in school on the part of his teachers appeared in the thoughts of several other the city's black mothers. For example, it echoes in Marie's account, who in Part I, shares that her babysitter, an African American elder in her neighborhood, noticed that the teacher was treating her daughter differently because she was African. After her caregiver met with the teacher, filed a complaint, and asked that the instructor modify her interactions with the elementary student, Marie remained observant of the school and her daughter's behaviors at home. The Togo-born beauty store owner continued to find questionable choices on the part of the teaching staff. At the same school, the following year, the principal handed her daughter a one-day suspension. The staff claimed that she hit a classmate. Physical violence was atypical for her daughter, thus Marie attempted to explain that her daughter using her hands to harm another child was unlikely. Further, if she did this, it may have been a result of teasing.

Her daughter often talked with her about another girl in her class who taunted her. Despite these explanations, the school did not reverse the suspension. Like Gwendolyn's case, Marie's experience speaks to a power imbalance in the classroom and a limited ability to shape her daughter's school conditions. It also hints at a tendency in the region to immediately remove children in conflicts from the school's premises, as opposed to send them to a different classroom and begin forms of mediation and counseling.

Racial bias in the media is an additional point of concern for black mothers. They observed that the media often vilifies black and Latino children in Hartford, and emphasizes their poor academic performance, teenage pregnancies, and the high rates of gun-violence. The parents argue that in reproducing these storylines and think pieces, communications media are in fact contributing to these community problems. In their view, the mass circulation of these narratives degrades children's self-esteem and ultimately leads them to reproduce violence and unsafe behaviors. Moreover, it encourages outside forces, such as teachers and police officers, to surveil and demean the city's children. Forty-three-year-old Tanya, a mother and othermother to countless children in the city's Northeast neighborhood, has experienced the contrived scope of the media directly. She has resolved that, "it's so much violence in the community and I blame that on media also."[12]

Tanya, who has given birth to three children – two now in their twenties, and one in middle-school – has unofficially adopted and raised many others. Through the years, friends struggling with finances, violent relationships, and addictions have asked that she care for their children. Others in her Northeast neighborhood, have been kicked out by

their parents or decided to spend most of their days in her home by choice. Also, her husband of three-years has ten children. She states, "My mother always had everybody else's kids and I kind of picked it up, it bounced off of me…I just always thought that was how it was supposed to be."[13]

Tanya's "family environment" is also fueled by "Hartford's Hope," a youth Drill, Drum, and Dance Corp. Two years ago, when the neighborhood was on lock-down due to an active police chase, she invited the team, who was then practicing in the nearby Swift Factory to practice in her home for safety reasons. She laughs, "That was a trap, because they never would leave!"[14] After learning that the group did not have a committed and stable source of adult leadership, she decided to take on the immense responsibility of managing and directing the group of about 15 children, whom ranged from middle to high school-aged. With the help of fundraising, community groups, and city council members, they secure places in the city to practice, instruments, uniforms, perform at parades, and travel to compete in various competitions. Since Tanya has assumed leadership of the group, they have also expanded. Tanya and "Hartford Hope" are a safe refuge for the African American, West Indian, and Hispanic children involved. She shares that they have something to look forward to after school and those whom were formerly involved in some of the areas cliques or gangs, have reduced their engagement significantly due to the team and her constant encouragement.

In her reflection on the role of the media in enabling and perpetuating racial bias she mentions a Channel 3 reporter, who reached out to her to do a story on the kids. She

shares that after sending him an e-mail about the team and their accomplishments, he

never replied back.

> I was like, "By the way we're opening up for the Rock Cats. You know they're groundbreakers. A minor-league baseball team that's coming to our city and we opening up for them." I was going through the story, you know, "You could come down there." Called, him, texted him, and e-mailed him and no reply. So, I sent him another email. I said, "Well it would've been nice if you would've replied. I bet you if the kids had a gun in their hands ya'll would be running over here real quick." He replied right back then. It has to really take us to do something negative for us to get any kind of attention?...Let me tell you – these kids, – last year we did over 80 performances in state and out of state. We've been going all around. Winning awards, winning competitions. Breaking records, you know doing mad stuff for the community. The media never once said, "Okay fine, let me figure out what's going on with these kids since they doing so much positive stuff." The minute they start doing something negative they all over it.[15]

According to Tanya, the unwillingness on the part of Hartford media, to acknowledge the

nuances of black youth life and culture in Hartford, plays a role in discouraging kids from

joining or remaining committed to alternative activities, like the corp.

Knowledgeable of the continuing significance of race, and its potential to impact

on their academic performance and how they saw themselves, the respondents in this

study deemed it critical talk to their children about race, and the ways in which their

black identity penetrates and shapes their relationships with individuals and institutions.

Also important, they model ways to approach and respond to incidents of discrimination.

Consistent with the existing literature on the ethnic-racial socialization practices of black

parents, the African and Caribbean women interviewed doubted the effectiveness of the

methods deployed by African American mothers. While the women found that race may

be over-emphasized in the homes of native-born black parents to the point where their

children become complacent, they also shared that these parents promote vehement

responses to bias.

Christine, a Kenya-native and nurse, finds that when black mothers address

school-related concerns, such as decisions made by teachers regarding their child, they

allow anger to consume them. In offering an example of this demeanor, the mother of

seven describes an incident at her son's school a few years ago. While picking her son up

early one afternoon, she noticed that a parent was asking a teacher to explain why she

confiscated her daughter's cell phone.

> I went to get my child when and he came and I find this lady swearing and
> yelling at the top of her voice in the reception area. I asked somebody,
> "What's going on here?" Then this person says, "Oh, you know, her child
> was found talking on the phone in class. So when the teacher took away
> the phone, the child took another phone to call the mother to say that the
> teacher has taken her phone." The mother comes not even asking…and –
> first of all, when you as a mother is swearing and yelling in front of this
> very child, to those teachers who are supposed to teach this child, what are
> you showing them?[16]

For Christine, the mother's actions shed light on a cultural difference between her home-

country and the United States in general. She shared that they have a level of respect for

teachers and Kenya, that she has not seen displayed during her years in the Greater

Hartford area. She asserted that the mother's actions sent the wrong message to the child,

and hypothesized that this is not the first time that she has modeled this behavior. She

suggests that the student's willingness to call her mother without the teacher knowing is a

sign what the mother has long affirmed, that stepping outside of codes of conduct in the

school setting is appropriate. When asked how she would respond to the teacher's

actions, Christine stressed that she would defy the expectations of her as a black woman

to me unruly, disruptive, and a poor example for her children. She would begin a calm

conversation, maintain a low volume, and ask for a meeting with the principle if

necessary. She emphasized that with her son and other children present, this behavior

would provide a better example of conflict resolution.

Christine's point of view is also comparable to the thoughts of African and

Caribbean mothers on how parents should teach their children to engage with law

enforcement if they have been wrongfully stopped or pulled over. The walk-through that

Marie gives her children is telling.

> We should teach our children here, living here with us - we have to make
> sure we keep them in touch really strongly with our culture. Again, our
> culture. Back home, if the police stop you, you stop, "Yes?" No matter
> what it is –sometimes you don't even know why the police stop you, you
> say, "Okay," wondering what is it. You start talking, "Please can you,
> please can you…." But here, because of the racism thing that is really here
> for hundreds of years, it trick people. So whenever police got involved
> with you on the street – something, I don't know how to say it, some
> people cannot control themselves because of the anger that is already there
> from long time. But if we teach our children, if you come across those
> kind of situations, do this, don't do this, don't do this, don't – and I
> believe most African, either male or female, that always keep their culture,
> that always remember that they are African - will not tell a police officer,
> who asking her or him to get out the car or to like – reply like – "What
> should I get out the car for?" I don't think so.[17]

As Marie demonstrates what to say to a police officer, the ideal physical posture, and

possible tone, she reveals that akin to Christine, she believes that her African beginnings

play a role in how she tells her children to respond to racial profiling, and sets her apart

from other minority groups. She suggests that due to Togo's distance from an on-going

history of racial crime, she is accustomed to a healthy and non-biased relationship with

law enforcement. Accordingly, she finds that she can respond to racial profiling in a

manner that does not stir up deep-seated anger and frustration. In using the term "trick,"
Marie suggests that police expect "anger" from black Americans and aim to use signs of
volatility to justify the stop or use of brutal force. Although she is rearing her two
children in America, she is intent on equipping them with what she believes to be
African-specific behaviors so that they may develop an effective way out of these
potentially harmful encounters.

In their conversations about race and racism, Marie, and the other African and
Caribbean mothers interviewed tended to essentialize the cultural beliefs and values of
their co-ethnics and African Americans. They gathered that while they were uniquely
able to build trap-doors and escape routes on a racially hostile terrain, African Americans
were not. By way of this essentialism, their viewpoints also reflected correlational
racism, or the sense that African Americans subjected themselves to unfair treatment.
They resisted the idea that the American context may substantiate and necessitate actions
and behaviors that they may not be used to seeing in their home countries. Yet, keeping
their children safe in America calls for approaches to schools and police departments that
diverge from what they deem customary. Thus, despite their interest in maintaining their
nation-specific points of view, they do acknowledge that African American mothers,
having been raised and socialized in America, possess an extensive knowledge of anti-
black practices and modes of resistance that they and their children can learn from.

Consider Delores' experiences. She is an African American mother and Assistant
Vice President for Student Development at a Connecticut university. The 60-year-old
mother of two adult children was born in Hartford and has worked at the university for 30

years. In her current role, she administers Multicultural Programs, an office that provides services for students from underrepresented backgrounds in the form of a scholarship program, student mentorship, academic support, and cultural programs. When she originally joined the Office of Multicultural Programs in the 1990s, the student of color population was about 5 percent. It now stands at 30 percent.

Due to her position, she interacts with students of color on campus day in and day out. Delores states that once they arrive on campus, they become her kids. She gauges and represents their needs before administrators and holding them accountable to the school's values of inclusion and diversity. Notably, she conveys to students the importance of creating spaces on campus that allow them to gain reprieve from micro-aggressions, receive support, as well as problem-solve and mobilize. The Black Student Union, The Caribbean Student's Association, Hispanic Diaspora United, The Gospel Choir, and others are products of Delores' advising and mentorship in recent decades. Delores makes clear that her job title does not alone prompt her to form relationships with students of color. Her professed role as their on-campus guardian and caretaker is an assignment given to her by students' mothers. Delores states that weeks before a student moves on campus, she can expect a phone call or visit from their parents.

> Every week I get a call or between 3 or 4 calls, and it's generally the mothers and women of color whose children are interested in coming to the University – so they want to have a mother to mother, woman to woman, conversation. They don't want the administrative answers and they get my number from other people who I interacted with – from former students, alumni, from a number of different churches that I was into…it's like a network of people and – so they'll generally pass on my information and they'll call me…there's a level of trust. They know I'll work with their students, they know I'm from the city of Hartford. I went to some of the same schools their parents went to…it was that kind of, "I'll call her,

because people have good things to say" – or there is a level of trust that is conveyed from black woman to black woman and that's who they want to hear from. They want to hear from someone who has probably walked in their shoes, who understands their issues, who is not judging them for their lack of college knowledge because sometimes their children are first generation college students. They want to hear real answers from people who, more than likely, have experienced what they've experienced…for whatever reason there's a commonality that has them ringing my telephone.[18]

While black mothers may come across Delores due to her position at the university, they call her because she is another black woman and by word of mouth, a mother to many. Distinct from the other deans and administrators, Delores has endured the same raced, gendered, and class-based conditions as they have and will be especially sensitive to their needs, and those of their children. They find that her trials within the margins of academia, will outweigh any commitment she may have to reciting rehearsed and uncritical statements about the college's commitment to diversity. It is the hope of native and foreign-born black mothers alike that she will speak to what their children can expect as minorities on a predominantly white campus and prepare them in ways that they cannot. Delores proclaims that with each call and visit she does not hesitate to "throw that rope over the wall and help you along."[19]

Enactments of othermothering on the part of African American women such as Delores, also occurs outside of occupational professionally designated roles. In the case of many women, it occurs between women they have befriended through work or social groups. Recall Jacqui from Part I of this dissertation. She was born in Ghana and spent her early childhood there before her parents moved to New York to pursue higher education and careers in politics. Empirical studies suggest that black parents of higher

socioeconomic backgrounds and immigrant parents of color participate in cultural socialization more so than bias preparation. Likewise, Jacqui's parents rarely discussed racism and bias with her and her younger brother. Thus, for Jacqui, informing her children of how to identify and navigate racism in social and structural contexts is an unfamiliar process, that is actively improving upon over time. The 44-year-old's African American colleagues, friends, and fellow congregants often usher in welcome reinforcement.

On one occasion, while spending time with her friend Monique, her 12-year-old son Christopher divulged that during school that day, many of his white classmates teased him and repeatedly asked, "What are you?" This was unfortunately not the first time that his classmates taunted him due to his racially ambiguous appearance. In recent weeks, Christopher had shared similar stories with Jacqui. She turned to Monique for her insight. Her peer, an African American mother, advised the sixth grader, "Make sure that when they ask you what race you are, tell them that you're green, tell them you have money."[20] She urged Christopher to tell his classmates about his affluent grandparents and his uncle, who was a famed entrepreneur. Monique asserted that this would show his classmates that although he may not fit into the same phenotypical category as they did, he came from a diligent, hard-working family and deserved to be respected as much as anyone else. Jacqui, concerned that Christopher may begin to measure his worth and that of others according to material possessions, added on to Monique's advice, and posited that he should focus on his relative's academic accomplishments. Moreover, instead of sharing them with classmates, Jacqui encouraged him to recount their academic feats in

his own mind. It was her hope that this would improve his self-regard. While Jacqui did

not fully agree with Monique's notion of "let me give you my resume, so you know,"

their messages and advisories merged and intersected to inform Christopher of interracial

dynamics and demonstrate that marginalization of any form is undeserved.

