

KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON:  
PERFORMING AND IMAG(IN)ING LEADERSHIP AND HOMESPACE WITHIN THE  
BLACK DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

LISA B. Y. CALVENTE:

Keep On Keepin' On: Performing and Imag(in)ing Leadership and Homespace within the  
Black Diaspora

(Under the Direction of D. Soyini Madison)

*Keep On Keepin' On: Performing and Imag(in)ing Leadership and Home-Space within the Black Diaspora* explores how specific embodiments of race and racial belonging affect the formation of local and global activism and how performance and media ethnography can further theorize upon these processes. This dissertation examines three oral histories as performances of race, transnational imaginary, and social activism in what is commonly understood as the black Diaspora. This research argues that the listening to and the telling of life histories can revision performances of race as an inclusive organizing concept that reaches across cultural boundaries. It also experiments with ways in which media and performance intersect and how these intersections can productively transform each discipline as well as add to the theory and practice of ethnography. Among its contributions, *Keep On Keepin' On* opens further research on how performance studies and media ethnography can ground political theory within everyday life and can simultaneously locate and create possibilities for social justice.

To Sang Thi Calvente.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

“I am here because I am a woman of the border: between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out.”

Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*

In the fall of 2004, I was an assistant to Dr. D. Soyini Madison for the Burch Fellows study abroad program in Ghana, West Africa, entitled, *Performance, Development and the Legacy of Kwame Nkrumah*. The program Dr. Madison created provided the undergraduate participants with both the experience of attending classes with Ghanaian students at the University of Ghana in Legon and with the opportunity to interact with multiple grassroots activists in various regions of the country. Dr. Madison and I regularly accompanied the students to visit and witness activists and their programs. One of our longest excursions was our trip to Tamale<sup>1</sup> in the northern region of Ghana. It was during this trip I began to formulate the questions that would eventually serve as the impetus for this dissertation project.

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<sup>1</sup>Predominantly Muslim region.

While in Tamale, I encountered an activist deeply invested in socialist strategies for justice. When we spoke, he shared his experiences of attending school in what was at the time the Soviet Union. As he explained the racism he had to face while he studied Russian, communism, and Marx, I wondered why he would continue to believe in the very political system that seemed less ideal in practice.<sup>2</sup> “Wow, that must have been difficult”, I said. He looked at me, “Yes, yes”, he said softly. He then laughed slightly, “It was. (Pause) It was very lonely.” He smiled at me again and looked away. He commented rather abruptly that even though he was sent there under the guise of communism and camaraderie, he was not made to feel a sense of camaraderie when he was living in the Soviet Union. He then said his experiences of racism were so painful that he would not have returned to the Soviet Union if it still existed. Assuredly, he concluded that he completed the schooling and survived those experiences because he had to, and he continues to work for the struggle because he must. Hesitantly, I asked, “And you still believe in socialist independence?” “Yes”, he responded. He smiled again.

This fieldwork memory encompasses the interplay between the major tropes found within my project: experiences of race, particularly racism, (be)longing (to) for homespace,

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<sup>2</sup>Here, I am referring to the adaptation of Marxist-Socialism by independence movements of colonial and neo-colonial territories that occurred globally. Ideally, these appropriations would have eradicated racist hegemonic discourse; however, in practice, the appropriation, at best, provided independence from colonialism and imperialism for particular countries and hope for the future for others, yet was not capable of exorcising the discourse that accompanied colonialism. Presently, the result of this past not only reveals the contradictions within our political practices (as Marxists of color) but also encompasses the task of revolutionary ideals not yet achieved. In discussing the political symbolism of Cuba and the racist (and sexist) ideology that socialism did not diminish, D. Soyini Madison states this description correctly when she argues, “Perhaps [Afro-Cuban] women live and work [in Havana, Cuba] through the inequities of labor divisions because the memory of the revolution offers hope for a better life. Perhaps, though, these symbols that seal memory and entrench ideology do just the opposite, heightening the revolution’s unmet promises” (“Cuba” 57). I believe the hope Madison discusses is what this particular activist held on to while in the Soviet Union and currently holds onto while he continues to practice socialist strategies in his community. His belief in this system seems closely intertwined with his belief in his own ability to help perfect it by incorporating experiences of racism and achieving those unfulfilled promises. I know I am “jumping the gun” here and breaking the tense of the story but this retrospection seems significant enough.

and activism for social justice. There are, however, key differences between the stories I will share in this project and the story I have told. The activist in the story was sent to the Soviet Union for a socialist education just as some of his Ghanaian comrades were sent to Cuba during a socialist-independent Ghana under President Nkrumah.<sup>3</sup> His experiences of racism, though disturbing and irreconcilable, were temporary. His experiences became a memory that serves as a catalyst for his present and future revolutionary practices. He is located within a geographical space he perceives as home, among people he feels share this sense of home. With this shared sense of home and belonging, his experience in the former Soviet Union is also an experience that, if he chooses, he likely will not encounter again because his home-space is tangible.

For me, this particular story began a conversation that gave rise to numerous questions: What occurs when one's place of inhabitation does not provide the comfort of home? What happens when memories of racist experiences and reminders of the racialization, regulation, and marginalization of bodies are constantly and consistently embodied and present at any given moment of time and space? How do inescapable life experiences of racism contribute to the decision to dedicate one's life to working with communities that predominantly consist of people of color and to socio-political justice? Thus, although my initial questions stem from my encounters with Ghanaian socialist-activists, I focus on the activism and experiences of three community leaders of color within the United States—a college professor, a grassroots activist, and a community leader.

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<sup>3</sup>During the era of President Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist development projects, Tamale was aimed to be developed through education and industrialism. This was an attempt by President Nkrumah to equalize the political and economic potential of the northern region of Ghana, a region deemed "useless" in natural resources under colonialism. These international education programs were part of Nkrumah's transnational development plan.

I locate the experiences of my three participants within the notion of the black Diaspora for multiple reasons. First, I do so to highlight how their embodied experiences lie within a tradition of non-essentialized truths of blackness that make conversations of belonging possible and, second, to suggest a political and historical link to those revolutionary movements that organized around imagined, global freedom. Lastly, I use the term black Diaspora to discuss local experiences both trans-nationally and trans-culturally. I define the black Diaspora as a possible space of connectedness that arises through experiences of racism particularly for people who fall under the umbrella of blackness. It is my belief these stories confront the image of a tangible home, noting its privilege of place and complicating its ideal. Through highlighting the practices of the everyday, we see the advantages of *homeplace*—a sense that you belong to somewhere. At times, we also see its limits for alternative possibilities such as the traps of essentialism that accompany nationality, race, culture, ethnicity, etc. The relocating of home within *space* as opposed to place establishes the significance of how I use the black Diaspora, a space of connectedness that is constantly shifting and essentially strategic to combat racism.

The black Diaspora highlights an intangible homespace within the context of racism and marked by a colonial past. Stuart Hall best describes the black Diasporic experience as an in-between space, a space of knowing a place and/or places intimately but not being of any place entirely; Hall terms this position as the ‘familiar stranger’ (“Interview” 490). The notion of black Diaspora that Hall is theorizing upon arose from various revolutionary movements of the 1950’s and the 1960’s as a response to racism (“Interview” 491). Diaspora, a term most commonly used in terms of the Jewish Diaspora was appropriated to highlight materialist, identity-based political strategies that ranged from nationalism to trans-

nationalism. For instance, both the Puerto Rican Nationalist Movement led by Pedro Albizu Campos and the Pan-Africanist Movement practiced by W.E.B. Dubois and Kwame Nkrumah utilized notions of commonality through an intertwining of Diaspora, nationalism and trans-nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

These movements argued for a sense of a national culture that was based on particular and specific historical realities of racism and offered a transnational, common struggle for the purpose of global socio-economic justice. Writers, such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon,<sup>5</sup> extolled the fact that these political movements were dialectical products of colonial racism and simultaneously challenged dominant pre-colonial and essentialist national discourses. I return to this notion of how imagined transnational communities are produced by the racialization of blackness. Blackness is a fluid marker of included exclusion that is racialized through visibly oppressed bodies (Rodney 16-17). Thus, I define blackness as “a universal signifier of fear, danger, and threat across color lines” (Madison “Street Performance” 540).

My theoretical framework rethinks the Black Diaspora through a present-day analysis of the United States as a model for Michel Foucault’s biopower, the governmental exercising of both disciplinary and regulatory practices upon humanity as a whole (*Discipline and Punish*, “Society must be defended”). Foucault argues that biopower cannot function without racism and that colonialism marks the beginning of biopolitical life and the exercising of biopower (“Society must be defended”). I then use Giorgio Agamben (*Homo Sacer, Means*

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<sup>4</sup>Pedro Albizu Campos redirected the Puerto Rican Nationalist Movement toward embracing a trans-national , black Diasporic, Puerto Rican pride. For more on the significance of Pedro Albizu Campos, see *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*. Similarly, Kwame Nkrumah believed that true independence was a global movement. For more on his strategies for social equity and freedom, see *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*.

<sup>5</sup>For more on the dialectical process of decolonization, see Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* and Frantz Fanon’s “On National Culture”, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

*without End*) and Achille Mbembe (“Necropolitics”, “African Modes of Self-Writing”) to highlight the violence and terror within biopolitical life that is produced by as a state of exception—within biopower, there is always a state of exception where that which is excluded is included by its very exclusion. This echoes Hall’s notion of the familiar stranger. I argue that, in the very acknowledgment of one’s included/excluded position, affective embodiments of belonging and activism can be produced.

I use performance theory as an attempt to redirect revolutionary, race discourse, such as the Black Diaspora, away from an essentialist, authentic exclusionary stance. Stuart Hall’s anti-essentialist analysis or Paul Gilroy’s anti-anti essentialist analysis of race studies are examples of this aimed redirection.<sup>6</sup> These scholars have contributed immensely to further theorizing upon critical race theory and I rely upon their contributions for my study. Moreover, some scholars, such as John L. Jackson, Jr., raise the possibility that particular theoretical frameworks may “be anchored in the very same kind of objectifying and thingifying that they attempt to debunk, relegating people to the status of racial objects” and warns against simplifying raced, human interaction into pre-determined dialogues and social scripts (*Real Black* 17). Following Jackson’s concern of objectification, as well as Hall’s and Gilroy’s attempt to alleviate performances of race and race-based communities from essentialism, I integrate these three critical race theorists with performance ethnography as both theory and method. In doing so, I argue for and illustrate a Performance Studies approach to Cultural Studies and critical race theory through these oral history performances in order to highlight performances of belonging to blackness as fluid and flux. I see

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<sup>6</sup>Essentialist arguments tend to define ethnic/racial meanings and criteria of blackness through phenotype and/or as one monolithic, static culture. Anti-anti essentialist arguments attempt to analyze performances of blackness and racial belonging as fluid and historical. For more on anti-essentialism and anti-anti-essentialism, see Chapter 3 of Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

performance studies as a way to ground political discourse within the everyday and theorize upon possibilities of realized, imagined communities. Thus, I present three oral histories as performances of included exclusion, belonging, imagery, and activism.

I incorporate media and performance ethnography to situate these stories within a temporality that continuously folds past, present, and future onto itself with each encounter. The performance of encounters, as Della Pollack describes it, “represents the ever-present potential for language to mean something else, to betray one set of meaning for another...” (*Exceptional Spaces* 23) The potential for meanings to mean something else acknowledges the material conditions that make each story “real” but keeps the moments of possibility open with each encounter. Interacting with these three people, their life stories, and the images they have inspired, with a performance lens act as a reminder that they are never absolutely part of the past. On the contrary, these oral histories and images as performance are continuously made alive in the presence of a reader/audience and partake in an imagined future. To highlight this collapse of time, I re-tell these stories and the images that accompany them as performance. As such, I analyze each of the three oral history performances to highlight and “promote solidarity and mutuality across fluid cultural lines” (Gilroy “Race and Faith” 2).

### **Oral History Performance as Political Intervention**

“Abandon her on the road; murder her with weapons that aren’t her own. Let’s kill her: let’s kill that word that separates us, petrifies us, rots us with its double venom of idol and cross. Let her not be either our answer or our fatality.”

Carlos Fuentes, *The Death of Artemio Cruz*

I open this section with a quote from Carlos Fuentes' novel of neocolonialism in Mexico not only to illustrate the danger of meanings but also the potential that meaning possesses. In those few lines, Fuentes reveals there is always a possibility of something new and *we* can proactively create those possibilities. Echoing the Fuentes quote, I define each of the three participant's story as oral history performance. I do so to highlight a co-creative process between me and my participants that results in the possibility of meaning to *mean* something else (Pollock). These oral history performances stem from the dialogical encounter within the practice of critical ethnography (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 9). As Dwight Conquergood argues, "dialogue insists on a *face-to-face* encounter because this turning towards, the other, the second person, enables talking *to* and *with*, instead of *about* and *for*" ("Storied Worlds" 342). The dialogical encounter calls on the ethnographer to "risk her face," to possess vulnerability before the other (Conquergood "Storied Worlds" 342). This encounter brings "self and other together so that they question, debate, and challenge one another" (Conquergood "Performing as a Moral Act" 9). Oral history *as* performance "is a process of making history in dialogue; it is performative. It is co-creative, co-embodied, specially framed, contextually and intersubjectively contingent, sensuous, artful in its achievement of narrative form, meaning, and ethics" (Pollock *Remembering* 2). Upon witnessing the oral history performances of my three participants: Dr. Malcolm Woodland, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, and Mrs. Gloria Moralés, I participate in a process of reshaping and remembering through dialogue (Conquergood; Pollock; Langellier).

Oral history performances suggest a double contract of re-presentational exchange: the *telling* of the story from the narrator's personal experiences of remembering to performing for the listener and the *told* stories that re-presents the oral histories that were

witnessed (Langellier 128). Mindful of performance features (how one re-members and tells the story), this contract highlights “the interdependence of the telling and the experience [and] differentiates between the telling and the story, between the present act of narrating and the past act being narrated” (Langellier 128). This interdependence of the telling and the experience challenges linear notions of temporality, compressing the past and present into a temporal existence that is also no longer “uncovering” the past but presents a temporality that possesses multiple possibilities of the future. Oral history performances in this sense maintain a presence that is beyond the time and place at which the story has been told, beyond these pages, accompanying the storyteller(s) as well as the audience members (as well as readers), transforming her and/or him. Framing these stories within performance also compliments how I theorize upon the relationship between racism and blackness – complex and fluid.

I additionally utilize the *dialogic performative* as a process that grounds me with reflexivity and the imaginary as the presenter of these oral history performances (Madison “Dialogic Performative” 321-2). Here, dialogic performative describes how I envision myself as the storyteller and as part of the story within the following oral history performances. The dialogic performative encompasses reflexive knowledge, the sense that “the ethnographer not only contemplates her actions (reflective), but turns inward to contemplate how she is contemplating her actions (reflexive)” (Madison “Dialogic Performative” 321). Through reflexivity, I, in the role of the storyteller, critically question how I am conscious of my “self” and the repercussions of my thoughts and interpretations of the following experiences. This reflexive knowledge “evokes the imaginary” (Madison “Dialogic Performative” 322) and enables me to represent these stories story not only as

present creations of the past (Denzin) but also as a way to invoke discussions of imagined communities projected into a possible future (Langellier & Peterson; Madison “Performance”; Pollock *Telling Bodies*). Dialogical performative contextualizes the dialogical moment, self, and Other within a specific time and space that reshapes the memories of the storytellers, and, in doing so, reshapes the story.

This sense of performativity<sup>7</sup> encompasses the material acts of the everyday as written histories that are no longer attached to a notion of master-narrative or universal truth but a conscious re-presentation of a moment in time, shared to possibly reveal a new meaning or perhaps many new meanings (Corey). It is, in this sense, that oral history as performance could be an emancipatory act (Calafell and Holling). It reminds us identities are invented, fluid, and vulnerable to change, establishing a reality relative to a specific time and space and becoming tactics against marginalization. Oral history performance, then, encompasses the notion of “doing through saying: on investing the future with the past, re-marking history with previously excluded subjectivities, and challenging the conventional frameworks of historical knowledge with other ways of knowing” (Pollock *Remembering 2*). In other words, our multiple voices continuously remind those who are speaking and those who are hearing that we constantly create and possess access to agency that enables change. This practice balances Gloria Anzaldúa’s “theories of the flesh”<sup>8</sup> with a “second level of knowledge, what Patricia Hill Collins’ calls “specialized knowledge” and what [bell] hooks

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<sup>7</sup>Like Madison’s take on performativity, here, I am referring to Homi Bhabha’s notion of *performativity*, which refers to a rupture in the flow of hegemonic, repetitive practices (236-256) as opposed to Judith Butler’s performativity which refers to an excess of repetition (171-190).

<sup>8</sup>Gloria Anzaldúa’s term “theories of the flesh” locates materialism within embodied, everyday struggles with and against racism, sexism, classism and homophobia. In *This Bridge Called My Back*, Anzaldúa coins the term as she discusses “materialism as flesh” (xviii) and racism experienced “in the flesh” (34).

calls abstract, critical thought...to present alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge” (Madison ““That Was My Occupation”” 214). With applied *specialized knowledges*, these written stories become an account of history that is no longer attached to a notion of master-narrative or universal truth but a conscious representation of a moment in time, shared to reveal a new meaning or perhaps many new meanings.

I use my specialized knowledge grounded within performance, critical race theory, and political philosophy to recreate a description of *what is* in order to potentially transform it into *what will become*. As Della Pollock states, the highlighting of these performative expressions create and/or articulate ethical and political possibilities that become not just impressions of reality, but reality itself (Pollock *Telling Bodies* 64). This “possible-real space” (Pollock *Telling Bodies* 64) these performing bodies occupy embrace a notion that certain forms of expression can organize and communicate information that has been limited by geographical, racial, and gendered borders. As Sandoval-Sanchez and Sternbach write, “To recover that past is to activate ethnic memory, a memory that, once recalled projects itself into a future performance of being, of selfhood. [...] performance is not only a ‘doing and a thing done,’ but also a ‘thing imagined,’ a ‘thing to be done,’ a thing projected forward” (104). Framing each of my participant’s stories as oral history performances collapses the construction of time and space in such a way that it encompasses revelations of what is possible.

Through oral history performance, I present these oral narratives as always and already raced performances of community belonging and leadership that stem from experiences of racism and an imagined future of social justice and equality. To illustrate *the act of performing culture* and the *telling* of these performances, I employ poetic transcription

(Madison “That Was My Occupation”). Poetic transcription not only echoes the representational exchange of the telling of and the story told but is also indicative of how meaning can be changed. The performance aspect of poetic transcription is significant because “it grants ownership of the words to the speaker rather than a researcher” (Calafell 20). Moreover, the use of poetic text is “consistent with the black tradition of acknowledging that words are alive with sounds that condition their meanings” (Madison “That Was My Occupation” 217). Poetic transcriptions reiterate the performance within performance ethnography, highlighting how the stories are told and how transcription is a performative act of writing in itself.

Writing oral narratives with this approach furthers the understanding of these raced performances and echoes what Clifford Geertz inferred with ‘thick description’-- a theorized upon presentation of human action as sociocultural performance (3-32). Geertz states, “behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior—or more precisely social action—that cultural forms find articulation” (17). These narratives presented in poetic transcription call attention to behavior, particularly the acts of remembering and telling raced experiences. María Lugones writes, “There are “worlds” we enter at our own risk, “worlds” that have agon, conquest, and arrogance as the main ingredients in their ethos. These are “worlds” we enter out of necessity and which would be foolish to enter playfully. But there are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly” (Lugones 401). These oral history performances as told through poetic transcription reveal how these *worlds* can be traveled to and returned to spiritually and materially; these worlds encompass simple acts within the everyday and notions of home-space and empowerment.

## **Ethnography and the Visual: Media as Performance**

“We must always be aware of the complexity of the media in relation to human practices as we attempt to understand the contributions that the media make, both positive and negative, to the very form and substance of contemporary social existence.”

Lawrence Grossberg, Ellen Wartella, and D. Charles Whitney, *Media Making: Mass Media in Popular Culture*

Since the mid-nineteenth century, media and ethnography have been intertwined modes of knowing (Ruby; Grimshaw). Within anthropology, the photograph became evidence for fieldwork data while the camera ensured objectivity (Grimshaw 21). Shortly thereafter, film began to be used to document society as the Lumière brothers illustrated with their film shorts beginning in 1895 (Littau; Grimshaw 15-16). While film itself developed into its own subject of study, the camera (whether film or photography –and now, digital) remained a technological tool within fieldwork throughout the development of both anthropology and ethnography. With the visual ethnographic works of those such as Jean Rouch, the camera has been used by the ethnographer and the ethnographic subjects collaboratively, creating a sense of ‘shared anthropology’ (Ruby 203-112). This type of ethnographic method proposes to create richer fieldwork data as it further builds the relationship between the ethnographer and her/his subjects. Additionally, since the early 1980’s indigenous and minority peoples have turned to various forms of media as a way to counter “structures of power that have erased and distorted their interests and realities” (Ginsberg, Abu-Linghod, and Larkin 7). Although the approaches of media in the field have expanded, media continues to be used as primarily visual ethnographic verification within the text, locating its presentations as markers of the past. My work, however, approaches media within my text as that which not only verifies my fieldwork but also unfolds and becomes

anew in and alongside the text with each encounter. In this case, media ethnography similarly echoes the performativity of the oral history performances.

Media ethnography as a significant part of my methodology allows me to develop a project that is not only about communicating culture, but also positions me within the process of communication. In *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*, Fatima Tobing Rony's 'third eye' is a concept that signifies the subject-object double consciousness of which people of color possess specific to how they interact with raced representations in film (3-17; 203-107). Rony discusses the third eye as a space of liminality particularly for those who produce work that challenge limited raced representations and are in between "academic objectivity and subjective insight" (210). As a woman of color and an ethnographer, I see the third eye as how I employ media ethnography in my research. Additionally, I borrow from John L. Jackson, Jr. and use the term *racial sincerity* to remind myself that these oral history performances are not rooted in essentialist and authentic truths of race.

Jackson's racial sincerity "highlights the everfleeting 'liveness' of everyday racial performances that cannot be completely captured by authenticating mediations of any kind [and] privileges intent – an interiorized intent that decentralizes the racial seer (and the racial script)" (*Real Black* 18). Here, racial sincerity replaces the notion of racial authenticity. Although these imagined and performed acts are bound to everyday life and particular imagined truths, there exists a kernel of truth that cannot be captured. Additionally, racial sincerity incorporates race into the dialogic moment of exchange: I do not speak for, of, or about; I speak to and with. In this sense, I do not transform the narrators of this story into racialized objects on display; they are social actors as opposed to socially raced objects.

Racial sincerity emphasizes the importance of reflexivity and the co-creativity that occurs within the field.

When I first began fieldwork, I followed those who preceded me and also used media not only as documentation but as a participatory creation of knowledge (between the ethnographic subjects and the ethnographer) during fieldwork. For me, as well, the use of media in the field is a way to include my participants within the data process and, in turn, have their voices “talk back” alongside mine. Ethnographic and historic photographs, film, and popular music create an atmosphere of dialogue as the interviews are taking place. Uses of these forms of media as supportive tools of communication can not only forge connections at the beginning stages of interaction but can also engender trust and interest (Pink 65). As an ethnographer “at home” (Di Leonardo), the notion of trust becomes all the more important (even if it is perceived only by me).

Along a similar vein, the uses of media can establish an act of reciprocity between the ethnographer and their subjects. For instance, John L. Jackson, Jr. also discusses how the video camera enabled him to give back to the members of the Harlem community, where he was conducting his fieldwork. Jackson states:

This is not just making films that equate subjects with audience members. It means making films intended exclusively for the people in them. No fancy editing into an anthropological narrative for professional and popular consumption. Just documentation—for familial memory’s sake, in service to someone else’s attempt at self-archivization. How many times have I been asked to do just that? Far more than I can count, with no “ethnographic film” as the final endpoint, just a giving back (through the visual), an obligated reciprocity... This is

a gift, an imagined instantiation of digital and electromagnetic security, with all due Maussian intonations—cementing social bonds, redefining and reproducing the contours, insisting on interdependencies. After all, the first gift was a willingness to trust me with their precious thoughts and personal stories. (*Real Black* 169-170)

Here, Jackson discusses the act, or responsibility, of giving back through his use of media to those who trusted him with their thoughts and experiences. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to reciprocate the gifts that Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Morales have given me, I see media as having strengthened our communicative practices. As importantly, media becomes part of the gift of telling and trust that I have gained from my participants. For instance, I can recount a few times when, after had just finished listening to a story from Mrs. Morales, she would bring out her old photo album to *demonstrate* what she was alluding to in the story, or, how Dr. Woodland would break into rhyme or refer to a film to further describe what he just described, and how, similar to Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey would refer to songs to recall the time of the particular story she was telling. These moments become all the more poignant with the reiteration made possible through media.

My particular use of media ethnography has expanded beyond the fieldwork and into the text. To my pleasure, I have discovered that media also highlights, and pushes further, the complexities of both the *telling* of each subject's performance and the cultural meanings of the *told* through the various theories. As I have mentioned previously, I followed the tradition of media ethnography within the field because I found its methods quite useful as a way to establish richer relationships at my ethnographic sites. Within the text, I similarly take a traditional route with my reasons for using images as part of my ethnography. Along

these lines, I use images in my study as part of the representations of these oral history performances and as cultural representations that are fluid. I use photographs as a way to present contradictory, alternative aspects of cultural meaning and representation (Pink 24). However, I steer away from the tradition of media ethnography with the presentation of my fieldwork data, the oral history performances, and the images that accompany them.

In addition to representing alternative cultural meanings and as opposed to traditional uses of photographs to document a specific time, space or truth, I position my ethnographic images in ways that act independently of the text. In other words, the photos do not verify the text. At times, the photos compliment the text, at times, it will contradict it, and at times it will lie outside of it (Liggett vii-xv). Rather than perceiving the photos as documenting a time in space and as an artifact of the past, I utilize the photos as an act of performance, creating meaning in the present with its presence. The positions of the photos are deliberate to perhaps channel and/or evoke a specific consciousness. Amitava Kumar states,

As photographers and viewers, we need to make an image work like memory, crisscrossed by dreams and detours [...] Such a practice cannot be uni-linear in yet another sense: it cannot flow from the photographer to the viewer...there is no finished photograph. An image can only be a part of a continually changing narrative, interrupting the authoritative discourse of a lecture on a distant history. (47-48)

Through the photographs that I have taken in the field and collected from my participants, I hope to create a reader text experience that challenges the notion that ethnographic photographs stand still in time. The ethnographic images as a significant part of the oral history performance are shifting continuously and open-ended.

Thus, my positioning of the images within this project aims to guide the reader toward creating new possibilities through reading the combined text (transcription of the life history performances), textual analysis (my theoretical analysis of the life history performances), and the visual (the photographs particular to each oral history performance). I envision these new possibilities the reader creates as possibilities I might not have imagined, while I placed each photograph alongside a given text. In this sense, these photographs are “points of access into the uneven, intimate, and demanding process of the subject’s formation...a performance that is never finished” (Hall 350). As a result, I also utilize media<sup>9</sup> as a participatory creation of knowledge that exists between the dissertation, the text and photographs, and the reader. This use of media as a co-creative process after fieldwork echoes my interpretation of Antonio Gramsci’s discussion on education (26-47).

After describing the task of the organic intellectual, Gramsci describes an education program, a school, designed to produce autonomy and a homogenous social consciousness simultaneously (26-33). As he discusses this result and the program’s phases, Gramsci states,

[This education] indicates a phase and a method of research and knowledge, and not a predetermined “programme” with an obligation to originality and innovation and originality at all costs. It indicates that learning takes place especially through a spontaneous and autonomous effort of the pupil, with the teacher only exercising a function of friendly guide...To discover a truth oneself, without external suggestions or assistance is to create—even if the truth is an old one. It...indicates that in any

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<sup>9</sup>For this project, I am talking specifically about photographs, but I use the terms media to generalize the method I set forth.

case one has entered the phase of intellectual maturity in which one may discover new truths. (33)

According to Gramsci's description, this interactive, educational process provides pupils with the freedom to create additional possibilities that stem from the guidance of the teacher. Much like Gramsci's description, my positioning of the ethnographic images guides the reader in the hopes that new forms of meaning are created. This is not to say, however, the photographs are randomly positioned. They are not; each photo is strategically placed beside each given text. Hence, even though the results of my channeling and/or evocation are not permanently fixed, the positions of the photographs do have a purpose. Each purpose is closely intertwined with each subject's telling of her/his story. This process is similar to my interpretation of Gloria Anzaldúa's 'theories of the flesh' and Patricia Hill Collins' 'specialized knowledges' as it applies to performance ethnography in the previous section. It also coincides with the idea that visual analysis is about "analyzing the dynamic unfolding of specific social practices in which non-verbal communication (pointing, gaze work, and so on) and images...play a role" (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 3). Along these lines, I call upon the reader to do as Gramsci asserts and "discover new truths."

### **Everyday Struggle: Three Oral History Performances**

"To have a regard for reality does not mean that what one does in fact is to pile up appearances. On the contrary, it means that one strips the appearances of all that is not essential in order to get at the totality in its simplicity."

André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Volume II*

I present three oral histories as performances of race, racial belonging, imagery, and activism. The three oral histories I use resulted from my interactions during my ethnographic

fieldwork in both New York City and various regions of Ghana, West Africa (primarily in Accra, Ghana). Within my field-sites, I listened to these three life histories through a number of semi-structured ethnographic interviews (Rubin & Rubin 122-195). The questions I asked were open-ended and predominantly influenced through my experience, interaction and time spent with each participant in the field. I chose each interviewee because of her/his participation in community activism and her/his identification with the black Diaspora. Although each interviewee identifies with *being black* differently, their journeys toward, and visions of, home-space are quite similar. The life history performances of Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Morales demonstrate the practices of the combined theoretical and methodological concepts I discussed previously. I will now provide you with a brief overview of each of my interviewees in addition to how the ethnographic photographs are positioned.

The first narrative is that of Dr. Malcolm Woodland, a Washington DC native and Black American post-doctoral fellow of the *American Educational Foundation*. Dr. Woodland's inspiration for his community activism stems from his mother and her determination to raise her son with a consciousness of, and pride in, being black, hence his namesake, Malcolm X. Dr. Woodland is currently finishing his post-doctoral research on how particular constitutions of local, after-school programs can combat the grim statistics of imprisonment, violent death, and drop-out rates that surround young, black urban men. His study concentrates primarily on both the New York City and Washington DC area. Throughout his residency for his doctorate in psychology in Sunset Park, a predominantly Latino neighborhood in Brooklyn, Dr. Woodland incorporated hip hop as a therapeutic method to interact with his clients, mostly young boys of color who were labeled "at risk."



**Figure 1.1: Graffiti Memorial in Brooklyn, New York to a black male youth, “Gutter,” who was shot and killed. His murder remains unsolved.**

Following his residency goals, Dr. Woodland also participates in multiple organizations that focus on the betterment of “at risk” youth from urban communities of color. One of the programs he participates in is *Prep for Prep*, a boarding school initiative that targets low-income urban youth from as early as elementary school and provides them with a private school experience they would not otherwise have the means to afford. Dr. Woodland also works in an after-school community center in the Lower East Side housing projects in New York City. He is currently a member of the *Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM)*, a community organization that bases its community service on actively remembering Malcolm X. For instance, MXGM organized a neighborhood watch called the *Central Brooklyn Cop Watch Program* in certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Manhattan, where police brutality has been virtually ignored. The program works with neighborhood

residents to empower themselves against race-based police brutality through surveillance. It also organizes an annual, international political forum and hip hop concert in celebration of *Black August*.<sup>10</sup>

In my analysis of the oral history performance of Dr. Woodland, I highlight how Dr. Woodland's experiences with racism greatly affected the way he approaches his present activist work. Through his oral history performance, I also underscore how particular people in his life help him to create the homespaces he needs to survive his experiences of the racism. Here, I specifically use hip hop music to emphasize the significance of popular culture in Dr. Woodland's life and work. Unlike the two other life histories, I do not use images for Woodland's oral history performance. I do so because of the role that the representation of blackness plays within Woodland's oral history performance. It is my hope that in contrast to the other images, the absence of images in this particular oral history performance will push the reader to envision the argument I put forth.