In many cases, African American mothers initiate the mutual mothering and

ethnic-racial socialization of second generation African and Caribbean youth. This is

noted for example in the experiences of 32-year-old African American mother of two,

Jeanine. She works at the Hartford Public Library in program development. As the library

is home to a myriad of opportunities for recent immigrants, such as ESL and citizenship

courses, Jeanine interacts with black immigrant women often. In fact, one of them is her

co-worker, Fatimah, who is Somali Bantu. Jeanine stated that that as their languages,

cultures, and religions set them apart, their mirroring roles as mothers proved to be a

building block in their relationship.

> I know my connection to Fatimah more so than anything else, started with me talking to her baby, and not necessarily to her. Or asking questions about her baby, and not necessarily her. We had a little back and forth thing where her daughter took a long time to connect with me. But you can see white women walk by, and her baby would run up to them and go…It's one of those things where it's like, she doesn't see the headdress so she doesn't see me as one of the woman who are safe in her mind and her heart that she deals with all the time. But then you can have total strangers who are white folk – and you're like, "Wait a minute." We talked about it and I was like – with Fatimah, "These are strangers, these are folk." How can she not?...Why wouldn't she?...I see her everyday, I talk to her everyday. I try and make her smile everyday. It took her awhile for her to smile back and to accept me into her place.[21]

Jeanine understood that since she did not wear a hijab or speak in Bantu dialect, Fatimah

and her daughter were slow to form a relationship with her. However, the child's swift

comradery with white employees suggest that Jeanine's race was at play as well. Jeanine gathered that as the city's immigration agencies largely employ white social workers, Fatimah's daughter is accustomed to interacting with them. She is likely to see them as more trustworthy than Jeanine. Over time, the toddler's reception of Jeanine improved as her relationship with Fatimah strengthened. Moreover, she continued to greet, embrace, and play with the child. In doing so she hoped to not only bond with the small family, but demonstrate that African American women are the antithesis of "strangers." Jeanine expects that there may come a time when the "folk," are not so supportive. In preparation for those moments, she wants Fatimah and the baby to be willing to locate and call upon other black women. Jeanine's actions also functioned to ward off the internalization of negative stereotypes about black identity.

Black Heritage, Black Pride

Black culture occupies every corner of the capital city. It is located on school marquees and street signs named after historically prominent African American figures in Hartford; captured in the float designs of the Annual West Indian Parade; on display in the Amistad Center downtown; and heard in the grocery stores, where English, Spanish, French, and Creole share a space in the food aisles. Mothers and children are co-authors of Hartford's diasporic dimensions. Their lineages, intergenerational family stories, and group memories shape and inform their day to day lives, choices, and decisions. The black children of native-born and foreign-born black parents, do not have to go far to look for or seek their heritage. It is in the food, music, dialect, as well as the activities and customs practiced within their homes.

For parents, retaining and transmitting their culture and heritage are in many ways habitual and instinctual, for their practices reflect those of their own guardians. However, this is also an intentional and strategic process. Each of the mothers interviewed are always thinking about the nature of the goals that they have for their children and how their parenting styles either bolster or impede these visions. The overarching narrative in their accounts, is the belief that their children's self-preservation, rests on their ability as parents to bind them to their cultural roots. They collectively asserted that a knowledge of the values and strengths of their foremothers and forefathers, leads to a positive sense of self and one's place in the world.

Rose, a 39-year-old mother of four, demonstrates the perspective of the respondents when she is asked why she treasures exposing children to their maternal and paternal beginnings. She states:

> Coming into their own has a lot to do with who you are and who you aspire to be, and whose come before you and who those people happen to be. It's like a cycle that you want to continue when you know the greatness of your past. The greatness of your history is only something that you want to continue to see flourish and thrive…we set a standard, we set boundaries, we discipline you, and we love you…and we give you the confidence that you should have…tell you how wonderful and beautiful you are, how special you are, how unique you are and all the talents and gifts you have, because of who you are, not just culturally, but because you are a part of this family.[22]

For Rose, and the other parents, the perceived potentiality of racial assault and abuse makes the growth and development of their children's confidence and pride in themselves, and the people from which they came, particularly urgent and critical. Evident in the case of Jacqui's son Christopher for example, both the native-born and

foreign-born black parents have come to understand that there persist external forces that threaten to demean, wound, and suppress their children. Cultural socialization supplies with a level of self-assurance that allows bars them from internalizing the negative views of others and enables them to respond, and demand representation and visibility.

An overarching theme in the interviews was the assertion that the school system functions to endorse black inferiority. Across the board, their children's education was a top priority for these parents. Yet, they also could not deny that these realms of opportunity, also threatened to harm their children in both overt and covert ways. While they expressed concerns about the quality of the school system and the disciplinary measures of teachers, they also referenced the limited portrayals of black history, life, and culture in their children's school curriculum and textbooks. They determined that as schools equip black children with critical reading, writing, and math skills, they also undercut their children's self-esteem, and in turn, their ability to implement the lessons learned.

Virginia's children are "grown," have left her home and gone on to build their own careers and families, but her memory of their experiences attending the areas public and private schools in the late 1980s and 1990s remains clear and vivid. Her eldest son was the first of the four children to attend a private high school. She shared that it was in his first year there, that she found that the voids in U.S. history curriculum evident in her childhood, were not wholly resolved.

> One time the headmaster called my husband and I to come to a meeting, and he said, "Sean is not participating in class" – this was during the Black History Month. He says, "We're reading a novel, and they're talking about slavery and everything, and Sean doesn't participate…he got angry when

they said that it looked like the slaves were being treated well." I said, "What book are you reading from?" You know what it was?... A [master] novel! I freaked out. I had a natural fit in that office, I told that man off. I said, "If you want someone to teach about black history, I said – Mr. Rogers was still alive. I gave him his name, I gave him Wilber G. Smith's name, Thirman Milner's name…I went off…from then on, I knew that we made a mistake, and we were not going to make that mistake with the rest of our kids.[23]

During the meeting, Virginia learned that her son's irresponsiveness to the course of material was not due to a lack of interest in school, but the material covered in class. The teacher not only relied on a fictional text to introduce the students to slavery, but a book written from the perspective of a slave owner. The work discounted the view of African slaves, and dismissed the fact that enslavement was an exploitive institution, regardless of the seemingly kind nature of the owners involved. After discovering this, Virginia completely redirected the course and purpose of the parent-teacher meeting. She posited that the problem was not Sean, but the syllabus. She pushed the teacher to discard the "master script," and use Hartford as his primary text. The city was home to black scholars and living forerunners of the Civil Rights Movement. Virginia pointed him to John E. Rogers, a black historian, Mr. Smith, a Senator and Activist, and Thirman Milner, the city's first black mayor, whom was elected in 1981. Her concerns about sending her son to a predominantly white school grew following the meeting, thus she became more intentional about sustaining his relationship with, "his neighborhood, his people" by way of afterschool recreational activities and programs.

The erasure Virginia noticed in her son's history class remains a concern for black mothers today. In 2016, the Greater Hartford Urban League initiated a monthly town hall meeting, entitled, "The State of Black Hartford." Over the course of the year, many

Hartford residents gathered at the Muhammad's Mosque #14 of the Nation of Islam,

attended these public events; connected with neighbors, parents, teachers, clergy,

politicians, and organizers to articulate their concerns; as well as discussed and

determined strategies for community development in the areas like housing, education,

safety, and employment. School curricula factored into many of the community

members' educational concerns and solutions. At the October assembly, a reverend

declared that residents are "ill-informed" about the local voting process, "misinformed"

about the overall needs of their neighborhoods, and therefore unable to place the

appropriate people in office. Moreover, he stated that the youth are "disengaged." He

said, "they don't know or have not been taught where we came from to be where we are

right now." The people in attendance agreed with his assessment. The affirming voices

included respondent Vanessa. The Boston-born daughter of an African American mother

and Bajan-American father, and an active member of her neighborhood's revitalization

committee, she replied:

> My brothers have said so many things that I wanted to address…the las
> thought that I had was – integration was probably our down fall because
> prior to that we knew who are famous African Americans where. I moved
> here to learn about Fred D. Wish, Johnny Rogers – Dr. Johnny Rogers,
> Simpson Waverly, Thirman Milner – superintendent of schools and
> "Equity 20/20" just wants us to forget about those people. But those are
> the famous African Americans that you have here to hold in high regard –
> here in the city of Hartford. Our children are not learning about those
> people. I think about the civics that I had growing up...civics for me was
> boring…it was uninteresting because nothing about government or history
> ever reflected me, ever. I was sick and tired of hearing about the puritans
> and the pilgrims. So I was slouched like this on the table, on my desk
> when he was talking. But I wasn't stupid and my parents didn't raise no
> fool, and I knew what I needed to do in order to live in that house so I was
> paying attention…bottom line is our history, our civics never reflects us
> and if children are feeling today the way I felt then, then that's an issue to

begin with. Our teachers need to reflect who we are in our community and we've got to do something to make that change, we really gotta encourage young men and women of color, brown and black to pursue education as a career so that we can really and truly educate our children."[24]

Vanessa highlights the absence of black perspectives in social studies courses and similar to Virginia, finds that this void yields an educational environment that restrains the academic achievement and implants the belief that their participation in the public sphere is insignificant. Critically, Vanessa points to another cog in the wheel of racial inequality, and that is the lack of teachers of color in the Greater Hartford area. Their absence is a reflection of and contributor to racial gaps in the academic and social success of black students. At the October convening, and in the meetings to follow, parents stated that they prefer their children to "see someone that looks like them as they're being educated."[25] As similar to Denise they find that these teachers have the potential to relate to the students more so than white faculty, and serve as role models.

Moreover, teachers of color are more attuned to the socioemotional costs of simplifying race and black identity in the school curriculum. They find that these teachers will know the importance of centering and prioritizing black history in the classroom. Parents stated that it is not only important that this subject takes center stage in the classroom, but that the lives of black people in America are expressed in nuanced form. Meaning, it should not begin and end with slavery, or be confined to sanitized images of heroic figures, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. A mother and city councilwoman asserted, "Haven't we done something else, other than come from slavery?...You deflate kids when you only give them that piece, but then you escalate

others that are in the room…you devalue them by not letting them know how far they've come, but only where they come from."[26]

The mothers studied culturally socialize their children, and provide them with the historical and cultural legacies minimally discussed in their schools by planning youth-geared black history programs at their churches. Many also purchase black-authored literature, and others, including respondent Shirley of Jamaica, author their own renderings of black history for local media, like the African American-owned North End Agent Newspaper. Marie, in partnership with a number of the African-born mothers in this study work closely with the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association to plan culturally-infused shows like an Annual Multi-Cultural Fashion Show. Many of the parents also enroll their children in cultural clubs, including The West Indian Social Club's adolescent and teenage programs, and The Artist Collective, a multi-arts institution that trains Hartford youth in the performing arts, theatre, music, and visual arts of the African Diaspora.

Their cultural socialization is a collective, interethnic process. To the contrary of predominant literature, this is particularly evident in the experiences of Hartford's African American mothers. Many of the African American participants instill their children with a knowledge of black history beyond North America. They inform their children of their ascendency from a past and a people that lived and thrived independent of a racial caste system. This history exorcises socioemotional warfare wrought by racism and encourages children to imagine and claim their right to an alternative reality.

Many of the respondents admit that drawing these connections is a difficult process. They are aware of the West African roots of their enslaved ancestors, but they also mourn what remains unknown and struggle with the inability to point their children to their lineage and exact country of origin. Delores' comments reflect these concerns:

> People coming from the West Indies or Africa – many times they bring their language, they bring their own food, they bring their own customs, they bring their own everything. We have assimilated and picked up pieces from what's attractive or what works for us…we can't say with certainty, having been in this country for so long, where our people are from, what our true cultural identity is, we have assimilated and adopted and – adapted and gone through so many changes…They have that advantage, we don't have that advantage. And I think it's also a sense of pride…They have tremendous pride in where they come from…in their culture, in their heritage, in their customs, in their ways, that they are multi-lingual, that they are probably more traveled than we are, and the fact that their ancestors were not slaves is another source of pride for some of these cultures.

As black mothers wrestle with these limitations, African and Caribbean mothers help make the diaspora real, tangible, and acceptable for black children. They embody the missing links, and for black children, make these ties tangible and in reach, visible.

Rose educates her children on the diaspora, so that they may be able to challenge peers and classmates whom demean their characters. She states that due to her mother and aunt's interest in filling in the blanks of their family tree, researching their continental bloodlines, and their travels to Egypt and Ghana, she had the wherewithal to correct those who attempted to make her "feel small." She recalls growing up in the early 1990s, and responding the taunts of her white classmates in the suburban town of Simsbury with: "My ancestors were kings and queens and we were the first musicians, the first doctors, we had universities, we had the Greeks coming to us to learn about

medicine and art, and agriculture and architecture, and language!"[27] Unbeknownst to

Rose's peers, her ancestors were indeed leaders and creators. She held a hidden script that

expelled turned justifications of her inferiority on its head and it is a script that she has

passed down to her teenage children.

A community of black mothers helps Rose in her attempts to endow her children

with pride and a refusal to internalize, what she refers to as the "isms." Her childhood

friends, fellow school parents, former classmates, and neighbors, with whom she and her

children spend a great deal of time are of multiple backgrounds. They are St. Lucian,

Jamaican, Ghanaian, Liberian, and Trinidadian. Through this group, she is able to create

a network for her children in which they learn of the "mightiness" of their roots through

storytelling, histories of slave rebellion, photos of family members, descriptions of

Kingston or Spanish Town, and exposure to different art forms. These mothers build

upon what Rose's children gain from her aunt's recent discoveries and the Virginian

women of her husband's side of the family.