Upon bearing witness to varied activists *at work* during my stay in Ghana, I was fortunate to have interacted closely with Dr. Lisa Aubrey, a political science professor of African, African-American and feminist studies. Dr. Aubrey has dedicated her work to social justice in both the United States and multiple sites in Africa. Her Louisiana-Creole heritage and cultural historical positioning have informed her ideals on political activism, global economy, and Pan-Africanism as theorized by Kwame Nkrumah and W.E.B. Dubois. Her story spans from the United States to Sub-Saharan Africa. She travels first for a sense of personal belonging and then for greater socio-economic and political equality and justice. Prior to her first trip to Sub-Saharan Africa, Dr. Aubrey, then a graduate student, began to

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<sup>10</sup>Black August is an organized fasting period to protest against inequality and injustice and to promote consciousness for equality and justice. The celebration marks the end of the fasting period.

participate in political, campus-affiliated organizations and took leadership roles in organizing protests that aimed to combat racial and sexual inequality on the college campus and in the United States.

Dr. Aubrey's decision to actively participate in political organizations stemmed from her belief that a political scientist must be grounded within everyday politics. She then decided to organize for social justice on a global scale. During her travels throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, Dr. Aubrey has worked with multiple community organizers who dealt with similar issues as those confronted by her organizational affiliations in the United States. She highlights these similarities in her work and builds transnational networks and communities based upon the same similarities. For instance, Dr. Aubrey mobilized a protest march on the American Embassy in Accra, Ghana to "speak out against the murder of Amadou Diallo and the miscarriage of justice [that followed]" (Madison "Street Performance" 539). Dr. Aubrey then wrote about the global, political implications of the march in an article entitled, *In Salute of Hero Amadou Diallo: African Americans Organize Amadou Diallo Protest Activities in Accra, Ghana in 2000: Lesson for Democracy in the United States and Ghana*. She wrote, "Americans organizing protest activities in Ghana against the United States government posed interesting political and social contractual questions regarding citizen's rights, state responsibility, and democracy in an international context" (qtd. in Madison "Street Performance" 539).

Professor Aubrey's story highlights the impetus for the creation of the *Center for African and African Diaspora Affairs (CAADA)*, her non-governmental organization that supports Black Diaspora studies in Ghana, West Africa and promotes transnational and multinational networks. Dr. Aubrey's story emphasizes how she consistently renegotiates

her outsider/insider position throughout her life in both the United States and Africa. The oral history illustrates the difficulties and complexities of praxis, putting theory into practice within given contexts among multiple sites, as she struggles to “keep on keepin’ on.”



**Figure 1.2: Dr. Lisa Aubrey and her daughter, Kari, (third and fourth from the left) with Burch fellow exchange students at the University of Ghana.**

In keeping with the Pan-Africanist ideology that Professor Aubrey works within, I incorporate photographs taken during my stay and research in Ghana, West Africa. These images, as visual ethnographic products, interpret and represent memories of Kwame Nkrumah, his theory, and the re-membering of his cultural and economic development of Ghana. These images alongside images of Dr. Aubrey, her family, and the NGO’s development will at times highlight the oral history and theory and at times contradict it.

This strategy aims to illustrate Dr. Aubrey's struggle with Antonio Gramsci's notion of praxis and the complexities praxis possesses.<sup>11</sup> The geographic location of the photographs spans the Ghanaian nation and reflects my own perception of Pan-Africanism, political economy, and social justice; this also exemplifies how I mediate the narrative.

Gloria Moráles' life history is situated in New York City.<sup>12</sup> Throughout our visits, I witnessed her interactions with co-workers, community members, her Nuyorican<sup>13</sup> pride, and her philosophy on life. She is the embodiment of Gloria Anzaldúa's theories of the flesh (*This Bridge Called My Back*). She is an urban working-class Puerto Rican woman, who has raised four children, a number of grandchildren and great grandchildren, while doing community-building work in Spanish Harlem – and continues to do so at the age of seventy-nine. Mrs. Moráles' oral history begins at a time when Puerto Ricans were relatively newly arrived migrants<sup>14</sup> of East Harlem, a place that was predominantly Jewish and Italian. The overt racism, sexism, and classism that Mrs. Moráles encountered significantly shaped her definition of community and community work. Unlike Dr. Aubrey and Dr. Woodland, Mrs.

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<sup>11</sup>Praxis, most simply is a combination of theory, a critical thinking about the world, and practice that is within a political arena. Praxis, for Gramsci, becomes the responsibility of the organic intellectual as s/he works with the masses to become critical of the world around them and mobilize for change. For more on praxis, common sense and the organic intellectual, see "The Study of Philosophy," 323-377, in Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

<sup>12</sup>There was much consideration in on my part to exclude this life history for fear of reproducing a body of literature that highlighted the extraordinary within the ordinary so much so that there seemed to be no need for a notion of praxis. Upon my own experiences within the field, however, I realized that whether we as academics are present or not, the struggle will continue and community members will do the best they can to keep communities afloat.

<sup>13</sup>A term used to identify Puerto Ricans who live in New York. This term points out the multiple layers of nationalism and cultural memory as Puerto Rican and American.

<sup>14</sup>Because of Puerto Rico's status of US commonwealth, Puerto Ricans possess US citizenship and migrate to and from the US as opposed to immigrate.

Moráles did not have opportunities for higher education that enable her to articulate and theorize upon her everyday life situation and interweave these reflections with social activism.

However, much like Dr. Aubrey and Dr. Woodland, Mrs. Moráles' everyday experiences and her fluid, contextual performances of culture and race influence her images of community and community leadership. For instance, Mrs. Moráles helped organize community outings that centered on providing youth with experiences and activities that would deter them from participating in "at risk" behavior while on summer break from school. Much of Mrs. Moráles' community work stems from her Puerto Rican, Roman Catholic upbringing and beliefs. She volunteers at the local community catholic school and church. As a mother first and foremost, Mrs. Moráles not only knew all the community children, she also felt a shared responsibility for each of them. She imagines family and belonging as reaching beyond blood relation. In turn, this image of familial community enables her to *re-member* her experiences, articulate them in ways to help other community members and motivates her to do community-building work such as starting an after-school community center at the Thomas Jefferson Housing developments in Spanish Harlem.

Mrs. Moráles' material conditions of *being* a "traditional," Puerto Rican housewife and mother from a working class family have limited her ability to physically travel, thus differentiating her from Dr. Aubrey and Dr. Woodland. However, her memories as well as her racial and cultural experiences have shaped her sense of home-space in similar ways. These go beyond borders in a material and imaginative sense. In other words, she imagines her community work as physically transforming borders through everyday interactions, and she forms alliances with those who do not necessarily "fit" within her national, gendered, and

geographical upbringing. She has *become* a world traveler through her everyday interactions and her contributions to change.



**Figure 1.3: Jefferson Houses Community Garden, fall of 2006.**

Mrs. Moráles' black skin re-shapes her cultural memory of being *Nuyorican* and places her within a space of liminality, as Gloria Anzaldúa describes it, a space between worlds and between borders (*Borderlands* 101-2), as she shifts between multiple points of identification enabling her to communicate beyond raced, gendered, and sexed nationalistic borders. This space of liminality also has racist and sexist consequences which at times prove to be physically life threatening. These consequences play a significant role in how Mrs. Moráles constructs her own *theories of the flesh* to continue her community work and re-member her life history through our conversations. Mrs. Moráles' physical appearance places her as a visible part of the black Diaspora and opposes popular representations<sup>15</sup> of

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<sup>15</sup>I am talking about both media and master narrative representations of Puerto Rican-ness that illustrate concepts of blackness through the politics of (in)visibility.

what it *means* to *be* Puerto Rican. To reinforce Puerto Ricans as part of the black Diaspora I use iconic images of Puerto Ricans, which includes Mrs. Morales' family photographs. In using these images, I aim to combat the normative definitions of Latino-ness, blackness, and Puerto Rican-ness that shape fixed media and intellectual representations.

### **Conclusion**

I locate the life and work of Dr. Malcolm Woodland, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, and Mrs. Gloria Morales in varying spaces within the black Diaspora. I argue their connections lie within their life experiences of belonging to blackness. Their embodied experiences have influenced their dedication to and strategies for social justice through community building and activism. I argue their experiences of belonging are directly related to the racialization of blackness in the United States even though each of them envisions belonging and home-space beyond U.S. borders. Those who experience belonging within the racialization of blackness in the United States, always and already experience it from an insider position. As D. Soyini Madison articulates,

I experience black belonging on American soil as a space of flux and ambiguity constituting multiple identities; however, this belonging remains a discursive and material association with specific bodies based on historical, social, and political arrangements that are regulated through law, culture and the everyday. As this belonging is discursively instituted and materially experienced, my black body is further evidence that I am not white and that I belong to the category of blackness. ("Street Performance" 541)

Madison’s description of belonging and the racialization and regulation of blackness similarly drives these three community workers to do what they do. Blackness is a fluid marker of included exclusion that is racialized through visibly oppressed bodies (Rodney 16-



17).

**Figure 1.4:**  
**Liquor store**  
**and grocery**  
**shop across**  
**the street**  
**from**  
**Glenwood**

**Public Housing entrance in Brooklyn, New York.**

In this sense, it is also Dr. Woodland’s, Dr. Aubrey’s, and Mrs. Moráles’ imagined home-spaces that affect their leadership and activism. Their life stories are tied together by blackness, and they embody this description through what Michel Foucault describes as subjugated knowledges.<sup>16</sup> Foucault defines subjugated knowledges as simply “what people know.” He continues, “...this by no means is the same thing as common knowledge or common sense but, on the contrary, a particular knowledge, a knowledge that is local, regional, or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it” (8). These three oral history performances are subjugated knowledges.

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<sup>16</sup>Foucault provides two definitions of subjugated knowledges as a way to revision political discourse. I will usurp Foucault’s definitions of subjugated knowledges to link the three told narratives and describe the telling of the narratives. For now, I will define the second as it coincides with Madison’s description above and links these life histories together.

Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Moráles are conscious of their belonging to blackness and the racialization of blackness, which enable them to act and organize within their communities. Their leadership extends beyond common sense and contradicts the status quo.



**Figure 1.5:**  
**Newly**  
**constructed**  
**condominiums**  
**(left) that**  
**begin at**  
**\$700,000 per**  
**floor, located**

**across the street from Thomas Jefferson Public Housing.**

The *telling of* and the *told* oral histories through performance is an attempt “to desubjugate historical knowledges, to set them free, or in other words to enable them to oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse” (Foucault 10).<sup>17</sup>

Before encountering the life histories of Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Moráles, Chapter Two will theorize upon racism, (be)longing (to) for homespace, and activism for social justice, the highlighted themes of these oral history performances. This next chapter provides the theoretical framework for this project. As mentioned previously, I will use the works of Michel Foucault, Achille Mbembe, and other critical race and Cultural

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<sup>17</sup>Here, Foucault refers to genealogy; however, I argue that oral histories defined through performance studies possess the same goal as genealogy.

Studies theorists to contextualize these life histories within biopolitical life. By doing so, I will highlight their insider outsider position as vital to biopower and their creation of homespace as an effective strategy against racism. This chapter will conclude with the possibilities that the creations of homespaces possess for social change.

The life history performances of Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Moráles ground these combined theoretical concepts in the next three chapters. Hence, Chapters Three, Four, and Five will be the three oral history performances. Chapter Three presents the life history performance of Dr. Malcolm Woodland, Chapter Four is the life history performance of Dr. Lisa Aubrey, and Chapter Five is the life history performance of Mrs. Gloria Moráles. The final chapter concludes that the Cultural Studies analysis of racism intertwined with performance and media ethnography, as illustrated by the three previous oral history performances, is a useful means toward generating multiple possibilities for social justice and equality.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'HOMESPACE' AS BECOMING: THE BLACK DIASPORA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

“¿Qué es Patria? ¿Sabes acaso lo que preguntas, mi amor? What is a homeland? Do you know, my love, what you are asking?”

Salomé Urena, [qtd in] *In the Name of Salomé*,  
Julia Alvarez

In the previous chapter, I shared how I began this project, how I came to understand the intersections of racism, homespace, and activism for social justice, and how I perceive myself as critical ethnographer. I begin this chapter, still, as critical ethnographer, but also as cultural analyst,<sup>18</sup> framing my ethnographic work within particular theoretical perspectives. My position in choosing the theoretical framework that follows echoes Lawrence Grossberg's description of the cultural analyst:

The cultural analyst moves through the complexity of social positions and social identities, allowing him- or herself to travel through and be mobilely situated in the fluidly structured field of forces. He or she moves with or within the field of popular culture and daily life, mapping as best he or she can the configuration of practices, the lines of articulation and flight. While such wandering is never random or capricious, its paths can never be guaranteed in advance...nor can such wandering ever complete its itinerary through the field. There are always paths to follow, other paths one could

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<sup>18</sup>I use cultural analyst as a way to describe one of the components of the “critical” in critical ethnography.

have taken, and the choices made reflect as much the cultural analyst as they do the historical determinations of the critical act. If one is never in control of such wanderings, one is also never merely blown about by the winds of popular and intellectual judgment. In the final analysis, analysts as storytellers are reshaped by the stories they are telling. (*We Gotta Get Out of This Place* 66)

The political paths that I have decided to highlight in the following three chapters, rather, the ‘articulations of flight’, paved with possibilities and chosen by my interviewees, could have been highlighted in various ways. I have listened to these life histories unaware of where they would lead me. Grossberg’s passage encompasses my explorations of racism, homespace, and activism. It reflects the way in which I have chosen the theories that frame my three oral history performances within the intersections of these three tropes.

This chapter introduces racism as the foundational concept of my theoretical analysis. This first section draws connections between the racialization of blackness and biopolitical life. Having already introduced the oral history performances I present as subjugated knowledges, I begin with this section because I want to portray how power produces truth-effects that rely upon racism and the racialization of blackness. In drawing out these connections, I argue the United States has become an active model of biopolitics and biopower, which utilizes representations of blackness, whether individualized or generalized, as a driving force of exercising power.<sup>19</sup> Along these lines, I analyze racism as a significant function of biopolitics and biopower to highlight the lives of Dr. Lisa Aubrey, Dr. Malcolm Woodland, and Mrs. Gloria Moráles as people of the black Diaspora living in the United

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<sup>19</sup>This idea the United States has become a major force of biopower positions the U.S. within the realm of biopolitics similar to that of *Empire*’s positioning of the United States. According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* is a new form of global governing that rises out of biopolitics and the U.S. possesses a privileged space within it but is not ‘Empire’ in and of itself (xi-xvi).

States. By highlighting racism as playing a key role within biopolitics and biopower, I reinforce the notion of *homespace* as an analytical concept as well as its significance to the racialization of blackness discussed in the last chapter.

I demonstrate how the performances of race and belonging arise from racist regulations of bodies. Following the last section, I argue the shifts between necropower and biopower form black subjects that are connected by the terror of racism marked by colonialism and slavery. This process explains how my three interviewees can, in fact, create imagined communities and, in turn, strategies for change. It also defines the black Diaspora as a relationship of togetherness that does not depend on essentialism or territorial definitions of culture, but an active awareness of belonging to the category of blackness, which is synonymous to continuously possessing an excluded/included position within the United States. This chapter will conclude with how a sense of belonging to blackness is a notion of homespace that is a non-chronological subjective space with possibilities of mobilization for social justice.

### **Biopolitics, Racism, and Blackness**

“Being a black man in America isn’t easy. A hunt is on and you’re the prey. And, all’s I’m sayin’ is...all’s I’m sayin’...is you gotta survive.”

Allen and Albert Hughes, *Menace II Society*

Foucault states, “we keep saying the same thing, and there again, perhaps we’re not saying anything at all” (“Society Must Be Defended” 4).<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Grossberg argues a

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<sup>20</sup>Within his discussion of the Left, Grossberg focuses on three underlying reasons as to why the kind of work that is required is not done. First, he argues, “the Left makes the same arguments over and over again as if they were new, as if they explained everything” (165). Second, he states that there is a tendency to think about

similar point when he discusses reasons as to why the Left is losing to the Right in the United States (*Caught in the Crossfire* 162).<sup>21</sup> To paraphrase Grossberg, we are losing this battle to the right because we are not doing the work which is required (*Caught in the Crossfire* 164-174). As stated in the last chapter, Foucault offers his analysis of subjugated knowledges as a way to revision how we theorize upon and practice politics. Foucault also argues that subjugated knowledges are also those knowledges that are marginalized or rendered invisible through efficacies of particular discourses (“Society Must Be Defended” 7).<sup>22</sup> I offer an analysis of each of these oral history performances also to illustrate Foucault’s second notion of subjugated knowledge. In other words, I analyze these oral history performances to not only incorporate a discussion of the very real, raced experiences of everyday life within particular, political discourses but also to historicize political philosophy within the context of race and racism.

Along these same lines, Achille Mbembe argues that to further theorize upon biopolitical life and globalization, we must incorporate race. Mbembe states, “More so than

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people as heroes whose tactics of survival are a deeper source of knowledge than those with particular expertise or to think about people as gullible and ignorant (168). Third, the Left perceives truth as politics when politics is strategic and is about possibilities not about what is true. For a deeper analysis of “the losing battle of the Left,” see chapter six of Lawrence Grossberg’s *Caught in the Crossfire: Kids, Politics, and America’s Future*.

<sup>21</sup>Grossberg describes his use of the term, the Left, as a fragmented, non-singular term used to identify those who possess certain fundamental values, such as a belief in “universal freedom, equality, and justice [and a belief]...that social problems can be solved through reason and compromise, since [the Left] believes in the basic goodness of people” (*Caught in the Crossfire* 162).

<sup>22</sup>Foucault illustrates his point through the phenomenon of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Foucault argues that both psychoanalysis and Marxism proved viable as applied political philosophy, however, the efficacies of these discourses mask other(ed) knowledges and prevent new political thought (2-12). Foucault provides the example of the “anarchist thematic” and refers to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* (5). He states, “I am thinking much more specifically of the efficacy of something—I hesitate to call it a book—like *Anti-Oedipus*, which referred to, which refers to nothing but its own prodigious theoretical creativity” (5). Here he does not critique Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, but how academia exacerbates its usage and how this usage in turn affects the knowledges that are produced.

class thinking (the ideology that defines history as an economic struggle of classes), race has been the ever present shadow in western political thought and practice” and is the technology at which biopower is exercised (“Necropolitics” 17). Congruent to Mbembe, Jackson argues, “Any discussion of globalization that does not make race one of its central analytical components threatens to offer an impoverished notion of globality that reproduces inequalities through its theoretical silences” (*Real Black* 56). Thus, it is my belief that when particular discourses, at best, marginalize race discourse and, at worst, render it invisible, they often reproduce the very injustice they aim to combat.<sup>23</sup> Race and the discussion of race in this sense have been policed by a politics of visibility that is produced by (and reproduces) hegemonic discourses of high theory, canonical texts, and claims of cultural diversity.<sup>24</sup> These hegemonic discourses are the very efficacies Foucault argues against. Contrarily, I aim to position race as a focal point of political discourse through my theoretical interpretations of these oral history performances by way of racism.

Paul Gilroy’s *Postcolonial Melancholia* begins in a similar place of race as subjugated knowledge. He questions the dismissal of race within academic forums and calls for a return to the analysis of how race perpetuates particular modes of governing bodies (*Postcolonial* 7-12). Gilroy historicizes race as a complex, contextual, powerful product that

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<sup>23</sup>It is not my wish to call any particular theorist(s) into question but understand that it is necessary to provide examples as proof. With this said, an illustration of the marginalizing or masking of race in a universal, global theory of present day politics would be Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri interestingly discuss present day political life in terms of Foucault’s biopolitics and biopower, however, race and racism take up a mere fraction of the otherwise long book. I say interestingly because, according to Foucault, racism is the necessary component of biopolitical life and biopower (“Society Must Be Defended” 255).

<sup>24</sup>Kara Keeling makes a similar argument on the politics of visibility concentrating on black lesbian and gay images in “Joining the Lesbians’: Cinematic Regimes of Black Visibility” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, pgs. 213-227. Keeling argues, “the appearance of black lesbians and gay images is made possible through a regime of visibility that has conceded to currently hegemonic notions of “lesbian and gay sexuality” and in the primacy binary and exclusive gender categories in the articulation of sexuality” (218).

“supplies a foundational understanding of natural hierarchy on which a host of other supplementary social and political conflicts come to rely” (*Postcolonial* 8). It is my hope that this section’s detailed analysis of Michel Foucault’s biopolitical life and its dependence on a racist hierarchy will dislevel the regimes of truth and political conflicts that rely upon it. From this hope, I take a similar approach as Gilroy toward discussing the present-day politics of race in the United States by placing racism in the forefront of my analysis of performances of race. As Gilroy argues, “Recognizing the role of race...should lead us...not deeper into an engagement with race or racial conflict—understood as a natural phenomena—but away from “race” altogether and toward a confrontation with the enduring power of racisms” (*Postcolonial* 9). My approach claims that biopolitical life necessarily relies upon and perpetuates racism to exert power over life and death, which shapes black bodies as unintentional, subjective targets.

Moreover, Gilroy calls for an analysis of the practices of everyday life through racism and not race, arguing that race is a product of racism and not the other way around. Too often, race is posed as a cause of racism inciting practices of “political correctness” and tolerance for differences that merely mask social injustices as opposed to combating them. These practices, stemming from points of view that arise from the very belly of racism, reinforce W.E.B. Dubois’ question posed over a hundred years ago, “How does it feel to be a problem?” (Dubois 164). In discussing the relationship between race and human rights, Gilroy states, “‘Race’ would then be an eternal cause of racism rather than what it is for me—its complex, unstable product. I should probably emphasize at this point that neither race nor racism are the exclusive property of the minorities who are their primary victims” (*Postcolonial* 14). Here, Gilroy echoes Dubois’ question by highlighting how race, viewed

as the cause of racism, becomes the sole burden of people of color who are deemed the problem. Furthermore, Lawrence Grossberg argues that tolerance fails to be an adequate solution to political problems of communication because “it cannot tolerate intolerance nor defeat it. And it cannot escape the inequality implicit in the difference between the tolerant and the tolerated; it cannot empower the tolerated as real agents of social change” (Grossberg *Caught in the Crossfire* 317).<sup>25</sup> Tolerance remains to be a solution that only perpetuates Dubois’ dilemma.

My analysis of racism’s significance to biopolitical life attempts to disturb truth in order to open possibilities of change and highlight the ways wherein *those who are tolerated* act as social agents. As Michel Foucault argues,

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own political practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of a new

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<sup>25</sup>Tolerance, in this sense, shifts attention from the social toward the individual, and, at times, simultaneously shifts the victimizer into the role of the victim. This point is becoming more apparent as there are more examples of our society’s intolerance for intolerance. Such examples are the highly covered Mel Gibson anti-Semitic slurs heard by officers who pulled Gibson over for suspected (later proven) DUI and Michael Richards, the star who played Kramer on *Seinfeld*, who was filmed yelling the racial/racist slurs at black audience members at a comedy club. The outrage for both instances was calmed by public apologies, both of which placed the “blame” elsewhere. Both stars claimed the racial slurs were “slips”; Gibson blamed alcoholism caused by stress and even went to rehab to enact his sincere apologies; similarly, Kramer blamed stress and his inexperience with stand-up comedy. The most recent star to be under the scrutiny of the media is Isaiah Washington for saying homophobic slurs on the set of *Grey’s Anatomy*. He was sent to counseling to resolve the problem. Intolerance for intolerance focuses merely on the intolerable speech act and the individual, who can be rehabilitated. Hence, one could think within racist, sexist, homophobic frameworks but cannot consciously say them publicly unless perhaps you are with people who feel the same way as in the beginning of the academy award winning, *The Departed*, where Jack Nicholson’s Irish character discusses his “Irish-ness” against notions of blackness as clips of racial violence against black folk are shown. Moreover, the focus on those who “slipped” has become one of empathy and victimization; thus, the only victim of tolerance becomes the one who “slipped”.

Tolerance of difference also erases the productivity of difference that create possibilities of change. In discussing tactics against inequality, Audre Lorde argues, “Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives...Only within the interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate...” (Lorde 442). I will return to this notion of the productivity of difference later in the chapter.

politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses...but the political, economical, institutional régime of the production of truth (*"From Truth and Power"* 1670).

Thus, I turn my critical cultural analyses toward understanding how racism functions on the terrain of regimes of truth and power struggles.

### **Racism and the Racialization of Blackness in Biopolitical Life**

Foucault argues that colonialism marks the beginning blueprint of how biopower necessarily functions via racism. He states the establishment of colonialism inverses upon itself at the end of the sixteenth century:

[While] colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power on the West and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism on itself. (*"Society Must Be Defended"* 103)

The boomerang effect that Foucault describes enables a new technology of power to emerge, biopolitics and biopower, during the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> This historical juncture marks the transition from solely disciplining particular, individual bodies to the regularization of populations in the name of humanity. He argues that prior to this moment, the sovereign's

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<sup>26</sup>There are moments when Foucault does not distinguish from biopolitics and biopower and there are times that he does. I believe he does this purposefully to highlight the discursive power biopolitics possesses in and of itself and to also establish that biopower is an extension of biopolitics. Here, I do not distinguish between the terms to keep along the lines of Foucault's description. I will, however, distinguish between the two later as it pertains to my analysis of racism (and Foucault's analysis as well).

power over life, via disciplinary actions upon the individual, was only demonstrated when the sovereign can kill, e.g., the public display of torture and death (*Society Must be Defended* 240). This form of discipline dissipates and a new exertion of power arises that is less visible, non-corporeal, and more general—this power could be exerted onto any one body at any point in space and time (*Discipline and Punish* 135-228). Society, thus, becomes less a disciplinary society and more one which is about control.<sup>27</sup> Foucault states:

Unlike discipline...the new non-disciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to living man, to man-as-living-being...to man-as-species...the new technology that is being established is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individualizing bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. (“*Society Must be Defended*” 242-3)

Within biopolitics, death, illness, etc. are no longer sudden threats but have a permanent existence within life itself, impacting upon and threatening all of humanity.

Biopolitics no longer deals with the individual but “deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as a power’s problem” (“*Society Must be Defended*” 244-5).

Biopolitical life is continuously intertwined with the fear of the threat of death generalized

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<sup>27</sup>In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri similarly explain Foucault’s transition toward a society of control within their analysis of biopolitical production and biopower (22-41). They do not, however, acknowledge race and/or racism within their analysis of biopolitics and biopower, which, I argue, is a “thin” reading of how biopower functions, especially since racism and race are necessary to how biopower operates for Foucault. Hardt and Negri do not fully omit racism from their discussion of how *Empire* works within biopolitical life. However, their analysis is limited to colonialism, imperialism and decolonialism, which then presents racism as a historical moment (114-136), and is convoluted by their critiques of critical race theorists (190-194). Their discussion of racism within *Empire* is then reduced to less than two paragraphs, one of which (the full paragraph) refers to the section aforementioned on how racism functions within colonialism (194-5).

into the active proliferation of human existence over human extinction. Here, I use the phrase “fear of the threat of death” because Foucault explicitly states that power within biopolitical life is not concerned with death unlike disciplinary power, which displays its power through death. For Foucault, power in biopolitical life ignores death because death is outside of the power relationship. It is actually the only thing outside of the power relationship.<sup>28</sup>

Foucault states, “Power has no control over death, but it can control mortality. And to that extent, it is only natural that death should now be privatized, and should become the most private thing of all...death now becomes, in contrast, the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak into his own privacy. Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death” (“Society Must Be Defended” 248). The notion that power no longer recognizes death can be illustrated through the lack of government intervention during Hurricane Katrina, where the government was accused of literally ignoring death. Even with media coverage and public outrage, government intervention for reconstruction is relatively minuscule. The aftermath of Katrina solidifies Foucault’s point as more and more private organizations had to be relied upon for relocation and reconstruction responsibilities, leaving the government responsible only for policing bodies that survived the hurricane.<sup>29</sup> Biopolitics, in this sense, is solely concerned with “the regularization of life” (Foucault “Society Must Be Defended” 249). This mode of regularization occurs via biopower.

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<sup>28</sup>Achille Mbembe argues against Foucault’s arguments around death with his discussion of necropolitics and necropower which I will in depth discuss later (“Necropolitics” 24-40).

<sup>29</sup>This was illustrated in the post-Katrina (Kanye West’s “Bush hates black people”) media coverage of police “maintaining order” throughout the neighborhoods. This ordering of neighborhoods was predominantly footage of police officers restraining and arresting black men for “breaking curfew”. This is also an example of biopower and the regularization of blackness which I will discuss shortly.

Biopower refers to the disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms of the State exercised throughout biopolitical life. Foucault argues that both mechanisms exist on two separate planes of biopower, yet are able to articulate each other (“Society Must Be Defended” 250). As I previously mentioned, discipline transforms into a general exertion of power that could be attached to *anybody* at any point in space and time. Thus, within biopower, the disciplining of a particular body could then be articulated onto a general population through regulatory mechanisms, and then back onto another body.<sup>30</sup> These planes of mechanisms are exerted within biopolitical life through the establishment and propagation of norms. Foucault states, “The norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize...The normalizing society is a society in which the norm of discipline and the norm of regulation intersect along an orthogonal articulation” (“Society Must Be Defended” 253). Normalizing tools both discipline a subject and regulate the population.

It is within a normalizing society that death, or as I have said previously, the threat of death (for regulating the regeneration of life) opens a pathway to incorporate racism as necessary for biopolitical life and biopower. Racism has two primary functions within biopolitics; it, first, distinguishes between what should live and what should die. Foucault states,

The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast are described as inferior: all this is way

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<sup>30</sup>It is the reason why, Foucault argues, medicine becomes so prevalent in the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Foucault states, “Medicine is a power-knowledge that can be applied to both the body and the population, both the organism and the biological processes, and it will therefore have both disciplinary effects and regulatory effects” (“Society Must Be Defended” 252). Medicine could be prescribed onto one body while simultaneously applied to all bodies through norms.

of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. [Racism] is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population. It is in short a way of establishing a biological-type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain. This will allow power to treat that population as a mixture of races...to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known precisely as races.” (“Society Must Be Defended” 255)

Racism, thus, divides humanity into subgroups in order to control the population. Racism in this sense also creates a hierarchy of racial difference which justifies the death of particular *rac*es.

The second function of racism establishes the death of what *should* die as something positive for what *should* live; in other words, the death of others becomes how life flourishes. “The fact that the other dies does not simply mean that I live in a sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race the inferior race (or the degenerate or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer” (“Society Must Be Defended” 255). This enables biopower to exercise control on both disciplinary and regulatory planes for normalization more efficiently. The Rodney King beating and trial exemplify how the regulation of norms maintain and reproduce a racialization of blackness that justifies disciplinary police action and *masks* excessive force. The footage of Rodney King’s brutal beating by Los Angeles police officers marked a moment where disciplinary control was, at the very least, held accountable for racism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Of course, we could add the multiple accounts of excessive force and brutality exercised upon raced bodies by the police, such as Abner Luima, sodomized and beaten by New York City Police officers while in custody, Amadou Diallo, an unarmed African shot over fifty times by NYPD and footage of the police “maintaining order” in New Orleans post-Hurricane Katrina that resembled the Rodney King beating. Each case exemplifies a long history of racist instances where both disciplinary and regulatory effects are evident. Foucault also refers to the police as functioning on both a disciplinary and state apparatus plane (“Society Must Be Defended” 250).

However, the acquittal of the police officers accused of using excessive force relied upon the very footage that served to indict them.<sup>32</sup>

The frame by frame account of King's beating during the trial allowed for the defense to argue (along with the testimony of the officers) that they had no other choice but to continuously club King in order to subdue him. The defense's argument relied upon the social norms that function on the racist, racialization of blackness as an inferior, subspecies with King as a representative of those norms.<sup>33</sup> Through a detailed analysis of Rodney King's body, imaged as a racialized, *rightfully* disciplined object throughout the trial,<sup>34</sup> Alen Feldman argues,

These are pre-social naturalized terrain from which the sanctioned enforcer extracts the disciplinary subject as so much "raw material" to be reworked by the State. Likewise, the mythic anti-societal zones from which the disciplinary subject is obtained marked the latter's embodiment as pre-social through the stigma of animality. The bodily-alterity of the suspect-as-animal predetermines the material character and the physical locus of police action on their captive. Bestial imagery

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<sup>32</sup>I realize that I have shifted from the actual event to the imaged event; however, I believe this shift only strengthens my argument on the significance of racism within biopolitical life and how inescapable racism can be. Here, we see State discipline and regulation slip onto another layer of biopolitical life, the media. For Foucault, this occurrence is precisely how biopower maintains its success; it spills its regulations of norms onto other institutions and, in turn, these institutions can easily take on dimensions of the State ("Society Must Be Defended" 246-253). Similarly, Hardt and Negri argue that there is a centralization of control within the information and communication structure that promises a "new democracy and a new social equality, [but] have created new lines of inequality and exclusion..." (300).

<sup>33</sup>I am not arguing this was conscious, whether it was a conscious decision on the defense's part or not is irrelevant for my purposes.

<sup>34</sup>Through the analysis of the media coverage of Desert Storm and Rodney King (both the beating and the trial), Feldman argues that the ways in which media is used promotes cultural anesthesia, "the banishment of disconcerting discordant and anarchic, sensory presences that undermine the normalizing and often silent premises of everyday life" (89). For more on cultural anesthesia, see Allen Feldman's "From Desert Storm to Rodney King's Via Ex-Yugoslavia: On Cultural Anesthesia."

continued to leak into subsequently characterizations of King made by defense witnesses and the accused. King was referred to as “bearlike”, and as “getting on his haunches” by Officer Powell in testimony. Animal imagery may have informed Officer Powell’s project of both *taming and caging* King within a prescribed spatial perimeter, a practice that has both penal and racial overtones. (95)<sup>35</sup>

Feldman’s references to Officer Powell and the witnesses of the defense first illustrates how blackness, described as pre-social and (thus) animalistic, ascribed onto King’s body enables the officers to discipline King with violence. The same references to King in lieu of blackness convince the jury to conclude that the force exercised on King was essential to his compliance, leading to the officers’ acquittals. The images of the riot that ensued after the verdict only enforced the representation of blackness as that which should be feared and disciplined, falling back from King onto a black population as a whole. These images result in civilized society and the white body positioned as potential victim, preyed upon by racial other,<sup>36</sup> thus a seemingly naturalized protection of some of the population from other parts of the population is not only accepted but desired. This acceptance and desire that is rooted in racism returns us to Foucault’s premise of racism’s two functions within biopower: (1) the allowance and justification of some of the population’s death (2) in order for some of the population to live *healthy, normal* lives.

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<sup>35</sup>Feldman argues that Officer Powell’s reference to “gorillas in the midst” in response to a domestic violence call twenty minutes prior to stopping Rodney King “evokes the jungle, the wilderness, the frontier; outside spaces opposed to civilization” (94-5). This outside space is the terrain that Feldman refers to in my citation.

<sup>36</sup>Here, I am specifically thinking about the footage of Reginald Denny, the truck driver who was beaten by teenagers during the riot, displayed repeatedly by the media. The repetition of this footage both masks the reasons for the riot and erases the violent act against King altogether, imaging a new victim of racism. Furthermore, Denny’s statement at a press conference where he forgives his assailants, an image similar to that of Rodney King’s infamous statement to the press, “Can’t we all just get along?” re-inscribed a hierarchy of difference. Denny’s position of forgiveness unlike King’s seemingly almost apologetic position, privileges Denny’s body as a recognizable, victimized body capable of forgiving recognizable assailants.

The double function of racism within biopolitical life and biopower establishes a warlike perspective centered upon particular races via norms.

When you have a normalizing society, you have a power which is at least superficially, in the first instance, or in the first line a biopower, and racism is the indispensable precondition that allows someone to be killed, that allows others to be killed. Once the state functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous functions of the State...[racism] is the precondition for exercising the right to kill...When I say “killing”, I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (“Society Must Be Defended” 256)

Racism within biopower allows for the State to function as if it is in a constant state of war against racialized blackness, justifying its right to kill and masking the victims of racism as victimizers. This *state of war* can be illustrated by various forms of indirect murder, such as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and its relationship to race and class mentioned previously, as well as the high percentage rate of young men of color who are presently “at risk” for education (Latino is ranked first, followed by Black). Furthermore, in 2006, the American Census Bureau estimated that 46.6 million people did not have medical insurance in the U.S., 19.6% of which identified as Black, 32.7% identified as Latino, and 11.3% identified as white. Hence, Blacks and Latinos are more likely to live without medical insurance than their white counterparts.

Prisons similarly exemplify both direct and indirect murder influencing State politics as well. The U.S. is ranked second to Russia as possessing the most people in prison; it is

also ranked as one of the two countries (the other is China) with the highest execution rates. Blacks and Latinos comprise two-thirds of the U.S. prison population, yet less than a quarter of the U.S. population.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the incarceration percentage rate for women of color in the U.S. is the fastest growing prison population; the age for these women range between the ages of 24-34. At first glance, the simple conclusion would be that Black and Latinos commit more crimes; however, studies reveal otherwise. Black youth are six times more likely to be incarcerated with no prior admission (Latino youth three times more likely) than their white counterparts for the same offense. “Blacks make up only about fifteen percent of the drug-using population but account for one-third of the arrests, over half of the convictions, and three-quarters of those sentenced to prison” (Grossberg *Caught in the Crossfire* 82). Blacks and Latinos are also affected politically by these prisons. Once convicted, prisoners are denied their voting rights, but, through relocation, are counted in the state legislative district of the town they occupy during their sentence. This process diminishes the minority voting strength (especially in urban spaces), while enhancing the voting strength of predominantly white non-urban communities and the power of a state mechanism -- the legislature -- to make decisions for that population (not to mention its affect on electoral votes).<sup>38</sup>

War also functions under these racist premises. Foucault argues that within biopolitics war becomes a way “of improving one’s own race by eliminating the enemy race (in

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<sup>37</sup>Unless noted otherwise these statistics were taken from Paul D’Amato’s “Color of Justice” from *The Internationalist Socialist Review*, Issue 12, June-July 2000.

<sup>38</sup>It has been argued that this process is a systematic (and thus far successful) attempt to undermine socio-political mobilization and equality for minorities in the United States and also echoes the Three-Fifths clause—one of the laws implemented in the southern states during slavery to gain voting strength that states three men would be added to the population for every five blacks. For more on this process, see “Hungry Blues: The New Three-Fifths Clause (Part One)”, February 14, 2005. See also Angela Davis and/or Assata Shakur on the prison industrial complex.

accordance with the themes of natural selection and the struggle for existence), but also as a way of regenerating one's own race. As more and more of our number die, the race to which we belong will become all the purer" ("Society Must Be Defended" 257). With the high drop-out and incarceration rates, the military becomes a viable solution for many people of color and working class youth.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, during the Vietnam War, the U.S. military promised work skills, desirable benefits, and socio-economic growth upon completion of service specifically appealing to the working class, Latino and black communities under the guise of socio-economic mobility. Proposals like Project 100,000 primarily allowed those who initially failed the mental proficiency section of the military exam to be retested and most likely inducted into the military under the new test score requirements.

However, low scores channeled a majority of the Project 100,000 men to work semi- or non-skilled occupations and prevented them from obtaining promotions. Low scores almost guaranteed these "New Standards" men combat duties. The men of Project 100,000 had a death rate that was double of the entire US military. With illustrations of both the justified indirect and direct killing of black bodies, it seems biopolitical life makes possible the subjective targeting of black bodies by biopower through racism. The subjective targeting of black bodies that exists today comes out of racist normalizing processes within biopolitical life. These racist, normalizing processes justify and proliferate the killing of black bodies. Blackness, as a signifier of that which needs to be killed, indirectly and/or

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<sup>39</sup>U.S. military recruitment seemingly continues to target primarily working class, Latino, and Black communities under the guise of socio-economic mobility and "free" higher education. This is apparent in any of their current recruitment commercials that play on working class ideals. One for instance, portrays a young black man telling his mother that he has now found a way to support himself and her, so he is finally a man (through enlisting in the army). Another commercial portrays a young black girl practicing in the mirror on how to tell her mother she has enlisted in the army as a solution to gain higher education.

directly, so that life can flourish, stems from colonialism as continuous state of exception and colonial subject as an included/excluded subject.

### **Colonial Slavery as State of Exception, Colonial Subject as Included Exclusion**

Foucault provides Nazi Germany as the ultimate demonstration of the effects of biopower, stating that Nazi Germany marks the point at which there is simultaneously an absolute racist state, murderous state, and suicidal state (“Society Must Be Defended” 260). Agreeing with Foucault’s development of biopower and its dependence on racism, Achille Mbembe expands upon Foucault’s biopower. He argues the complete conflation of war and politics along with the coinciding of racism, homicide, and suicide to the point where they are inseparable is not unique to the Nazi State (“Necropolitics” 17-18). Mbembe states that traces of biopower appear throughout modernity, where technologies of murder aim to civilize killing and “also aim at disposing of a large number of victims in a relatively short span of time. At the same time a new cultural sensibility emerges where killing the enemy of the state is an extension of play. More intimate, lurid and leisurely forms of cruelty appear” (“Necropolitics” 19). Congruent to Foucault’s aforementioned account of the rise of biopolitics within colonialism, Mbembe locates slavery as the first moment of “biopolitical experimentation” and argues “the very structure of the plantation system and its aftermath manifests the emblematic and paradoxical figure of the state of exception” (“Necropolitics” 21). However, in an expansion of Foucault’s brief mention of colonialism and racism, Mbembe states that biopolitics and biopower are not sufficient in analyzing modern colonialism and the state of war. Mbembe introduces necropower to describe the state’s

incorporation of killing and death as part of the proliferation of life within *necropolitical* life. Modern day life becomes a combination of the biopolitical and the necropolitical.

For Mbembe, the acts of terror within colonialism and slavery mark the beginning of biopower's transformation into necropower. Mbembe states, "*Colonial occupation* itself was a matter of seizing, delimiting and asserting control over a physical geographical area—of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations" ("Necropolitics" 25). Borrowing from Frantz Fanon, Mbembe argues that colonial occupation compartmentalizes space and categorizes people. "It involves the setting of boundaries and internal frontiers epitomized by barracks and police stations; it is regulated by the language of pure force, immediate presence and frequent and direct action; and it is premised on the principle of reciprocal exclusivity" ("Necropolitics" 26). Here, Mbembe usurps the principle of reciprocal exclusivity from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (of which he footnotes) to highlight how necropower operates. Fanon states, "The world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask human realities...It is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to a given race, a given species" (*Wretched of the Earth* 39-40). With necropolitics, killing is direct and death is not ignored but proliferated in the name of humanity. For both Fanon and Mbembe, colonialism makes apparent the special, economic, and social divisions of who belongs and who does not, "who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not" ("Necropolitics" 27). Necropolitical life is

where people become “the living dead” and society functions under the notion of “death worlds” (“Necropolitics” 40).<sup>40</sup>

Before I discuss the black subject that arises from colonial slavery--a state of exception, I will first account for the concept, state of exception. Generally, the state of exception marks a point of exception to the norm, however, within biopower the state of exception becomes the norm.<sup>41</sup> Thus, colonial slavery as a state of exception functions as part of the normal society. According to Giorgio Agamben,

The exception does not subtract itself from the rule, rather the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule... We shall give the name *relation of exception* to the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion (*Homo Sacer* 18).

Hence, along with the state of exception functioning as the norm, whatever is included within this state of exception is included precisely by its exclusion. This included/excluded subject

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<sup>40</sup>There are traces of the modern colonial state and necropower within the realm of the United States as in Palestine and African States as discussed by Mbembe (“Necropolitics” 24-40). These traces are apparent in theories of nihilism within minority communities. For instance, mostly apparent during the Reagan Era and during the rise of crack cocaine, compartmentalized/segregated “ghettoes” were bombarded with the rise of gang culture and warfare, the easy access to guns, the commodification of human life, and the notion of the walking dead. This state of black life subjugated by necropower appears as themes in films such as *Boys N the Hood* and *Menace II Society*. I believe that life oscillates between biopolitics and necropolitics, modes of biopower and modes of necropower within the context of the United States. I make this distinction because I think biopower’s threat of death as opposed to necropower’s constant state of death allows for particular acts of racism to be “hidden” (ironically, by hiding it in the most visible spaces). This oscillation empowers and enables the modern sovereign to capture possibilities of resistance and appropriate them to work for biopolitics instead of against it. This echoes Giorgio Agamben’s interpretation of both Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari’s territorialization. Agamben states, “[...] sovereignty only rules over what it is capable of interiorizing...confronted with an excess, the system interiorizes what exceed it through an interdiction” (*Homo Sacer* 18). A good example of this would be hip hop culture, a resistant act of expression that for the most part lost its potential for resistance as soon as it became widespread.

<sup>41</sup>See Part Three, “The Camp as Biopolitical Paradigm of the Modern,” of Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 119-188.

formation then functions as normal; such is the state of the black subject that arises from colonialism.

Like Foucault, Agamben's absolute state of exception is illustrated by the concentration camp. For Agamben, the camp as a space of exception is a space where "law is completely suspended" and "the people who entered the camp move about in a zone of indistinction between the outside and the inside" (*Means Without End* 40). The people in the camps are "so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives to the point where committing any act toward them would no longer appear as a crime" (*Means Without End* 41). For Mbembe, however, prior to "the camp", the structure of colonial slavery functions in the same fashion. This coincides with where Foucault locates the beginning of biopolitical life. Mbembe states:

First, in the context of the plantation, the humanity of the slave appears as the perfect figure of the shadow. Indeed, the slave condition results from a triple loss: loss of a "home", loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether). To be sure, as a politico-juridical structure, the plantation is a space where the slave belongs to the master ("Necropolitics" 21).

Through the normalization of colonial slavery as a continuous state of exception, the slave as commodity verifies the slave's nonexistence as human or, rather, the slave's existence as human shadow. Slave as commodity within colonialism becomes the sign of that which is not only included by its exclusion but also susceptible to various acts of torture and terror. Ironically, however, the slave's position as commodity is also what assures the slave's existence, prolonging the status of "the camp."

In discussing the slave as commodity, Mbembe continues:

As an instrument of labor, the slave has a price. As a property, he or she has a value. His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive, but in a *state of injury*, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity. The violent tenor of the slave's life is manifested through the overseer's disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner and in the spectacle of the pain inflicted on the slave's body. Violence, here, becomes an element in manners, like whipping or taking the slave's life itself: an act of caprice and pure destruction aimed at instilling terror. Slave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life ("Necropolitics" 21).

The acts of terror and torture inflicted upon the slave by the overseer exemplify both Foucault and Agamben's Nazi camp as the state of exception. This positions the slave within a constant state of injury as if she/he were already dead, only to be kept alive by her/his relation to commerce. Power over life within slavery transforms the slave into a commodity. Thus, within colonial slavery, the slave's existence is apparent but not life. And, as Mbembe argues, "Because the slave's life is like a "thing," possessed by another person, the slave existence appears as a perfect figure of the shadow" ("Necropolitics" 22). The slave is part of humanity in that she/he belongs to a human, the human's shadow. Mbembe argues the uniqueness of this terror formation is "its concatenation of biopower, the state of exception, and the state of siege" ("Necropolitics" 22), which necessarily relies on race.

The colonial subject, as an embodiment of the colony, becomes interchangeable with the colony. Consequently, the state of the colonial subject is similar to the colonial slave in that the colonial subject is also a commodity susceptible to the violent acts of terror, allowed

and even enforced, within the state of exception. Mbembe states, “In fact, in most instances, the selection of races, the prohibition of mixed marriages, forced sterilization, even the extermination of vanquished peoples are...in the colonial world. Here we see the first synthesis between massacre and bureaucracy, that incarnation of Western reality” (“Necropolitics” 23). This justification and bureaucratization of mass murder relies on the notion that the colonizer is innately different from the colonized. Mbembe states:

That colonies might be ruled over in absolute lawlessness stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native. In the eyes of the conqueror, *savage life* is just another form of *animal life*, a horrifying experience, something alien beyond imagination or comprehension. In fact...what makes the savages different from other human beings is less the color of their skin than the fear that they behave like a part of nature [...]. The savages are, as it were, “natural” human beings who lack the specifically human character, the specifically human reality [...] (“Necropolitics” 24).

Again, we see the differentiation of humanity as discussed previously through Foucault’s description of how racism functions as a tool of biopower. Mbembe shifts from color to the notion of savage as the justification of murder implemented through the included exclusion of savage and colonialism as the state of exception. The notion of that which is associated to nature also echoes the justification of the use of force by police officers to subdue Rodney King, indicating that the included exclusion of blackness still exists as illustrated in the last section.

The non-dependence on color, or dare I say, race, for a foundation to justify the brutality of colonialism enabled biopower to subject many to a “figure of the human shadow”

and eventually allowed for the practices of colonialism to then be applied to the victims of Nazi-Germany. However, this is not to say race and/or color is not a factor. In fact, reflecting the uniqueness of the terror formation that arises from colonialism, the U. S. juridical political structure exemplifies a history of usurping race as the distinguishing factor for maintaining unequal difference. For instance, in 1854, the Supreme Court of California defined Chinese Americans as Indians, which prohibited them to testify against anyone white (Alcoff-Martín 9). This referred to a law that stated “no black or mulatto person, or Indian, shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of, or against a white man” (qtd. in Alcoff-Martín 9). In 1927, the U. S. Supreme Court defined Chinese Americans as non-white subjecting them to segregationist and Jim Crow legislation (Alcoff-Martín 11). In the 1950’s, in Texas, segregation laws applied to Mexican Americans, yet they were categorized as white in federal documents, such as birth certificates, passports etc.

The categorization of Mexican Americans as white justified case rulings of Mexican Americans that were judged by all-white juries, a process that was overturned for a number of cases with Black American defendants during that same time (Alcoff-Martín 11). Here, race is used to justify the subjection of those who are non-white (colonial subjects) to included exclusion. However, interestingly, in the case of the Mexican American both categories of black and white are used to further oppress her/him (this occurs with Caribbean Latinos as well). Hence, race actually becomes a most significant, soluble marker, for distinguishing between those who are within human reality and those who are not, in colonies even after World War Two and within the context of the United States. As stated, the distinguishing hierarchy of *raced* savage as less than natural human becomes a way to justify colonial acts of terror after World War Two.

As Aimé Césaire points out:

[...] the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century...is being inconsistent that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not the crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India, and the “niggers” of Africa. (36)

Here, Césaire highlights the differentiation between the victims of Nazi-Germany from the position of colonial subject. Given that colonialism continued after World War Two, the colonial subject as savage, then, both reinforces the racist construction of savage as that which is different than human and positions race as the distinctive signifier in the forefront. As in the United States, blackness becomes the slippery signifier of any being that falls under the term “natural”, naturally excluded from the realm of civilization.

Consequently, the kinds of subjugation that arose from the included/excluded racialization of blackness, coupled with the perceived hypocrisy of World War Two, also allowed for the independence movements of the 1950's and 1960's. These movements envisioned a common bond among the colonized, not primarily because they were not white, but because they suffered the same acts of terror and slavery through colonial subjectification. As Aimé Césaire illustrates:

[...] Colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instinct, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism, and we must show that every time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, each time a

little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, each time a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread [...] (35).

In working to diminish the colonial construction of hierarchical differences of race, Césaire does not distinguish between the colonial acts of brutality in Vietnam or Madagascar; instead, he highlights a bond of colonial suffering. Through this clever account, Césaire also alludes to the fact that, when it comes to non-white colonial subjects, the mechanisms of biopower and biopolitics are colorblind; this account returns to Mbembe's point that biopower's reliance on the depiction of the colonial subject focuses on animalistic qualities more than color. Hence, even though the colonies were a space to experiment acts of terror for the absolute state of exception--Nazi Germany (as both Foucault and Mbembe argue), the difference between non-white and white, savage and civilized, marks the moment in which *the absolute state* of included exclusion arises: the included/excluded *raced* savage, the included exclusion of blackness.

Césaire also positions colonialism, justified through the act of *civilizing* and *humanizing* the savage, and Nazi Germany within a linear temporality. He presents capitalist progress, under the guise of civilization, as the progressive *regression* into universalizing acts of global brutality based on the effects of unequal difference. Césaire's assessment of capitalist progress and civilization lays the foundation for Foucault's concluding description of biopower. Foucault concludes his analysis by arguing that any State formation (including State Socialism) that exerts biopower must necessarily be racist. Foucault questions, "How can one both make a biopower function and exercise the right of war, the rights of murder

and the function of death, without becoming racist? That was the problem, and that, I think is still the problem” (“Society Must Be Defended” 263). Thus, the problem has come full circle in the sense that regimes of truth that are derived from capitalism and state socialism have not ridded themselves of the processes of biopower which necessarily includes a figure of included exclusion.

From this, Mbembe argues against a telos of history. He states the linear notion of history within Marxism necessarily spirals into a biopower mode exercising the very function it was meant to work against:

[...] Marx blurs the all-important divisions among the man-made realm of freedom, the nature-determined realm of necessity, and the contingent in history. The commitment to the abolishment of commodity production and the dream of direct and unmediated access to the “real” make these processes—the fulfillment of the so-called logic of history and the fabrication of humankind—almost necessary violent processes (“Necropolitics” 20).

For Mbembe, the teleological process that establishes a society, which necessarily rests on the proliferation of equal differences, ironically prevents that society from ever existing because of its reliance of force and violence. In doing this, Mbembe takes a similar turn as Césaire by critiquing a sense of linear temporality as it relates to a progression toward violence and brutality.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, Césaire critiqued a linear notion of progress not because he was a Marxist but because he was a colonial subject. Césaire’s colonial subjectivity enabled him to

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<sup>42</sup>This echoes Kwame Nkrumah’s appropriation of Marx in *Consciencism*, where he argues that the colonial situation needs to be necessarily accounted for within an application of Marxism (1-6). Nkrumah also interprets the dialectical process as non-linear. He states, “It is important that dialectical evolution be not conceived as being linear, continuous and mono-directional” (26).

appropriate Marxism as a practice against colonialism and racism. In commenting on his loyalty to Marxism and the (French) Communist Party, Césaire states that, if following this political agenda, “pillages our most vivifying friendships, breaks the bond that weds us to other West Indian islands, severs the ties that makes us Africa’s child, then I say communism has served us ill in having us trade a brotherhood for what seems to be the coldest of all ill abstractions” (Césaire qtd. in Kelley 25). Here, Césaire explicitly points out that if Marxism fails as a political practice, it is not because the organized colonial subjects failed; it is because Marxism failed them. Hence, the struggle continues.

Marxist appropriation, in this sense, is *a practiced possibility*, a tactic, toward independence for social justice. Most importantly, the moment of appropriation itself marks a moment at which the colonial subjectivity perceived a plethora of temporalities that would pave paths toward sociopolitical, global equality, which, for Césaire, was “a different idea of universal [...] a universal rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all” (Césaire qtd. in Kelley 25-6). These moments of appropriation that arise out of the colonial subjectivity exemplifies a paradox within biopower’s state of exception and included exclusion. This paradox opposes a western notion of time and redefines universal as that which includes multiple, coexisting particulars. In doing so, this paradox imag(in)es a future paved with possibilities for an included/excluded subject to cease to exist.

### **The Paradox of the State of Exception and Included Exclusion**

Although the plantation world during colonialism produces slave existence as a “death in life” existence, Mbembe argues that there is a paradoxical subject formation.

Mbembe states:

In spite of the terror and the symbolic sealing off of the slave, he or she maintains alternative perspectives toward time, work and self. [...] Treated as if he or she no longer existed except as a mere tool and instrument of production, the slave nevertheless is able to draw almost any object, instrument, language, or gesture into a performance and then stylize it. Breaking with uprootedness and the pure world of things of which he or she is but a fragment, the slave is able to demonstrate the protean capabilities of the human bond through music and the very body that was supposedly possessed by another (“Necropolitics” 22).

As Mbembe highlights, these alternative perspectives of time, work and self within the very context of normalized loss and terror become ways wherein the included/excluded black subject *perform* a communal bond.

Paul Gilroy also acknowledges the particular history of the enforced separation of slaves and their use of musical forms as a method of coping and even overcoming. Gilroy states, “Music becomes vital at the point at which linguistic and semantic indeterminacy/polyphony arise amidst the protracted battle between masters, mistresses and slaves (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 74). Along these same lines, Paul Gilroy describes the peoples and cultures of the black Atlantic as a “non-traditional tradition, an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable, and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the Manichean logic of binary coding” (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 198). The black Atlantic paradoxical tradition is the expressed awareness and alternatives of the unequal effects of

racism that arise out of an included/excluded position of blackness. This awareness then creates a sense of community, which, in turn, possesses the possibility of socio-political mobility for social change. Tradition, in this sense, calls attention to the “nameless, evasive, minimal qualities that make these diaspora conversations possible...the apparently magical process of connectedness” (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 198). Gilroy’s magical process of connectedness echoes Césaire’s notion of belonging that extends to all peoples of colonial subjectification.

Gilroy’s mutable traditional practice of a shared awareness also coincides with Césaire’s, Foucault’s, and Mbembe’s critique of a linear, progressive temporality. For each theorist, the black identity is not a substance. As Mbembe states:

It is constituted, in varying forms, through a series of practices, notably practices of the self. Neither the forms of identity nor its idioms are always self-identical. Rather these forms and idioms are mobile, reversible and unstable. Given this element of play, they cannot be reduced to a purely biological order based on blood, race, or geography. Nor can they be reduced to a custom to the extent that the latter’s meaning is always shifting (“African Modes of Self Writing” 272)

Overall, the black subject that arises out of the state of exception and an included/excluded position is a practice that works against progress precisely because of its very position. Black subjectivity as practice is immediate, unstable, tactical, reversible, etc; black subjectivity as practice is always shifting precisely because it must, as mentioned previously via Césaire.

Kara Keeling similarly creates a space for black subjectivity that exists outside of linear time through its very exclusion. At the same time, Keeling returns to the logic of civilization and progress through her analysis. Keeling states, “The human unfolds in time

while the Black is internal to time—the Black haunts the human’s past, present, and future” (“Passing for Human” 242). Because Black as referent (and what it references) was created simultaneously with civilization to justify killing in the name of human progress, both of Keeling’s points hold true: Black subjectivity is alternative to the linearity of time, yet Black is that which haunts progress and linear temporality in itself. Because racism is the very essence of the notion of included exclusion, black subjectivity does not fall into the same ontological traps of modern progress. In other words, the very fact that the Black is created as an included exclusion enables an existence of the paradox. In this sense, the non-tradition traditional practices of black culture “upsets the linear, chronological temporality European culture claims” (“Passing for Human” 242). This non-chronological time of black subjectivity that Keeling describes embodies the possibility of “temporalities that are always simultaneously branching out toward several different futures” (Mbembe “African Modes of Self Writing” 258; qtd. in Keeling “Passing for Human” 243).

In this sense, black subjectivity, as Keeling argues:

[...] is a formulation of subjectivity open to the creative innovations of the unforeseeable and the unpredictable. Such a subjectivity cannot be called “human,” if we understand “the human” to mark a linearly progressive rational movement towards self-consciousness. Yet, it might be understood as that which “the human” has become, that to which it was heading—the Black.

In understanding black culture as nonlinear, these practices that arise out of the paradox of colonialism as the state of exception become practices that do not locate a sense of politics within the telos of history. Thus, these practices of blackness possess the possibility of the very space of becoming, a space where differences are equally possible and celebrated. As

Keeling alludes, and I propose, to reach a space of becoming, everyone has to, first, become black, the occupancy of nonlinear temporal humanity; or, as Césaire exclaims, everyone needs to reach a consciousness that envisions a universality that consists of multiple particulars.<sup>43</sup>

### **Homespace as Becoming/Becoming Black for Social Justice**

“We knew by then that our struggle was hopeless. Sooner or later, we would die; they would defeat us, but we also knew that until that day we had no choice but to continue.”

Gioconda Belli, *The Inhabited Woman*

While discussing colonialism as a state of exception and the colonial slave as a primary example of the included exclusion in the last section, I quoted Mbembe’s description of the slave experiencing a triple loss: a loss of home, loss of her/his own body, and loss of political status. I also described how included exclusion extended to the colonial subject, who experienced similar acts of loss and terror. My point is not to establish some hierarchy of suffering and oppression, but to highlight how colonialism, as a state of exception, birthed the proliferation of the included exclusion of blackness that still remains intact today as illustrated in the last section. It is my hope that this highlighting of a continuous experience of terror exacerbated by the included/excluded position of blackness will provide an understanding that any attempt to create a home-space is not a privilege of choice but a necessity for survival.

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<sup>43</sup>This is actually a call for a return to those decolonization movements in the Post World War Two era. The notion of a global, black consciousness is the very argument that many popular philosophers call for today (Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, Agamben), however, they do not identify the politics as a *black* consciousness. This reinforces my two previous arguments. I use black Diaspora to identify with these movements and I use homespace to highlight the connectedness we feel because of our included/excluded position. This connectedness again is not tied to any place but is tied to the feeling of included exclusion that can occur at any moment in any space.

To return to Mbembe's description of the paradox, musical expression is but one of the popular sites at which alternative modes of communication, belonging, and community building emerge—homespaces. As Lawrence Grossberg argues, "The popular is where social imagination is defined and changed, where people construct personal identities, identifications, priorities and possibilities, where people form moral and political agendas for themselves and their societies [...]" (*Caught in the Crossfire* 221). Grossberg's definition of the popular broadens the spatial site of the paradox and emergences of homespace. Moreover, the paradox exists as long as there are racist effects of biopower and included exclusions that justify the acts of terror and killing that biopower exerts. Given the global and historical effects of colonialism that remain today through the exertion of biopower, these forms of expressions can occur at any space whatsoever, since, with biopolitics, an awareness of an included/excluded position can occur in just about any space as well. Thus, following the logic of the paradox and Grossberg's definition, religious practices, educational practices, practices that can occur even street corners, can become spaces where popular sites of expressed awareness of belonging (to an included/excluded position of blackness) arise with the possibility of becoming so much more.

Making a home-space becomes an act that resists the (re)positioning of the human shadow; it is the materialization of the very paradox of included exclusion. In discussing *homeplace*, bell hooks argues, "For those who dominate and oppress us benefit most when we have nothing to give our own, when they have taken from us our dignity, our humanness, that we have nothing left, no "homeplace" where we can recover ourselves" ("Homeplace" 449). The making of *homespace* occurs in moments and spaces of loss, not necessarily linked to any particular places. These moments are very much embedded in moments the

American dreams of assimilation diminish. Their possible existence occurs in the moments where we recognize our included exclusion, the moments that taxicabs *do not stop* (even if you are Danny Glover) and police officers *do stop* (especially if you are New York rapper, Jay-Z, or Southern rapper, T.I.) because of our included/excluded position of blackness. It is also in these moments of loss due to our positions that we can realize a sense of equal difference that exists among those within the suffering and terror.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the acts of homespace are also sites where these expressions could be more.

The awareness of these losses, a remembrance of colonialism as a state of exception, a positioning of blackness as the included exclusion has enabled, and continues to enable, included/excluded subjects to create spaces of possibilities aimed to regain these losses. In this sense, homespaces become spaces of “renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole” (hooks “Homeplace” 454). The creations of homespace as renewal and self-discovery are modes of continuous recreations that open a possibility for Césaire’s universal world of equal particulars. The creations of home-space are thus acts that acknowledge the past and simultaneously look to various spaces of becoming. Thus, minorities are not necessarily and essentially within a space of becoming; rather, because of their included/excluded positioning of blackness, the possibilities of becoming occur most often. Becoming, in this sense, the process of making homespaces, can become spaces of discontinuous, continued performances, where particulars of difference in action are

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<sup>44</sup>The end of *Do the Right Thing* exemplifies how moments of loss coupled with the realization of included exclusion can reveal moments of possibility. After the police kill Radio Raheem and members of the neighborhood burn down the pizzeria, they move to the Korean store to burn it down. Before they do, the Korean owner proclaims he is Black. Some of the members of the neighborhood laugh in disbelief, but, while laughing, decide to leave the Korean store intact. Amidst the anger of injustice and the pain of racial terror, the Korean owner’s proclamation that he too is Black resonates in a shared understanding with the members of the neighborhood. Clearly, the Korean is not Black, but his Korean subjectivity within the U.S. is that which marks him as belonging to the category of blackness as opposed to the category of whiteness. His proclamation may be read as him trying to save his store, but, nevertheless, it rings with an inkling of truth to his audience’s ears.

celebrated. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's explain through their concept of becoming:

Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse. [...] It is important not to confuse

“minoritarian,” as becoming or process, with a “minority” as an aggregate or a state.