Hellen, a 59-year-old mother of three daughters, also speaks to her maternal

connections with black immigrant mothers and the role of these relationships in

emboldening her children's sense of group identity and racial pride. One of these women

is Marai, the Sierra Leonean wife and mother of two described earlier, in Part I of this

dissertation. The United Church of Christ, and in particular, the historically African

American, Warburton Community Congregational Church on Flatbush Avenue, played a

critical role in helping Marai's family adjust to the country. Hellen, a member of the

church when Marai's family joined, provided them transportation around the city, and

helped them communicate with social workers, and teachers. Hellen states that Marai was not the only beneficiary of their relationship. When asked what she gained from Marai's time as a member of the church, Hellen replied,

> She showed us their African dance, and she shared some of her stories about her family and how generations lived in one place, generations lived in one village, not like how we are here….that generational bond, you know, like for them it's like, "Why doesn't your mother live with you?" Those were the questions they'd ask.[28]

Marai offered to teach "praise and worship" dance classes, using music and techniques from Sierra Leone. Hellen prepared her daughters for the sessions each Saturday and Sunday afternoon. She also assisted Marai as needed. Coupled with dance, the new family and members of the church both grappled with how different their home societies are. Yet, they also located strands of similarity. Marai described how interrelated her country's past is with that of African Americans, as the region was a central site for slave attainment and exportation. Hellen valued these lessons, as she and her middle-school aged children gained a global understanding of their identities. As the children of the church grew close with Marai, Hellen found that whether dancing, or sitting before her feet as she recounted her life in Sierra Leone, they became extensions of Marai's village.

Evident in Marai's willingness to share her time, family, and culture with the children of Warburton Church, African American mothers value and initiate communal cultural socialization, but black immigrant mothers do so as well. They especially seek to expose native-born black children to their African ancestry. A number of the foreign-born respondents pointed out that their children not only encounter forms of racial discrimination, but intraracial prejudice on the part of their African American classmates

and peers. For example, while a white classmate once claimed that Cote D'Ivoire native

Martha's 11-year-old son had "ebola," black classmates demanded that he "go back to

Africa!"[29] The Caribbean mothers reported that other black children tease their young for

their accents or clothing. Their children's experiences with African American youth

reveal tensions among this young generation on the borderlands of blackness. It also

sheds light on the existence and dominance of schemata that endorse black inferiority and

privilege a Western, settler colonial lens. Distinct from their assessments of the assaults

on the part of white youth, they did not describe black children as prejudiced. Rather they

suggest that the taunting reflects a school curricula, streams of mass communication, and

an overall societal culture that indoctrinates black youth to devalue the African Diaspora.

Many of the black immigrant mothers announced that this group learns, often by

insidious means, to reject a core part of who they are.

This viewpoint is evident in Martha's reflections on the peer responsible for

ostracizing her son at school. She expressed an interest in talking to the child and her

parents. She stated,

> I wanted to tell her…she's too young to understand…because the answer
> is, we are black. We know where we come from and we know where we
> are going. You? You are black American. Do you know where you come
> from? You don't know where you come from! You don't know where you
> come from! And you are telling another person to go back to Africa. You
> – you are black. European country here is – white country. You are black
> so you, you are going. Where you are going?...I don't know if she knows
> that she's black…but you are black and you are telling another black
> person to go back to Africa. Even if I'm going to Africa, I know where
> I'm going. I'm from Cote D'Ivoire. I know my country… If you are going
> back to Africa, where are you going?[30]

Martha gathers that the young girl is drawing from an existing rhetoric that suggests that Africa and the continent's descendants are unworthy of the right to live and participate in American society. She has come to see a correlation between white predominance, leadership, and control, and modernization, affluence, and global superiority. Africa falls outside of this standard. When the child records and appropriates this exclusionary language, she is not only silencing her classmate, who was born Cote D'Ivoire, but herself. According to Martha, though she does not realize it, the young girl is lost and disconnected from her origins. In milieu that questions black humanity, Martha foresees that her extension of this erroneous frame of thought this is to her detriment.

Many of city's black immigrant women, offer thoughts on black youth more generally, that echo Martha's assessments of her son's classmate. Take for example, Floriane, a 45-year-old mother of three and special education teacher. She is also from the Ivory Coast. When asked what differences, if any, she observes between African Americans and African immigrants, she responded,

> I think the people from Africa, the African American that were brought here…they were dehumanized, deprived from their culture, from their identity and then – especially – the school system doesn't teach much about slavery so our young generation don't really know…the culture…the history of it.[31]

Floriane surmises that the distance between African Americans and Africa, wrought by raced subjugation, leaves black youth with a partial sense of self and militates against the ability for native and foreign-born children to build community with one another. Much like African American mothers, black immigrant parents observe the diminishment of black culture and refuse to leave its cyclical nature uninterrupted in the lives of black

children. Martha, Floriane, and other foreign-born black mothers extend the reach of their

cultural socialization practices to include African American children.

Ernestine, a St. Lucian mother of four who has lived in Hartford since 2006,

epitomizes this interconnected cultural socialization. After traveling between the United

States and St. Lucia for many months to see her children during their temporary stay with

family, she became a permanent resident in 2008. When asked what she first observed

about black families in Hartford and Florida, where she lived for a few months prior to

relocating to Hartford, one observation came to mind, "They have lost a great portion of

their…African culture, African tradition." Ernestine continued,

> …they have no idea about medicine, they have no idea about our customs
> and our traditions, they don't have any of it at all even though they say
> they do, but compared to what I know and compared to…what I hear
> when I hang out with them, when I sit with them – it's like when I tell
> them stories of things about where I came from they think I came from
> Heaven with those things – never heard it before. So I constantly have to
> say I'm only reminding you of your lifestyle, I'm reminding you of your
> culture. I'm only reminding you of your hairstyle -- of your music, drum
> beating…[32]

The disconnect between African Americans and "home," prompted the St. Lucian mother

to consider ways to "build our culture" and "train our kids." As someone with an interest

in holistic food and nutrition, she decided that cuisine would be an ideal entry way to

introducing the community, and especially black mothers and their children, to African

culture. It would also allow her to address the absence of healthy food options in their

neighborhood. During her initial months in the city, she struggled to find nearby food

options outside of fast food restaurants and corner stores. It was clear to Ernestine that if

she and her children battled with this, the health of other families were at risk as well.

Ernestine collaborates with the Passages Gallery, located right in her neighborhood, to offer dinners, frequent cooking workshops, and exhibitions at an affordable price. She states, "it began with help from a black woman. She opened up a place for me to hold my event and I've been there ever since." The woman Ernestine is referring to is Rosita Forte-Dobson. She is an African American mother, Hartford resident, and the gallery's owner. Situated within a multi-family house, between a KFC and Mobile Gas Station, Passages supports and highlights the work of Hartford artists. Free and open to community members, the gallery hosts pieces and performances that display different components of the black and Hispanic experience. Thus, she welcomed the opportunity to offer a program that emboldened her educational goals for the site. In promoting the health, as well as a diasporic consciousness of black families, Ernestine asserts that she is "saving our children."[33] She suggests that while at Passages, she improves their health, and most essentially reintroducing them to the breadth of their cultural identity.

Mothering Race-Conscious Efforts

Black mothers' interethnic othermothering and community mothering is also evidenced in their efforts to remodel institutions charged with educating and offering services to black children. Native-born and foreign-born black mothers jointly inject "color" into race-neutral systems that otherwise neglect the particular needs of black youth, and in turn function to compromise the quality of their lives. The African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Incorporated (AFCAMP) is such a vehicle of institutional transformation. Merva Jackson, a social worker and an

immigrant from Jamaica's Saint Ann Parish, founded the grassroots, non-profit organization in 1999.[34] AFCAMP supports the parents of children of color with disabilities. The organization works with the guardians and caregivers of youth with learning disabilities, physical impairments, birth defects, and mental illness. In Hartford and nationally, black children with disabilities are disproportionately misdiagnosed or unidentified. Their families also lack access to adequate clinical treatment and special education services.[35] Thus, AFCAMP collaborates and organizes with "schools, government agencies, private providers and community stakeholders to ensure that families get the services they need." Utilizing workshops and trainings, the staff informs parents "of their rights and how to effectively advocate for appropriate services."[36] As disabled children of color are also more likely than their white peers to enter the juvenile detention system, AFCAMP pushes for reform. The organization testifies in support of raised bills that mandate the erasure of criminal records for youth convicted of non-serious offenses and prohibit the transport of 17-year-olds to adult facilities. These initiatives work to halt the school-to-prison pipeline.

Gradually, as the children of AFCAMP mature, they become their own advocates. Their parents, which largely include native and immigrant black and Latina women, contest institutional racial inequality and displace an ideological model that delegitimize race-based remedies and solutions. Through meetings alongside their parents, they learn to the same. They are acutely aware of red flags and how to go about requesting modifications when necessary. AFCAMP also models how to conduct ongoing dialogue, offer peer support, and form working relationships across language barriers and cultural

differences. The organization asserts that as racialized and disabled bodies, interethnic coalitions are necessary to take child welfare systems to task and ensure that they sustain their livelihoods.

Conclusion

When responding to disagreements between members of the Connecticut Parent's Union, Gwendolyn Samuel often responds, "At the end of the day, the village is the village."[37] The mother and organizer asserts that in spite of their varying beginnings and standpoints, the village, remains the village. Gwendolyn's actions and those of the other respondents demonstrate that they find it to be imperative that they contend with their distinct origins and the conflicting standpoints these beginnings bear, in order to color-blind racist practices. They determine that their children's welfare necessitates locating and building cooperatives, as well as extending and reforming their original approaches to mothering black children in a racialized context. Within this chapter, native and immigrant mothers arise as models of collective, diasporic resistance, as well as the stream of consciousness documented among the nation's African, African American, and Caribbean youth. When they create villages, whether they be "tent cities" on the campus quad or vast coalitions, the lessons and messages of their African American, African, and Caribbean mothers and othermothers serve as guides.

EPILOGUE

In the months leading up to the rededication of the Flatbush Avenue Bridge, the *Hartford Courant* interviewed Henderson. Amid expressions of gratitude for the honor, she recalled how she arrived to Hartford in the summer of 1952 from Georgia. She moved in hopes to "find the grass greener" and save enough money to begin her second year at Spelman College. However, she "didn't find such green grass."[1] Henderson lamented that she desired to move out of Charter Oak and live in a larger, cleaner, and safer home for her children, but that there were few affordable options for mothers on welfare. The community activist bemoaned that the playground was "concrete," and the project's children had few recreational options. Further, Henderson feared that with the federal government reducing the funds for programs beneficial to urban communities, like Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) initiatives, Charter Oak's trials would only grow worse. Though shared in the 1970s, Henderson's reflections capture the modern state of systemic racial inequality, in which progress co-exists with struggle.

The study takes heed to Henderson's admonition that though the city lowered the Park River and secured its barriers, troubled waters swelled elsewhere. *Migrant Black Mothers: Intersecting Burdens, Resistance, and the Power of Interethnic Ties* travels to banks of rivers defined by structural practices that inundate black bodies and ideologies that misrecognize their drownings as natural occurrences. It stands beside black mothers, who pulled to the waters by multiple and interactive systems of power, struggle to keep themselves and their children on dry land.

Critically, it argues that both natives and immigrants line the banks of these waters. African American, African-born, and Caribbean-born mothers demonstrate the existence and viability of interethnic ties as a mode of resistance. They conceive of borderlands as a site of truth-telling and a space that allows them to lift their children and themselves from configurations of inequality.

The same hands that penned telegrams to city officials and senators requesting repairs to the Flatbush Avenue Bridge in the 1960s, once held mine as I walked across the conduit to and from school, church and the corner store. Those that tied their "River of Tears" signs to the bridge's dilapidated fence on that Mother's Day 47 years ago, nourished and reared me. The parents who in the midst of their week-long occupation of the bridge in 1969 traveled to Governor John N. Dempsey's mansion on the West End to see about the forgotten neighborhood, taught me and the other Hartford children of the city to claim recognition although we were "no big shot's children."[2] In recent decades, much has changed about the south end neighborhood. 130 single family and duplex homes, a Job Corps Center, and a shopping plaza with a super Walmart at its center, now stand in public housing project's place. Barbara Henderson, in addition to her co-organizers, who included my grandmother, aunts, and family friends have passed on. Yet, the bridge still stands.

Like the project's mothers whom called on elected officials, city residents, school teachers, and passerby to "come out here to the community," the dissertation invites readers to do the same. It asks scholars of the contemporary black experience to recognize the ways in which the migrations of natives and immigrants across ethnic lines

make the perpetuation of anti-black practices legible. The erasure of black immigrants from conceptualizations of collective black agency and definitions of cross-ethnic dynamics as fragmented places a cap on our understandings of black freedom-making in the contemporary moment.

The generations of children birthed and reared after the construction of the Barbara Henderson Bridge have walked along Flatbush Avenue and the surrounding areas without a fear of drowning. Now synonymous with Hartford's geography, the bridge is immovable and secure. The bridge serves as a constant reminder of the possibilities of black mothering, as well as makes visible the power and equality that can emerge from following the paths they forge.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Shayla C. Nunnally, "Linking Blackness or Ethnic Othering? African Americans' Diasporic Linked Fate with West Indian and African Peoples in the United States," *Du Bois Review* 7, no. 2 (2010): 338. Nunnally references "linked fate" as introduced in, Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[28] Anderson, "A Rising Share of the U.S. Black Population Is Foreign Born; 9 Percent Are Immigrants; and While Most Are from the Caribbean, Africans Drive Recent Growth," 17.

[29] Ibid., 18.

[30] In addition to Sowell, this argument for cultural difference is captured in, Center for Afro-American and African Studies, The University of Michigan, *Black Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography* (Troy, Michigan: Greenwood Press, 1985).

[31] Everette S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (January 1966): 46–57.

[32] Suzanne Model, "The Secret of West Indian Success," *Society* 45, no. 6 (December 2008): 545.