Jew, Gypsies, etc., may constitute minorities under certain conditions but that do not make them becomings. One reterritorializes or allows oneself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state, but in becoming one is deterritorialized. Even blacks, as the black Panthers said, must become-black. [...] if blacks must become-black, *it is because only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming*, but under such conditions that it ceases to be a definable aggregate in relation to the majority. [italic emphasis mine] (291)

Deleuze and Guattari's reference to majority echoes the description of biopolitical norms and biopower functioning through these norms, provided previously through Foucault. Being minoritarian is a process of becoming. It is a process of deterritorialization (a breaking out of the categories of subjectification), which is continuously maintained; deterritorialization, in this sense, echoes Césaire's universal, multiple particulars. Also, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, blacks must become black. Being black is already being in a space of becoming as the paradox of included exclusion reveals. Thus, black subjectivities as the included exclusion are always and already at the point of becoming, because, as the paradox reveals and as Keeling argues black subjects necessarily practice this process. To become black, however, black subjectivities must realize the reasons for creating homespace. That reason is the necessary included exclusion position that biopolitical life relies on via

racism to continue its regime (Foucault 255-260). It is upon this realization that minority subjectivities will all *become* black. And, perhaps, those who do not fall to the side of minority will desire to choose to follow. However, until then, those subjects who fall under the umbrella of blackness will and should continue to keep on keepin' on through the connectedness of the Black Diaspora as homespace.

In summary, the aforementioned biopower and biopolitics sets the stage for the following life history performances, where senses of becoming and the paradox of the included exclusion manifest. The next three chapters will presents these processes of creating homespace as imagined, performative acts that are bound in ideals of truth, community, culture, etc., and are performed with (and in turn analyzed with) racial sincerity (Jackson *Real Black* 9-61). Here, I am not only commenting on the immediacy of the process of creating homespace and becoming black, but I am also acknowledging my own subjectivity in analyzing these performances, which influences my perspectives and modes of analysis. It is my hope, however, that in the chapters to come I am able to highlight the racioscapes<sup>45</sup> that influence these particular performers to do what they do.

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<sup>45</sup>Here, I am referring to John L. Jackson's racioscapes. Jackson adds to Arjun Appadurai's flowscapes and introduces the notion of racioscapes as "the inescapably non-*flow*like constancy of racial inequality as an effective analytical template for understanding globality, diasporic relations, and transnational interconnections in the past, present and foreseeable future" (*Real Black* 56).

## CHAPTER THREE

### ‘SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD’: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOMESPACE TO COMBAT RACISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

“Policies change, and programs change, according to time. But the objective never changes. Our objective is complete freedom, complete justice, complete equality, by any means necessary. That never changes. Complete and immediate recognition as human beings, that doesn’t change, that’s what all of us want.”

Malcolm X, “I Don’t Mean Bananas” (*New Left Reader* 208)

Dr. Malcolm Woodland is an American Educational Foundation postdoctoral fellow who is currently finishing his research on the productivity of community centers for young black males at UC-Berkeley. Woodland became interested in community leadership at an early age. During high school, young Woodland had his first experience with community leadership when he organized his fellow classmates to visit local junior high schools and speak to the younger children about school and academic achievement. He has continued this work, taking black teenagers from his old neighborhood in Washington D.C. on college tours to encourage academic achievement. He does this work in addition to his research and activist work with organizations such as the MXGM. Woodland’s success and his desire to help young black boys become successful stems from his own experiences as a black male growing up in an urban environment. In order to avoid the deployments of indirect murder-- what he rightfully describes as “active resistance” toward his achievement as a young black

male, Woodland relied heavily upon the counter-education and communal belonging he possessed.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the male, black body in particular, as illustrated by Feldman's analysis of the Rodney King trial, is deduced to that which is pre-social and animalistic through norms and images;<sup>46</sup> this racist deduction provides a justification for the disciplinary and regulatory apparatuses of biopower to function. The representations of blackness prescribed onto particular bodies help justify the murder and indirect murder of these bodies. As Foucault reminds us, indirect murder is any activity that purposefully exposes "someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" ("Society Must Be Defended" 256). Chapter Two illustrates that the included/excluded position of blackness exposes those who possess this position to more barriers for socio-political and economic mobility than their *included* counterparts. Again, this kind of death for Foucault is based on racism. It is in this sense Frantz Fanon argues that the multiple forms of the representation of blackness seem an inescapable cycle<sup>47</sup> (*Black Skin White Masks* 112). Here, like in Feldman's analysis, Fanon recognizes the significant role media images play in everyday life.

Herman S. Gray argues, "As central as they are to the operations of political, legal, organizational, discursive, and technological structures, the movement of black images and representation is never free of cultural and social traces of the condition of their production, circulation, and use" (*Cultural Moves* 21). Like Stuart Hall argues, and Herman Gray notes,

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<sup>46</sup>See Chapter Two.

<sup>47</sup>Here, I am referring to the cycle of representations of blackness that Frantz Fanon describes in Chapter Five of *Black Skin, White Mask*. Fanon exclaims, "Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it's in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way I am locked into the infernal circle." (116)

representations of blackness are never pure (Hall “What is the ‘black’” 465; Gray *Cultural Moves* 21). As such, indirect murder, the representation of blackness and racism are necessarily linked and are a primary function of and for biopower. Stuart Hall highlights this link and its internalization through his definition of ideology: “the mental frameworks -- the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation-- which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (“The Problem of Ideology” 26). This Chapter analyzes ideology to highlight deployments of indirect murder and the practices against the representations that enable these deployments. Through Dr. Malcolm Woodland’s oral history performances, this Chapter highlights these processes of consciousness and the strategies which Woodland uses to resist the entrapment of indirect murder. In acknowledging these traps, Woodland perceives his strategies as modes of “counter-education” and “protective factors” for resistance.

Woodland’s notion of counter-education and communal belonging acted as a mode of resistance and struggle for equality within the everyday. It continues to do so in his community work and research. Along the premise of counter-education and communal belonging this chapter highlights the possibilities of homespace that are created through Woodland’s “protective factors.” Protective factors are the specific tactics that Woodland describes within his oral history performance that prevent him from falling victim to indirect murder or perhaps even death itself. I focus on Woodland’s upbringing and experiences of counter-education to illustrate how he arrives at his role as a community leader. It is my belief that Woodland’s counter-education and feeling of belonging to a community with the black Diaspora provide him with the self-identification that enables him to be a social

activist. The protective factors he describes also open future possibilities of political equality and solidarity for they become the impetus of Woodland's revolutionary work. Through his oral history performance, Woodland shares the process of counter-education and a communal belonging that becomes vital as he navigates beyond the indirect murder that racism justifies within biopolitical life (Foucault "Society Must Be Defended" 256). As such, Woodland also provides a "mapping" of sorts on how he becomes dedicated to activism. This "mapping" begins with one of my most treasured memories of my dear friend, Malcolm.

### **Memories of Dr. Malcolm Woodland: An Introduction**

It is the summer of 1998 and I am in Carmichael dorm, located on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am standing in an almost complete circle of mostly young men of color, who, like me, are participants of the Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program (MURAP).<sup>48</sup> Having almost finished the ten week summer program, we are in a celebratory mood, rapping alongside Big and Meth's chorus to *The What*,<sup>49</sup> as it was blasting from the speakers of someone's room. I look between the bodies that block my frontal view; those who are not rapping are dancing and cheering in unison with us would-be-rappers. A sense of pride fills me:

Fuck the world! /Don't ask me for shit/anything you gets ya got/ta work HARD/for it.  
Honeys SHAKE/your hips/ya don't stop.  
Niggas PACK/in' clips/keep on.

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<sup>48</sup>MURAP is a graduate school initiative program for underrepresented populations in higher education for the humanities and social sciences.

<sup>49</sup>The last song on The Notorious B.I.G.'s debut album, *Ready to Die* (Bad Boy 1994), that features both the Notorious B.I.G. and Method Man from the Wu Tang Clan.

A couple of us mimic Big's last line that is more in the backdrop than part of the song, a hint the CD is over. My head shifts from side to side congruent to the rhythm in Big's voice; the others are doing similar versions of the same movement as they too rhyme with Big:

Bed/ford/STEY/ve/sant, the LIvest/one  
My borough/is thorough.

The music ends and we laugh and cheer, giving each other "pounds"<sup>50</sup> for a good performance.

As the gathering of would-be academics/amateur rap performers begins to dissipate, Malcolm (having yet to become Dr. Woodland) and I walk toward his room. Apparently caught up in the

moment, I was not paying attention to my surroundings as much as Malcolm, because he turns to me as we are walking and comments on my dorm-mate's behavior.



**Figure 3.1: Malcolm Woodland in my dorm room at Carmichael Hall during SPGRE.**

My dorm-mate, Molly, was a mathematician; her sex made her a minority in her field and she was the only white girl in our program. "Yo/I think your girl, Molly, was scared." Woodland calls Molly *my* girl to remind me that she is *my* dorm-mate.

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<sup>50</sup> Hand-shakes.

He laughs softly and repeats, “I think we scared her. Did you see her face?” I drag out the first word of my response, sounding more indifferent than anything else, “Nah, I didn’t.” My indifference is my attempt to relinquish any responsibility for Molly as my dorm-mate and has less to do with what Malcolm observed. Malcolm performs his interpretation of a fearful Molly. Instantly, Malcolm freezes in his tracks; his hands are on his side as if they are glued to his legs and his eyes are wide open with a half smile that resembles a frozen look of fear. Malcolm’s performance of Molly has now gained my full attention. I stop in my tracks signifying my full attention to Malcolm, “NOOO!” I drag my response loudly and enthusiastically while laughing, and then quickly blurt calmly as if having collected myself, “But I’m not surprised.”

Malcolm felt a moment of disconnect by the way Molly looked at us. His experience with Molly’s frightened look is reminiscent of Frantz Fanon’s encounter with a little white girl accompanied by her mother in France. As Fanon recalls, the little girl exclaims, “‘Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened!’ Frightened! Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me.” (*Black Skin White Masks* 112). The fear that both Malcolm and Fanon experience reiterates D. Soyini Madison’s description of blackness in Chapter One as a signifier of fear on a universal scale (“Street Performance” 540). Like Madison, Woodland’s perception of Molly reminds him that his black body places him further within the category of blackness and is also the representation of fear to which blackness is linked (“Street Performance” 541). Malcolm’s experience with Molly reminds him that he is included in society by his very exclusion; he is Stuart Hall’s *familiar stranger*.<sup>51</sup> Madison’s description of blackness and Hall’s description of a black Diaspora positioning becomes even more

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<sup>51</sup>See Chapter Two.

salient when layered with the experience of representation: Malcolm's experience with Molly and Fanon's experience with the little white girl. What did Molly *see* when she *saw* us performing *The What?* Molly's look was an ideological projection of us rather than herself.

Our momentary performance of the popular post-gangsta hip hop song<sup>52</sup> diminished our ten weeks of academic achievement. Much like Fanon: "I tell you, I was walled in: No exception was made for my refined manners, or my knowledge of literature or my understanding of the quantum theory" (*Black Skin White Masks* 117), Molly's look reduced us to racialized objects of fear. While Malcolm's observation of Molly's actions distinguished Molly from the rest of us, Molly's position does not possess the same historical context of representation. The double layering of Malcolm seeing Molly seeing him echoes W.E.B. Dubois' description of double consciousness and the veil and also reveals unarticulated and invisible whiteness as a space of privilege and normalcy (Dyson 40; McIntosh). In other words, this double layering reveals the insider outsider position that we possess as people of color within the category of blackness (particularly in the United States) just as both Madison and Hall point out. This moment during the first summer that Dr. Woodland and I spent together as MURAP colleagues is significant because it highlights not only the impact of racism and its link to representation but also the possibilities of the making of homespace.

Molly's reaction aside, my story above also re-tells a trust that was built among all of us during the time we shared together as MURAP students. During one of our interview

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<sup>52</sup>I term this song post-gangsta, based on my own experience; however, I realize that some may disagree. For instance, an article in *Vibe* magazine marks a time line of hip hop genres and according to this time-line *The What* would still be within the genre of gangsta rap. See cover article in May 2008 issue for reference.

conversations, Woodland shares how MURAP had an impact on him as far as helping to “bring it all together.” Woodland recalls:

SPGRE<sup>53</sup> was really helpful as far as/ya know/ networking  
and really solidifying the experience of research and academia for me...  
I mean,  
it was any one of these periods but all of them together/ ya know  
just basically meeting the right people,  
being in the right space  
and the right time.  
It was the combination of this  
and those modes of protection and community building...

Even though the moment of Molly’s reaction re-presents a momentary rupture from our “community-building,” the celebratory moment remains a moment of possibility and solidarity. In Erving Goffman’s terms, our celebratory moment reveals the backstage that we created as MURAP participants; we have left the front stage and, with it, our performances of would-be, serious academics of color (106-140). In turn, we created spaces within and around Carmichael dormitory as our backstage, a process that took almost ten-weeks after we met.

Our backstage provides us with a feeling of safety to feel free to perform what has been hidden (Goffman 106-140). James Scott refers to spaces such as this as cites where hidden transcripts<sup>54</sup> are formed, a social space “insulated from control and surveillance” (Scott 118). For Scott, these “off-stage social spaces” are created through feelings of mutuality by subordinate groups and possess the possibility of mobilization through practices

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<sup>53</sup>The Summer Pre-Graduate Research Experience (SPGRE) is the name for entire ten-week program, which includes students from the “hard” sciences along with those from social sciences and humanities; MURAP is the subsection for those in the social sciences and humanities.

<sup>54</sup>According to James C. Scott, hidden transcripts are any “discourse that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation of powerholders. [...] it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript” (4). Public transcript, for Scott, could be termed as hegemonic discourse (1-4).

and discourses of resistance (Scott 118-120). This feeling of safety and mutuality enables our hidden behaviors and expressions to seep out via embodiments of the Notorious B.I.G. and Method Man.<sup>55</sup> Much like Scott's explanation, these "off-stage" practices only exist because of our feeling of safety, our feeling of home, which was created by our interactions with one another. Hence, our interactions, our feeling and our "backstage" practices created within the context of the MURAP program became our home-space, spaces where we "could affirm one another and by doing so heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks "Homeplace" 449).

Similarly, Scott argues, "the hidden transcript...exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted and disseminated within these offstage social sites" (119). Here, it is the importance of the practice, articulation, enactment and dissemination of the hidden transcript, the action itself as opposed to the site. The space is created by the enactment of the hidden transcripts, which in turn is created by the feeling of safety and commonality: homespace. The celebratory performance that took place at Carmichael dorm illustrates the bond that is forged through our common experiences in the program. It similarly displays our common desires for the possibilities the future possesses particular to our successful completion of the program. Along the same vein as the creation of home-space, the in-the-moment act of celebration and performance resembles spontaneous communitas. Victor Turner defines spontaneous communitas as a moment of "intersubjective illumination" where there is a "high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of pretensions" and we are "free from the culturally defined encumbrances" of social roles

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<sup>55</sup>See chapter three of Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life* (106-140), chapter seven of D. Soyini Madison's *Critical Ethnography* (155-6) and/or chapter two of Norman Denzin's *Performance Ethnography* (25-26, 32-33).

(Turner 48). For Turner, spontaneous *communitas* is an ideal, fleeting moment of inherent solidarity where hierarchical social signifiers, such as sex, class, race, caste, dissipate.

This moment of spontaneous *communitas* would not be possible without the feeling of homespace which is the primary theme that this Chapter explores. Moreover, our classed, raced, sexed positions fade within this feeling of communal joyousness brought about by the affective (em)power(ment) of popular music.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, the affective (em)power(ment) of popular music that we felt and shared echoes what both Mbembe and Gilroy allude to as the paradox of colonial slavery: the moment of possibility and solidarity that is felt, shared and expressed through embodied performances like music and musical expression.<sup>57</sup> To honor this trajectory the subtitles in this chapter (as well as this chapter title itself) refer to popular hip hop songs and titles. Each line and/or title reflects not just the song it is derived from but also Dr. Woodland's oral history performance. This kind of re-presentation is

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<sup>56</sup>In discussing Henri Bergson's theoretical description of affect, Kara Keeling describes affect as "the intervention of the interested part of the body, [affect] is a form of labor that is intrinsic to the body's self constitution. While one's perception measures the possible or virtual action of a thing on one's body, affection can be understood as the moment one's perception ceases to measure an objects potential action upon one's body and begins to sketch out the object's actual action. Affection...thus locates the emergence of a real action" (*The Witch's Flight* 13). Moreover, Lawrence Grossberg discusses the affective qualities of the popular in Chapter Two of *Dancing in Spite of Myself*. Lawrence Grossberg describes affective empowerment as "open to struggle and articulation. Affect defines, then, a condition of possibility for any political intervention; it is, however, ideologically, economically, and libidinally neutral except as it is articulated into these systems under specific historical conditions" (160-1). Here, I am specifically referring to both Keeling's definition of affect and Grossberg's description of affective empowerment. Keeling's affect provides an explanation of the how the possible is transformed into the real. Our performance reveals how the possibility of spontaneous *communitas* can become reality if even for a fleeting moment. Furthermore, Grossberg's affective empowerment within the context of hip hop music as illustrated through our performance affirms the fleeting moment could be sustainable. It is ultimately my argument and Woodland's as well (though he does not use the same term) that a practice of homespace can ultimately sustain this fleeting moment.

<sup>57</sup>See Chapter Two.

perhaps my attempt to entice the reader to visually listen and feel what is expressed through Woodland's oral history performance.<sup>58</sup>

### **Malcolm's Homegirl Meets Dr. Woodland's Ethnographer (at Home?)**



**Figure 3.2: Author and Malcolm Woodland in Carmichael Dormitory during our stay at SPGRE.**

Homespace, homegirl, ethnographer at home: I begin this chapter with a personal memory to situate both Dr. Woodland and myself within my research. As the story reveals, Woodland and I have been friends for almost ten years. Our friendship has not only become

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<sup>58</sup>Unlike the other chapters in this dissertation (with the exception of my theoretical framework chapter), the oral history performance of this chapter is absent of photos. I do this purposefully because of my focus on the representation of blackness at the beginning of this chapter. I believed that utilizing Fanon's critique of the representations of blackness and in turn placing photos to re-present blackness would only reinforce the never-ending cycle Fanon explains. This is only particular to this chapter. I say this because it is my overall belief that Fanon's infernal cycle of representation can be transcended by the performative nature of images. Images, given their, at times, oversaturated historical context, can become something else depending on the new contextual position. It is my hope the photos within this dissertation fall into this category. For an example of the performative nature of images, see Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, particularly Moten's analysis of Emmett Till's death and his mother's use of photos of his death and life in Chapter 3. For a theoretical illustration of transcending Fanon's cycle, see Kara Keeling's *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*, Chapter 2. Keeling focuses on Fanon's call for a new epistemology centered on "the interval" and theorizes upon the representation of blackness (27-44).

a space of personal and political reciprocity but it becomes a home-space in itself. Whether Woodland and I were in Carmichael at UNC-CH, at popular clubs and bars in New York City, at a conference together or just plain “hangin,” he has become a true home-boy, a friend that embodies home-space for me. Our friendship was the circumstance that allowed me to ask Woodland to participate in my research. Our friendship gave me the opportunity to observe firsthand Woodland’s community work in multiple neighborhoods and communities. Through our friendship, we have shared many stories with each other as listeners entrusted with the past and as witness-participants in each other’s everyday lives. Through the years, I have witnessed Dr. Woodland struggle to reach his goal of community building for social equality and justice. I have seen him perform a kind of humility and sincerity that enables him to reach a number of people and participate in multiple programs that serve diverse communities of color. Ultimately, it was this kind of leadership work that Woodland did and continues to do that prompted me to ask him to participate in my research. Thus, based on our friendship, I asked Woodland to trust me to share his stories for my dissertation, and it is my belief that it was our friendship that compelled him to reply in the affirmative.

I decided to ask Woodland if he would participate in this research when I returned from my stay in Ghana in December of 2004. Aware that the ethnographer/informant relationship is “predicated, especially for the so-called native ethnographer, on the mutual search for sincerity” (Jackson *Real Black* 27), I have taken responsibility for these stories cautiously and humbly. Even with the experience of having known Woodland for all those years beforehand, I felt the sense of anxiety over sincerity that Jackson touches upon while listening to Woodland’s stories as an ethnographer. I jotted the following questions down in my notes prior to my first interview with Woodland, which encompasses this anxiety: Will I

be able to perform through my writing the humility and sincerity Woodland possesses? Will this shift in our relationship affect our interviews? More importantly, will it affect our friendship? After reading Jackson's notion of racial sincerity and sincerity within the ethnographic field, after being trained by my advisor and other scholars who do field research, was I "trained" to incorporate a friend into my study? Have I established enough exchanges of sincerity with my friend in terms of this new relationship?

These questions were some of the many concerns I carried with me the first time I sat down to interview Woodland. Now in the re-writing stage of the process, it is my hope that my raising of these questions and my presentation of Woodland's stories as oral history performance speak to both my training and my friendship with Woodland in a positive manner. Many of these stories I have heard before, but some I have not. Regardless of whether I have past memories of the stories, my position of ethnographer reshaped all of Woodland's stories into something new. "Ethnographic positionality is always already embedded in layers of (un)knowing even as it is embedded in layers of power and privilege. Positionality is charged" (Madison "My Desire" 155). My ethnographic positionality adds new layers to my relationship with Woodland, changing how I listen to the story and thus how it is told. With this said, I have also realized that the act of listening and sharing Woodland's oral history performance has re-shaped not only the stories I have heard in the past but also our friendship. There are places in this Chapter where the moments of trust are apparent through the interaction between both Woodland and I; these moments are highlighted through my performance of the stories, which include my responses to Woodland's shared memories. The significance of the performance was also expressed by Woodland, who believed that our weekly interview sessions were "very therapeutic" for him

both personally and professionally. With this said the friendship and trust that propels this chapter forward is ten years in the making and adds yet another layer to our bond.

### **‘Dear Momma’: Counter Education = Homespace**

Woodland’s oral history performance begins with the most influential people in his life. As Woodland re-members<sup>59</sup> his mother, I can hear a sense of pride in his voice:

My mother gave me an outlook on the world politically.  
Movin’ to D.C., teachin’ me about myself..  
Well, the first thing is my name, Malcolm,  
after Malcolm X,  
so in a sense you could say that  
since birth  
I was pigeonholed into it. (*He slightly laughs.*)  
It’s/it’s like that rapper said,  
“I was born into it/not sworn into it.” (*He laughs again.*)  
So I had my hair locked before that was even in style.  
People were like, “Yo watsup with your hair?” (*Woodland laughs more heartily.*)  
You know/and/after that my mother taught me things  
that kind of/ya know/went against the education that we get taught.  
Some may call it/COUNTER-education.

Having known Woodland for as long as I have, I could guess who he would credit, however, I didn’t expect Woodland to emphasize the significance his name possessed in shaping how he viewed the path he has chosen in life. In fact, Woodland reveals how significant his mother’s role was in shaping how he looks at the world and who he sees himself as becoming; Woodland’s fate begins with his namesake, Malcolm X.

Woodland’s reference to his mother and his namesake within the story reminds him of his mother’s attempts to influence his very identification before his own developmental growth. This is apparent through the telling of his story as he parallels his mother’s political

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<sup>59</sup>I am using re-memembering as Victor Turner defines it as “not merely the restoration of some past intact, but setting it in living relationship to the present” (86).

choice of naming him after Malcolm X with the rap verse, “I was born into it/not sworn into it.” Woodland’s choice of verse reveals his re-membering of his mother’s choices as strategic, which he has embodied since birth, first through his name and thereafter through his appearance. Having had dreads before “it was even in style” further supports that Woodland’s politics were shaped for him by his mother. His laughter provides a window into his reflection of the political awareness that his mother instilled in him even before he was capable of comprehending it. It also reveals a sense of wonder and admiration of his mother acting as fate’s hand. Hence, his mentioning of “after that my mother taught me things that kind of...went against the education that we get taught” further implies that his conscious acceptance of path comes later. Woodland exaggerates the notion of “counter” with his louder pitch as if revealing the importance of what his mother taught him in his performance of what he terms, “counter-education.”

As hooks argues, “Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects...where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world” (“Homeplace” 449). The choices Woodland’s mother inscribed onto her son can be viewed, like hooks points out, as embodied practices of resistance. This resistance is a subject position that she creates for her son which not only acknowledges an included/excluded position of blackness but also acts against the status quo position. In naming her son after Malcolm X and dreading his hair before it was “in-style”, Woodland’s mother creates a position of possibility for her son that is outside of positive and negative representations of blackness. As Fanon argues, echoing Aimé Césaire’s claim of a universal world of particulars,<sup>60</sup> “Negro experience is not a whole, for there is not merely *one* Negro, there are *Negroes*” (*Black Skin White Masks* 136). Accordingly, Woodland’s mother

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<sup>60</sup>See Chapter Two.

marks her son with a public presentation (hair and name) of a freedom to choose alternative ways of being. In turn, counter- education shapes these alternate paths.

Just as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's point out through their explanation of becoming, "Even blacks, as the Black Panthers said, must become-black" (291), Woodland's mother shapes Woodland's process of becoming both physically and intellectually. This is also apparent in Woodland's early memories of counter-education:

Lisa:           What are some of your earliest significant memories of counter-education?

Woodland:    Oh let's see,  
                  there's many that just stand out to me.  
                  I could just picture them.  
                  But, I remember, one time,  
                  I was about four or five  
                  and  
                  I was in/like uh/kindergarten/and ya know/...well, it was around the  
                  holidays/and the teacher  
                  was telling the kids.*(Woodland's voice shifts a bit to perform the  
                  teacher's voice and mannerisms)*  
                  'Now some people celebrate  
                  Christmas  
                  and some people celebrate  
                  Hanukah  
                  and she explained a little bit more. *(Woodland laughs slightly as if he  
                  could see the image in his mind.)*  
                  She then asks the class, *(going into her voice again,)*  
                  'Does anybody here celebrate something else?'  
                  I raised my hand.  
                  And she's like  
                  'Yes Malcolm?'  
                  And I say 'Kwanza.' *(Woodland's voice demonstrates a sense of pride  
                  in his remembrance of his response at five.)*  
                  Everyone looked at me like I was crazy  
                  and the teacher was like  
                  'WHAT'S that?'  
                  I was like,  
                  'This is what black folk celebrate.' *(He laughs and I laugh with him.)*  
                  Oh/and I HATED nursery rhymes,  
                  ya know like the ones like *(He begins to say the rhyme in song)*  
                  'row row row your boat'/and stuff like that.

I  
 HATED  
 them. *(He pauses as if reflecting upon his own answer.)*  
 I guess maybe I hated them because  
 my mother never taught me them.  
 Like (Pause)  
 she didn't read that to me/before bed  
 or/sing them/to me./I mean/she sang stuff /like  
 Marvin Gaye  
 and black pride songs.  
 Stuff, like that.  
 But/not/ those nursery rhymes.  
 And she read stuff/to me/about/ya know  
 me,  
 black folk/and stuff.  
 So, *(He states this as if to return to his story,)*  
 I remember/we were going through those nursery rhymes in class.  
 And/ya know/  
 my kindergarten teacher was white,  
 and she asks if anyone would like to share a nursery rhyme they know  
 with the class.  
 And there I was  
 with my hand in the air,  
 'I do!'. *(We both laugh aloud. I could now imagine a little Woodland  
 enthusiastically raising his hand. I feel like he imagines it too.)*  
 So, yeah *(still with a breadth of laughter in his sound,)*  
 the teacher is like *(he returns to his 'teacher voice'. I see imagine her  
 vividly)*  
 'Yes, Malcolm.' *(Woodland breaks into song, performing his memory  
 of a child doing the same)*  
 pow/wer  
 to the people  
 /black/  
 black pow/wer  
 to the African people  
 and I had my little fist in the air  
 and I swear/that teacher looked like/she was going to die. *(We laugh  
 again and as he laughs he says,)*  
 Like I said  
 I was born into it  
 not sworn into it.  
 You know and as I said before  
 it was a kind of counter education my mother was teaching me,  
 but/it wasn't like/one against the other/  
 more like/both. *(There is a long pause.)*

Nursery rhymes are known for seditious meanings and political commentary within a given historical context (Scott 160). Woodland's early memories of counter-education begin with his learning alternatives to the nursery rhymes that he assumes he would also learn at school. In this context, young Woodland's alternatives are now seditious and political while the nursery rhymes in school have become an extension of a regulatory apparatus of biopower.<sup>61</sup> James Scott argues that oral traditions, like nursery rhymes and popular songs, become ideal vehicles for resistance because of their anonymous origins and subversive, disguised messages (Scott 160). Interestingly, the "rhymes" he does learn are black pride songs that shift the "privacy" and/or anonymity of subversive origin of oral tradition into the public realm. Hidden transcripts, such as the creation of dignity within the homeplace that hooks describes, can become declared acts of resistance, shifting from the private realm to public (198). Woodland's voluntary act of performing his black pride for the class illustrates both the pride he embodies through his mother's teachings and an act of resistance toward the formal, institutional nursery rhymes and rituals.

Similar to Woodland's performance of his black pride, Woodland also shares that as a child he practiced Kwanza. Woodland's performance of his younger self, announcing that he knows and celebrates Kwanzaa, while the teacher names both Hanukkah and Christmas as celebrated holidays, further illustrates a public act of resistance. Moreover, Woodland's account of young Woodland reveals the double meaning of oral history performance.

Through Woodland's telling of the story, Woodland moves from his narrating voice to the

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<sup>61</sup>Within biopower there are particular kinds of apparatuses of regulation that subject people to the norms that enable biopower to function. School is an institution within biopolitical life that regulates subjects; the school-learned nursery rhymes in this sense reinforce the norms that marginalize children of color. For example, "We're going to Kentucky, We're going to the fair/to see the senorita/with flowers in her hair" were one of the songs that many little girls in school sang (including myself) unknowingly singing about the objectification and exoticization of women of color. For more on the apparatuses of biopower see Chapter Two.

teacher's to young Malcolm. This shift shows how proud Woodland feels of his younger self as he tells the story. It is unclear if young Malcolm understands the political depth and repercussions of his voluntary boasting in class but it is clear to Woodland who is recollecting the moment; the clarity is apparent in the tone of his voice. A sense of delight is reflected as Woodland performs his kindergarten self, singing "power to the people" with his "little fist in the air." In both young Woodlands's actions and Woodlands re-telling of the story, Woodland's mother's counter-education proves to work and develop even in her absence. His public remembrance of Kwanza and his enactment of song is an embodiment of his mother's counter-education.