[33] Ibid.: Coupled with Model, Contestations of this line of reasoning also include, Mosi Adesina Ifatunji, "A Test Of The Afro-Caribbean Model Minority Hypothesis: Exploring the Role of Cultural Attributes in Labor Market Disparities Between African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans," *Du Bois Review* 13, no. 1 (April 2016): 109–38; Suzanne Model, *West Indian Immigrants: A Black Success Story?* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

[34] See Marilyn Halter and Violet Showers Johnson, *African and American: West Africans in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Shelly Habecker, "Not Black, but Habasha: Ethiopian and Eritrean Immigrants in American Society," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 7 (2012): 1200–1219; Ian E.A. Yeboah, *Black African Neo-Diaspora: Ghanaian Immigrant Experiences in the Greater Cincinnati, Ohio Area* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); Nancy Foner, ed., *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); John A. Arthur, *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States* (Westport: Praeger, 2000); Milton Vickerman, *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Mary C. Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (New York; Cambridge:

Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press, 1999); Philip Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[35] For racial housing segregation as it effects black immigrants, see Table 13.5 in Boswell and Sheskin. They provide indexes of similarity for black ethnic groups living in New York City and Miami, Florida. Utilizing the 2000 Census, they find that overall, in New York City, 72.8 percent of black and white residents would need to relocate to another census track in order to live in a racially balanced neighborhood. This number is 71.1 percent for Miami. The dissimilarity between West Indian and non-Hispanic white New Yorkers is 83.7 percent and 67.3 percent in Miami. For Sub-Saharan African immigrants, the ID is 80.0 percent in New York City and 59.3 percent in Miami. Of both groups, Caribbean immigrants are more likely to live alongside native-born black Americans, while the African-born tend to be more dispersed.

[36] Harriet Pipes McAdoo, Sinead Younge, and Solomon Getahun, "Marriage and Family Socialization among Black Americans and Caribbean and African Immigrants," in *The Other African Americans,* ed. Yoku Shaw-Taylor and Steven A. Tuch (United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 100.

[37] See Reuel Rogers, *Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and the Politics of Incorporation: Ethnicity, Exception, or Exit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Reuel Rogers, "Race-Based Coalitions Among Minority Groups: Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and African-Americans in New York City," *Urban Affairs Review* 39, no. 3 (2004): 283–317.

[38] Rogers, "Race-Based Coalitions Among Minority Groups: Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and African-Americans in New York City," 288.

[39] Ibid., 284.

[40] Ibid., 301.

[41] Jill M. Humphries, "Resisting 'Race:' Organizing African Transnational Identities in the United States," in *The New African Diaspora*, ed. Isidore Okpewho and Nkiru Nzegwu (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 293–294. For the political dispositions of African immigrants, also consider, Akwasi Assensoh, "Conflict or Cooperation? Africans and African Americans in Multiracial America," in *Black and Multiracial Politics in America*, ed. Yvette Alex-Assensoh and Lawrence Hanks (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 113–30.

[42] Refer to Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race*.

[43] Eugene Robinson, *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America* (New York: Anchor Books, 2011), 6.

[44] Zain Abdullah, *Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 77.

[45] John A. Arthur, *African Women Immigrants in the United States: Crossing Transnational Borders* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 20; Vickerman, *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race*, 155.

[46] Candis Watts Smith, *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 65.

[47] Cathy J. Cohen, *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

[48] David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 332.

[49] Ibid., 334.

[50] Ibid., 337.

[51] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward," *Connecticut Law Review* 43, no. 5 (2011): 1245–1352; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism*

Without Racists Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2001); Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[52] Ian F. Haney Lopez, "Is the 'Post' in Post-Racial the 'Blind' in Colorblind?," *Cardozo Law Review* 32, no. 3 (2010): 825.

[53] Cheryl I. Harris, "Equal Treatment and the Reproduction of Inequality," *Fordham Law Review* 69, no. 5 (2001): 1756.

[54] Ibid., 1758.

[55] Ibid., 1759.: According to Harris the results of the Rice v. Cayetano case, "the opinions advanced the argument that equality compels equal treatment for all, notwithstanding underlying differences, as distinctions that implicate race are either illegitimate, unsustainable or incoherent."

[56] In *Hopewood v. Texas,* which was later repealed in 2003, the United States Supreme Court prohibited the University of Texas at Austin's School of Law admissions office's consideration of race.

[57] Imani Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible the Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 15.

[58] See Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible the Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*; Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*.

[59] See for example, Kathryn Sweeney, "The Blame Game: Racialized Responses to Hurricane Katrina," *Du Bois Review* 3, no. 1 (March 2006): 161–74.

[60] Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University, 2011), 137.

[61] Crenshaw, "Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward," 1313.

[62] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Fear of a Black President," *The Atlantic*, August 22, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/ (accessed October 11, 2014).

[63] Crenshaw, "Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward," 1321.

[64] Patricia C. Becker and APB Associates, "Hartford Connecticut: A Demographic Report" (Hartford, Connecticut: City of Hartford, 2014), 3, http://www.hartford.gov/images/facts/HartfordDemographic2014_Complete.pdf (accessed March 1, 2017).

[65] Ibid.

[66] Rafael Mejia and Priscilla Canny, "Immigration in Connecticut: A Growing Opportunity" (New Haven, Connecticut: Connecticut Voices for Children, September 2007), 14, http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/immigrants/econ_opportunity.pdf (accessed March 1, 2017).

[67] Becker and APB Associates, "Hartford Connecticut: A Demographic Report," 5.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Isoke Zenzele, *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3. Also see, Douglass S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[70] Becker and APB Associates, "Hartford Connecticut: A Demographic Report," 8.

[71] Tim Kennedy, "Hartford: Integrating Schools in a Segregated Place," *Teach for America: One Day Magazine*, June 14, 2016, https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day-magazine/hartford-integrating-schools-segregated-place (accessed March 1, 2017).

[72] Becker and APB Associates, "Hartford Connecticut: A Demographic Report," 9.

[73] Ibid., 12.

[74] Ibid., 14.

[75] The terms, "bloodmother" and "othermother" will be described in greater detail later in the text. Key sources on this subject include, Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2000).

[76] Aliases are used for all of the respondents. Exceptions to this rule include Gwendolyn Samuels, Emma Jones, the West Indian Social Club (WISC), and The African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Incorporated (AFCAMP). I received their permission to utilize their names in this study.

CHAPTER 1

[1] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[2] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[3] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[4] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[5] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[6] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[7] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[8] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[9] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[10] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[11] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[12] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[13] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[14] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[15] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[16] Martha, Interview with Channon Miller, June 3, 3015.

[17] Lea, Interview with Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[18] Missy Diaz, "DNA Evidence Led to Teens in Dunbar Village Rape," *Sun-Sentinal (Palm Beach, FL)*, August 22, 2007, http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/palm-beach/sfl-flpdunbar0822nbaug22-story.html (accessed March 14, 2016); Associated Press, "Rape of Woman, Forcing Son to Participate," *Fox News*, July 6, 2007, http://www.foxnews.com/story/2007/07/06/florida-police-arrest-two-teens-in-gang-rape-woman-forcing-son-to-participate.html (accessed June 6, 2016).

[19] Brian Skoloff and Jennifer Kay, "Fla. Mother and Son Are Attacked," *USA Today*, July 10, 2007, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-07-10-3620132447_x.htm (accessed June 6, 2016).

[20] Diaz, "DNA Evidence Led to Teens in Dunbar Village Rape."

[21] In 2011, Lawson, Taylor and Walker were resentenced to 60 years since they were not adults or above the age of 18 at the time of the crime. This information is discussed in further detail in the article, Daphne Duret, "Convicted Dunbar Village Rapist Sentenced to 60 Years in Prison," *Palm Beach Post (Palm Beach, FL)*, August 3, 2011, http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/crime-law/convicted-dunbar-village-rapist-sentenced-to-60-ye/nLwd5/ (accessed March 14, 2016).

[22] Howard Witt, "Case Puts Civil Rights Blocs at Odds: Web-Based Activists, Old-Guard Leadership Not Seeing Eye to Eye on Florida Assaults," *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2008,

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2008-03-30/news/0803290381_1_al-sharpton-civil-rights-black-on-black-crime (accessed June 28, 2016).

[23] Laura Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons from an Online Antirape Protest," *Feminist Criminology* 5, no. 3 (2010): 244–62.

[24] Witt, "Case Puts Civil Rights Blocs at Odds: Web-Based Activists, Old-Guard Leadership Not Seeing Eye to Eye on Florida Assaults."

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 245.; In addition to Laura Rapp, Deeanna M. Button, Benjamin Fleury-Steiner, and Ruth Fleury-Steiner, a number of other social scientists have given attention the digitization of the public sphere, and the role of the internet as a site of black expression, protest, and conscious-raising in the modern period. Black people and communities find social media platforms useful in building mass protest, garnering the attention of the broader populace, and interjecting mainstream discourse. It also allows black Americans to build community across region and time-zones. While scholars have found that blogs or Tweets for example, are sporadic and unreflective, online spaces offer a valuable window into planned, strategic, and critical practices of black resistance. See Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States," *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 42, no. 1 (February 2015): 4–17; Sarah Florini, "Tweets, Tweeps, and Signifyin': Communication and Cultural Performance on 'Black Twitter'" 15, no. 3 (2014): 223–37; Sanjay Sharma, "Black Twitter? Racial Hashtags, Networks and Contagion," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 78 (2013): 46–64.

[27] Ibd., 251.

[28] "Black Girls Blogging: Gina McCauley of What About Our Daughters," *For Harriet*, August 2, 2012, http://www.forharriet.com/search/label/Black%20Girls%20Blogging (accessed June 28, 2016); Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest," 251.

[29] Gina McCauley, "NAACP Contacts WADO- National Office Won't Be Speaking Out On Dunbar Village - Addressing Hate Crimes Against Black Women Not 'Mission,'" *What About Our Daughters*, August 10, 2007, http://www.whataboutourdaughters.com/waod/2007/8/10/naacp-contacts-wado-national-office-wont-be-speaking-out-on.html (accessed January 13, 2016). Also cited in Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest," 251.

[30] Chloe Hilliard, "Black Blogger Month: What About Our Daughters, Ladies First," *Black Enterprise: Wealth for Life*, May 29, 2012, http://www.blackenterprise.com/lifestyle/black-blogger-month-what-about-our-daughters/ (accessed January 13, 2016).

[31] Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest," 255.

[32] Gina McCauley, "Open Letter Regarding NAACP, Sharpton, and Dunbar Village Atrocity," *What About Our Daughters*, March 28, 2008, http://www.whataboutourdaughters.com/waod/2008/3/28/open-letter-regarding-naacp-sharpton-and-dunbar-village-atro.html (accessed January 13, 2016). Also cited in Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest," 252.

[33] Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest," 252; "Symphony," "Stop Al Sharpton and the NAACP From Endangering Black Women!," *Dunbar Village*, March 21, 2008, http://dunbarvillage.blogspot.com/2008/03/stop-al-sharpton-and-naacp-from.html (March 21, 2017).

[34] "Symphony," "Stop Al Sharpton and the NAACP From Endangering Black Women!"

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons from an Online Antirape Protest," 252.

[38] Ibid., 253.

[39] "Symphony," "Don't Believe The Lies: Al Sharpton's Backpedal," *Dunbar Village*, March 28, 2008, http://dunbarvillage.blogspot.com/2008/03/dont-believelies- al- sharptons.html (accessed March 23, 2017), quoted in Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons from an Online Antirape Protest," 253–254.

[40] "Stop Al Sharpton and the NAACP From Endangering Black Women!"

[41] Abby Goodnough, "After a Brutal Attack, Many Hope for Change but Few Expect It," *New York Times*, July 19, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/19/us/19palm.html?_r=1 (accessed March 14, 2016).

[42] Deborah King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 47.

[43] Skoloff and Jennifer Kay, "Fla. Mother and Son Are Attacked," July 10, 2007.

[44] Goodnough, "After a Brutal Attack, Many Hope for Change but Few Expect It."

[45] Associated Press, "At Fla. Housing Project, Rape Just Another Crime," *NBC News*, July 10, 2007, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/19698132/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/fla-housing-project-rape-just-another-crime/ (accessed March 24, 2017).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Skoloff and Jennifer Kay, "Fla. Mother and Son Are Attacked."

[48] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. For further discussion and analysis of urban black neighborhoods and public housing units in the post-Civil Rights era, their historical grounding, the processes that make their sustainment possible, composition, as well as their impact on the life outcomes of blacks in America, see Margery Austin Turner, Susan J. Popkin, and Lynette Rawlings, *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2009); Mary Pattillo, "Extending the Boundaries and Definition of the Ghetto," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 6 (2003): 1046–57; Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise : Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[49] Andrew Abramson, "Dunbar Village Two Years after Rapes: This Wound Won't Heal," *Palm Beach Post (Palm Beach, FL)*, December 9, 2009, http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/crime-law/dunbar-village-two-years-after-rapes-this-wound-wo/nLj5W/ (accessed June 28, 2016).

[50] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241.

[51] Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975).

[52] In the article, "The "Justice Gap" for Sexual Assault Cases: Future Directions for Research and Reform," Kimberly A. Lonsway and Joanne Archambault find that of the small percentage of sexual assault offenses reported to authorities, few "end in a prosecution, conviction, and a sentence of incarceration." Utilizing federal data from 2004, the authors surmise that "of 100 forcible rapes that are committed, approximately 5 to 20 will be reported, 0.4 to 5.4 will be prosecuted, and 0.2 to 5.2 will result in a conviction. Only 0.2 to 2.9 will yield a felony conviction. Then an estimated 0.2 to 2.8 will result in incarceration of the perpetrator, with 0.1 to

1.9 in prison and 0.1 to 0.9 in jail." See Kimberly A. Lonsway and Joanne Archambault, "The 'Justice Gap' for Sexual Assault Cases: Future Directions for Research and Reform," *Violence Against Women* 18, no. 2 (2012): 157.

[53] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

[54] The concept of "white over black," calls upon the title and narrative provided in the historical work, Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968). In this text, Jordan asserts that enslavement and in particular, the process of writing it into law relied on the generation and re-generation of prejudices against Africans and African Americans.

[55] Articulations and enforcements of the Jezebel image are discussed in scholarly works that focus on the treatments of black women's sexualities within the context of slavery, such as, Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[56] Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 19.

[57] For a detailed assessment of the construction of black womanhood as deviant in the 20th century and black women's negotiations of the Cult of True Womanhood, in addition to White (1999), see Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Black Women in United States History* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, 1990); Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter : The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985).

[58] Evelynn M. Hammonds, "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 173.

[59] Additional riots that marked the Reconstruction years included the New Orleans Riots in 1866 and the Louisiana Colfax Massacre in 1873. Each of these epitomize violent mediums to deter the Republican direction of the local and federal government. Riots endured as a dimension of white supremacy in the 20th century as evident in, the, Missouri (1919) and the "Red Summer" of 1919. See LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed : The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); William M. Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Antheneum, 1970).

[60] Rosen (2009), asserts that the law's refusal to understand rape as a crime against not only against white women, but also black women, was not ignored by black communities. She states for example that the testimonies of black women following the Memphis Riots in 1866, functioned to interject and transform the public discourse. Ida B. Wells anti-lynching campaigns at the turn of the 20th century are also notable. Her publication, Ida B. Wells, *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States: 1892–1893–1894* (Chicago, 1894), propounds that although white men claimed that the men they lynched were guilty of assaulting white women, the victims were innocent. Crimes against women was an excuse for lynching, not the cause. White male claims of upholding chivalry were unfounded and inconsistent as they raped black women without inhibition. The work of the National Association

of Colored Women, founded in 1896, also reflects black women's refusal of the Jezebel delegation.

[61] Tera W. Hunter, *To'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 35.

[62] In addition to aforementioned texts, see John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters : A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Madelin Joan Olds, "The Rape Complex in the Postbellum South," in *Black Women in America*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1995), 179–205, for a discussion of the "rape complex" and the perpetuity of black women's rape in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

[63] Examples of this includes works such as, George Tucker, *Valley of Shenandoah: Or, Memoirs of the Graysons*, 1825; Isabel Drysdale, *Scenes in Georgia* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1827). For an extended discussion on colonial and antebellum representations of and understandings of black mammies, see Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[64] Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender and Southern Memory*, 1.

[65] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 2.

[66] Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 61.

[67] Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, 73.

[68] Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender and Southern Memory*, 5.

[69] Sketches of the rise of an American consumer society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and its ties to assertions and reinforcements of citizenship are offered in, Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

[70] M.M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 138.

[71] For the commodification of the black Mammy and the ways in which the creation and dissemination of products anchored by degrading and simplifying images of blackness, and the power of this market to reinstate a racial hierarchy in the 19th and 20th centuries, see the aforementioned Wallace-Sanders (2007) and Manring (1998), as well as, Sue K. Jewell, "Mammy," in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Nancy Bercaw and Ted Ownby, vol. 13: Gender (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 170–73; Kyla Tomplins, "Everything Cept Eat Us: The Antebellum Black Body Portrayed as Edible Body," *Callaloo*, 2007, 201–24; Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).

[72] Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, 77.

[73] For useful explorations of the continual and perpetual predominance of black women in the domestic work field far after the Reconstruction era, and the exploitation of their laborer, see Lisa Krissoff Boem, *Making a Way out of No Way: African American Women and the Second Great Migration* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In,*

Living Out: African American Domestics in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

[74] Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "From Slavery to Social Welfare: Racism and the Control of Black Women," in *Class, Race, and Sex: The Dynamics of Control*, ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1983), 294-295.

[75] The economic and political implications of the Moynihan Report and similar studies on the lives of black women and their families is explored in James Patterson, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Julia Sheron Jordan-Zachery, *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy*, vol. 2, Routledge Studies in North American Politics (New York: Routledge, 2009); Julia Jordan-Zachery, "Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy: The Influence of Her Image on Policy Making," *Sage Race Relations Abstract* 26, no. 3 (2001): 5–24; Robert Staples, "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy," *The Black Scholar* 12, no. 6 (1981): 26–34.

[76] Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965).

[77] Ibid.

[78] The "silent majority" was a forerunner to the racially coded language that would ultimately define the post-Civil Rights period, smother standard pronouncements of racism and thus deter claims of its continued validity. Originally deployed by President Richard Nixon to bring attention to the presence of Americans in support of the Vietnam War, a population that did not protest nor stand on the picket lines, but had an opinion nonetheless. Reagan later extended this term from Nixon's conservative agenda to his own to represent the larger white population as disadvantaged by the government's emphasis on the needs of African Americans. This racially inexplicit framing was important to his political agenda, which aimed to enforce privatization and relatedly, reduce mechanisms of federal support for racial minorities. It allowed him to successfully draw on the color-blind interests of white voters and push back against race-conscious state operations. See Scott J. Spitzer, "Nixon's New Deal: Welfare Reform for the Silent Majority," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 455–81; Elliot W. Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham, *The Reagan Presidency : Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[79] The racialization of welfare in social and political discourse, the conflation of black women with welfare dependency in narrations of is effectively treated in Kem Roper, "From the 'War on Poverty' to Reagan's 'New Right,' What's in a Name? The Symbolic Significance of the 'Welfare Queen' in Politics and Public Discourse," Dissertation (University of Louisville, 2012); Carly Foster, "The Welfare Queen: Race, Gender, Class, And Public Opinion," *Race, Gender & Class* 15, no. 3/4 (2008): 162–79; Ange-Marie Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) Sue K. Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[80] Dorothy E. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 215.

[81] The superfluous surveillance, criminalization and mass incarceration of African Americans in the contemporary era and its beginnings with the War on Drugs, induced by President Nixon and extended by the administrations to follow, will be a central subject in Part Three. Valuable sources on the campaign include Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in*

the Age of Colorblindness (New York: The New Press, 2010); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), which will be referenced in the coming sections of the present study, as well as Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); Katheryn Russell-Brown, *The Color of Crime: Racial Hoaxes, White Fear, Black Protectionism, Police Harassment, and Other Macroaggressions* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[82] Consider the following studies, a number of which will also be referenced in Part Three: Assata Zerai and Rae Banks, *Dehumanizing Discourse, Anti-Drug Law, and Policy in America: A "Crack Mother's" Nightmare* (Aldershot, Hants, England and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002); Drew Humphries, *Crack Mothers: Pregnancy, Drugs, and the Media* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Sasha Torres, *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); David Jernigan and Lori Dorfman, "Visualizing America's Drug Problems: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Illegal Drug Stories on the Nightly News," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 23, no. 2 (1996): 169–96; Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness"* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Jimmie Lynn Reeves and Richard Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

[83] Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, 18.

[84] Ibid., 157.

[85] Ibid., 154; The dissertation's deployment of the term "Bad Black Mothers" is guided by Melissa Harris-Perry's use of the phrase to represent the historically continuous web of derogatory theorizations and conceptualizations of black mothers' parenting skills, reproductive choices and sexualities. Her discussion of the "horrifying images of African American mothers" that "encourages Americans to see black motherhood as a distortion of true motherhood ideals," occurs in Melissa Harris-Perry, "Bad Black Mothers," *The Nation: Investigating Progress Daily*, November 25, 2009, https://www.thenation.com/article/bad-black-mothers/ (accessed July 1, 2016).

[86] The particular impact of the War on Drugs on "crack mothers" and black women as a whole, is noted in the aforementioned works, Zerai and Banks (2002) and Roberts (1997), in addition to Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Stephanie R. Bush-Baskette, *Misguided Justice: The War on Drugs and the Incarceration of Black Women* (New York: iUniverse, 2010); Julia Sudbury, *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Susan C. Boyd, *From Witches to Crack Moms: Women, Drug Law, and Policy* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2004). Each text makes clear that social constructs of normalcy and the apparatuses of racism, sexism and classism, combine to leave black women especially vulnerable to interactions with the punitive system and subject to harsh law enforcement strategies.

[87] The phrase "neoliberal social project" as a descriptor of the intentional relationship between neoliberal policies and disparaging ideology is introduced and extensively utilized in Zenzele, *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*.

[88] Imani Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 48.

[89] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 43.

[90] Ibid., 42.

[91] Ibid., 42.

[92] The Moynihan Report and similar studies were not the only impetus for the masculinist centered conceptions of racial justice during the "Second Reconstruction." Black anti-racist organizing in earlier periods, such as the Revolutionary and Antebellum eras undoubtedly reflected the patriarchal orientation of the dominant society in its activities, agendas and leadership. Also important in shaping the intraracial assignment of black women to the role of Superwoman was the work and findings of historians in the 1960s. Much of the research that returned to the familial structure of black slaves depicted black men as more affected and harmed by the institution than black women and emphasized the normalization of male leadership in the black community as a need and a right deprived. An example of this is Stanley Elkins' *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959).

[93] Black women's and more specifically poor black women's encounters with rape and domestic violence are compounded by the tendency of law enforcement to criminalize them as opposed to assist them. Beth E. Richie (2012) concludes that ideological schemes about black women contribute to this form of policing. As also elaborated on by Crenshaw, feminist organizations also deploy a single issue framework in their approach to targeting violence against women. This too informs the criminalization of black female victims. In regards to structural voids, Crenshaw outlines the inability of rape crisis centers to recognize and thus reach black women living in economically challenging environments. They lack funding in the areas particularly important to these population, yet have an abundance of funds to achieve missions that would be fitting for other groups of women unaffected by the intersections of racism, sexism and classism. See Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color."

[94] Ibid., 1256.

[95] Ibid., 1273.

[96] Ibid., 1253.

[97] Ibid., 1269.

[98] Ibid., 1258.

[99] Witt, "Case Puts Civil Rights Blocs at Odds: Web-Based Activists, Old-Guard Leadership Not Seeing Eye to Eye on Florida Assaults," 2008; Also discussed in Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons From an Online Antirape Protest,"245.

[100] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 2.

[101] Concept at the nuclear of St. Jean Yanick and Joe R. Feagin, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (Armonk, New York and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

[102] Ibid., 15.

[103] Ibid., 28

[104] Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65.

[105] *See Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant,* Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance *(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Diane Robinson-Brown and Verna M. Keith, eds.,* In and Out of Our Right Minds: The Mental Health of African American Women *(New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Marilyn Martin,* Saving Our Last Nerve: The African American Woman's Path to Mental Health *(Chicago: Hilton Publications, 2002); Julia A. Boyd,* Can I Get a Witness?: For Sisters When the Blues Is More Than a Song *(New York: Dutton, 1998).*

[106] Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), 124.

[107] Black women's decisions to change their outward appearance as a route of protection, is also referred to in black feminist theoretical scholarship as denoted in the scholarship as "Habits of

Survival" as in Kesho Scott, *The Habit of Surviving: Black Women's Strategies for Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991) and a "Culture of Dissemblance" as applied by Darlene

"Culture of Dissemblance," a practice typically applied to black women of the 20th century by Darlene Clark Hine in "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 912–20.

[108] Jones and Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, 70.

[109] Ibid., 70.

[110] Ibid., 66.

[111] Ibid., 61.

[112] Barbara Smith, "Some Home Truths on the Contemporary Black Feminist Movement," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 256.

[113] Ibid., 256.

[114] Melissa Harris-Lacewell, "No Place to Rest," *Women & Politics* 23, no. 3 (2001): 24.

[115] Beauboeuf-Lafontant, *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance*, 159.

[116] Yanick and Feagin, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism*, 3, 36.

[117] Jones and Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, 5.

[118] Ibid., 9.

[119] Jones and Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, 281-291.

[120] Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen.*

[121] Ibid., 29, 32.

[122] Results of this Chicago Study were originally published in 2001 in Harris-Perry's, formerly Harris-Lacewell, previously cited article, "No Place to Rest."

[123] Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, 32.

[124] "Coming to voice" and "taking back" are terms introduced in bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

[125] Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, 1st ed. (New York: Kitchen Table - Women of Color Press, 1983), xxiv.

[126] bell hooks, *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 41-42.

[127] Beauboeuf-Lafontant, *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance*, 82.

[128] Katrina Bell McDonald, *Embracing Sisterhood: Class, Identity, and Contemporary Black Women* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 82.

[129] Alice Walker, *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness* (New York and London: The New Press, 2006), 4.

[130] The use of "mules" to capture the nation's perception of black women and mothers, calls upon a discussion between protagonist Janie May Crawford and her grandmother, Nanny Crawford in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Within the first few sections of the novel, Janie's elderly guardian tells and advises her that the black woman is the "mule of the world." See Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1937).

[131] Philomena Essed, *Everyday Racism: Reports from Women of Two Cultures* (Claremont, CA: Hunter House Inc. Publishers, 1990), 2.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 145.

[134] Ibid., 145.

[135] Reuel Rogers, "'Black Like Who?' Afro-Caribbean Immigrants, African Americans, and the Politics of Group Identity," in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 179.

[136] Nancy Foner, "West Indian Migration to New York: An Overview," in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 12.

[137] Ibid., 12.

[138] Although black identity is not a deterrent in West Indian societies, skin tone carries a cultural currency. There are for example disproportionately derogatory meanings applied to those who have a darker complexion, versus those of a lighter hue. Stated in, Milton Vickerman, "Tweaking a Monolith: The West Indian Immigrant Encounter with 'Blackness,'" in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 237–56, this is rooted in the nation's "tripartite model of race relations" in the 18th and 19th centuries, which consisted of "a small white elite at the top, a large mass blacks in the base, and an intermediate mixed-race group." Yet skin tone does not operate in isolation. Due to the predominance of blacks in the West Indies and relatedly, the gradual deterioration of racial boundaries, the ultimate positioning of an individual relies on their socioeconomic status and education. Thus while dark skin is often associated with poverty, and lighter skin with wealth, residents are likely to see the former in positions of influence. For further reading on colorism in the West Indies, see Vickerman (2001), also, Mervyn C. Alleyne, *The Construction and Representation of Race and Ethnicity in the Caribbean and the World* (Barbados and Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2005) and Christopher A.D. Charles, "Skin Bleaching, Self-Hate, and Black Identity in Jamaica," *Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 6 (2003): 711–28.

[139] See Yoku Shaw-Taylor, "The Intersection of Assimilation, Race, Presentation of Self, and Transnationalism in America," in *The Other African Americans: Contemporary African and Caribbean Immigrants in the United States*, ed. Yoku Shaw-Taylor and Steven A. Tuch (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 1–48; Arthur, *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*.