Woodland's mother derives her teaching practices that she instills in her son from what Kara Keeling, borrowing from both Antonio Gramsci and Wahneema Lubiano, terms "common sense black nationalism" ("Ghetto Heaven" 33-35).<sup>62</sup> Common sense black nationalism is a set of perceptions of the world that provide a sense of political unison to "those who understand themselves to be 'black' [and]...is antagonistic to those forms of racist domination and exploitation which assist in the consolidation of bourgeois hegemony in the United States" ("Ghetto Heaven" 34). Keeling's discussion of subaltern common sense focuses on how "common sense provides consent to the groups' domination and how it might support a viable alternative to their domination" (Keeling *The Witch's Flight* 20).<sup>63</sup> In

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<sup>62</sup>Kara Keeling theorizes upon Gramsci's common sense and Lubiano's common sense black nationalism along with Robin D. G. Kelley's term, "ghettocentric" to mark a "shift in the on-going and contested consolidation of common sense black nationalism" ("Ghetto Heaven" 35). This shift in "common sense black nationalism hinges upon a recognition of a new reality that sets contemporary black ghetto existence apart from prior manifestations of life in America's ghettos" (Keeling "Ghetto Heaven" 35). However, given the specific historical context of Dr. Woodland's mother, I do not think her experiences and her teachings fall within the context of Keeling's "new reality" of "black common sense". In fact, it is my belief that Dr. Woodland shares aspects of this manifestation of this black common sense due to his own contextual experiences of the everyday.

this sense, I identify the political practices of Woodland's mother as a set of common sense black nationalism that is accompanied by an awareness that her practices are not entirely resistant but are instead complex with both modes of consent and antagonism. In fact, I argue that Woodland acknowledges this form of black common sense as well, which is evident in his identification of mother's form of counter-education as an addition to his institutional learning as opposed to an either/or act.

Woodland's conscious use of repetition within his oral history emphasizes his belief that it was in fact his destiny to do the kind of political work he currently does within urban communities of color. Moreover, Woodland's acknowledgment of his mother's common sense black nationalism is evident through how he expresses what she has taught him, which continues as Woodland's oral history performance unfolds:

Woodland:               so moving to D.C./was a way/ to provide me /with a frame of  
reference  
that was/different./Ya know. (*Pause.*)

Lisa:                       Different in what way?

Woodland:               Ya know/ different /in the sense/ that I would get a diverse  
range,  
a wide variety of black folk,  
poor,  
middle class,  
black folk in suits,  
those who aren't.  
Like that.  
Ya know it was kind of like/those different stories and songs,  
my mother wanted me to see/differ/ent things,  
different ways/of life,  
different ways about the world.  
She provided me with the guidance  
Or/you could say  
knowledge

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<sup>63</sup>I combine my interpretation from two different sources of Kara Keeling's explanation of black common sense. Even though my understanding of Keeling's explanation is from two different sources, I don't believe they are contradictory or unrelated.

that was indicative of  
the man she wanted me  
to be.  
She wanted me to think  
critically.

Lisa: So, where did you move from?

Woodland: We moved from  
New OR/leeeans/ LUI/si/ANA. (*He says it in song in draw/.*)  
We moved to D.C. when I was two. My mother was in  
graduate school,  
gettin' her Masters  
at Tu/LANE Un/I/versi/TY. (*Woodland takes on a more formal  
voice but still has an expressive tone that is similar to his sing-  
song performance of New Orleans, Louisiana*)  
Being in D.C. helped to develop me in a certain way.  
We often took trips to the Frederick Douglass Museum, The  
National Mall.  
I remember Saturday and Sunday  
we would be at the museums/cause/ you know /the museums  
are  
ALL FREE/ in D.C.  
so there I was  
with my mother.

Reminiscent of homeplace, a site where the private and the public are intertwined both internally and materially (hooks “Homeplace” 449), Woodland’s mother provides him with the knowledge(s) or as Woodland says the counter-knowledge(s) of consciousness that arise from her own experiences. Similar to D. Soyini Madison’s description of how the women in her family helped to shape her own identity as a black woman (““That Was My Occupation”” 213-214), both the told story and telling of the story highlights the significance of Woodland’s mother to his own life and work. Woodland’s told story locates his mother’s active resistance through the intertwining of the private and public, politicizing the privacy of motherhood and the early stages of child development. Woodland’s early exposure to a multiplicity of “black folk” reiterates both Césaire’s and Fanon’s assertion that there are

multiple, equal particulars of “black folk.” Woodland’s mother’s conscious decision to move to Washington D.C. coupled with black pride songs and “different” stories suggests an attempt by his mother to combat Fanon’s infernal circle of representation.

Woodland’s repetition of the word “different” images his “critical thinking” as unique and antagonistic to both the representations of blackness and the colonial history that marks it. The repetitive differences also reveal a commonality under the notion of black folk and pride, so even though there are differences that is a commonality as well. The commonality, derived from Woodland’s mother’s common sense black nationalism, rests on the form of racism and included exclusion. As Woodland’s namesake Malcolm X notes, “Why Black Nationalism? Well, in the American society, how can there be any white-black solidarity before there is first some black solidarity? [...] the Black Nationalist political, economic and social philosophies had the ability to instill within the black man the racial dignity, the incentive and the confidence that the black race needs...” (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* 382) In this sense, Black Nationalism does not argue for one black experience but argues against racism and its effects. Furthermore, it is a philosophy that realizes a common bond between victims of racism and oppression.

Woodland’s mother’s relocating to Washington D.C and continuing the educating of her son in various places and circumstances links this intertwining of the public and private, this created space of safety in potentially unsafe territory, to multiple spaces and contexts. Additionally, her weekend educational outings with her son pushes further Woodland’s earlier account that counter-education is in addition to the institutional education young Woodland was receiving. In this sense, counter-education broadens future possibilities of Woodland’s subject formation and mobility. Woodland’s mother extracts the actions of

politicizing the everyday from the domestic realms that hooks discusses into multiple terrains of space and time. Hence, homeplace is transformed into homespace. As such, Woodland understands at an early age the differences between him and the other children, so Woodland “pretty much knew early on that [he] was black.” However, he does not feel a sense of lack from his difference. Homespace (counter-education and a feeling of communal belonging) provides him with the racial dignity, incentive and confidence of difference. Woodland’s first encounter with the difference of which his mother forewarned him occurred during his attendance to private school, where he was enrolled “on and off” from about “kindergarten to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.”

Woodland: Yeah./My mother sent me to this private school in Virginia It was unique. (*He kind if snickers...more to himself than me.*)

It WAS DIFF/er/ENT.

It was called the *Burgundy Country Day School*.

And/ ya know/my mother would have me in this school when she could afford to pay/so ya know/ that’s why it was on and off.

So, sometimes/I would be up in this school/and sometimes I would be in DCPS. [Washington D.C. Public School]

Lisa: Dag, so it was in Virginia? How far was it from home?

Woodland: Oh./It wasn’t THAT far. (*He picks up my expressive tone.*) It was about a 15-20 minute drive from my house/but/it could’ve been 1500, two thousand miles away. I mean/it was like two different worlds. I could remember the black students in that school on half my hand/including me,/ so it was COMPLETELY different/than my neighborhood. The school itself focused on alternative ways to have children fall in love with learning. It was a school that was ran/ by like/ two white hippies./And/ their views on learning were both world based and nature based. /I mean/ the school had a farm on the premises with pigs, goats, chickens,/ALL these farm animals.

Lisa: That’s crazy.

Woodland: Tell me about it. I mean/ it was nothing/ to be in class and look out the window/ and see these ducks or whatever. And I really digged /ya know /being around the farm/ pettin' these animals./I think the school is still there/ but now I think it caters to more conservative based, upper class families. Yeah./ But I was DEFINITELY/ the ONLY kid/ in MY neighborhood/ who was out there. So, that's why I say /it might as well/ have been fifteen hundred, two/ THOU/sand miles away.

The multiple sites of homespace appear in Woodland's account of growing up in D.C. This is demonstrated by how his mother not only teaches him the different facets of black people through the diversity in Washington D.C., but also through the outings of what the city had to offer her son. However, in Woodland's mother's attempt to provide her son with a notion of counter-education particularly in the *Burgundy Country Day School*, she exposed him to the material experience of difference. While attending *Burgundy*, Woodland is exposed to different modes of learning and a different environment altogether; he leaves a concrete urban space for a space with farm animals. Woodland attends *Burgundy* only when his mother could afford to have him attend. The difference is not just physical but also financial.

The financial aspect of the socio-economic needs of urban youth had been addressed by others who have demonstrated common sense black nationalism such as the Black Panther Party (B.P.P.). In Assata Shakur's autobiography, Shakur refutes the image of the B.P.P. as an image of black urban youth toting guns for the sake of solely armed revolution. Shakur points out that it was the B.P.P.'s desire for their local urban neighborhoods to have access to fundamental needs like breakfast and lunch for children attending school that drove them to

mobilize.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, the B.P.P. aimed to reveal the hypocrisy of the American Dream from the perspective of included exclusion; their practices helped to gain audience attention all the while serving fundamental everyday needs of local urban communities (Smith 55). With this said, I return to Keeling's description of common sense black nationalism and argue that Woodland's mother's struggle to be able to afford to place her son in Burgundy to gain a "world based, nature based" education reveal both a resistance and an adherence to hegemonic society. It is a resistance to the kinds of barriers or as Woodland calls it "traps" that limit opportunities for particular groups of peoples but it is also adheres to a desire for upward mobility and success. It is a desire for a fair stake at the American Dream; however, the included/excluded position assures that particular racist barriers will diminish possibilities of success.

### **'It Ain't Where You're From, Its Where You're At': Experiencing Other(ed)ness**

By attending this alternative school yet living in an urban working class neighborhood that consists predominantly of people of color, young Woodland embodies the stranger in Gloria Anzaldúa's border(ed)lands. In Gloria Anzaldúa's seminal work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa differentiates between borders and borderlands. She argues, "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge."<sup>(3)</sup> For Woodland, it is unclear which "educational" place is safe or unsafe, his neighborhood or

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<sup>64</sup>Assata Shakur was a high ranked officer of the New York chapter in the Black Panther Party who was later accused and convicted of the murder of a state trooper during an incident that occurred in 1973 on the New Jersey Turnpike. She escaped prison and is currently living in Havana, Cuba, where she is granted political asylum by former President of Cuba, Fidel Castro. Shakur still maintains her innocence. For more on Assata Shakur, see *Assata: An Autobiography*.

the *Burgundy Country Day School*. However, Woodland simultaneously becomes both a stranger and someone who is at home in both places:

Woodland: I remember around the second grade. /Somehow I was with one of the kids from the school all weekend. I don't remember exactly/ but I remember his name was John. And /John and his dad/ they had to take me home /and when we got to my neighborhood/they was like 'WHAT?'

I felt their whole demeanor change./ I re/member /the kid John and I /were friends,/ and I was like/ 'come on in'./ And John's father was like 'NO.' (*Woodland laughs aloud.*)

That's a wrap on that'.  
THAT/IS/A/WRAP/ON/THAT./ (*He laughs again.*)

And, then my mother was there/ and the father was like 'Oh. It's pretty rough over here, huh?' to my mother./My mother just looked at him like... (*Woodland breaths out,*) 'Teh'.  
And, she sent me inside.  
Even though my mother told me what it was all about I don't think I knew at the time/but it was odd./It was odd to me.  
Yeah/ I remember feeling odd about the whole situation. But/ya know/I don't think you could really articulate it at the time/but /ya know YOU KNOW the feeling.

Lisa: Oh yeah, of course.

Woodland: In both cases, I was in worlds that didn't overlap,/ ya know what I'm sayin,/ worlds, culture, music,/ things kids listen to play a large role at that time./Though/ this is all retrospective.

Lisa: Yes, yes, of course, that's fine.

Woodland: Yeah./I mean these separate worlds didn't overlap  
But/ya know/it/was cool.  
I LOVED petting the goats /and then coming home to the community center.

Although for young Woodland both "worlds" shape how he sees himself, the border(ed)land, is very apparent by John's father's reaction to Woodland's home.

Anzaldúa's description of the power struggles that distinguish between self and other explains the situation that Woodland recalls. John's father having distinguished himself and son from Woodland and his home reinforces the signifiers that shape the position of included exclusion. The people who inhabit this unsafe neighborhood are the embodiments of fear. As Anzaldúa states, there is no complexity in the defining of us as opposed to "them"; those who are other(ed) and objectified fall into a rigid definition of blackness.

The impact of young Woodland's experience is apparent through Woodland's recollection of how he felt "their whole demeanor change" upon arrival to his home. Although a young Woodland tries to maintain a friendship with John, his attempts falter by John's father's negative response. Woodland's recollection is felt as he performs the narrative and laughs at the behavior of John's father, commenting upon it repeatedly and emphatically with "THAT'S A WRAP ON THAT." Woodland breaks from the narrative to reaffirm "the feeling" he felt and still recalls by including my position; he ensures that I know "the feeling" through his tone and gesture of "KNOW." I, of course, reciprocate that bond by responding affirmatively, thinking back to my own experiences of that feeling while listening to him. The break from the narrative to discuss "the feeling" illustrates both my and Woodland's practice of homespace and communal belonging through our shared experiences of racism and included/excluded position. Even though Woodland could not articulate the strange feeling he possessed while witnessing the reaction of John's father to his home, this "strange feeling" Woodland sensed as a child is named by Woodland as a feeling of difference, which he acknowledges is "retrospective."

Young Woodland's feeling of the shift in his position as "friends" with John is further affirmed by John's father's comment to Woodland's mother, "Oh. It's pretty rough over

here, huh?’ Interestingly, Woodland’s mother sends her son inside and informs him of the situation afterwards. Her decision to send her son inside yet inform him about John’s father’s behavior *in her terms* illustrates a layered act of empowerment that stems from both the political and the private. By sending young Woodland inside, Woodland’s mother chooses to shelter her son from the lived experience where perhaps she felt she could not control the outcome and the effects of the assault upon her son. This moment further reinforces the slippages between private and public that are embedded within Woodland’s mother’s practices and homespace. Just as bell hooks described with homeplace, inside the home becomes the site where Woodland’s mother can control the effects the experience of John’s father’s reaction had on her son. Moreover, as hooks argues, for black women, speech, talking back or “true speaking is not solely an expression of creative poser; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless” (*Talking Back* 8). Woodland’s mother’s actions simultaneously empower her as she responds to John’s father alone.

Despite the border, through his oral history performance, it seems as if Woodland occupies an in-between space; this in-between space suggests that Woodland is also positioned within a place(d)/space of possibility. As Anzaldúa points out, unlike borders or what I call border(ed)lands, a borderland is a “vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (*Borderlands* 3). This space of possibility that Woodland occupied is apparent in his expressed love for his two separate worlds and the fact that “it was cool.” However, within this in-between space, there are possible moments of pain, estrangement, and the inability to belong. Interestingly, as a child, although Woodland does not articulate difference, even as

his mother explains to him what had occurred, the “strange feeling” marks the moment he realizes difference much like W.E.B. Dubois’ childhood recollection of realized difference. Dubois writes, “I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing...In a wee wooden schoolhouse...it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like mayhap in heart and life and longing, but shut out from the world by a vast veil” (Dubois 164).<sup>65</sup> Much like Dubois, Woodland perceives this difference as common struggle for those who are marked by their included excluded positions and struggle for future possibilities of solidarity. Hence, our bond, forged by experiences of racism, marked by a colonial past, is predicated more upon future possibilities rather than a shared past encompassed in identity.

### **An ‘Everyday Struggle’ with ‘D’Evils’ : Countereducation vs. Traps of Systematic Racism**

Woodland alludes to the community center as the referent of his other(ed) world.<sup>66</sup> Although the community center did not provide formal educational guidance, the center introduced Woodland to organized sports. Woodland credits the coaches’ guidance and the effects of sports-playing as having a significant role in his shaping of homespace.

And,/ and, /that space was BIG /to me. / It provided me/ with access/ to people  
that played a/ big part of my life/ ya know/ I mean  
AL/ways/ as far as I can recall/ people took a liking to me.  
I don’t know/ maybe because I played basketball  
and so they took me under their wing.(Pause)  
AND I THINK IT’S THAT kind of guidance  
and support

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<sup>65</sup>W.E.B. Dubois’ realization occurs when he is a child in school. While he and his classmates are exchanging cards a new girl refuses his card (Dubois 164).

<sup>66</sup>I am using other(ed) here as a reference to John’s father’s reaction.

that is particularly important to kids like myself./YOU KNOW  
 mom's not home (*Woodland draws out 'home', which makes the word sound  
 as if longer than one syllable.*)  
 workin'/you're alone after school.  
 And/ YOU KNOW  
 ninety percent of what you prefer to do after school ain't good/ and often  
 times  
 it could trap you.  
 Sports gave additional opposition to those traps as well as my mother. (pause)  
 Now, I ain't one of those guys who say sports saved me  
 cause sports  
 CAN be one of those traps as well.  
 But/ I am saying that it added to the protection I believe I had/ you know  
 those protective factors.  
 Like cats in the neighborhood would be like  
 'Oh that's Woodland./ He a hooper/ whatever.  
 Organized sports gave me a certain credibility  
 like 'hey whassup?'  
 For a young man/ perhaps for young women/ I am not sure (pause)  
 you wanna have your space  
 you definitely don't wanna be no punk/ so/ you know/ young kids will do  
 things to gain a kind of street credibility,  
 fighting, smoking, dealing drugs.  
 Some would say it's a feeling of lack or whatever.  
 But, I was like/ 'you don't wanna go there with them' /because of basketball.  
 For me,/ I was cool with my hands. I felt like I got a pass on a lot of things.  
 Coaches are also one of those people I am referring to  
 as far as providing me with that guidance and protection.  
 These cats couldn't even play  
 but they did it more because they believed in what they were doing.  
 They did it because they wanted to guide young men like me  
 out of these traps  
 and because they love kids.  
 They provided opportunities for kids like me to see beyond those traps.

In *Things Done Changed*, the Notorious B.I.G. rapped, "the streets is a short  
 stop/either you're slingin' crack rock/or ya got a wicked jump shot" to comment on the limits  
 of possibility for young urban black males. The lack of options eventually takes a toll on the  
 self, which Big acknowledges in *Everyday Day Struggle*: "I know how it feels to wake up  
 fucked up. Pockets broke as hell/another rock to sell. Everybody look at you like you the

user...mad buddha<sup>67</sup> abuser.”<sup>68</sup> Much like Big’s description, Woodland’s account exemplifies the same two options: organized sports at the community center or “fighting, smoking, and dealing drugs” as Woodland says most of the things to do afterschool were not good; these things were what Woodland describes as traps. Woodland’s traps await young black men who may have “a feeling of lack or whatever.” Like Big and Woodland, Malcolm X points to these same kinds of actions as manifestations of racism that victimize black men.

Malcolm X recalls his life before the Nation of Islam: “I was a true hustler—uneducated, unskilled at anything honorable, and I consider myself nervy and cunning enough to live by my wits, exploiting any prey that would present itself. I would risk just about anything” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 111). Upon this reflection Malcolm X continues, “Through all of this time of my life, I really was dead—mentally dead. I just didn’t know that I was” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 128). This feeling of being dead or mentally dead is not only congruent to “a feeling of lack” but also to my reference of Mbembe’s walking dead within necropolitics in Chapter Two.<sup>69</sup> Easily linked to indirect murder, the hustler embodies the walking dead; Malcolm X concludes: “I heard the usual hustler fates of so many others. Bullets, knives, prison, dope, diseases, insanity, alcoholism...but beneath the surface they were poor, ignorant untrained black men; life had...hyped them” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 220). Woodland perceives the community center, its practices centered on organized sports and the people who were dedicated to

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<sup>67</sup>Marijuana.

<sup>68</sup>*Things done Changed* and *Everyday Struggle* are both from Big’s 1994 debut album, *Ready to Die*, under Bad Boy Records.

<sup>69</sup>In Chapter Two, I argue that within the context of the United States life oscillates between biopower and necropower, biopolitics and necropolitics. Of course this depends on the historical and geopolitical context, but I point to the crack-cocaine era as one of these moments. See Chapter Two for further elaboration.

guiding the children as an addition to his mother's counter-education. The communal practices served as "protection" from Woodland performing the hustler's life, while he was home alone as his mother worked to support them. Woodland's skill with his hands is focused on basketball as opposed to the fighting in the street, which he hints is what he could have been doing if it was not for the protection of the community center.

Woodland's reference to smoking and dealing drugs refers directly to Big's explanation of the perceived opportunities for socio-economic mobility in urban working class environments. Woodland also recognizes that playing basketball provides him with credibility in his neighborhood that he might otherwise have had to gain and maintain by fighting, smoking, and dealing. However, Woodland is careful with crediting sports as his "saving grace," because, according to Woodland, sports itself could also become a trap. This too is related to the representation of blackness. As Paul Gilroy argues, often, the projected racialized form of the black body is either the sub- or inhuman or "the same incredible subspecies [becomes] superhuman and even godlike in its physicality" (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 18). Here, once again, only two options seem possible. Counter-education and the protective factors within the umbrella of homespace are attempts to alleviate the limits of possibility. Later, Dr. Woodland describes how being perceived as an athlete enables teachers to actively deny him access to enter a more intellectually advanced track in his DCPS school curriculum.

Woodland describes his experience at the *Burgundy Country Day School* as "very different than DCPS to say the least." Woodland laughs slightly as he recalls how the dynamics of the school "focused on providing a space for a worldview perspective" and how "it was run by some hippy white folk." I assume in his pauses he is imagining the school and

those who ran the school as I am imagining them. He mentions again that the school is still open but is now “predominantly for Republican families.” Aware that he has said all of this before, he then tells me he knows he has mentioned this and pauses a second time. This second pause slightly differs from the first, as if he returned to the awareness that he is being interviewed for my dissertation. In an act that seems suddenly conscious of the interview process and my topic, Woodland regains his composure and says, “And, as I said, I was in and out of this school. But my experience there most definitely shaped how I see myself.”

Woodland tells me that by the time he was in the fourth grade, the last year he attended *Burgundy Country*, he felt that he was “getting caught up:”

Woodland: You know I was listening to rock n roll, those rock bands.  
*(He laughs aloud. I laugh with him.)*

Lisa: No. *(I drag out my ‘no’ in disbelief.)*

Woodland: Yeah. *(Pause)* Kids in the neighborhood were NOT listening to that/and/were like ‘WHAT?’  
My mother would look at me like ‘What is UP with YOU’ and laugh.  
*(He laughs as if he is laughing alongside his mother’s laugh.)*  
And my mother was like  
I sent you there to give you an educational opportunity not for you to come back on some other stuff.  
So/ one day/ we had a field trip. My mother came/ and/ I remember that I had wanted to show her a girl I liked in class. She was a little white girl.  
Her name was ADR/I/enne/ KLEIN.

Lisa: What? *(Woodland laughs and continues.)*

Woodland: Yeah. Klein, like Calvin KLEIN.  
She had blue eyes and I think she was of German descent.  
*(We both laugh.)*

Lisa: No. *(I drag out my ‘no’ dramatically.)* What did your mother say?

Woodland: Well,/ when I pointed little Adrienne Klein out to my mother  
my mother was like  
*(Woodland performs a different voice than his own)*  
'Oh. She's pretty'  
and that was it.

Lisa: That's it? *(I question in an excited laughter.)*

Woodland: Yeah,/ but I'll tell you/I think it was the reason  
I stopped going to that school.  
If it wasn't the day after/ or/ or/ a week after  
I was back into DCPS/ quick  
with the little Keisha's and the Tamika's.  
*(We both laugh more forcefully this time.)*  
*With laughter still in his voice, Woodland continues.)*  
To this day, my mother denies it ever went down like that  
but she doesn't have an alternative story.  
She's like  
'Mmm Hmm'.  
So yeah, the school had some issues on playing into  
my own identity.

Musical genre is one of the markers of communal belonging (Grossberg "History, Imagination" 156-157). It can be a form of expression that possesses the possibilities of solidarity across color lines (Gilroy *The Black Atlantic*). Yet, it can also possess the possibility of reinforcing the rigid race-based categories of representation (Gilroy *Against Race*). Here, Woodland reveals how "music both empowers and disempowers" him as a fan and listener (Grossberg "History, Imagination" 157). Woodland's taste in music is the first "sign" of the kind of impact that attending *Burgundy Country* has on his identity. The contrast of rock and roll music to the earlier "songs about black folk" is reinforced by Woodland's acknowledgement that this was not the music that people in his neighborhood were listening to. His mother's reaction that she did not intend for him to return from *Burgundy Country* "on some other stuff" further reinforces what might be seen as Woodland's "getting caught up" in one of his worlds.

It isn't until young Woodland points out little Adrienne Klein to his mother, Woodland understands the extent of *Burgundy Country*'s impact on his identity as he remembers this moment. Adrienne Klein seems to alert Woodland's mother as well. In discussing the importance of Antonio Gramsci for the study of race and ethnicity, Stuart Hall argues that institutions such as school play a significant role in "giving, sustaining, and reproducing" racially structured forms ("Gramsci's relevance" 439). In this sense, Woodland's "getting caught up" refers to his potential subjection to "the mystification of the very racist ideologies which imprison and define [him]" ("Gramsci's relevance" 439). Perhaps Woodland's mother perceived her son liking Adrienne Klein as a similar manifestation of one of the aforementioned traps that stems from a sense of lack. Woodland's account of this moment as "getting caught up" seems as if Woodland perceives his liking of Adrienne Klein as having a similar affect on his subjectivity as these traps.

Similarly, Fanon discusses how this kind of subjection impacts men of color. Fanon points out that this mystified man of color could conflate privileges of whiteness that he is limited to into *possessing* a white woman (*Black Skin White Masks* 63-82). He states, "I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*...who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man...I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (*Black Skin White Masks* 63). Although Woodland's mother did not voice any discontent with her son liking Adrienne Klein, Woodland re-members this moment as the pivotal moment that drives his mother to take him out of *Burgundy Country* permanently. Perhaps his mother, already concerned with young Woodland's music preference, did not want her son to perceive his

color as a flaw and have this perception and desire for fairness and equality manifest in his choice of women.<sup>70</sup> Along this same vein, Fanon continues:

In no way should my color be regarded as a flaw. From the moment the Negro accepts the separation imposed by the European he has no further respite, and 'is it not understandable that thenceforward he will try to elevate himself to the white man's level? To elevate himself in the range of colors to which he attributes a kind of hierarchy?' We shall see another solution is possible. It implies a restructuring of the world. (*Black Skin White Masks* 81)

Fanon combats against what Hall describes as ““the mystification of the very racist ideologies which imprison and define” people of color. Like Fanon, Woodland's mother also perceives another solution. Much like Césaire's universal world with equal particulars Fanon calls for a world where there is a plethora of possibility for consciousness (*Black Skin White Masks* 230-232). Because of Woodland's mother's common sense black nationalism, it seems as if her hope for the future would lie under the same logic. Counter-education could happen elsewhere with other practices.

Almost as if Woodland would rather betray his words than his mother's actions (or his interpretation of her actions), he quickly recalls another story:

I remember one time/I was writing a letter backward or something. So I remember/one of the little white kids came/and I think he said that I was writing the letter backward or he saw and came/ and told the teacher/ or maybe the teacher came in first./I don't quite /remember exactly but I do remember/that the teacher said 'Oh, you can't tell Woodland ANYthing/ anyway'.

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<sup>70</sup>Here, I am not arguing that this is inevitable nor do I want to suggest that Woodland's mother believed that this was inevitable. However, given Woodland's account of “getting caught up,” this seems to be a possibility that Woodland's mother wanted to avoid.

And I remember wondering,  
how come/ I/ don't listen? (Pause)  
So while wondering this, I remember changing the letter.

Lisa: Do you think it's because of race?

Woodland: Well, I think race is the easy assumption.  
I was one of the two black children  
and we were the ones who had this kind of attention the most.  
And I was like/ why am/ I/ getting' singled out? (pause)  
And so to be fair to my mother,  
I think this played into my learning and my mother,  
having acknowledged this,  
decided that it was time take me out of that school,  
permanently.  
Ya know/ and I was a big kid as well. I was the tallest, biggest  
kid up until the eighth grade.  
I believe this is significant in terms of how people viewed me,  
even how I viewed *myself* and how I viewed others.

Woodland's second story both resemble his mother's earlier practices of counter-education and additionally illustrate my above claim that Woodland's mother shares similar hopes to that of Césaire and Fanon. Pulling Woodland out of school demonstrates that counter-education could in fact occur elsewhere; this reinforces the notion that homespace pertains to practice as opposed to place. Woodland then confesses that he does not believe that returning to D.C.P.S. created a better learning environment for him:

To be honest,  
I don't think it got better.  
I think that  
if anything  
whatever I experienced  
up until that point was miniscule in comparison.  
I feel like I was just being trapped.  
I mean/as I had mentioned  
my savior was that I was an athlete,  
I was big,  
I could still throw down.  
So/I think in terms of the social aspect  
these things made the adjustment easier.

I mean/I still liked white music,  
Wham, Whitesnake, ya know.  
And dudes were like  
'What?' but I was like  
'Dude, I'm doin' me'.  
So you know  
once I got back to the Tameka's  
and all that  
I was socially fine.  
Academically  
I began to falter.  
I was CONSTANTLY being trapped.

Woodland's belief that his situation was no better at D.C.P.S. deals less with his experience at *Burgundy Country* and more with how his appearance influenced how people perceived him and how he perceived himself. Woodland reinforces this belief by recalling how the teacher in *Burgundy Country* gave young Woodland and the only other black child "that kind of attention." Woodland's account of his downward spiral in academic achievement, followed by his recognition of "constantly being trapped," demonstrates that his spiral was not linked to his capacity but outside factors. This is further reinforced by his easy adjustment upon his return to D.C.P.S. Woodland returns to living in between borders quite comfortably as shown through his continued taste in "white music" as "doin' me" and his acknowledgment that, "once I got back to the Tameka's...I was socially fine." In this sense, what his physical body represents both empowers socially and disempowers him intellectually.

After recalling that he was "constantly being trapped," Woodland discloses that he hated to read as a child. He is so passionate in describing his hatred of reading his voice heightens a few levels in sound and he repeats his statement:

I remember I hated to read. I mean  
I HATED TO READ.  
HAT/ED/TO/READ.

And my mother would like try and get me to read. And (*pause*)  
ya know/she wanted me to read stuff that had to do with me  
and/in a sense/ give me that kind of counter-education.

In response to her son's aversion to reading, Woodland's mother gave him a book entitled *Countering the Disparity* that centered on the destruction of black males through everyday experiences. The book provided Woodland with an understanding that he was not alone and "it made him be like 'Damn. So, it's NOT me.'" In this sense, *Countering the Disparity* validates his existence and the fact that his experience as a young black boy was more common than unique. This, in turn, informs young Woodland that it is in fact outside factors and not him. Woodland slightly laughs as if reflecting on his own childhood and the impact the book has had on him; his laughter breaks the tense of the story.

Woodland then explains his reflection of realizing systematic racism:

Woodland: Ya know/ As a child, you don't really know what's goin on  
I mean/you have a feeling but/ at the same time  
you can't really articulate/beyond a certain kind of experience  
or feeling.  
I think it's real difficult/ya know/ to see what's goin on.  
You know like why your teacher treats you a certain way  
or why you are not in the smart class. And  
this book really helped me put a lot of things in perspective like  
'WOW. My teacher really does treat me like this!'  
And YOU KNOW at this time in a child's life/it's crucial.  
I mean/it's like/your mother could tell you/ you're smart/but  
if your mother is the ONLY one tellin' you you are smart/and  
those people who SHOULD be guiding you/are actin' funny,  
treatin' you a certain way./Well (*PAUSE*)  
you know/ you might be like  
'DAMN. What's WRONG with ME?'  
(*He performs the question as a statement.*)  
So YEAH/ this book really put things in proper perspective for  
me  
And/it still holds a lot of weight(*PAUSE*)  
ya know/ in terms of my work/now as a clinician  
even as a researcher.

Lisa: So what do you think about it now?

Woodland: I mean/I am much more critical of the things he says in the book especially in terms of women. Ya know/some of the things he says (*PAUSE*) it's/it's really sexist. But you don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water ESPecially since I think WHAT he is saying is crucial. Like I've recommended this book to some parents, mothers. (*He says in as a matter of fact manner.*) And I would tell them like/ya know/ there's some stuff you might want to watch in there and explain/to your child/cause/it's sexist. Yeah, there's definitely some things that are questionable even in terms of his method for analysis/his methodologies. But like I said/even now, I use it as a reference with my own work and I've had people question his methods but ye know like anything else, any other reference, there are things that might be like "EEEEHHHH." Again, though, you do not want to throw the baby out with the bath water. (*There is a pause and Woodland returns to his initial point.*) Oh, like I said I hated read. And so, I remember my mother giving me *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and being like 'Yo./If/you/don't/read/this/book,/you and me/are gonna be fightin.' (*He laughs and I do too.*) I remember I was like one of the only people I knew who read *Malcolm X* that young.