[140] Smith, *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity*, 49.

[141] Ibid.

[142] The present studies insertion and understanding of "linked fate" is shaped and informed by early, political science based works such as Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*; Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Charles P. Henry, *Culture and African American Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[143] Janel Benson, "Exploring the Racial Identities of Black Immigrants in the United States," *Sociological Forum* 21, no. 2 (2006): 224.

[144] Smith, *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity*, 61.

[145] Discussed in Rogers, "Race-Based Coalitions Among Minority Groups: Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and African-Americans in New York City"; Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[146] As elucidated in the introduction, Zain Abdullah's Harlem, New York based ethnographic work, *Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Mary Waters' *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American*

Realities (New York; Cambridge: Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press, 1999) are among the studies that fully engage both native and foreign-born blacks and thus effectively captures the composition of the acts of distancing on the part of black immigrants and the distrust harbored by native-born blacks. Also cite Eugene Robinson.

[147] Consider the existing literature on the recent waves of African immigrant women. John Arthur's *African Women Immigrants in the United States: Crossing Transnational Borders* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).and Mary Johnson Osirim's article, "African Women in the New Diaspora: Transnationalism and the (Re) Creation of Home," in *Africans in Global Migration: Searching for Promised Lands*, ed. John A. Arthur, Joseph Takougang, and Thomas Owusu (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 225–52, privilege a race-based interpretation of ideological oppression. This is also the case with studies on contemporary black immigrants from the Caribbean. In *Crosscurrents* (1999), Vickerman's irrevocably critical investigation of this group, the predominance of male respondents leaves little room for a discussion of images specific to black women and their influence on the ideals and maneuverings of foreign-born women. Additionally, although Mary Waters' *Black Identities* (1999) comprises a sizable study population, the text does not situate Caribbean-born black women within an intersectional and dually racial and sexual framing.

[148] Smith, *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity*, 65.

CHAPTER 2

[1] The idea that black women engage in day to day, "habits of surviving" originates from Scott, *The Habit of Surviving: Black Women's Strategies for Life*.

[2] The "Black Women's Standpoint" is pointedly defined by Patricia Hill Collins in "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" (1989). Collins asserts that this standpoint is made possible by black women's "political and economic status" and correspondingly, a "distinct set of experiences." This builds and informs the existence of a "different view of material reality than available to other groups" (747). Most important, a "distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality" is another facet of the Black Women's Standpoint. The current chapter ventures into a discussion of the existence and pronouncements of a shared reality and consciousness on ethnically multi-dimensional grounds. Refer to Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Common Grounds and Crossroads: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in Women's Lives, 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 745–73.

[3] Due to the open-ended design of the interview process and an interest in allowing respondents to expound on ideas or particular questions to the point of contentment, a direct and clear discussion of controlling images and stereotypes did not always occur. This is the case for a minority set of the interviews. Only one of the respondents, Nema, deliberately articulated an unawareness of and detachment from stereotyping. She is a 25-year-old mother and wife, originally from Mali. A number of factors can be attributed to her divergent assessment. These include her short length of time in the United States and Hartford. She and her husband migrated to the city in 2010. As made evident in the scholarship on the black immigrant experience, not only are their social sensibilities informed by the relational and hierarchical dynamics of their home countries, but an awareness of inequality is a gradual process, that standardly grows with time. Coupled with the West Indian immigrant focused texts, such as Reuel Rogers, "'Black Like Who?' Afro-Caribbean Immigrants, African Americans, and the Politics of Group Identity," in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 163–92 and Milton Vickerman, *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), this conclusion is also drawn in Kofi Konadu Apraku,

Outside Looking In: An African Perspective on American Pluralistic Society (Westport: Praeger, 1996).

[4] John L. Jackson, *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness, The New Reality of Race in America* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 78, 201.

[5] Ibid., 202.

[6] Ibid., 87.

[7] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment and Earnings" (Washington, D.C., 1984)., quoted in Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Black Professional Women: Job Ceilings and Employment Sectors," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 113.

[8] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Black Women in the Labor Force" (Washington, D.C., March 1997), quoted in Jones and Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, 151; U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "The Economic Status of Women of Color: A Snapshot," Fact Sheet (Washington, D.C., 2013).

[9] Wahneema Lubiano, "Black Ladies, Welfare, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means," in *Race-Ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 323–61. The "Black Lady" is also defined in Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

[10] Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, 140.

[11] Ibid., 140.

[12] The precarious positioning of professional black women in the arenas of income and promotional opportunities compared to white men, white women and black men is evidenced in George Wilson, "Women's Mobility into Upper-Tier Occupations: Do Determinants and Timing Differ by Race?," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639, no. 1 (2012): 131–48; Becky Pettit and Stephanie Ewert, "Employment Gains and Wage Declines: The Erosion of Black Women's Relative Wages Since 1980," *Demography* 46, no. 3 (August 2009): 469–92; Linda M. Hite, "Black and White Women Managers: Access to Opportunity," *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (2004): 131–46.

[13] Higginbotham, "Black Professional Women: Job Ceilings and Employment Sectors," 113.

[14] Sammayah, Interview by Channon Miller, March 7, 2015.

[15] Christine, Interview by Channon Miller, December 8, 2015.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Jacqui, Interview by Channon Miller, March 18, 2013.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* argues that the circulation of controlling images in the contemporary global market is made possible by a historically informed attraction to a blackness that is "dangerous" and "detestable." This functions to procure the working-class as the epitome of an "authentic" black identity and thus, more realistic and a prophecy that is expected to come to pass.

[22] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, December 19, 2015.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[25] The practice of casting the socioeconomic strides of black women as uniquely progressive in comparison to their black men is epitomized in mass media and scholarly investigations of their educational attainment. While they attempt to combat negative assumptions regarding black

women's intellectual capacities, in the process, their barriers emerge as diminished or comparatively more permeable than those of their counterparts. Consider the following articles for popular consumption, Kali Holloway, "African-American Women Now Top the List of Most-Educated Group in the Country," *Alternet*, June 2, 2016, http://www.alternet.org/gender/black-women-most-educated-people-america (accessed July 14, 2016); Britni Danielle, "Did You Know Black Women Lead All Groups in College Enrollment? Watch This!," *Clutch Magazine*, February 2014, http://www.clutchmagonline.com/2014/02/know-black-women-lead-groups-college-enrollment-watch/ (July 14, 2016); "Black Women Students Far Outnumber Black Men at the Nation's Highest-Ranked Universities," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education: News & Views*, 2006, http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/51_gendergap_universities.html (accessed July 14, 2016).

[26] Higginbotham, "Black Professional Women: Job Ceilings and Employment Sectors," 113.

[27] U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "The Economic Status of Women of Color: A Snapshot," 5.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 6.

[31] Vickerman, *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race*, 66.

[32] Although domestic labor remained the occupation of the majority of African American women up until the 1980s, at this juncture, particularly in light of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the opportunity to enter other career paths increased. Changes in the work patterns of white women also coincided with the expansion of the nation's immigration policies, as well as the rise of the global market. The contours of these historical transformations and Caribbean-born black women's entry in the field are discussed in, see Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Aubrey W Bonnett, "The New Female West Indian Immigrant: Dilemmas of Coping in the Host Society," in *In Search of a Better Life: Perspectives on Migration from the Caribbean*, ed. Ransford Palmer (New York: Praeger, 1990), 139–49; Cassandra Gordon, "Dependents or Independent Workers? The Status of Caribbean Immigrant Women in the United States," in *In Search of a Better Life: Perspectives on Migration from the Caribbean*, ed. Ransford Palmer (New York: Praeger, 1990), 115–38.

[33] Yvonne, Interview by Channon Miller, June 5, 2015.

[34] Ibid.; "Croff" is a Patois term used in Jamaica, to refer to an individual that is unmotivated and dependent on others to live. The father's beliefs speak to a Caribbean-based cultural value and emphasis on the overriding importance of individual merit and a strong work ethic. To do otherwise is to earn a place of disdain in the community.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Henrietta, Interview by Channon Miller, February 19, 2015.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Evelyn, Interview by Channon Miller, August 2, 2012.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Jackson, *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness, The New Reality of Race in America*, 201.

[47] "Quick Facts: Minority Teacher and School Leader Recruitment in Connecticut," *ConnCAN: Great Schools For All*, 2014, http://www.conncan.org/recruitment (accessed July 16, 2016).

[48] Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), "EdSight: Insight into Education," Public Staffing Data (Hartford, Connecticut, 2015), http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do (accessed July 16, 2016); Charlene Russell-Tucker and Sarah Barzee, "An Update on Minority Teacher Recruitment" (Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), January 14, 2015), http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/alliance_districts/convening/update_on_minority_teacher_recruitment.pdf (accessed July 16, 2016).

[49] Robert Cotto Jr., "Where Did Black and Latin@ Teachers in Hartford Go?," *Cities, Suburbs & Schools Project at Trinity College*, February 23, 2016, http://commons.trincoll.edu/cssp/2016/02/23/where-did-all-the-black-and-latinoa-teachers-in-hartford-go/ (accessed July 16, 2016).

[50] Wanda Blanchett, "Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education: Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism," *Educational Research* 35, no. 6 (2006): 24.

[51] Evelyn, Interview by Channon Miller, August 2, 2012.

[52] Kadijah, Interview by Channon Miller, April 16, 2015.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Janet, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[56] Jacqui, Interview by Channon Miller, March 18, 2013.

[57] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[58] The measures of this program are offered by the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, Amy Bilskie, "From Entitlement to Empowerment: Welfare Reform in Georgia, Part I," *Georgia Public Policy Foundation*, December 2, 1996, http://www.georgiapolicy.org/1996/12/from-entitlement-to-empowerment-welfare-reform-in-georgia-part-i/ (accessed July 16, 2016).

[59] Tina, Interview by Channon Miller, April 17, 2015.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Marai, Interview by Channon Miller, June 26, 2012.

[63] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, December 19, 2015.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Pauline, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2013.

[66] Ibid.

[67] In Fumilayo Showers' article, "Being Black, Foreign and Woman," she suggests that her interviews with a range of African-born women, from the sending countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia, reveal that while they grapple with race-based discrimination in their work settings, they are also likely to find their foreignness to be just as relevant as the bearers of disadvantage in work settings. The women put forth that stereotypes tied to African immigrants in particular affected their relationship with co-workers, supervisors and patrons, as well as obstructed their access to promotions, the weight of their labor and the extent to which they were recognized and respected by those they encountered. See Fumilayo Showers, "Being Black, Foreign and Woman: African Immigrant Identities in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 10 (2015): 1815–30.

[68] Pauline, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2013.

[69] Sammayah, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Christine, Interview by Channon Miller, December 8, 2015.

[74] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

[1] "Symphony," "Don't Believe The Lies: Al Sharpton's Backpedal." quoted in Rapp et al., "The Internet as a Tool for Black Feminist Activism: Lessons from an Online Antirape Protest," 253–254.

[2] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 100.

[3] To be sure black churches are not consistent or indiscriminant safe-spaces for black women. In the words of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in *Righteous Discontent* (1993), they have historically been "microcosms" of the public sphere and thus entrenched in patriarchal and heterosexist ideals. Thus black women often have to work through, push back against and move around barriers imposed on their ability to lead, their influence in the church and their capacity to claim full and empowered identities. See Marcia Riggs, *Plenty Good Room: Women versus Male Power in the Black Church* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003); Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women--: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[4] A history of this hair-centered enterprise and its powerful role in securing the stability of black women's physical and ideological lives see, Tiffany M. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Lanita Jacobs-Huey, *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Susannah Walker, *Style & Status Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007). Black women's beauty culture as a foundation of safe-spaces is also treated in works on the New Negro Era. Refer to for example, Erin Chapman, *Prove It On Me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[5] Hair braiding and the importance of this industry among black immigrants, and in particular Franco-phone West African women such as respondent Kadijah, is discussed in Halter and Johnson, *African and American: West Africans in Post-Civil Rights America*.

[6] In her in-depth study of a Senegalese-owned braiding shop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Shartryia Collier finds that the owners and their majorly African American women customers rarely hold conversations or embark on extensive verbal engagement beyond discussions of styling and payment. This is especially the case if a stylist whom is fluent in English is not present. Collier notes that an ambivalence towards the English language is often the the result of an intentional attempt to preserve their culture. Refer to, Shartryia Collier, "And Ain't I a Woman?" Senegalese Women Immigrants, Language Use, Acquisition, and Cultural Maintenance in an African Hair-Braiding Shop," in *Selected Proceedings of the 35th Annual*

Conference on African Linguistics, ed. John Mugane (Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2005), 66–75.

[7] See Ibigbolade S. Aderibigbe, "African Initiated Churches and African Immigrants in the United States: A Model in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America (RCCGNA)," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religions in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Ibigbolade S. Aderibigbe and Carolyn M. Jones Medine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 241–58; Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani, eds., *African Immigrant Religions in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007); Yanick St. Jean, "Contrasting Religious Preferences between Catholic African Americans and Haitian Americans," in *The Other African Americans: Contemporary African and Caribbean Immigrants in the United States*, ed. Yoku Shaw-Taylor and Steven A. Tuch (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 153–76.

[8] Audre Lorde, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 147.

[9] Pauline, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2013.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Karen, Interview by Channon Miller, April 23, 2015.

[13] Shirley, Interview by Channon Miller, April 20, 2015.

[14] Christine, Interview by Channon Miller, December 8, 2015.

[15] Evelyn, Interview by Channon Miller, October 13, 2012.

[16] Gloria, Interview by Channon Miller, May 26, 2015.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Vanessa, Interview by Channon Miller, June 10, 2015.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Sammayah, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Janet, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Henrietta, Interview by Channon Miller, February 19, 2015.

[30] "Mission and Vision Statement," *The West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Connecticut, USA*, 2016, http://westindiansocialclub.org/mission-vision-statement/ (accessed July 17, 2016).

[31] Their efforts include the renowned exhibit "Finding a Place, Maintaining Ties: Greater Hartford West Indians," held at the Connecticut Historical Society (CHS) in 2003. The historical venture documented the experiences of the city's first generation of West Indian immigrants utilizing interviews with the community's elders and their descendants. It also featured images and artifacts. Fiona Vernal, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Connecticut served as the Project Coordinator and Oral Historian.

[32] Dionne, Interview by Channon Miller, April 26, 2015.

[33] Sharon, Interview by Channon Miller, April 26, 2015.

[34] Ibid.

[35] "Our History: We Should Not Fail to Carry On the Legacy," *The West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Connecticut, USA*, 2016, http://westindiansocialclub.org/our-history/ (accessed July 17, 2016).

[36] See the following works on Jamaican immigrant farm workers and the aspects of their United States settlement in the mid-20th century in Hartford and other cities, Joey Fink, "No Man's Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor," *Labour*, no. 71 (2013): 285–87; Wendi N. Manuel-Scott, "Soldiers of the Field: Jamaican Farm Workers in the United States During World War II," Dissertation (Howard University, December 2003); Nancy Foner and Richard Napoli, "Jamaican and Black-American Migrant Farm Workers: A Comparative Analysis," *Social Problems* 25, no. 5 (1978): 491–503.

[37] Dionne, Interview by Channon Miller, April 26, 2015.

[38] Sharon, Interview by Channon Miller, April 26, 2015.

[39] Terry, Interview by Channon Miller, April 14, 2015.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] The dissertation's concept of "role-moldering" is guided by Milton Vickerman's scholarship. He defines "role-modeling" as an expression of recent West Indian immigrants' "panblack identity." This population tends to "advance the notion that the norms and values typifying West Indians can act as a guide for some African Americans" (155). While this project draws on Vickerman's use of the term, it distances it from ethnocentrism and recasts it as a mechanism that allows for a strong resistance to the infiltration and acceptance of controlling images. See Vickerman, *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants and Race*.

[43] "Beyond the mask" is adapted from black feminist theorist Sondra O'Neale in "Inhibiting Midwives, Usurping Creators: The Struggling Emergence of Black Women in American Fiction," in *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 139–56. O'Neale suggests that on the other side of the veneer lead lives that are in opposition to their subordination.

[44] Lea, Interview by Channon Miller, March 6, 2015.

[45] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, February 9, 2015.

[46] Cassandra, Interview by Channon Miller, December 9, 2015.

[47] Marie, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

CHAPTER 4

[1] Helen Ubinas, "Reaction: Community Outraged At Police, But Advocating Restraint/Outraged Community Sees Pattern in Police Shooting," Hartford Courant, April 15, 1999, sec. 1/A11.

[2] "Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped of Chicago Youth," *Jet Magazine*, September 15, 1955.

[3] Koritha Mitchell, "Mamie Bradley's Unbearable Burden: Sexual and Aesthetic Politics in Bebe Moore Campbell's 'Your Blues Ain't Like Mine.,'" *Callaloo* 31, no. 4 (2008): 1048.

[4] Steve Edwin, "Remembering the Ancestor's Image: Emmett Till and Predicaments of Witnessing," *Callaloo* 37, no. 3 (2014): 715.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

[7] Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 61.

[8] While this section refers to the existence of a black collectivity in 1955, the responses to the murder of Emmett Till were not uniform. During this historical epoch, the black population's

navigation of the persisting color-line varied across not simply regional but class and age lines. Yet, most scholars point to the event as a unifying force. In addition to the studies of Till listed later in this chapter, for a survey of the various responses of the event see, Darryl Mace, *In Remembrance of Emmett Till: Regional Stories and Media Responses to the Black Freedom Struggle* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

[9] Edwin, "Remembering the Ancestor's Image: Emmett Till and Predicaments of Witnessing," 712.

[10] Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 1.

[11] Ibid., 11.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] The use of the phrase "strange fruit" to capture and define the thousands of black men and women lynched, largely between the 1880s and the early 1940s, mirrors the title and content of Billie Holiday's groundbreaking 1937 ballad, "Strange Fruit."

[15] Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* (New York: Ballantine, 2003), 139.

[16] See Clenora Hudson-Weems, *Emmett Till: The Sacrificial Lamb of the Civil Rights Movement*, 2nd Revised Edition (Troy, Michigan: Bedford Publishers, 1994).

[17] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*, First Edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), xi.

[18] For a survey of the contours of the "Negro Problem" in the post-bellum era, see Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*; Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

[19] Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, "Science and the African Problem," *Atlantic Monthly* 66 (July 1890): 41–43.

[20] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 42.

[21] Ibid., 50.

[22] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of the Races," in *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Henry Holt McDougal, 1995), 25–26; Wells, *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States: 1892–1893–1894.*

[23] Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness,* 31-32.

[24] See Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kali N. Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006); W.E.B. Du Bois, "Notes on Negro Crime, Particularly in Georgia," *Atlanta University Studies* 9 (1904).

[25] Refer to Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II*, First Edition (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Amy Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[26] Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 389.

[27] See Leonard N. Moore, *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2010); Dwight Watson, *Race and the Houston Police Department, 1930-1990: A Change Did Come*, First Edition (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Marilynn S.

Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

[28] According to historian, Joe William Trotter, black migration during the early 1900's peaked between 1916-1919 and 1924-1925. See Joe William Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[29] Law enforcement was called to enforce prohibition, discipline strikebreakers and radical labor groups, and fulfill middle-class, progressive reformers' interest in efficient crime reduction. Racial biases informed the demands and consequences of police action. The early 1900s saw the continual production of social scientific research that promoted racialist theories and maintained assertions of black cultural deficiencies. These works included eugenicist scholarship, such as Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916). Also important, in the segregated South, as in cities such as Houston, Texas, in which blacks were politically impotent, officers located protection within the interests of the more powerful, white elite.

[30] Moore, *Blake Rage in New Orleans,* 1.

[31] Ibid.

[32] The historiography reveals the breadth of African American activism against police brutality in the post-war years. In addition to the previously cited, Moore (2010) and Watson (2005), see Simon Ezra Balto, "'Occupied Territory': Police Repression and Black Resistance in Postwar Milwaukee, 1950–1968," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 229–52; Karl E. Johnson, "Police-Black Community Relations in Postwar Philadelphia: Race and Criminalization in Urban Social Spaces, 1945–1960," *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 118–34; Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Race, Labor, and Politics in Postwar Detroit* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); Gail O'Brien, *The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post–World War II South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[33] Naomi Murawaka, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 9

[37] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[38] Greta De Jong, *Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle After 1965* (Chichester, UK, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 67.

[39] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 92.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 59.

[42] Ibid., 59.

[43] Ibid., 96.

[44] Ibid., 96.

[45] Ibid., 53.

[46] Ibid., 109.

[47] Further information on these bills and policies is supplied by, Dorothy E. Roberts, "Prison, Foster Care, and the Systemic Punishment of Black Mothers," *UCLA Law Review* 59, no. 1474 (2012); Rickie Solinger, Paula C. Johnson, and Martha L. Raimon, eds., *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 2010); Patricia E. Allard and Lynn D. Lu, "Rebuilding Families, Reclaiming Lives: State Obligations to Children in Foster Care and Their Incarcerated Parents" (New York, NY: Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, 2006), https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_37203.pdf (accessed April 15, 2012).

[48] Loïc Wacquant, "Race as Civic Felony," *International Social Science Journal* 57, no. 183 (March 2005): 131; Allard and Lu, "Rebuilding Families, Reclaiming Lives: State Obligations to Children in Foster Care and Their Incarcerated Parents," 31.

[49] Wacquant, "Race as Civic Felony," 132.

[50] Ibid.

[51] The Three-Strikes Law is discussed in Alexander (2012)*,* Wacquant (2005), as well as in Angela Y. Davis, "Race and Criminalization," in *The House That Race Built: Black Americans, U.S. Terrain*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 264–79.

[52] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 65. As will be discussed later in this chapter, a myriad of Supreme Court decisions contributed to the molding of warrant-free searches as legal and in accordance with the U.S. Constitution's Fourth Amendment. They include, *Terry vs. Ohio* (1968), *Florida vs. Bostick* (1991), *Whren vs. United States* (1993), *Ohio v. Robinette* (1996), and *Atwater v. City of Lago Vista* (1999).

[53] Ibid., 131.

[54] Ibid., 131; An additional study in Maryland found that African Americans composed 17 percent of the drivers on I-95, yet signified 70 percent of those stopped and searched. An analysis on these studies is located in David A. Harris, *Profiles in Injustice: Why Racial Profiling Cannot Work* (New York: New Press, 2002).

[55] Ibid., 121.

[56] Jeffrey A. Fagan et al., "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited: The Demography and Logic of Proactive Policing in a Safe and Changing City," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Policing: New and Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen K. Rice and Michael D. White (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 309.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 31.

[59] Andrew Gelman, Jeffrey Fagan, and Alex Kiss, "An Analysis of the New York City Police Department's 'Stop-and-Frisk' Policy in the Context of Claims of Racial Bias," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 102, no. 479 (2007): 813.

[60] Ibid., 813.

[61] Jeffrey A. Fagan and Garth Davies, "Street Stops and Broken Windows: Terry, Race, and Disorder in New York City," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28, no. 2 (2000): 457.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Fagan et al., "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited: The Demography and Logic of Proactive Policing in a Safe and Changing City," 315.

[64] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* 244.

[65] Ibid., 75.

[66] Ibid., 122.

[67] Ibid., 126.

[68] Ronald John Weitzer and Steven A. Tuch, *Race and Policing in America: Conflict and Reform* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

[69] Clifford Krauss, "Mollen Commission Ends, but Life Goes on for Staff," *New York Times*, July 23, 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/23/nyregion/mollen-commission-ends-but-life-goes-on-for-staff.html (accessed March 10, 2016).

[70] Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 83.

[71] These recent findings on the contemporary state of police brutality are located in a number of studies, including the data project entitled, "Mapping Police Violence." This portal began in 2015 and documents police brutality against blacks on a month-to-month basis. See Johnetta Elzie et al., "Police Violence Map," *Mapping Police Violence*, 2016, http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/ (accessed March 10, 2016).

[72] Prison expansion is also a product of neoliberalism in the form of the "prison industrial complex." A discussion of this system is further described in, Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Since 1984, the state has erected 43 penal institutions. The capitalist facet of this prison expansion is evident in their locations. The prisons are based in formerly irrigated agricultural lands and in regions bogged down by depressed economies. Also see, Angela Y. Davis and Cassandra Shaylor, "Race, Gender and the Prison Industrial Complex: California and Beyond," *Meridians* 2, no. 1 (2001): 1–25.

[73] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 106.

[74] Ibid., 189.

[75] Davis, "Race and Criminalization," 269.

[76] See Reeves and Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy*. According to these authors, in 1980 only ten cocaine-related news stories appeared on network news programs. By 1985, stories of this kind numbered 140 a year.

[77] Zerai and Banks, *Dehumanizing Discourse, Anti-Drug Law, and Policy in America: A "Crack Mother's" Nightmare*, 119.

[78] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* 102. Evidence of the power of the media to pin meaning to racial groups fitting for unjust legislative shifts can be found in Reeves and Campbell (1994), as well as Jernigan and Dorfman, "Visualizing America's Drug Problems: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Illegal Drug Stories on the Nightly News."

[79] Owen Brown, "From the Philadelphia Negro to the Prison Industrial Complex: Crime and the Marginalization of African American Males in Contemporary America," *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 2014): 85. Brown makes clear that these texts, among others, played a central role in ushering in the contemporary American public's focus on individual pathology as a cause of mass incarceration, as opposed to patterns of institutionalized oppression. Murray and Magnet, among others, posited that the growth in black prisoners was a consequence of black pathology and more particularly, single mother households and "family dysfunction" among blacks in America, as well as a lack of dedication to seeking employment. See Myron Magnet, *The Dream, and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 1993); Charles A. Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

[80] Wacquant, "Race as Civic Felony," 128.

[81] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 224.

[82] Audre Lorde, "Man Child: A Black Feminist Response," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 74..

[83] Elizabeth Alexander, "'Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?': Reading the Rodney King Video(s)," in *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 84.

[84] Ibid., 83.

[85] Ibid., 84.

[86] Ibid., 82.

[87] Clenora Hudson-Weems, "Resurrecting Emmett Till: The Catalyst of the Modern Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 2 (November 1998): 179.

[88] DoVeanna S. Fulton Minor, *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery* (Ithaca, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 13.

[89] Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*, 47.

[90] Harris, "Equal Treatment and the Reproduction of Inequality," 1761.

[91] Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity,* 2.

[92] Ibid., 6.

[93] Ibid., 6.

[94] Ibid., 7.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Jonathan Markowitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 102.

[97] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible the Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 15.

[98] hooks, *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, 52..

[99] For a discussion of multiculturalism also see, Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2011); Sherene Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

[100] Lawal Babatunde, "The African Heritage of African American Art and Performance," in *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul C. Harrison, Victor L. Walker, and Gus Edwards (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 43, quoted in Fulton Minor, *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery*, 5.

[101] Toni Morrison, "Home," in *The House That Race Built: Black Americans, U.S. Terrain*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 8.

CHAPTER 5

[1] Robert Rudewicz and Neil Dryfe, "Finding of Firearms Discharge Board of Inquiry," Press Release (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Police Department, November 22, 2000), http://hhs.hartford.gov/Healthy%20Start/PR/R_Allan.htm (accessed March 10, 2016).

[2] Mike Allen, "After Diallo, Newfound Muscle: Blacks Focus Attention on Hartford Police Shooting," *New York Times*, April 25, 1999.

[3] Helen Ubinas, "Solemnity, Anger, A Call For Reform," *Hartford Courant*, April 16, 1999, sec. A9.

[4] Ubinas, "Reaction: Community Outraged At Police, But Advocating Restraint/ Outraged Community Sees Pattern in Police Shooting."

[5] Ibid.