Woodland's mother adheres to Kara Keeling's subaltern notion of common sense discussed previously. Much like Fanon's acknowledgment of racist representations of blackness, Keeling argues that mainstream representations of black subjectivity are "essentially macho, masculine and heterosexual" which function within the moral norms of the nation and in turn the nuclear family ("Joining the Lesbians" 217). Moreover, in discussing the images of the B.P.P. and black revolutionary women, Keeling argues that, even though the BPP challenged the category of femininity for black women, it did not challenge the inscriptions of masculinity (*The Witch's Flight* 83-85). The challenges toward

masculinity within the context of the BPP came retroactively with the works of black feminism (Keeling *The Witch's Flight* 87-88). Woodland's mother's experience and influence informs Woodland to think critically about the sexist connotations in *Countering the Disparity* and, in turn, formulate new possibilities of guidance and becoming even with the traces of sexism. By distributing the book to others, yet forewarning them about the sexism, Woodland hopes to provide the feeling that the reader is not the lone victim of racism and influence their interpretation of the sexist connotation. His repetition of "You can't throw the baby out with the bath water" further demonstrates his new perspective on *Countering the Disparity*.

Woodland's mother's everyday experiences through a subaltern notion of common sense drove her to make particular decisions on how she would raise her son to identify the world and his place within it. In turn, Woodland usurps this knowledge with his own experience, creating possibilities anew. This act embodies bell hooks' politicization of memory; for hooks, remembering possesses the power to illuminate and transform the present (*Yearning* 147). Woodland enacts this in his critical account of *Countering the Disparity*. The attempts made by Woodland's mother to provide him with a counter-education hint to her own embodiment of hooks' politicization of memory as well. In other words, her own experiences shaped Woodland as not only a race conscious but also gender conscious man.

### **'The Streets Are Watchin': The (Be)Coming of Homespace**

Woodland's ability to identify himself and others who experience the oppressive effects of racism as black provides him with a sense of safety that he carries with him. This

safety is an assurance that there is something “wrong” beyond him. This is not to say that Woodland’s need to identify as Black is an essentialist stance; it is however a positional strategy (Hall *Questions of Cultural Identity* 3). As Stuart Hall argues, identities “emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of marking through difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity” (Hall *Questions of Cultural Identity* 4). Hall’s explanation of how identifications of belonging to blackness emerge through difference and exclusion. Woodland gains his identification through counter-education and the experiences that support his counter-knowledge. Woodland understands that his position like many in the United States is shaped by what Walter Rodney describes as a particular modality of power that possesses a long history of defining blackness to which if one does not possess privileges of inclusion and whiteness one is defined as black (Rodney *Groundings with My Brothers* 28). He understands, then, that he and other(ed) peoples of color in the United States belong to the category of blackness. Woodland’s everyday experiences further realize Hall:

I wanted to be challenged more.  
And/ you know they had different tracks  
the academic, comprehensive, and special ed.  
And I was in the comprehensive track.  
I had asked to be in the academic track/right  
Now, this is the first time I had asked this question  
to be challenged more/ and nobody picked up on it.  
I had asked to be in the academic track and  
I remember the teacher who was in charge of placing the  
students Mrs. Smith was her name/ And /ya know/ Mrs. Smith  
was like ‘Nah, we’re not gonna be able to this, Woodland’.  
I think this is pretty common for young people of color.  
For the most part, I think it is ESPECIALLY common/  
from what I have experienced/ in terms of myself and my work  
for black boys/ who want to be smart/ but/ are not/ a/llowed to.  
They are consistently being ignored or not challenged  
and ya know, my research is primarily on these assaults  
on the intellectual and identity development of black boys

within the everyday.  
You know/that's why it's important for us to begin  
examining these assaults  
and to begin to establish and institutionalize  
counter-educations if you will.  
And/ ya know /I am hoping that my work does that  
and continues to do so. (*Pause*)  
But/ ya know/ now that I am telling you this/ ya know/  
now that I think about it/ it/its more than an assault.  
For me, it was more than an assault, it was a denial.  
Cause/ ya know/ ya have to think,  
what would've happened if she would've said  
'OK, Malcolm let's put you in the academic track'/ ya know/  
we don't know those potential the possibilities.  
I just would have no idea.

Woodland's account of active and continuous assaults on young people of color, black boys in particular is a deployment of indirect murder. As Foucault argues racism functions in many forms in biopower and it might not cause direct murder as such but political death, intellectual death; in this sense, indirect murder could be interpreted as the continuous denial of access to agency. As Woodland puts it, "We don't know those potential possibilities" if racism did not come into play. This kind of indirect death that Woodland discusses is justified by ideological formations tied to blackness which in turn victimizes young people of color, for Woodland, black boys in particular. Justifications for acts of indirect murder are not necessarily conscious; Woodland does not claim that Mrs. Smith knowingly denies him access to the academic track because of what Woodland represents to her. However, most importantly, for Woodland, the effects upon the lives of young black boys are real when they remain ignored, unchallenged, and intellectually undeveloped; it is a socio-political and economic death which can often times lead to physical death or "walking dead" state greatly affecting an entire peoples.

I ask Woodland a follow-up question to ensure that he should have been in the academic track:

Lisa: And what kind of grades did you have at this point, around when all this happened?

Woodland: I had all A's and B's. Yeah  
it would've been interesting to see what could've happened.  
But you know/I was actively denied access to intellectual development.  
There was an active resistance to me being smart.  
And another story of this active resistance/now, this one, my mother flipped/ I don't know I must've told her/ or something  
I don't know/ I don't quite remember/ But I remember some cats came around givin' tests.  
They created some kind of career aptitude test  
And when it came to my turn, I was like  
'Oh, I don't know exactly what I want to be but I kind of like to talk to people and I like workin' with people.  
I most definitely wanna be communicatin' with people.'  
And they were like/'oh, you could be a barber.'  
and my mother was SO MAD/she went up there and was like  
'HAVE YOU ALL LOST YOUR DAMN MIND!'  
Like the other night I was watching *Malcolm X*  
and you know the part where the teacher asks Malcolm if he's given his career goals any thought  
and Malcolm was like  
'I wanna be a lawyer'  
and the teacher is like 'Nah.  
That's not realistic for a nigger.  
You SHOULD be a carpenter.' Tsss.  
*(We both uneasily laugh a similar disappointed, yet unsurprised expression.)*  
And ya know it's the same thing.  
Tellin' me I should be a barber.  
It was as if I was actively prevented to really claim smart.  
You know they might as well say it to me like they said it to Malcolm. AND  
I'm not sayin' there's anything wrong with these professions or that being a barber takes less skill and smarts than being a lawyer but what I am sayin' is that you have kids that are being actively discouraged or even encouraged/to claim particular categories and identities.

I'm at a point in my life where possibilities should be unlimited  
and you know/ they were like  
'Nah, that's a wrap'.  
So yeah/ with good right my mom had to flip on my behalf.  
Cause you know/its like/it begins at such an early age  
where you are constantly being trapped into particular  
categories. And it's these people in authority/ who SHOULD  
BE guiding you toward multiple possibilities,  
that are like  
'No, you need to be a carpenter' or  
'No, you need to be a barber' or/ or/  
'No you need to be an athlete'.  
So what you have is exactly what you created  
and you have a bunch of kids whose potential abilities  
are focused elsewhere.  
This is why I give praise to my mother,  
I give praise to people within my cultural community, ya know  
I give praise to the people I was in contact with  
when I needed a kind of guidance or/ or a  
countereducation. Ya know.  
In part, this is why I do what I do.  
Cause you know you come to a point where you say  
there has got to be some institutional change  
cause what we have ain't workin'. Ya know.  
So that brings me to what I'm doin' here  
my postdoctoral work at Berkley/ and ya know  
some of what I did when I was in NY at CUNY. Ya know.

*(Pause)*

Woodland's grades reinforce the idea that there is a practice of actively denying young people of color access to intellectual development, which is a continuous assault on people of color. Here, sports which once served as Woodland's protective factor becomes an identity "trap." He is now actively denied the opportunity to be anything else but an athlete. Woodland seems caught between subhuman and superhuman, echoing Gilroy's argument of the racialized black body; both representations deny access to intellectual development. Woodland again likens himself to Malcolm X who also recalls a similar situation of active

resistance toward intellectual development. Woodland reenacts Malcolm X's recollection which is famously depicted in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*.

Woodland and Malcolm X's experiences serve as a platform for Woodland's critical, social and political commentary on how particular bodies remain within a position of included exclusion and must struggle for equal access to political life and socio-economic mobility. This included/excluded position is reinforced by Woodland's conclusion, "So what you have is exactly what you have created...a bunch of kids whose potential abilities are focused elsewhere." This poignant remark incites a curiosity of the potential of elsewhere. Does this potential of elsewhere magnify Malcolm X's hustler in numbers? Does it, in turn, reinforce the fear which blackness already signifies? Does it then multiply those who fall victim to modes of murder and indirect murder? The struggle against this potential of elsewhere arises from multiple practices in the community such as Woodland's mother's counter-education and the people in the community center who protected young Woodland from the potential elsewhere factors.

Woodland's activist work supports his critique of society and its continuous victimization of young people of color. Woodland believes there must be institutional change and that he too must partake in this change through both community leadership work and research. However, even with his status as Dr. Woodland, community leader, activist and researcher, Woodland adds that he remains a victim of Fanon's racist cycle of representation:

And even like today it's not a point  
where this all has passed for me/ it's not like  
'Oh, I am Dr. Woodland and its all good.'  
I STILL FEEL MARGINALIZED.  
OH/OH/Here's another story that just happened like  
just the other day.  
*Woodland laughs slightly in an unsurprised yet disbelief  
manner.*

I'm out with my cousin

Lisa: A girl or a guy?

Woodland: A woman.  
We are out driving and we're driving for about 30 minutes. And at this point we're a bit turned around and didn't know where we were going. So, we're driving around, and we pull over cause I had to go to the bank to get some change and figured we could also get some directions. So, I go to the bank and I see two Mexican brothers standin' not so far so I'm like 'oh, ok. I'mma go ask them for directions.' And so I'm like, 'Excuse me.' And there's no response. So I'm like, 'Excuse me, excuse me' but louder this time. These dudes break out runnin' to the restaurant. THESE are the kind of assaults that happen to black men. And you know the first reaction is like 'ok, what are you wearin?'

And, Lisa, I am DRESSED/ya know/ like how I do for work you know how I do.

Lisa: Yeah, yeah. Slacks/ shirt/button down/ no sweats, t-shirt.

Woodland: Exactly.

Lisa: But ya know it's precisely that kind of questioning of ourselves that is specific to people of color particularly young urban youth. And as far as the two Mexicans are concerned, unfortunately, we are sometimes our biggest police, our biggest enforcers.

Woodland: Tsss. You know. AND I'M straight up tryin' to ask directions/and still didn't get it.

Lisa: Tsss. (*I shake my head simultaneously.*)

Dr. Woodland: Tsss. Exactly.  
These are the kind of assaults that happen to black men and shake them in certain ways.  
And its these kinds of experiences, these assaults that give them an identity/before they even claimed one. Ya know the teacher sayin' you can't tell me nothin', Mrs. Smith, the two Mexican brothers thinking I was a robber or something. At the end, those dudes categorized me as a robber or something to that extent and/ ya know/I have claimed an identity FAR from a robber.

But this is precisely what I'm talking about,  
these continuous assaults.  
It's why to this day I give my mother the credit/for me  
being who I am today  
and for shaping my perspective on the world.  
You know/ and/ of course/ those other people as well, who  
being outside the model for young men,  
were able to provide me with guidance and support that I  
needed/ and/ so MANY of us need.  
That's why the community center is important  
for those kinds of support systems  
but more importantly these kinds of support systems  
need to be institutionalized.  
It's what I'm trying to do personally,  
institutionalize these kinds of counter-educations if you will.  
Cause ya know people get old,  
and there is so much work to be done and so many kids  
people get tired/ and rightfully so/ya know there is so much  
its why we need to develop those institutions.  
Cause/ you know/ the guy who was a father figure to me  
can't do it now.  
One individual can't do it all.

When Woodland asks the two Mexicans for directions and sees them run from him, Woodland *feels* his included exclusion. His first thought is to look at himself to see what kind of clothes he is wearing. In realizing that he is wearing what he deems to be acceptable and not “life-threatening,”<sup>71</sup> he also realizes that it is he who seems life-threatening. The incident reminds him that he is marginalized solely because of his appearance, which in this case has nothing to do with his style of dress. This seemingly random moment echoes Fanon's description of feeling “walled in” with no exception to his knowledge, status or behavior. Woodland argues how it is these kinds of experience that force an identity on

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<sup>71</sup>John L. Jackson, Jr. discusses how performances of gestures, language, and clothes assist to signify class difference in Harlem. He also looks at how these combinations of performances are linked to racial identity. In his analysis, he examines how baggy jeans on a black man can be perceived as life-threatening (*Harlemworld* 143). Jackson states, “The class differences embodied by specific performances have life and death implications, such as when you wonder about the young black male with baggy jeans standing ominously over your shoulder in an otherwise empty elevator” (*Harlemworld* 149).

young black men before they have the ability to identify themselves. Is the vision of Malcolm X's hustler, Big's drug dealer, and the Mexican's robber one in the same?

As a result of the situations like those described above, Woodland recognizes the importance of the making of homespace as a support system and a mode at which other identities and perspectives on the world can be formed. Moreover, he calls for an institutionalization of the processes that make homespace happen like his mother's counter-education and the protective factors of the community center. Recollecting his shock and outrage at being perceived as a robber even when he was dressed "appropriately," Woodland names this incident as an example of the very kinds of assault that young black men have to encounter. Interestingly, Woodland still calls the two Mexicans who ran from him 'brothers' and adheres to my comment that "we are our biggest policers." As Walter Rodney argues those who are included in society but are excluded from power are black (*Groundings with My Brothers* 16). Although both Woodland and I voice our disappointment (the shared "tss") in the two "brothers" who ran away from Woodland, our inclusive expressions illustrate our shared sense of identification with each other and others who fall under the umbrella of blackness. Moreover, I would in fact argue that Woodland's push to institutionalize what I term practices of homespace illustrates how this sense of identification is a projection into the future. As Woodland says, "There is so much work to be done and so many kids."

### **'It's a Hard-knock Life': Why Homespace Matters**

While speaking on his experience of counter-education, Woodland explains that even though he possessed this different perspective he did not feel "much different" than the other children in his neighborhood while growing up. He did also make it a point to highlight the

significance of this counter-education by listing activities in which he would not partake, such as “smokin’, robbin’, hustlin’.” Aside from his refusal to be involved in certain activities, “Brothers knew I was DOWN/ but there was a line that I wasn’t gonna cross.” This reinforces how Woodland re-negotiates the meaning of masculinity that informs his everyday life. This is done so through the counter-education he gains from his mother. As discussed earlier, Woodland’s sense of homespace provides him with a sense of self that does not possess a feeling of lack. In this sense, Woodland is able to renegotiate his being “down.” Woodland elaborates:

So/ya know/I would be chillin’  
but I wasn’t gonna go in no robbed car/cause then  
Man, mess around/and get caught/I could be an accessory.  
*(He drags out his ‘Man’ and begins to laugh)*  
So brothers would be like,  
‘Yo Woodland/Ya wanna go do this right quick’/and I’d be like  
‘Yo. I’m chillin’.  
So/you know/ I would chill but there were times that I was like  
‘This is as far as I’m gonna wanna go’.  
And brothers would be like, ‘Yo we’re gonna go break in  
here.’  
And/I would be like/ ‘No, I’m chillin.’  
*(He laughs again which prompts me to respond).*

Lisa: No, I feel you.

Woodland: So yeah/nah/ I never really saw myself as different.  
I was always down to role/but you know/there were things that  
I was still like/nah/I am not down with all that/foolish/ness.  
But it wasn’t un/til/ about during my senior year of high school  
that dudes were like ‘You know Woodland.  
You were always kind of different/yeah/  
you were always kind of/good.’  
*(He sounds as if he was reminiscing and performs the line in a  
different voice with a tone that possesses a revelation.)*  
Even when I go back/ NOW/ I still hear this.  
Like/I would go into the barbershop/and/the barber would be  
like/‘Ya know/you were always a good guy  
not like these other knuckleheads.’ *(Pause)*  
Ya know/not to say/that I was good

and other dudes were knuckleheads cause the difference was not/that I/was SO DIFFERENT THAN THEM/BUT/the MAIN difference. I /would have to /say/was/IS/my mother putting ideas into my head the counter-education that others weren't getting. I mean I can't explain it/cause/I didn't feel different/but/ya know/I still hear 'Yeah, you always was the good one'. But that wasn't until the time where/ya know/you get older, changes start to occur. I mean/we all came up in the same neighborhood, chillin, ya know, so I would have to say it was/that/countereducation/ that I got from my mother.

Woodland's expressed awareness of how his friends see a difference between him and them, reinforced by the barber's opinion that Woodland was "always a good guy, not like these other knuckleheads", brings us back to Fanon's infernal cycle. As Fanon states, "Sin is a negro as virtue is white...I am guilty. I do not know of what, but I know I am no good" (*Black Skin White Masks* 139). In recognizing that Woodland was always the good one and always different from them, it seems as if his friends reduce themselves to "no good"; the barber reinforces this notion. This moment of awareness for Woodland's friends and the neighborhood barber arises only when Woodland graduates and achieves socio-economic success. Here, we see how socio-political and economic explanations of behavior get reduced to individual actions of morality that can easily be further deduced to nature.<sup>72</sup> Representations of blackness mask the biopolitical conditions of everyday life in Woodland's neighborhood. However, Woodland refutes any innate, individual difference. Woodland's sense of belonging is apparent through his assurance that, when he was younger, he "didn't feel different." Woodland's identity, the role that counter-education played in shaping it, and

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<sup>72</sup>I am echoing Herman Gray's argument in "Television, Black Americans, and the American Dream" that particular repetitive images of urban, working class blacks juxtaposed with shows like *The Cosby Show* reify the American Dream and mask the socio-economic factors that affect the everyday lives of urban working class black Americans. This reification lays blame on individual (in)action that is reduced to natural and factual representations of blackness (177-188).

his communal identification, is further established when Woodland explains that he “was not so different than them” and the only difference was the counter-education he received.

Woodland’s insistence that he was not different and did not *feel* different is reinforced by his recollection of “deep-seeded instances that really be trying to throw you off the grind.” Woodland shares incidents with me that support the aforementioned assaults and demonstrate there was no innate difference between him and his friends other than his counter-education and protective factors. One of these incidents occurred when Woodland was still in junior high school and a teacher told him that in fifteen or twenty years Woodland would be a “bum on the streets.” Woodland reacts as he tells his story: “Tss, you believe that? Like it’s that kind of mentality, that kind of thinking we are dealing with. Imagine telling a sixth grader that in fifteen or twenty years from now he will be a bum on the street.” This story juxtaposed with the barber calling his friends “knuckleheads” illustrate the similarities between Woodland and his friends as well as the importance of counter-education that made their paths different. These events correspond to Woodland’s earlier account that young black men are given identities before they get a chance to choose one for themselves. Woodland elaborates on the importance of counter-education and revolutionary work to combat the projected identities of bums and knuckleheads:

You know/and again/its experiences like these  
that make you think about how important it is to have those  
positive people in your life.  
You know, to counter that.  
The way folks opened doors for me really helped me be  
where I am/despite everything else.  
And that’s why it’s so important to open doors through my  
work,  
the work that you’re doing,  
the work that so many people that have come into my life  
are doing.  
Revolutionary work.

Ya know, it's so important to live as a revolutionary in life but it's also important to live life too.  
I think it's important for revolutionaries to live their own life as well as do their thing.  
Like, I met some of the members of MXGM out here in Oakland. And, it's crazy/cause/ya know/some of the older brothers and sisters were rollin' as Black Panthers with Bobby Seal and Huey Newton. And/ya know/I am hearing these stories about how it was and the sister was talking/about how it wasn't easy.  
And how when things started to fall apart, how when crack came along, Huey got caught up into rocks. She said it was hard for her to see Huey like that, but it was understood that he took it hard.  
I mean that was HIS life!  
That's why/ like/ you could do this kind of work but you have to live life too. You have to live the life but it's GOT TO BE juxtaposed/with living/your life.

Woodland's experiences "that really try to throw you off your grind" could have influenced him so much so that he might have become the very images that were projected onto him. However, it was all the practices of counter-education that shielded him from these "traps." It was Woodland's homespace that eventually helped him to become the activist and person he is today "despite everything else." Similar to his aim to institutionalize these practices of homespace, Woodland stresses the importance that this works continues so that more opportunities and practices can be made available for others who have similar experiences and occupy the similar included/excluded positions. However, Woodland also emphasizes that revolutionary work, work that will change the conditions of included exclusion, must be coupled with "living life." Through Woodland's account of Huey Newton, Woodland depicts this coupling of "living the life" and "living your life" as a necessity. Furthermore, "living the life" and "living your life" as a necessity corresponds to his praxis toward institutionalizing practices of protection and counter-education. If these practices are institutionalized "living the life" and "living your life" can be a more feasible

necessity. Ironically, Woodland's account of Huey Newton and his emphasis on "living your life" also resonates with Malcolm X's sense of flexible tactics of struggle in the quote that begins this Chapter. "Living your life" alongside of revolutionary work can make it easier to change tactics when necessary because your life becomes a protection, a support system, a homespace in itself; as Malcolm X says, "Policies change, and programs change, according to time. But the objective never changes."

### **Conclusion: 'It's All Good, Ba/by, Ba/by'**

I begin this Chapter with a quote from Malcolm X because the quote encompasses the long journey that Woodland has travelled since before our meeting almost ten years ago. Woodland's destination has not faltered despite the active resistance he faced due to the injustices of racism. His mother's common sense black nationalism enabled her to provide her son with counter-education that helped to combat the traps of indirect murder that awaited young Woodland. Others, such as the people who worked in the community center, shielded young Woodland from the constant assaults that he faced as a young black boy. These facets provided Woodland with a sense of homespace that enables him to combat the effects of racism within his everyday life even today. Additionally, he has always managed to be flexible enough to incorporate tactics for justice and equality when he deems necessary. It is because of his homespace that Woodland has never lost sight of his goal to build his own community youth center and continue to work as a community leader, activist, and researcher. Dr. Malcolm Woodland's oral history performance exemplifies how marginalized peoples perform and combat ideologies that exist in biopolitical life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “THE GOOD SAMARITAN”: A SHARED FUTURE FOR THE BLACK DIASPORA

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn in Jericho and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Gospel of Luke,  
*New International Version* (10: 25-37)

I begin this chapter with “The Parable of the Good Samaritan” because it encompasses the heart of Dr. Lisa Aubrey’s oral history performance. Aubrey, a feminist, political theorist and activist, is currently an associate professor in African American Studies and Political Science at Arizona State University. Although she presently resides in the United States, Lisa Aubrey conducts her research and activist work on development and equality with various local and national organizations throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Aubrey embodies the parable of “the good Samaritan” in her treatment of others in both her own work and personal life. For Aubrey, every social encounter is a space of neighbors. Each encounter in this sense holds the potential for creating homespace(s): spaces of interaction that resist and combat the effects of included exclusion. This view facilitates Lisa Aubrey’s understanding of the fight for equality through a notion of the black Diaspora that looks toward a shared future. This is not to say that she ignores the historical context of the black Diaspora. Through her work against racism, Lisa Aubrey realizes the history of slavery and colonialism, as well as the trajectory of biopower and biopolitical life in which this history shaped (Foucault “Society Must Be Defended” 103). Additionally, Aubrey’s work against racism aims to connect the peoples of Africa, the African Diaspora, and beyond through a hope for social justice, equality, and neighborly love. In other words, Dr. Lisa Aubrey’s academic and activist work against inequality and marginalization combats *any* position of included exclusion in the name of humanity.

Aubrey’s look toward the yet to come is a turn away from essentialist stances that can reinforce a position of included exclusion. It is instead a stance that promotes a humanity

based on egalitarianism that is congruent to the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Aubrey’s sense of neighborly practice acknowledges the past of marginalized peoples and also leaves room for Aimé Césaire’s universal particulars. As stated in Chapter Two, the move toward “a universal rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all” (Césaire qtd. in Kelley 25-6) diminishes the practice of norms which upholds positions of included exclusion and the exertion of biopower.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 4.1: View of canons in the Elmira Slave Castle in the Cape Coast of Ghana, West Africa.**

Moreover, Aubrey’s practiced perspective inspires her to continue her work on a trans-local and trans-global scale. It enables Aubrey to easily connect the fight for social justice for peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora with social justice for humanity as a whole.

### **Parables in Practice: Meeting Dr. Lisa Aubrey**

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<sup>73</sup>See Chapter Two.

Aside from using the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a trope that explains Lisa Aubrey's activist work on behalf of the black Diaspora, I usurp the Parable of the Good Samaritan to also illustrate the important role that Catholicism played in her life. Through speaking with Dr. Lisa Aubrey, I learned that her Catholic teachings significantly shaped how she sees herself and the world around her, as well as how she practices her political beliefs. During one of our interviews, Lisa Aubrey credited the nuns in her Catholic school for being one of the first groups of black women outside of her family that provided her with a sense of strength and leadership that reached beyond the individual. In talking about her experiences in an all black Catholic school, Lisa recalls that it was "the black nuns, a black people, a black institution" that gave her "a kind of confidence to know that women of color, people of color, we can do all kinds of things." The motivation that Lisa Aubrey experienced from her interaction with the nuns instilled in her a sense of agency that enables her to do the work that she does today. The nuns that she encountered influenced her so much that for a long time Aubrey aspired to be a nun.

Retrospectively, Lisa Aubrey also realizes that her Catholic education was repressive in multiple ways and is very critical of what she learned there. Aubrey's critique of Catholicism points out that Aubrey applies certain perspectives of Catholicism to her everyday life but is opposed to other Catholic perspectives and practices. Thus, Aubrey's appropriation of Catholicism acts as a jumping point into her notion of praxis and its relationship to the black Diaspora. With this said, the following illustrates Aubrey's critical awareness of Catholic philosophy:

I think/that/some of the/things/the nuns did/were pretty messed up,  
I think/our stuff/was/pretty messed up. (*Pause*)  
I think/we got beat/en too much, (*She laughs*)  
I really think/we got beat/en

too much/I think/I just think/that in your own lives,  
 It seems/so/I want to say REPRESSED, in many/ways  
 because of Catholic doctrine, and/everything.  
 I think that stuff/was passed to us.  
 They/They/didn't want us/to watch TV.  
 And/I'm SUCH/the obedient child.  
 And/that/doesn't come/from the nuns/that comes more/from your  
 family. We couldn't wear red.  
 Red was like/the color/of/floozies.  
 I think /that carried to the extreme.  
 So/I've really had to/come through/some MAJOR paradigm  
 shifts/major revolutions/to even bring myself/to um/wear red. To be  
 free, to/express/just in conversations like this, my own sexuality  
 the question of/whether/it's right or wrong/to have sex. I mean/that  
 just really/haunted me/for a long/time, and/ not only/from the nuns,  
 but from my mother/which/is also/the reason, why/ she sent us  
 to Catholic school/and/then you hear/that being a  
 virgin/is/so/impor/tant and then/you go through this thing/ I had  
 sex/am I/going/to go/to hell?  
*(Both her and I laugh.)*

Aubrey demonstrates how she was entrenched in a Catholic way of life by both her interaction with the nuns and her family upbringing. However, she also reveals how she condemns particular practices such as constant beatings and sexual repression. Aubrey's reflection that "our stuff was pretty messed up" shows how she both embraces and rejects the practices and ideals that she experienced by way of Catholicism. In this sense, her Catholic upbringing is a primary factor in Lisa Aubrey's life not so much because of the rituals that Catholicism provides or even Catholicism itself but more because of the ways her own research and activist work rely heavily upon a notion of humanitarianism and a critical rejection of Catholicism's repressive practices.<sup>74</sup> Aubrey's humanitarianism demonstrates her embodiment of the Good Samaritan. In the course of her oral history performance, this

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<sup>74</sup> The practice of humanitarianism that I refer to, here, is not the liberal/neoliberal humanitarianism that masks racism and reinforces racial hierarchical inequality on a global scale, but one that refers the works of theorists such as W.E.B. Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah, and Frantz Fanon. Paul Gilroy reminds us that these theorists' works called for a trans-local and trans-global humanity that fought against racism and the marginalizing of people of color. Gilroy counters this version of humanitarianism to the aforementioned. For more on these differences, see "Part One" of *PostColonial Melancholia*.

chapter highlights how Dr. Lisa Aubrey's experiences of included exclusion led her to create homespaces that spanned from the local to the global. Aubrey's telling of her experiences and told experiences maps out how she becomes an advocate for marginalized peoples primarily of the African and African Diaspora and for humanity in general.

I first met Dr. Lisa Aubrey in August of 2004, when I arrived at Kotoka International Airport in Ghana, West Africa, for the Burch fellows program. I arrived a week prior to the students to be certain that things were all in order for their semester stay. Dr. Madison planned for me to stay with her very dear friend, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, until my accommodations at the University of Ghana were available. As I walked through the airport doors with my luggage, I saw crowds of people waiting for their guests and loved ones to arrive. I looked around and heard voices calling my name. I turned toward the sound of my name and saw a group of about five people that smiled as they shouted, "Lisa, Lisa." As I walked toward them, one woman stood out in their midst; she was wearing traditional Ghanaian garb and her head was crowned with dreads pulled back by a head wrap that matched her outfit. One of her hands was holding a young girl as the other seemingly comforted a distraught woman. As the woman smiled at me, I knew it was Dr. Lisa Aubrey.

When I approached Dr. Aubrey, she greeted me, "Liisaa!" I noticed that she sings her words softly much like my advisor except with an accent that I was unable to pinpoint. I smiled with a sense of relief that it was her. "Yes!" I exclaimed. She let go of the girls and gave me a big hug as she introduced me to everyone. "Lisa, this is my daughter, Kari," she gestured to the young girl that was holding her hand. She then introduced me to the girl who looked as if she had been crying, "Lisa, this is Ousma. Ousma is from Norway and is here to volunteer at a village for a Church. Unfortunately, there must have been some mix up

because the organizers of her trip are not here to pick her up. So, we are here with her to keep her company.” Aubrey’s warm smile amazed me as she put her arm around Ousma and lightly squeezed her as if to console her. Lisa Aubrey laughed as she confessed that she actually thought Ousma was me. I smiled and looked at Ousma whose eyes were red and swollen; she looked nervous but seemed comforted by Aubrey’s touch and voice. I thought to myself that she was lucky that Dr. Aubrey had seen her, having mistaken her for me. As we walked to the car, she assured Ousma that she will do everything in her power to get her to where she has to be. It took Lisa Aubrey a couple of days to get in touch with the organizers of Ousma’s internship but she kept her promise. During those couple of days, Ousma, like me, was a welcomed guest in Dr. Aubrey’s home. She even met with Ousma throughout the semester to make sure Ousma was comfortable during her stay in Ghana.



**Figure 4.2: Opening to a slave dungeon at Elmira Castle.**

Aubrey not only opened her home and heart to me, she also helped Ousma based solely on Ousma's need for help. It was these small acts of kindness within Lisa Aubrey's everyday practice that intrigued me and drove my desire to get to know her. I spent time with her during my stay in Ghana, observing her in multiple facets: networking with members of different grassroots organizations, partaking in teaching and guiding the students toward a better understanding of community-based action research<sup>75</sup> in Ghana, building her non-governmental organization, the Center for African and African Diaspora Affairs (CAADA), and negotiating her own position as a black American woman while raising her daughter in Ghana. It was during this time that I came to know Aubrey as a friend, a mother, a scholar, and an activist. Dr. Aubrey put into practice the very things that she talked and wrote about in her academic work. The rapport we built in the short time that I was in Ghana enabled me to ask her if she would participate in my research on activism and homespace within the black Diaspora. To my delight, Dr. Lisa Aubrey was more than happy to share her life experiences that drove her to begin her activist work which centers on equality for people who are marginalized on a global scale.

During the last few weeks of my stay in Ghana, I interviewed Aubrey and listened attentively to her stories. I would sit with her as she lay on the floor of one of the rooms in her unfinished NGO and watch her as her oral history performance unfolded. As stated in Chapter One, Lisa Aubrey embodies Gramsci's notion of praxis through her own research and activism. This notion of praxis ties directly to her Diaspora politics and sense of

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<sup>75</sup>Community-based action research is a method that "enacts an approach to inquiry that includes all relevant stakeholders in the process of investigation. It creates contexts that enable diverse groups to negotiate their various agendas in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance and to work toward effective solutions to problems that concern them" (Stringer 38). This method is a practical approach of Antonio Gramsci's notion of praxis for the organic intellectual, a political theory of the world that is combined with practice. For more on community-based action research, see Ernest Stringer's *Action Research*, Second Edition. For more on praxis and the organic intellectual, see Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

humanitarianism. For Gramsci, the purpose of praxis is to “criticize the problems [of culture as whole], to demonstrate their real value if any, and the significance they have had as superseded links of an intellectual chain, and to determine what the new contemporary problems are and how the old problems should be analyzed” (Gramsci 331). This purpose aims to mobilize people through these critiques and their conclusions, “which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small groups” (Gramsci 332-3). This Chapter highlights Dr. Lisa Aubrey’s belief in praxis and performances of praxis through her oral history performance. Her goals for this method are precisely to mobilize marginalized peoples toward social equity and justice. She is a community-based action researcher who has applied her methods on a global transnational scale. She not only urges for human rights but strives for the humane treatment of everyone; her embodiment of this is her treatment of both Ousma and me.<sup>76</sup>

Much like Woodland, Aubrey’s story begins with particular accounts of racism and the building of homespaces to combat it. However, unlike the stories of Woodland, this chapter highlights how Lisa Aubrey’s oral history performance echoes and re-shapes the politics of the black Diaspora as that which is embedded in future possibilities. Aubrey embodies the politics of the black Diaspora that centers on struggling against the inequalities of racism in the hope for “human opportunity” (Dubois 168). Aubrey’s oral history exemplifies a belief and praxis toward gaining humane treatment for all. Paul Gilroy also argues for the importance of how stories are told. He states, “The simple content of the stories is dominated by the ritual act of story-telling itself. This involves a very particular use of language and a special cultural dynamics” (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 200).

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<sup>76</sup>I realize that some may argue the notion of human rights is humane, equal treatment for everyone. I would argue that, especially today, and, given the state of the United Nations, human rights and humane treatment for all have yet to be synonymous.



**Figure 4.3: The bats that currently reside in one of the dungeons in Elmira.**

Gilroy echoes the significance of the performance of how the oral history is told emphasized in Chapter One. In this sense, Aubrey’s performance of telling her life history provides a window into a public self-construction that is an “integral component of insubordinate racial counterculture” (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 200). It opens future possibilities of reflection and action.

How Aubrey’s story is told and unfolds is central to her embodiment of praxis. Her childhood experiences, her family stories as she says “that just doesn’t make sense,” her re-enactment of these stories and memories of her past become essential to how and why she continues to push for those justices even if the future may seem grim. In this sense Aubrey’s work focuses on a communal relationship that particularly battles the inequities of racism,

however she believes that it possesses the potential to affect all of humanity. This is apparent through her life experience and activist work. As Dr. Madison once wrote about Lisa Aubrey, “This woman is a wonder, with her combination of striking beauty, unabashed willfulness, irreverence for rules and extraordinary intellect. She always averts the expected, the predictable, the required” (Madison “Street Performance” 539). It is my hope that my analysis of Dr. Lisa Aubrey’s oral history performance not only illustrates the impetus behind her aim for social justice on a global scale but also these qualities of unpredictability that open wider possibilities for the unexpected.

### **Race, Class, and Sex: The Multiple Facets of Included Exclusion**

Lisa Aubrey grew up in a small rural town, called La Pointe, and located in Louisiana. Her family was a “farming family” that focused on growing seasonal foods, such as okra and pepper, until factories and other industrial work became available around 1971. Aubrey recalls working on the farm while growing up but also remembers that her and her three siblings did not work as much or as hard as her parents. Aubrey explains that her parents shielded them from hard labor in the hope their children’s focus on education would provide them with better lives. Much like Woodland’s mother, Aubrey’s parents struggled to provide young Aubrey and her siblings with access to privileges they felt they did not possess. This kind of protection illustrates that Aubrey’s parents maintain hope for socio-economic mobility for their children even if it cannot be gained for them. Aubrey’s parent’s protection does not end with the amount of farm work Aubrey and her siblings have but also extends to young Aubrey’s awareness of *being* poor:

Umm./So/we (*Pause*). When you’re growing/you  
you don’t/really think/that/you’re POOR.

That's not/something/that I/thought about.  
But/as I got older/and/was more/exposed/to other kids/and things  
that other families did./I realized/that we didn't do/as much/as other  
families./Didn't/have/as much/as other families.  
But/never/we/never/had a *crisis*/or/not anything/that was  
not/manageable.  
And, I guess/there were difficult times/with my parents/um/financially  
but that's something/that/they probably/protected us from.  
And also/kids/just/you're not supposed to be/in your parents' business.  
Umm/So/we worked on the farm/but my mom/always said/that/  
she didn't want us/to grow up /and have that/as our life's career.  
Which is why my mom/um/and I remember this well  
why/she pleaded/with my father/to allow/her/to work  
when/the fac/tories came/ to town.  
It was/a Fruit of the Loom/fac/tory  
And/they were sewing t-shirts/and men's briefs.  
And/before that,  
my mom worked/as a domestic/in/the homes/of white folks.  
And/even though/we weren't/supposed to be/in grown folks' business,  
there/are things/that/you hear,/conversations/that/you hear,  
things/that you see/and/things/that/make you/uncomfortable.

Aubrey recalls *being* poor but not really believing or feeling like her family was poor. It is not until she is older and is able to compare her family to other families that she understands that her family was poor. Interestingly *being* poor and *feeling* poor are not quite the same; Aubrey's parents' recognize this same difference and protect her from *feeling* poor; feeling poor in this sense seems to encompass the negative of being poor: a feeling of being other. Aubrey's parents are able to protect their children from feeling the repercussions of what would inevitably be realized as an included/excluded position. Hence, much like how her parents desired to provide their children with better lives by encouraging them to focus on their education, they also desired for their children to have a confidence of being the same as other families. These desires illustrate her parent's understanding of their own insider outsider position that is marked by their class, race, and sex, a position they try to alleviate through gaining other employment and attempting to better their next generation. Sex

becomes all the more apparent when Aubrey recalls that her mother “pleaded with her father to allow her to work.” Aubrey’s mother submits to her father in order to model alternative ways of living for her children. James Scott identifies conformity among subordinate groups as “an active manipulation of rituals to turn them to good personal advantage” (Scott 33). In this sense, conformity to gender roles becomes a tactic; Aubrey’s mother can manipulate submissive gender roles to achieve personal gain for her next generation. She sacrifices for her children.

Even though her parents’ attempt to shelter a young Lisa Aubrey from their “business,” Aubrey alludes to the “grown folks’ business” that she bears witness to and identifies it as that which “makes you uncomfortable.” Aubrey’s uncomfortable feeling is a space of vulnerability. Margrit Shildrik approaches vulnerability as a condition of becoming that provides “a critique which gives some account of the violence with which the process of othering different forms of bodylines is conducted” (Shildrik 85). Aubrey’s vulnerability illustrates her critical reflection of “grown folk’s business.” The violence within the process of othering deals directly with the race, class and gender dynamics that Aubrey’s parents face as those who are included solely by their exclusion; it also alludes to their attempts to shield their children from encountering similar moments of violence. The practice of shielding your loved ones from the violence of othering, or included exclusion echoes both Mbembe’s communal practices of the paradoxical subject formation that is marked by the terrors and violence of colonialism. The results are the continued creation of homespace.



**Figure 4.4: The slave exit to boats of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade at Elmira Castle.**

Shildrik

continues, “The notion of an irreducible vulnerability as the necessary condition of a fully corporeal becoming...shatters the ideal of the self’s clean and proper” (Shildrik 86). In Aubrey’s case, her vulnerability brought about by her

uncomfortable feelings, signifies her own identification with her parents’ outsider insider position; the clean and proper self is realized as an illusion, while young Aubrey’s included exclusion begins to materialize through the witnessing of grown folk’s business. In this sense, homespace becomes all the more necessary as Aubrey’s own feelings of exclusion become visible. These feelings begin to appear as Aubrey speaks of her mother:

But my mom/was never/a good domestic/because  
she’d/end up/arguing/with the people/that/she worked for.  
I/re/member/one story she told/ about/one of the women/she worked  
for

asked/if she'd clean/the windows,/which is probably/like a  
normal/thing  
to ask some/bod/y/to clean the win/dows, and/she told/the woman  
"Clean your own damn windows, I don't do windows."  
(*Dr. Aubrey's voice shifts into a more stern tone and her Louisiana  
accent is slightly more noticeable.*)  
Ummm/That's just/one/story.  
I mean/she's/feisty.  
She/still/is.  
Umm/then there was/another/story/about somebody else/asking her  
to clean/her husband's shoes,/dust off/his shoes,  
because/she wanted 'em/dusted/by the time he came back  
she/would've been/worried about that. /My mom said,  
"Hell no, I don't walk in 'em, I don't clean 'em."  
And/she never/could/stay/for a long time,/at these jobs. And,  
There's another incident,/I remember/*quite a few.*

These stories of Aubrey's mother working as a domestic illustrate Aubrey's uncomfortable feelings brought about by conversations that were heard. It also exemplifies her mother's unwillingness to submit to norms that signify and reinforce her classed, sexed, and raced position. Aubrey's recollection of her mother never being a "good domestic" by publicly refusing to do the "normal" tasks of a domestic echoes what James Scott terms as political electricity. Scott argues that a declaration of a hidden transcript has an impact on the both the actor and the audience witnessing the dissident act (206-8). The political electricity for Scott lies within the multiple exchanges from the actor to the audience and the potential of these exchanges to challenge power relationships beyond the individual who publicly dissented.

Aubrey's witnessing of her mother's feisty refusals *to be* a domestic opens the potential of both recognizing and challenging the hegemonic appearance and power relationship between owner and worker. These stories of her mother's resistance to her domestic jobs contrast Aubrey's mother's willingness to submit to her role as dutiful wife; it also makes complex Aubrey's mother's acceptance of her position. Aubrey's mother's

continuous refusal to accept her “place” as a domestic demonstrates possibilities of access to agency. In other words, a young Aubrey begins to realize, through her mother’s stories, she does not have to accept the world that surrounds her nor her position in such world. A young Lisa Aubrey is exposed to the possibility of change.

Aubrey’s mother’s domestic work also represents another facet of alternative perspectives for young Aubrey. Patricia Hill Collins accounts that, “Domestic work fostered U. S. Black women’s economic exploitation, yet it simultaneously created the conditions for distinctively Black and female forms of resistance” (404). Through domestic work, women like Aubrey’s mother observe firsthand “White elites, both actual and aspiring, from perspectives largely obscured from black men and from these groups themselves” (Collins 404). These firsthand perspectives make conscious an insider outsider position that demystifies raced and classed ideology, opening conditions of possibility for change. For Aubrey’s mother in particular, her experience as a domestic and her actions of refusing to “do domestic work” reflects this unique perspective. This drives her to instill a desire and agency for change in her daughter. The window into domestic work also reveals the complexities of insider outsider positions through its highlighting of sex, class and race.

As Frantz Fanon argues, “Racism, as we have seen, is only one element of a vaster whole: that of a systemized oppression of a people” (Fanon *Toward the African Revolution* 38). Fanon’s claim considers the complex layers of included exclusion such as the aforementioned dynamics of race, class, and sex. The historical and material context within which the dynamics of markers of othering play out become significant in highlighting the similarities and differences of exploitation and oppression. In this sense, these dynamics enable the disciplinary and regulatory apparatuses of biopower to further push the parameters

of exploiting other within the included/excluded position. As Foucault argues the mechanisms of regulation and discipline are widened and perfected after colonialism through the proliferation of knowledge and norms and the expansion of science and technology (“Society Must Be Defended”). The multiple markers of insider outsider and its context force more people into exploitation and oppression.

Retrospectively, Lisa Aubrey assesses the normalcy of segregation and objectification from her childhood memories:

Dr. Aubrey: Where we were/at the doctor’s office,/Dr. Moreau,  
and one doctor/came to town/and/this is/post-integration/but, um,  
as we know,/places didn’t/integrate/at the same time/as the law *says*.  
It was compulsory/to do so.  
We were really/behind the times.  
We were at/the doctor’s office/and/I remember/my aunt,  
people/used to/talk about him/a lot/and/the stories were,  
if you went/to Dr. Weinstein,/no matter what/the complaint was,  
the first thing he’d say/was  
‘Take your dress off.’

Lisa: WOW.

Dr. Aubrey: Take/your/dress/off.  
*(She repeats as if to reinforce a sense of disgust in the doctor’s actions.)*  
And/at the time,/you know,/they used to/laugh/about it.  
“Ok,/you’re going/to see/Weinstein,  
you/know/you’re going to/have to/take your dress off.”  
Like,/people/would laugh/about it, but/I think that  
Laughter probably soothed/some/of the discomfort/and the pain  
'cause as I’m older/I realize/how/demoralizing/that/must have been.  
Um/and I also think/that/the doctor/was messed up,  
when/ the prescription/for what had to be done/was  
so/out/of/synch/with what/the complaint was.  
But I remember/being/in Dr. Moreau’s office,  
and there was/a/white section/and/a black/section.  
And of course/Dr. Moreau/was white,  
and/the front section/is for whites  
and the BACK section/is for blacks.  
And/ah,/I remember/that/with the water fountains.  
The water fountains/for whites/one for blacks

but/not only at his office.  
But/that was just/the norm  
that was just/the way/people grew up.

Aubrey recalls how Dr. Weinstein sexually objectified and abused his black female patients. On the surface, this behavior may seem corrupt; however, given the racist norms that were mentioned in Chapter Two, Dr. Weinstein's behavior is created by his authoritative position of power as a white male doctor. It is the power he possesses made possible through racism, sexism and classism that fuel his dominating, exploitative behavior. As Foucault argues in discussing the confinement of so-called madmen, "the doctor's intervention is not made by virtue of a medical skill or power he possesses in himself and that would be justified by a body of objective knowledge...If the medical profession is required, it is a juridical and moral guarantee, not in the name of science" (Foucault *Madness and Civilization* 270). In this sense Dr. Weinstein's behavior is reinforced and supported by the apparatuses of biopower and the moral ideology that maintains the normative exploitative and oppressive nature of included exclusion. These medical and juridical practices are made visible via Aubrey's account of the racist power relationships that continue with segregation in the post-segregation era as well as with her testimony of the doctors' continuous misdiagnosis.<sup>77</sup> As Aubrey says, her town was "behind the times," however, according to the framework of biopolitical life and biopower, the practices within her town were precisely what "the times" created.

Joy James argues how historically this kind of interracial abuse was virtually ignored due to the representational, social and political emphasis on the sexual prowess of black men for white women ("Shadowboxing" 348). Here, the repercussions of this invisibility are made visible through Dr. Weinstein's victims' interactions in the guise of storytelling.

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<sup>77</sup>See Chapter Two.

Through telling their stories to each other, these women were able “to identify imaginatively with actions they would like to perform but [could] not in the ordinary course of events’ given their exclusion from civil political participation,” (Cawelti, qtd. in Tate, *Domestic Allegories* 7). In doing so, these women gave each other voice and empowered themselves with a sense of safety similar to that of bell hooks’ homeplace; exceeding the limits of place, however, the sharing of stories also transform into warnings that prevent the abuse of other women. The town’s women are now forewarned: “Ok, you’re going to see Weinstein, you know you’re going to have to take your dress off.” They transform their interactions into a homespace. In this sense, the laughter Lisa Aubrey recalls and comments upon does indeed become a method of coping with the humiliation and pain that these women suffer at the hands of their entrusted doctor.

### **Racism in Louisiana: The Disciplinary Normalizing Effects of Segregation**

Frantz Fanon argues, “Racism stares one in the face for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole: that of the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another” (Fanon *Toward the African Revolution* 38). Following the exploitative nature of the doctors in the town, the spatial divisions of both the doctor’s office and the water fountain further evidences Fanon’s claim that racism is embedded within the social structure that utilizes it. The spatial division at the doctor’s office of whites in the front and blacks in the back reiterate Fanon’s assertion and simultaneously serves as a visual depiction of an insider outsider position. The space of blacks in the back and whites in the front replicate how space is related to what Foucault describes as disciplinary normalization.



**Figure 4.5: View of shore from slave exit at Elmira Castle.**

For Foucault, laws refer to norms and its primary function is to codify these norms in a specific way. Discipline on the other hand is how normalization occurs, which can “develop from and below a system of

law, in its margins and maybe even against it” (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 56).

In terms of segregation, the division of the population by race and space normalizes the notion that the black subject is inferior. Aubrey recalls the doctor’s office as “a place where white women would hire” domestics as “we sat in the back” room waiting to see the doctor. Acknowledging and refuting the inequality of this division, Aubrey remembers thinking, “‘Why do *we* have to sit in the back?’ and ‘And why do we have to be *so* sick before *we* get a chance to go to the doctors?’” Even though segregation, by law, has ended,

the disciplinary function of normalization continues. Discipline breaks individuals and places down into components so they can be seen and modified according to a model (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 56-7). The model of course is not those who occupy a space of included exclusion; the model is not the black subject. This is apparent to young Lisa Aubrey at the doctor's office. Discipline in this sense "establishes the division between those considered unsuitable or incapable and the others" (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 57). Young Aubrey cannot articulate included exclusion and the effects of racism that accompany it, but she sees it nonetheless; as Fanon argues and Foucault alludes, it is in plain sight particularly through Aubrey's description of post-integration segregation.

Lisa Aubrey continues:

Public schools/were/integrated.  
Um/with um/private/schools,  
the/Catholic schools/turned us down/because,  
*we/believe,/that/yeah,* the white nuns/refused/to teach/the black kids.  
And/of course/ our school/the black school/was also/struggling/with  
funding.  
So/we're transitioning to/the public school/integrated school,  
which is/new/and/different  
new and different.  
And/I can remember/our families/having to be/O/K/with that cause  
its school/you have to go/to school,  
but all/the Catholic school/is/too far,/too/expensive.  
And/our parents, our families/were supportive of that,  
but/ always telling us/be/cautious of white folks,  
be/cautious of racism,/be/cautious.  
Because they knew/the way of the worlds,  
they/had/HIS/TORY.  
And/they never said/the word/racism.  
I learned that/in college.  
Cause/we're not/talking about/racism  
we're just/talking/about/the ways/things are.  
The way it is,  
they're not calling it/anything/cause/it's just/the way/of life,  
the way/of/the day.

Um/one of the stories/that I get,/that I'll never forget.  
There's this guy,/Mulber.  
Mulber is the last name.  
I can't/quite/remember/I can't/remember/the guy's first name/but  
he was in/my class.  
And/I was in/class/with mostly, white folks  
there was me/and the other girl/Cynthia Lewis/and Carl,  
my friend who passed away.  
He was in/a second class/cause they do/this tracking system,  
which/I don't know/if it's/still done/in school.  
Smart kids/are on/track A.  
Then/the second/group of kids,  
which/they say/are/the second smartest/group.

Lisa: Umm-hmm. They still do that.

Dr. Aubrey: So/I was in/track A. Always being asked,  
“What do your parents do?”  
“Have any of them ever gone to college?”  
“I mean how do you know this stuff?”  
*(Aubrey asks the questions inquisitively.)*  
And/Cynthia Lewis was also/asked the same kinds/of questions,  
Because/I think/comparatively/we might have been  
*in terms of education, in a/bit of a higher/bracket.*  
Um/but/she also/I think/more than I did, understands/the game  
and I think/she understood/the force of the questions/with this/because  
she had/that kind of street savvy/coming from the city,  
and seeing/white folks/more than I did.  
*(Aubrey breaks from the story, stops from looking up at the ceiling,  
and looks at me.)*  
Um/where was I going with this?

Lisa: I asked you if these schools were integrated.

Dr. Aubrey: Yes/ah/integrated but segregated. *(Aubrey looks up at the ceiling again  
and places her left hand over her forehead.)*  
Because/um/integrated/because/we were all there/black and white  
segregated/by the tracks/and/the teachers.  
And/there was always/a tendency/to try/and separate/to separate  
us/from separate/those of us who/were in/those fast tracks.  
And/the Mulber kid/was/in my class/and/I went home,  
And/kids go home/and/you talk about/and/I went home/talking/about  
Mulber/and/um/um/Mulber/um/they just/and/they just/kind of look at  
you when you're talking/and/you're talking/ and/you're talking/and  
you're talking/Mulber/they own the furniture store.  
The place is so small/that/you just need one/of everything.

One family/owns/the grocery store/that's the Aber/they're/all/white,  
one doctor/they're/all/white, one family own/the furniture/store,  
Mulber/they're white.

White folks own everything.

So (*Aubrey drags her 'So'*)

then/they tell me a story/a bit/how/the Mulber grandfather/beat  
my grandfather/and my uncle/in the street.

They're grown men.

And/I'm thinking/what?

(*She acts out her surprise through dragging her "what."*)

And/I'm thinking, how can I be in class/with this kid/he is really nice  
you know/so/I mean/how/does a kid of twelve/make sense of that.

And/I think/does/he know/that his grandfather/his family/I mean  
does/ he/ KNOW/ that/they do/those kinds of things/I

mean/what(*Pause*) what/kind of people/and I/I (*Pause*)

when I got to/the school,/hearing/these kinds of stories,/interacting  
with white folks,/not understanding/why/there's only two of us  
in the fast track,/Carl/is in the second class.

Most/of the black kids/are in the [third/slow-learner]/class/I started  
I guess/the word that came/to my mind/was/just/the imbalance/of it all.

And I/I liked/the attention/I wanted to be smart/and/do the right things,  
and make good grades/and/but/I just/couldn't/understand/why  
they were all so/surprised/I could do/the work.

I/I/so/that really so/I think/at that point/the interaction/with white  
folks, and/ I couldn't/describe it/in this way/at the time, but/just the  
gross inequality that existed, that seemed/to be grounded/in *race*  
just really/really/bothered me.

Um/and/then/um/just the ease, of the use of the word,

"You niggers," you this/you that/ah

(*She drags and sings her 'ah' in a melancholy tone.*)

And/I can remember/in/the beginning of/the 8<sup>th</sup>/grade,

My/second year/at/the integrated/school.

And/somehow these things/ never/leave you.

It was this/white boy/Shane Courtvane/who was in/my class  
and you know/ these/are people/that you live/everyday/with,  
people that/I lived mostly/everyday with/in this school/of white kids.

Like/Cynthia Lewis, me,/and thirty white kids/um

"We don't want niggers in this class." So/I didn't/I didn't know  
what to say.

Lisa: How/how/was this the first time/that/YOU EXPERIENCED/like  
something like that,/that type/of confrontation,/given that, you  
weren't really around/white people?

Dr. Aubrey: Yeah yeah yeah. I mean, going/to the doctor's office,/ I'm seeing that,  
going/my mom/going to/working in white folks' homes,/ I'm seeing

that, and then/ when my mom/I remember my mom,/fussing out my  
 dad,  
 that/where he works/they're using him/you know/  
 I'm hearing these conversations.  
 I'm hearing these conversations.  
 I'm hearing that the Mulbers/you know/beat my grandfather  
 and/ his brother/in the streets./ I mean/I'm hearing this/ but  
 being/ per/sonally/confronted with it/ face to face/you know,  
 I've gone/to Catholic school/with black folks,/so/ the stories,  
 I know that/ they exist/but being called/ nigger /to my face,  
 by somebody white/you know/of course/I've heard the word/ nigger  
 before/ from BLACK /people/who are using it as well/I/[heard  
 "ya'll] niggers"/you know/people talking like that.  
 But/nobody/especially women/they talking about a man,  
 "O, that nigger, tadadadada he did this, that"  
 and/ almost/in a/in a loving kind of way/  
 "I'm so sick of that nigger cause he did [tadadadada],  
 he was supposed to come by"  
 but nobody /is using that /in a derogatory way /to your face./ NOT,  
 "We don't want you niggers in this class,"  
 and /I'm /per/sonally/SHOCKED.  
 And from/ the Catholic school,/we don't /say bad words,/ we  
 don't/cuss,  
 you don't/get angry, you are/nice/to people,  
 you want people/to be nice/ to you, you don't/get into/fights.  
 You know/ maybe/I was Catholic/EXTREME.  
 But/that/ was the stuff/I had to/I mean/that was just/the stuff/ I had to  
 deal with/and I can remember/I can remember, exactly where  
 I was standing/we were in Chemistry/Chemistry class.  
 I can remember/what the teacher/looked like/I can't/remember/his  
 name.  
 I can envision/what he looked like,  
 I can remember/the class room, and /I can also/remember, years later,  
 because /I went through/the seventh grade/with the same class to  
 twelfth grade, and I can remember/thinking,/when I found out where  
 these people/lived/I can remember/thinking  
 'How can these poor white people, talk to me like this?'  
 This/This/this poor white boy/he thinks /he's so much better/than me?  
 You know? /That was/that was over time/cause I think I'd really  
 I don't know how/I came out of it/O.K. Now I can see/how many  
 people get very confused/cause you want to have friends,  
 you want to fit in,  
 you want to have friends outside of school  
 um/I/I don't know.

Aubrey underlines the physical division that continued after integration through her description of transferring from private school to public school. Here, Aubrey provides us with a glimpse of the disparity that is tied to race and class when she recounts that she cannot go to the white Catholic school. In recalling this transition, Aubrey says that she could not attend the white Catholic school because “we believe” the white nuns would not teach the black children. Her careful distinction between what was believed and what occurred points to the indirect ways segregation took form. “Racism has not managed to harden. It has had to renew itself, to adapt itself, to change its appearance” (Fanon *Toward the African Revolution* 32). There was no other reason except the one given as to why the black children were not accepted at the white Catholic school; however, there is also no proof of this *belief*. Aubrey’s cautiousness also points to her sense of fairness and willingness to accept alternative truths even though it was her who bore the repercussion. Aubrey’s sense of fairness is a stark contrast to the white nuns who refuse to teach the black children, a lesson that shows Aubrey that racism supersedes faith. This lesson enables Aubrey to critically usurp certain Catholic teachings, while letting go of others as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Her catholic education is further stunted when the black Catholic school is forced to close because of limited funding, forcing Aubrey’s parents to send her to public school.

Despite the decision to send her to public school Aubrey’s parents have concerns with “the way things are.” Thus, even though they ideally believe in the merits of integration, they also believe that Aubrey and her siblings will now be exposed to the direct effects of racism. This is apparent through their warning to their children “to be cautious” while attending public school with white children. As Aubrey reenacts her parent’s warning, the repetition of “be cautious” gives a sense of the degree of their concern and the consequences

that may occur if the warning is not considered. The warning of cautious reestablishes Foucault's disciplinary normalization. In this sense, Aubrey's parents warn their children to be mindful of how they act and interact in their new school. They warn their children to police themselves according to the "way things are" and their included exclusion. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, these kinds of warnings act in a certain way to demystify the depiction of raced fear: those who are deemed the victimizer are really the victims of a fear



**Figure 4.6: Memorial for First President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, in Accra, Ghana.**

of everyday violence that can occur randomly. This modifying or policing of behavior for safety purposes is further evidenced by Aubrey's tale of befriending the Mulber child in her class.

Aubrey describes her experience: "And the Mulber kid, was in my class...and I went home talking about Mulber/and um/um/Mulber/um/they just and they just kind of look at you

when you're talking, and you're talking and you're talking and you're talking." As she tells the story of her interactions with the Mulber child, young Aubrey notices the stares of her family which is followed by a story of how Mulber family's grandfather beat her grandfather and uncle in public. She continues, "They're grown men and I'm thinking what? And I'm thinking, how can I be in class with this kid, he is really nice...so, I mean, how does a kid of twelve make sense of that? And I think does he know that his grandfather, his family, I mean, does he *know* that they do those kinds of things?" The way Aubrey tells the story depicts a young girl who inadvertently, and judging by the way her family react, incautiously befriends a young boy. A young Aubrey's notion of bad and good collide through hearing the Mulber family's racist brutality and experiencing the kindness of the Mulber child. Her questioning of the Mulber child's awareness gives the idea that young Aubrey defaults more on the Mulber child's kindness. However, her family story to keep her cautious and aware of, as well as safe from, the world around her is not told in vain, Aubrey begins to be more conscious of the meaning of "the way of the day." This is evident in how she pieces together the stories she hears with what she sees as she told her story.

Aubrey retells the story as if she has returned to the past but at the same time intervenes to depict the relationship between the political economy of her town and racial inequality. She acknowledges the stores in her town were owned by white people: "white folks own everything." Walter Rodney points to the same economic racial disparity to reinforce the ills of the effects of racism. He states, "There is nothing with which poverty coincides so absolutely as with the colour black—small or large population, hot or cold climates, rich or poor in natural resources—poverty cuts across all of these factors in order to find black people. The association of wealth with whites and poverty with black is not

accidental” (Rodney 19).<sup>78</sup> Aubrey, too, pieces together “the gross inequality” and realizes that it seems to be “grounded in race.” In doing so, she highlights how the students in public school were, for the most part, segregated from the white students by the track system. Similar to Woodland’s recollection of attending Washington D.C. Public School in the last chapter, Lisa Aubrey remembers that most of the black children are in the third track, the non-academic track. And, like Woodland, Lisa Aubrey believes it is no accident and that racism is the underlying factor. Aubrey demonstrates her belief through portraying the teachers’ curious surprise in reaction to her *being* “smart” and *doing* “good” in school.

Aubrey’s parents’ warning of caution ring true as Aubrey experiences her first encounter with being called “nigger” in a derogatory manner. One of the only two black children in a class of thirty children, Aubrey expresses her fear, shock, and feeling of not knowing “what to say;” this echoes the aforementioned victimizing of included/excluded subjects. Aubrey’s fear is justified by the dominating presence of racism practiced in her daily life as she points out that “these are people that you live everyday with, people that I lived mostly everyday with in this school of white kids.” Without detracting from the fear and victimization, young Aubrey’s silence can be seen as precisely her heeding to the warnings of cautiousness. In other words, young Lisa Aubrey performs a version of the trickster in her compliant silence.<sup>79</sup> She is aware these are the people that she lives with

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<sup>78</sup>Walter Rodney continues to explain the construction of this disparity which, like Foucault, he argues is marked by colonialism and imperialism. The racial politics behind economic poverty resurfaces later when Aubrey travels to South and West Africa.

<sup>79</sup>The folktales of the trickster in oral tradition provided lessons and perspectives of the society from which they arose. “Typically the trickster makes his successful way through a treacherous environment of enemies out to defeat him...not by his strength but by his wit and cunning. The trickster is unable...to win any direct confrontation for he is smaller and weaker...Only by knowing the habits of his enemies, by deceiving them, by taking advantage of their greed, size, gullibility, or haste does he manage to escape their clutches and win

everyday as such she understands her silence is the best tactic to avoid perhaps physical racist brutality such as a public beating. The deep seated affects of this kind of victimization is all the more piercing when Aubrey reveals, “And somehow these things never leave you,” suggesting these experiences haunt her to this day.



**Figure 4.7: Partial view of the Akosombo Dam and the Volta River basin in Eastern Ghana. The construction of the dam was part of Kwame Nkrumah’s plan for an independently economic Ghana.**

When I asked Dr. Aubrey my follow up question to clarify, Lisa Aubrey repeats her story. In this replay, Aubrey seems more reflective in how “these things never leave you.” She quickly recounts the stories of racism that she has shared as well as the protection of

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victories” (Scott 162). Here, a young Aubrey understands what could be the repercussion of her expressed opposition, so she is silent. Her silence masks her resistance and critique of such actions that stem from racism.

attending the Catholic school with other black children. The recounting of these stories as well her experience of being called “nigger” by her classmate shape Aubrey’s comprehension of what is wrong with, what her parents described as, “the way things are.” When Aubrey finds out that Shane Courtvane is just as poor as her family, she realizes that Shane still believes himself to be better than her solely because he is white and she is black. This realization enables Aubrey to understand that regardless of what she achieves economically or academically people will think they are “so much better” than her because of her race.