[6] Josh Kovner, Tina A. Brown, and Cynde Rodriguez, "One Year Later, Aquan's Legacy Remains A Work In Progress A City's Struggle To Change," *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 2000, sec. A1.

[7] Ubinas, "Solemnity, Anger, A Call For Reform."

[8] Mike Allen, "After Diallo, Newfound Muscle: Blacks Focus Attention on Hartford Police Shooting."

[9] Rudewicz and Dryfe, "Finding of Firearms Discharge Board of Inquiry."

[10] Josh Kovner and Liz Halloran, "A Ruling, But No Resolution/ Report: Officer Had Real Reason to Fear for Life," *Hartford Courant*, February 17, 2000, sec. 1/A12.

[11] Paul Zielbauer, "Plan to Monitor Police Hailed," *New York Times*, November 25, 1999, sec. B11.

[12] Josh Kovner, "Aquan Inquiry Focuses On Deadly Force Interpretation But At Meeting, Groups Call For Broader Look At Police," *Hartford Courant*, July 2, 1999, sec. A1.

[13] Citizens' Research Education Network, Hartford Public Library, and Hartford 2000, "Council Review: Hartford City Council Meeting" (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Public Library, November 22, 1999).

[14] Ibid.

[15] Kovner and Halloran, "A Ruling, But No Resolution/ Report: Officer Had Real Reason to Fear for Life."

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Rudewicz and Dryfe, "Finding of Firearms Discharge Board of Inquiry."

[19] Kovner and Halloran, "A Ruling, But No Resolution/ Report: Officer Had Real Reason to Fear for Life."

[20] Ibid.

[21] Kovner, "Aquan Inquiry Focuses On Deadly Force Interpretation But At Meeting, Groups Call For Broader Look At Police."

[22] Rudewicz and Dryfe, "Finding of Firearms Discharge Board of Inquiry."

[23] Helen Ubinas, "Some See Aquan Protest Plan As Wake-Up Call," *Hartford Courant*, January 15, 2000, sec. A1.

[24] In 2004, the City of Hartford arrived to a settlement with the Watts estate. The particular amount, has not been disclosed to the public. See Norma Watts v. City of Hartford, No. 3:00CV0681 (United States District Court, District of Connecticut 2004).

[25] Mark Pazniokas, Helen Ubinas, and Rick Green, "A Ruling, But No Resolution/Responding: Relief, Anger, Fear, Grief, Prayers," *Hartford Courant*, February 17, 2000, sec. 7/A13.

[26] Alexander, "'Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?': Reading the Rodney King Video(s)," 83.

[27] Tina A. Brown, "Anger Tinges Rally, Conference Aquan Case Sparks Protest, U of H Forum," *Hartford Courant*, March 1, 2000, sec. B1.

[28] Roger P. Cayer, "A Teenager Is Dead: Whom Can We Blame?," *Boston Globe*, April 19, 1999, sec. A18.

[29] Helen Ubinas, "Aquan Salmon's Life of Contradictions Why City Teen Died Is Not the Only Question," *Hartford Courant*, April 28, 1999, sec. 1/A13.

[30] M.J. Thiel Killingworth, "Hartford City Council Looks For A Scapegoat," *Hartford Courant*, March 4, 2000, sec. A16.

[31] Chris Powell, "Someone Talk Back to the Hysterics," *The Day*, February 21, 2000, sec. A6.

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[50] Mark Zaretsky, "Emma Jones Relives '97 East Haven Police Shooting of Son, Malik, in Ferguson Case," *New Haven Register*, August 7, 2015, http://www.nhregister.com/general-news/20140817/emma-jones-relives-97-east-haven-police-shooting-of-son-malik-in-ferguson-case (accessed March 10, 2016).
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[52] Ibid. Gee's Bend is a small, rural town in Alabama. As early as the antebellum era, the African American women of this community produced quilts for practical, as well as spiritual purposes. Emma Jones' mother was head of the "quilting bee." She recalls that, she and other children in the community, "were required to sleep on them so that we could feel the connection to our ancestors." Older women in their co-op passed many of these quilts down to her mother and their composition pointed to the Northern Star. In 2002, following the publication of Souls Grown Deep: African American Vernacular Art of the South, the exhibition, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* began in the Fine Arts Museum of Houston. Over the course of six years, the exhibit traveled to other major museums throughout the nation. This included the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. The exhibition comprised seventy-one quilts made between 1930 and 1997 by forty-four women. While the transformation of clothing, crop sacks and worn fabric into a utilitarian object is indicative of an African American tradition that extends beyond this community, the Gee's Bend

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CHAPTER 6

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[89] Jennifer Crocker et al., "Social Stigma: The Affective Consequences of Attributional Ambiguity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, no. 2 (1991): 218–28.

[90] Sherri-Ann P. Butterfield, "'We're Just Black': The Racial and Ethnic Identities of Second-Generation West Indians in New York," in *Becoming New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the New Second Generation*, ed. Philip Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkopf, and Mary C. Waters (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 289.

[91] P. Khalil Saucier, *Necessarily Black: Cape Verdean Youth, Hip-Hop Culture, and a Critique of Identity* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 25.

[92] Ibid., 25.

[93] Ibid., 25-26, 32. Butterfield and Saucier's findings challenge the theory of "segmented assimilation" posited by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993). They conclude that second generation immigrants of color either embark on, "consonant acculturation," "selective acculturation," and "dissonant acculturation." In traversing the "consonant" and "selective" paths, these children maintain close ties with their parents and their ethnic enclaves. "Dissonance" categorizes the children who reject their parent's culture, Americanize, and align with their corresponding racial, native-born group. In the case of black immigrants, this group is African

Americans. These scholars hypothesize that the latter path leads to "downward assimilation" and the former yields "upward assimilation." See Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530 (1993): 74–96; Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

[94] Niara Sudarkasa, "Interpreting the African Heritage in African American Family Organization," in *Black Families*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 29–48.

[95] Niara Sudarkasa, "Conceptions of Motherhood in Nuclear and Extended Families, with Special Reference to Comparative Studies Involving African Societies," *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 5 (2004): 2.

[96] "Child-Minding" is used in the Caribbean to refer to the rearing of children, and "Child-Keeping" is a terminology traditionally used in the American context. See Christine Ho, "The Internationalization of Kinship and the Feminization of Caribbean Migration: The Case of Afro-Trinidadian Immigrants in Los Angeles," *Human Organization* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 32–40 and Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

[97] Sudarkasa, "Conceptions of Motherhood in Nuclear and Extended Families, with Special Reference to Comparative Studies Involving African Societies," 1.

[98] Ho, "The Internationalization of Kinship and the Feminization of Caribbean Migration: The Case of Afro-Trinidadian Immigrants in Los Angeles," 32. Also see the following for the mothering practices of Caribbean women, Tracy Reynolds, *Caribbean Mothers: Identity and Experience in the UK* (London: Turfnell Press, 2005); Mary Chamberlain, "Rethinking Caribbean Families: Extending the Links," *Community, Work & Family* 6, no. 1 (2003): 63–76.

[99] Ibid., 34.

[100] Ibid., 34.

[101] Studies on the transnational mothering of mothers from Africa and the Caribbean comprise, Bertranna Muruthi et al., "Afro-Caribbean Mothers in the U.S.: An Exploratory Study From a Transnational Feminist Perspective," *Women & Therapy* 39, no. 3–4 (2016): 413–31; Arthur, *African Women Immigrants in the United States: Crossing Transnational Borders*, 2009; Njoki Nathani Wane, "Reflections on the Mutuality of Mothering: Women, Children, and Othermothering," *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* 2, no. 2 (2000): 105–16.

[102] Harriette Pipes McAdoo, "The Village Talks: Racial Socialization of Our Children," in *Black Children: Social, Educational, and Parental Environments*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2002), 47–55; Andrew Billingsley, *Black Families in White America* (Englewood Cliffs, NK: Prentice-Hall, 1968). Also see, A. Wade Boykin et al., "Communalism: Conceptualization and Measurement of an Afrocultural Social Orientation," *Journal of Black Studies* 27, no. 3 (1997): 409–18.

[103] Collins, "Shifting The Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood," 55. The term "othermother" also captured in the literature as early as, Rosalie Riegle Troester, "Turbulence and Tenderness: Mothers, Daughters, and 'Othermothers' in Paule Marshall's 'Brown Girl, Brownstones,'" *Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 13–16.

[104] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83–99.

[105] St. Jean Yanick and Joe R. Feagin, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (Armonk, New York and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 196.

[106] Consider Simone C. Drake, *Critical Appropriations: African American Women and the Construction of Transnational Identity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2014); Rose M. Morgan, Desideria T. Mwegelo, and Laura N. Turner, "Black Women in the African Diaspora Seeking Their Cultural Heritage Through Studying Abroad," *NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Inc.)* 39, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 333–53, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing, eds., *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1987).These works weigh and give voice to the ways in which African American women value African ancestry, and attempt to steep themselves and their children in a pan-black consciousness. While travels abroad for example gain credence, the role of African or Caribbean immigrant women in this process is not discussed.

[107] Adesayo Adelowo, "The Adjustment of African Women Living in New Zealand: A Narrative Study," Dissertation (Auckland University of Technology, 2012), 109–110.

[108] Alex Stepick, *Pride Against Prejudice: Haitians in the United States* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 24.

[109] Arthur, *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 78.

[110] Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*, 309.

[111] In addition to Kasinitz et al., *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* and Hughes et al., "Parents' Ethnic–Racial Socialization Practices: A Review of Research and Directions for Future Study", the tendency of foreign-born parents of color to embark on bias preparation less than their native-born counterparts is also captured in, Diane Hughes, "Correlates of African American and Latino Parents' Messages to Children About Ethnicity and Race: A Comparative Study of Racial Socialization," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 31, no. 1/2 (2003): 15–33. Coupled with deliberate distancing strategies, these works suggest that immigrant parents' minimal experience with identifying and navigating racial discrimination is another cause of the distinctions between their parenting choices and those of African Americans.

[112] Kasinitz et al., *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*, 307.

[113] Ibid., 309.

[114] S. Alease Ferguson and Toni C. King, eds., *Black Womanist Leadership Tracing the Motherline* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 16.

[115] Ibid., 23.

CHAPTER 7

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Gwendolyn Samuel, "Lawmakers & Advocates Introduce a Comprehensive Education Reform Bill Which Includes a Landmark 'CT Parent Trigger,'" Press Release (Hartford, Connecticut, February 8, 2010), http://scholasticadministrator.typepad.com/thisweekineducation/2010/02/reform-parent-trigger-moving-east.html#.WK5hF_krJEZ (accessed February 1, 2017).

[7] Gwendolyn Samuel, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2015.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Black Liberation Collective, "About," *Black Liberation Collective*, 2015, http://www.blackliberationcollective.org/about-1/ (accessed October 1, 2016).

[10] Jacqueline Rabe Thomas, "Minority Representation in School-To-Prison Pipeline Draws Scrutiny," *The CT Mirror*, August 11, 2015, http://ctmirror.org/2015/08/11/cts-school-to-prison-pipeline-filled-by-black-hispanic-youth/ (accessed February 15, 2017).

[11] Gwendolyn Samuel, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2015.

[12] Tanya, Interview by Channon Miller, April 7, 2015.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Christine, Interview by Channon Miller, December 8, 2015.

[17] Marie, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[18] Delores, Interview by Channon Miller, February 12, 2015.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Jacqui, Interview by Channon Miller, March 18, 2013.

[21] Jeanine, Interview by Channon Miller, December 5, 2012.

[22] Rose, Interview by Channon Miller, September 17, 2016.

[23] Virginia, Interview by Channon Miller, June 2, 2015.

[24] State of Black Hartford, October 27, 2016: Hartford holds 14 neighborhoods. Each neighborhood houses a Neighborhood Revitalization Committee, also referred to as an NRZ. Each of the committees hold public meetings in their prospective neighborhoods once a month to address the concerns of residents, ranging from noise complaints, homelessness, to abandoned houses. Further, they determine solutions with the help of city council members, police officers, and social service providers also attend these meetings. Together, they form "Hartford 2000." Additionally, "Equity 20/20" is the advisory committee for Hartford schools, comprised of parents, school staff, and community members.

[25] State of Black Hartford, June 16, 2016.

[26] State of Black Hartford, October 27, 2016.

[27] Rose, Interview by Channon Miller, September 17, 2016.

[28] Hellen, Interview by Channon Miller, April 3, 2012.

[29] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[30] Martha, Interview by Channon Miller, June 3, 2015.

[31] Floriane, Interview by Channon Miller, June 17, 2015.

[32] Ernestine, Interview by Channon Miller, June 16, 2015.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Anne M. Hamilton, "Merva Jackson: An Advocate For African Caribbean Community And The Disabled," *Hartford Courant*, May 29, 2012, http://articles.courant.com/2012-05-29/features/hc-extraordinary-life-jackson-0527-20120523_1_disabilities-african-caribbean-american-parents-special-education (accessed February 10, 2017).

[35] H. Barry Waldman, Steven Perlman, and Misha Garey, "African-American Children with Disabilities," *Exceptional Parent* 46, no. 3 (2016): 20–22; Jason C. Travers et al., "Racial Disparity in Administrative Autism Identification Across the United States During 2000 and 2007," *The Journal of Special Education* 48, no. 3 (2012): 155–66; Michael J. Morrier and Kristen L. Hess, "Ethnic Differences in Autism Eligibility in the United States Public Schools," *The Journal of Special Education* 46, no. 1 (2012): 49–63.

[36] African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc. (AFCAMP), "History," *AFCAMP: Advocacy for Children With Disabilities*, 2016, http://www.afcamp.org/content/history (accessed February 10, 2017).

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[37] Gwendolyn Samuel, Interview by Channon Miller, March 12, 2015.

EPILOGUE
[1] Constance Neyer, "The Bridge You See Is One Of Many She Built," *Hartford Courant*, June 24, 1973, sec. 3A.
[2] Offer, "'They've Been Dead a Year:' Parents Tired of Waiting for Lower Depth on Park River."

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