Aubrey reinforces the impact of how “these things never leave you” through her own expression of disbelief that she “came out of it OK.” “It” refers to the continuous moments of feeling excluded to which she acknowledges is shared by many others. Aubrey empathizes with others who ultimately become “very confused” because they desire “to fit in” and cannot. Fanon states, “Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms...the oppressed flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man ...[and] is shocked to find that he continues to be the object of racism and contempt” (*Toward the African Revolution* 39). Fanon depicts this confusion in terms of the black subject attempting “to fit in” and overcome her/his race-based exclusion only to be sorely disappointed.

Aubrey’s sense of “Catholic extreme” counters her experiences of “the way things are,” while simultaneously echoing the “Parable of the Good Samaritan.” Her kindness toward people was a given and she desired kindness in return. Racism as a primary function of biopower and the position of included exclusion prevented her from receiving this kindness and continues to do so. However, Aubrey’s realization of her included exclusion motivates a young Aubrey to move toward a consciousness as one who is included solely by

their exclusion. Her empathy for others that share her plight pushes Aubrey to begin to help mobilize toward a stream of consciousness and change. Along these lines, Lisa Aubrey begins her journey as a transnational activist for marginalized peoples in order to combat the existence of included exclusion.

### **Racism is Everywhere: Transnational Resistance and Hope for Equality**

Young Aubrey manages to come out of her childhood experiences “OK” with a new found knowledge about “the way things are.” In refusing to accept the order of “things,” she focuses on equality in terms of race and gender during high school. Following her parents’ involvement in the community and Church,<sup>80</sup> Aubrey begins to organize locally for awareness and equality. She organized her high school’s black student prom with an “Africa” theme that reflected the emergence of her politics and stood against the segregated proms as well as their disparity in funding.<sup>81</sup> She also mobilized the students to fight to have black

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<sup>80</sup>During Lisa Aubrey’s childhood, her parents were extensively involved in the Church and the community. They organized and helped fulfill particular need of the town such as fundraisers for educating the neighborhood children and family sustenance. They organized cultural dances and outings as well as certain kinds of awareness for mobilization such as bringing the community together to protest against the white Catholic school’s refusal to accept the community’s black children. Aubrey’s parents’ sense of community leadership was tied directly to their Catholic beliefs and church. Her parents’ example plays a primary role in Aubrey’s sense of herself as “Catholic extreme” and her dedication to activism.

<sup>81</sup>Aubrey discusses how hard she worked for the black students’ prom, trying to get donations and organizing certain events to raise funds for things such as decorations. She recalls the organizer for the white students’ prom did not have to partake in such activities.

Dr. Aubrey: I mean, there was integration but also segregation/and I think that already in my thought conscious, because I was the prom organizer, you get the cake, you get the photographers, get the band/I mean/I can remember not SLEEPING/all the night, working my butt off, going to school, not so interested in my classes, because I had to organize the prom. And really, for the white students/it wasn’t destitution/even though it was separate from us, they knew that they were going to do it, there were sign ups around the town, ads in the newspaper, the town. Now, ain’t that the shit? I don’t know why, their parents owned those institutions, the/and we had to struggle so hard, and work so much, just to get enough money just to get enough support for the kinds of activities.

cheerleaders in their high school. As Aubrey remembers, “And, of course, the football team was black, and the basketball team was black, track team was black, right, and where are the black cheerleaders?” Aubrey understood that, even though the representation of cheerleaders could be seen as furthering the perception of women as objects, the lack of black cheerleaders spoke to what was deemed beautiful and desirable and what was not.

Aubrey’s action resonates with Patricia Hill Collins’ call “to rescue and redefine sexuality as a source of power rooted in spirituality, expressiveness, and love” in order to create a “progressive black sexual politics” (Hill Collins *Black Sexual Politics* 51). Having black cheerleaders opens these possibilities for redefining sexuality and empowerment for both Aubrey and her classmates. Even with her attempts for change, Dr. Aubrey recalls how her entire experience of racial exclusion and inequality in La Pointe was “too painful.” Reflectively, she wonders if “maybe it’s a little too painful, to be there, to try to work on things there.” She thinks that it might also be because of “the way that [she sees] the problems, as more *global*” and “the place where “she has to begin is this one.” Aubrey’s reference to where she needs to begin is Africa, the place where she first ventured toward transnational activism during college.

In college, Lisa Aubrey became involved in *Operation Crossroads Africa*. Her assignment was to help build a school in South Africa, where she felt firsthand the Apartheid system. At the airport, Lisa Aubrey and each of the other students were separated by the color of their skin and housed accordingly. Aubrey recalls:

We get to the airport,  
and/we are color classified/and sent/to the appropriate sections of town,  
because/at the time, the Group Areas Act was still enforced.  
And that meant/that the *Crossroads* group/could not/stay together  
because/we were/racially/different,  
and our SHADES of blackness were different.

And that determined/where/we were going to stay  
and/what things we were going to have access to.  
In South Africa,  
the Groups Area Act/made it illegal/for different racial groups/to interact.  
At the time/there were four/ racial classifications.  
There was/white,/being at the top.  
There was colored,/which is/the mix of black/and white  
and that's the group/of people/that, in the United States,/we  
would/call/mulatto.  
And then/there were Indians,/who were/descendants/of East Indians.  
And then/blacks at the bottom/and that/was also/the power hierarchy/as well.  
So/all of the whites,/including/our group leader,/ were classified/as white  
and could easily get through immigration.  
No problem.  
So, Leslie,/the group leader,/Laura, the Bahai woman,/the other women,  
the white guy, they got through/easily.  
I, because/I am brown, went/to the colored area.  
They also/do this thing/called a pencil test/and if they think  
that the pencil/can get through/your hair/easily,/you are colored.  
If your hair is nappy/kinky/and/I had a perm,  
So/the pencil could/get through/easily  
so/I went to/ah/a colored area.  
*(Aubrey's 'ah' drags out like a melancholic song)*

Aubrey goes to South Africa and finds a similar kind of racial, hierarchical segregation that she experienced in La Pointe. However, in South Africa segregation remained legally enforced. The racial hierarchy in Apartheid South Africa echoes Fanon's description of colonial discrimination in Africa: "There the Negro, the African, the native, the black, the dirty, was rejected, despised, cursed. There an amputation had occurred, there humanity was denied" (*Toward the African Revolution* 36). The continuous denial of access to power that accompanied the Groups Area Act simultaneously reinforced a constant denial of the black subject as human. On human rights, Malcolm X argued that, "That's the true problem. The black masses want not to be shrunk from as though they are plague-ridden. They want not to be walled up in slums in the ghettos like animals. They want to live in an open free society where they could walk with their heads up, like men, and women!"

(*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 278). It is during her stay in South Africa that Aubrey, like Malcolm X, begins to see “the problem” of racism as a *global* human problem. Aubrey’s melancholic tone demonstrates her heartfelt understanding of this dehumanization. Her own experience with Apartheid places her on the same path for human rights as Malcolm X. Aubrey points to the same problems as she reveals that power was distributed in the same way as the color-based hierarchy. Her feelings of racism and included exclusion are further reinforced by an encounter with a police officer as she returns from Botswana to South Africa.

Aubrey explains:

So,/we come from Botswana/and/Botswana/had more cows/than people.  
I mean/there’s more cattle/than peo/ple.  
People in Botswana/still/today/measure their wealth  
by the number/of cattle/that they have.  
So/ you eat a lot of beef/ and you get/a lot/of /leather goods.  
Great leather shoes, great leather bags, I thought.  
And/we come back/to/and/I have my hair/braided/at this point  
And/we come back/to South Africa, and I’m carrying/my leather bag/and  
this white/and I’m at the train station/or something/and this white/police  
officer says, “Hey you, kafir. Hey you, kafir.”  
And I’m thinking, “I know he ain’t talking to me.”  
Because/kafir is the Boar word/for nigger.  
*(Aubrey begins to become more animated as she re-members the officer; her  
words begin to come out of her mouth with more speed.)*  
“Hey you, kafir. Hey you, kafir.”  
And I’m thinking, “Nah/I know he ain’t talking to me.”  
and I keep walking/and I keep walking/and he’s got his club/and  
he is/talking to me!  
And he asked, “Where did I get that bag?”  
And I said, “Why do you want to know?”  
Also, basically/it comes down to/kafirs  
niggers ain’t/supposed to/have leather bags.  
And, I said, “Well. I got it,”/so then/it becomes/an argument.  
And then/she tells the officer, “We’re American, and dadadadada,”  
Which/pisses me off/even more! Because/even if/I’m not American,  
even if/I’m South African, what/ gives YOU /the right/to have/goods of  
quality. And because/I’m black, I/shouldn’t have.  
So/I was RE/ALLY/really mad, and/the group leader/couldn’t/talk to me,

and I was like/look/all of you's/have to/back off.  
 You just/got to/leave/me/a/lone.  
 And then, blacks/they can't have/the books,  
 they can't have/any/thing/that's worth/anything.  
 Um/I just felt like/how do people/how do you/keep on/GO/ING?  
 How? *(Pause)* You know?  
 And this/has been since/1872, 1862, 1972, you know.  
 And they're talking about/100 years, I know/and I was/just/SO/ANGRY,  
 just so/ANGRY/ and felt SO POW/ER/LESS.  
*(Aubrey slows down but her tone is louder.)*  
 That's when I got back/when I got back/to the United States  
 I couldn't think/about/anything else.  
 I couldn't breathe/anything else.  
 I couldn't talk/about/anything else.  
 I was just really angry/just/REALLY/really/angry.  
 And/being at an HBCU/being with/the women that know/the apartheid  
 system, and/being with/the people/that had lived through/the Civil Rights  
 struggle.  
 I think/if I had not been/with them.  
 I/I might have/just broken down, I/might just/have lost/ my mind, you know  
 because/you want to/change, you/you/you/you vote,  
 you contact your/representatives, you refuse/products/made/in South Africa,  
 you refuse to support/corporations/who do business/in South Africa.  
 It just/overtakes your life.  
 It just/overtakes your life, and you/was just for long time/so focused.  
 So madly focused/that/ I didn't want/to do anything.  
 I didn't want/to have boyfriends.  
 I didn't want/to go out on a date.  
 I didn't want/ to enjoy myself, because/I said,  
 "If I'm enjoying/look at how many people are suffering, and/I'm here,  
 in the U.S."/and I/ I mean/I think that/was extreme.  
 Maybe that/was the extent/ that I needed /to go/to really know  
 figure out/ how to channel it/ into some positive/ energy.  
 I mean/I talk about this because /I organize, and I have /a lot of information  
 about this/there are race articles and stuff we can look up.  
 I organized a group/called/*The Students/United/Against Apartheid*  
 which was/ the Ohio State/um/anti-apartheid movement.  
 And we were the ones /that brought the issue/to the table/and got/the  
 university  
 to DIVEST.

Lisa Aubrey's encounter with the police officer is reminiscent of her encounter in  
 public school with Shane Courtvane. Again, Lisa Aubrey is filled with a shock of disbelief  
 that the officer is calling her out as "kafir;" she feels similar to that of when little Shane

called her, “nigger.” However, as a young adult, Aubrey expresses her anger in a way that she did not as a child. Aubrey is no longer confused; she understands the implications behind the officer’s behavior. She quickly identifies his reaction as his racist belief that she is a black woman in South Africa who could not, and perhaps should not, possess a leather bag. With the encounter young Lisa Aubrey had with Shane Courtvane, Aubrey’s silence was perceived as a trickster performance. Aubrey *talking back* is a version of the bad-ass wolf, a figure that historically is “one of both admiration and fearful awe. Admiration, for having acted out the hidden transcript and fearful awe, for having often paid for it with [his/her life]” (Scott 41). Here Aubrey feels empowered enough to speak out against racism even to a figure of authority.

Speaking out against a police officer could have had dire consequences if not for Aubrey’s own privilege as an American in South Africa. In this sense, “the subtext of the spectacle of tourism (either the identified tourist or the objectified “native”) is not an intrinsic quality of an embodied presence, but is inherent in a moment of intercultural encounter. A moment that is specific to time and place, but also predetermined by the cultural heritage of each involved in the specific moment” (Alexander xxi-xxii). Within this context, Lisa Aubrey is both tourist and objectified native. Her race still remains a signifier of included exclusion even with her U.S. passport; however, it is her U.S. passport that relieves her from the grasp of the police officer. Aubrey’s anger at one of the her white *Crossroads* colleagues demonstrates the complexities of being both tourist and objectified native: she is almost the same as her white colleague in terms of tourist but not quite, while, at the same time, she is almost the same as the objectified and oppressed native of South Africa but not quite.

Moreover, the officer's role as the enforcer of laws echoes Chapter Two's discussion of how police officers become the tools at which disciplinary and regulatory practices are imposed (Foucault "Society Must Be Defended" 250). Aubrey's encounter with the police officer is in line with a long history of racist instances where both disciplinary and regulatory effects are evident. As Fanon points out, "The police agent who tortures [a black subject/native] infringes no law. His act fits into the framework of the colonialist institution. By torturing, he manifests an exemplary loyalty to the system" (*Toward the African Revolution* 71). Much like Dr. Weinstein's behavior, the police officer's actions, even if he would have brutalized Lisa Aubrey to confiscate her leather bag, would have been acting within the guidelines of the norms and practices at which Apartheid consents and reinforces.

Aubrey's experiences and feelings of outrage do not leave her when she leaves South Africa. She cannot imagine how black subjects survive under these kinds of oppressive conditions. Her outrage at the incident with the officer is fueled by her outrage with the gross disparity of the world that is justified by race. The officer's reaction to her leather bag only reminds Aubrey that in Apartheid South Africa those who are categorized as black "can't have the books," an ironic twist on her efforts to build a school as her *Crossroads* assignment. Interestingly, as she describes how she survives her ordeal, Aubrey touches on precisely the tactics of survival that provide an outlet of hope for the black subject. She enacts these tactics through her sense of community, which, in turn, enables hope for change. These tactics are exactly how those who suffered oppression survive.

Achille Mbembe's paradoxical subject formation that arises out of included exclusion illustrates these tactics of survival. Mbembe argues that the oppressed subject incorporates alternative perspectives of time, work, and self, which then help to build a communal bond

among those who suffer oppression (“Necropolitics” 22).<sup>82</sup> Paul Gilroy also alludes to this magical expression of communal bonding within the social interactions of people of the black Diaspora (Gilroy *Black Atlantic* 198).<sup>83</sup>



**Figure 4.8: Woman handling sun-dried produce with child doing the same in what was once part of a tomato canning factory located in Tamale, Ghana. This was also part of Kwame Nkrumah’s plan for independent economy.**

Similar to that of Mbembe and Gilroy, Aubrey’s sense of comfort, guidance and community is gained from her schooling at an HBCU and from being around women who

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<sup>82</sup>For more on paradoxical subject formation see Chapter Two.

<sup>83</sup>See Chapter Two.

have survived Apartheid and struggled through the Civil Rights Movement. In this sense these spaces of interaction become a homespace(s) at which survival and hope for change arise. Aubrey usurps her sense of community and strength and, as she recounts, turns it into positive action. She organizes a movement against Apartheid and mobilizes the students to pressure the university to withdraw any money funding businesses that support Apartheid in South Africa. Thus, Lisa Aubrey's sense of transnational activism against the unequal treatment of marginalized peoples is born.

### **Going Global, Creating Homespace through Praxis**

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Lisa Aubrey moves toward perceiving the systematic racism that she faced in La Pointe as a child and in South Africa as a young adult as a problem of human rights. Aubrey begins to enact a sense of praxis for global equality, which becomes an outlet for the feelings of powerlessness and outrage. In other words, she empowers herself by aiming to mobilize and empower others. Aubrey states:

Um/I'm feeling/this anger, I'm feeling/this anger/about/white privilege about/feeling like/even when they're not/even/in the majority, they're in control.  
Feeling like/my white American/counterparts/will never/ *really* understand what it is/I go through/ in the United States,  
Because/ even in Africa, they not only have a [system]/for racism they have even more privilege.  
And/I think/it's because I/I wasn't mad at INDIVIDUALS,  
I was mad/at the SYSTEM.  
You know, because, I/ think/ even white individuals, some of them/ had been probably as OUT/RAGED /as I had been.  
I mean/ if you look/ at the apartheid struggle/ some of the people/ that lost their LIVES/are white people/ trying to make a difference.  
So/it's beyond the individual, it's/ not the individual/it's the system.  
And I think/ that the year that/ I'm the president of the society.  
And we're doing/ a lot of teach-ins /about South Africa.  
So much so /that other/ people/ in the society/ are like  
"Listen, this is a little overboard."

And they're not as /incensed about it /as/ I am/and they're bored/and/and that's not a judgment about them.  
Because/ people are different /and /we have a right/ to be different  
And/ their world view is also /different from mine.  
And they are asking  
"What does that struggle have to do with our struggle?"  
And I'm like,  
"It's part and parcel of the same struggle.  
It's not/ not/ not /separate/ from ours."

Lisa: Why did you already see it as part of the same struggle?  
Dr. Aubrey: I saw it as/ part of the struggle /because/I saw us/one.  
Not lobbying/congress/not/lobbying/um/people  
who make policy/um/in the way that we could.  
To stop the support/ from a system /that/ exploited us  
both /in the United States/ and/ in South Africa.  
And I think/ people in the labor movement/ helped me understand this  
I mean/not people/ that I went to school with/ but  
WORKERS helped me /to understand this.  
Because /if you look/ at the steel industry, right?  
People are losing massive jobs.  
Unemployment/ is massive, so high,  
BLACK people.  
PEOPLE OF COLOR,  
more than its /affecting/ white people.  
I mean, we /are the ones/ that are in/the greater number  
in these unemployment lines/and welfare lines,  
these companies are /treating us/ like nothing  
cause/ they know that/ they can go /to South Africa, employ more  
people, extract more, pay them *less*, and /these folks/ that own these  
companies  
are making out/ like bobcats.  
So they screw up/ in the US/and/ they screw up/ in South Africa,  
And/ I just come to know more/ about countries in Africa, I'm like  
"Hell, they're doing it everywhere!"  
I mean/ it's the *same*, it's the same/ thing/ and/ I'm like/it's the same  
methodology/ to screw up /no matter where/ we are/ in the world.  
We look at/ the Dole Corporation, you look at/ Swaziland,  
you look at/what happened to/ Jamaica, you look at/ Chiquita Banana,  
you know/you look at/ Latin America.  
What's so different?  
So I'm thinking/ it's the same problem, the same kind/ of exploitation  
the same culprit/that fucks us over/everywhere, and  
they are the same ones/making the laws, they get around /the laws.  
They destroy one place,

Or/ the labor pressure becomes too much/ and/they just go to another place and /they are happy to say, yes/ come in, just pay us/ a little/ bit/ more.

You look at Mexico, I mean, same thing/so I'm thinking and then/ you look at places /like Southside Chicago.

Look up at/ design projects/ in New Orleans,

you look at parts of Cleveland, Ohio,

you look at Compton, California,

you look at the Bronx, some parts of the Bronx,

it ain't no different from Nima

Is it any different from Nima?

It ain't no different from ghettos/in different parts of Africa,

And/ how did this happen to us?

In pretty much the same way/and/

instead of really all of us/focusing on the culprit

we're fighting each other.

We are fighting each other/ in South Africa,

we fighting each other/ in Congo,

we fighting each other/ in Nicaragua.

We fight each other/ in the United States.

So for me/and I've read Walter Rodney/I think I have/not a

sophisticated at that time, but/ I'm beginning to have /an

understanding that

the United States /couldn't have had /the industrial revolution/that it had

without the labor /of people /taken as slaves

without the defamation/ of Native Americans.

We paid'em /blood /and sweat/ and tears,

and they ride high /on the hog/ and they claim /that it's all theirs.

Well/I mean/ what did they do?

You know/the same/ in South Africa, you know.

We built/ the country.

I mean/ look at the UK. I mean/the same dynamic.

So, for me, it's part of/ the same dynamic.

I mean/ for me/ it's simple.

Trying to talk/ to society systems/and they're like/and

I wanted to /lock my hair/because/you gotta/ represent

this is what you think/this is who you are.

Lisa Aubrey recounts how it is the *system* of racism and white privilege that must be fought, not individuals and/or individual racial groups. Careful to avoid practicing exclusion and falling into essentialist stances, Aubrey reifies her point of struggle through her example of white people who “lost their lives” struggling against Apartheid and “trying to make a

difference.” As a way to “make a difference” against “the system,” Aubrey conducts “teach-ins” about South Africa to educate and organize for widespread change. However, she faces opposition from fellow society members’ that do not perceive the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa as part of *their* struggle for equality in the United States. This resonates with Malcolm X’s critique that the system “has so thoroughly brainwashed the black man to see himself as only a domestic “civil rights” problem that it will probably take longer than I live before the Negro sees that the struggle of the American black male is international” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 317). The “brainwashed” perspective that Malcolm X cites is incumbent upon those same feelings of exclusion that escalate to the extent of isolation, which enables exclusion to continue. Aubrey transcends this cycle when she realizes her feelings of exclusion are not particular to her experience and makes connections of solidarity. Expanding the domestic problems of racism, Aubrey perceives the struggle against exploitation and marginality as the same struggle worldwide.

Unlike Malcolm X’s seemingly harsh yet honest judgment, Aubrey kindly identifies this perspective as simply not having the same “world view” as she does. Aubrey’s kindness and humility exemplifies how she embodies the Good Samaritan, echoing her belief that “you are nice to people and you want people to be nice to you.”<sup>84</sup> Aubrey’s “world view” stands for her transnational fight against racism and inequality as opposed to a fight for particular civil rights. This “worldview” allows Aubrey to perceive and practice a change toward an alternative human existence in general that is beyond rights for peoples of color. However, Aubrey’s experience and work both on and off the ground enables her to understand that the material plight of people of color must be the starting point of struggle for

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<sup>84</sup>This quote of Aubrey’s was from the previous section entitled, “Racism in Louisiana: The Disciplinary Normalizing Effects of Segregation.” It is also referred to in relation to the parable of the Good Samaritan in that same section.

this new humanity. Hence, for Aubrey this struggle must begin with bringing to surface the connections that lie between marginalized groups and withstanding essentialist practices that prevent these connections from surfacing.

Malcolm X points to exactly the same dividing essentialist practices that Aubrey discusses. Malcolm X states, “probably 100 million people of African descent are divided against each other, taught...to hate and to mistrust each other...Can you imagine what would happen, what would certainly happen if all of these African heritage peoples...ever realize they all have a common goal—if they ever *unite*?” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 370) Similarly, Aubrey states, “It ain’t no different from ghettos in different parts of Africa, and how did this happened to us? In pretty much the same way and instead of really all of us focusing on the culprit, we’re fighting each other.” Both Malcolm X and Aubrey draw attention to essentialist identity politics that divide people against each other rather than bring people together. For both, this division helps to reinforce exclusion and oppression. Hence, the question of “What does that struggle have to do with our struggle?” stems from essentialist identity politics where the differences in historically contingent struggles outweigh the similarity of the aimed “culprit.”

Aubrey’s account of similarities of worldwide exploitation and ghettoization among peoples of color resonates with Rodney’s notion that poverty is suffered throughout the world by black people (Rodney 19) discussed in the previous section. Aubrey interestingly aligns herself and her politics with Rodney as she mentions that she read his work. Her sense that it is the same struggle is because she perceives the problem of race as that of racism much like Rodney.<sup>85</sup> For Aubrey, unity is not identity politics, but precisely what Stuart

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<sup>85</sup>It is important to point out that Rodney’s definition of blackness is any person who occupies an included/excluded position (Rodney 16-17). Rodney states, “I maintain that it is the white world which has

Hall terms a politics of identification that struggles against marginality mentioned in the last chapter. Aubrey's political strategy is one that is against the racist effects of biopower made possible through a position of included exclusion. Furthermore, her strategy relies on the hope for the possible unity that Malcolm X imagines through making the connections between people of color throughout the globe and seeing and practicing it as "part and parcel of the same struggle." She further emphasizes this notion of the same struggle, while detailing different experiences of colonial exploitation and brutality such as colonial slavery, occupation, and annihilation.

Aubrey explains how the "United States couldn't have had the industrial revolution that it had without the labor of people taken as slaves, without the defamation of Native Americans. We paid'em blood and sweat and tears, and they ride high on the hog and they claim that it's all theirs. Well...what did they do...the same in South Africa...We built the country...I mean look at the UK." In one breath, Aubrey marks the different experiences of the past while underscoring the same type of oppression. For Aubrey, this same type of oppression sways her to speak to "society systems" for freedom and equality. Locking her hair becomes a significant performance of her political position and "black pride" while she speaks to society systems. Returning to Rodney, he states, "Now, we need to be specific in defining...our own particular roles in society. You and I have to decide whether we want to think black or to *remain* as a dirty version of white" (Rodney 24). Rodney calls for people to

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defined who are blacks—if you are not white than you are black" (28). Even though Rodney uses the terms black and white, he uses them to point to a larger notion of black that speaks more to a position of included exclusion reinforced by racism than it does any essentialist notion of black; this is apparent in his plural use of "who *are blacks*" and the larger category of "black". The larger category is the category of included exclusion, while the plural use of the term applied to all the different peoples who fall under the included/excluded umbrella of blackness.

have an awareness of an included/excluded position of blackness but also to choose to mobilize behind this awareness for change. For Aubrey, her hair physically marks her choice.

Noticeably, as Aubrey's story unfolds, hair becomes significant as it represents her transition from awareness to community builder to activism. Aubrey first mentions her hair when she is stopped at the airport and separated from other *Crossroads* students. She says that she is labeled colored because of her skin color and her perm, which allows the pencil to move easily through her hair. She then mentions that after her stay in Botswana (which actually occurs toward the end of her *Crossroads* assignment), her hair is braided. Now, as a dedicated activist, her hair presents her politics. Aubrey literally wore her transition and physically performs what she represents. This physical performance rejects a notion of assimilation for the system that Aubrey aims to combat.

Through Aubrey's sense of social solidarity and hope for change, she rejects the alienation that Fanon describes as he discusses assimilation. He states, "the oppressed tries to escape [guilt and inferiority] by proclaiming his total and unconditional adoption of the ['superior'] cultural models, and on the other pronouncing an irreversible condemnation of his own cultural style" (Fanon *Toward the African Revolution* 38). The depiction of this rejection rests on her hair; Aubrey turns Fanon's act of alienation on its head and embraces her black subjectivity. As Aubrey says, "I wanted to lock my hair because you gotta represent this is what you think, this is who you are." Aubrey understands self-alienating assimilation is not the solution; she realizes the guilt and inferiority that is forced upon the black subject via racism can only be fought through mobilizing solidarity for change in the name of humanity.

Thus, Aubrey expands unity beyond the peoples of the black Diaspora:

I also started making/comparisons/more in-depth comparisons/about the history of the United States/ and its apartheid/ and South Africa/and then the connections to Israel.

And/as it turns out/some of the press/of South Africa were very good friends/ of the prime minister of Israel, so the connection/between /Apartheid and Zionism/um/became even clearer to me/and then/with the support of a/lot of /PALESTINIAN students as well, so/ we are/ *Students /United /Against/ Apartheid*. I was doing /a lot of work /with the C.W.A., the Communication Workers of America, which is /a labor organization/and a number of other/ labor organizations/working with them as well. Also working with/um/lawyers from Emory, Columbus, worked with the/ Citizen Rights Organization/ in Columbus on Hyde Street, doing tasks/ at churches, at schools, in Ohio any venue we could get/any place we could get.

We had friends/ who opened /a Reggae/ club /at *Skateland*. We had teach-ins/there we had fundraisers/there. Because/of course/you need some operating money, which we had none/but we got support/ from/unions/from the reggae club, from reggae artists/ who came /and did concerts.

I also worked in the music business/ as an intern for this club/ and reggae artist, Jamaican artist /that would come and/and King Sunny ID, Lucky Dubé. Because of this/I think/places that were located/ I was able to/ make a lot of connections/and also the media/it was a large part of what the media/ was covering /at the time.

It was/the major debates/a major debate in congress/um the students /at Rutgers University/ were also really involved the students/ at the University of California system.

Um/and I remember/the schools because that year /I received 1985. I received/ a Congressional Black Caucus Award.

Aubrey's expansion of a politics connects the people of the black Diaspora with those who are also victims of included exclusion such as those who suffer under Apartheid and Zionism. Dr. Lisa Aubrey's politics returns to W.E.B. Dubois' strategy for social justice and human solidarity. Dubois' response to the black subject shaped as a problem<sup>86</sup> was a call to mobilize toward "the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talent of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American

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<sup>86</sup>See Chapter Two.

Republic...” (167). For Dubois, this human brotherhood could only occur if the black subject gained equal access to the ideals of the American Republic, no longer occupying an included excluded position. It is not race that is the problem, but the racism that created the black subject’s insider outsider position. Moreover, Dubois concludes that human brotherhood can occur against a notion of racial hierarchy but for global solidarity. “The connection between liberation from racial hierarchies and the future, the yet to come, allowed Dubois to dream forward and thus to remake the map of world civilizations...” (Gilroy *Postcolonial Melancholia* 35-36) In doing so, Dubois acknowledges the interests of included excluded position of the black subject in the name of humanity in general (Gilroy *Postcolonial Melancholia* 36). Aubrey seems to do the same as she makes the kinds of global connections of oppression and struggle for freedom.

While broadening her struggle in the name of humanity, Aubrey also demonstrates Gramsci’s aforementioned notion of praxis. She exemplifies the notion of community-based action research, which “creates contexts that enable diverse groups to negotiate their various agendas in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance and to work toward effective solutions to problems that concern them” (Stringer 38). This materializes through the multiple venues that enable her to network, organize through teach-ins, and provide her the opportunity to “make connections.” Aubrey’s willingness to make connections with people with different aspects from multiple venues enables her to be “on the ground” and to continuously mold her political practices with the shifting occurrences of the everyday. While doing so, she incites others to organize and struggle for justice. In this sense, she becomes the organic intellectual, which Gramsci describes as “the active man who modifies the environment, understanding by environment the ensemble of relations which each of us

enters to take part in” (Gramsci 352). For Gramsci, this ensemble of relations creates the possibility for change (Gramsci 360). Aubrey’s political praxis centered on global change for humanity resonates with her decision to live in both Ghana and in the United States.

Aubrey explains:

I don’t think/ I ever really/ made a decision/ that,  
“OK, I’m packing up and I’m moving to live in Africa.”  
I don’t/I/I’ve never not/ for a moment said/ that’s what I’m going to do.  
I think /because unconsciously/even when I’m/ physically/ in one place,  
I’m in both places/especially if/ I’m in the U.S.,  
I’m half there/ and /I’m half here.  
Because/without here/I couldn’t be there/if that /that makes sense.  
How does that foundation, no matter how /elusive/ that may be  
I think my work /there/could not be relevant.  
I think/ that it could be/ in vain/because it’s about the nexus,  
It’s about the connections,  
it’s about/um/being able to say, say/be the African epistemology.  
This is the source/ of something/ that is/good.  
Not all that is good.  
I mean/I am not at the point/ where I believe /that everything/in the world  
came from Africa, good or bad.  
I think that /there are many people /who would like to say/ that everything/  
good came from Africa.  
I think that good things /come from all places/but  
I think that/um/the problematic/Africa is not valued /on the same  
on the same level/that we value Europe  
um /and /that we valued places/like China/because of this economy.  
Because/and I think that/because Africa is devalued,  
everything connected to Africa,  
no matter/ WHERE/ in the world/ is also devalued/and I think/our struggles  
in the Caribbean,  
in Latin America,  
in Asia,  
in the U.S. will never be/won  
can’t ever be fair, until Africa/ is respected /as a continent.  
Like Europe, like Asia, that /is the connection/ that/I’m making.  
And I think/ if I understand the world /in that way/then/in the academic way  
if I understand the world/ then/ my activist part has to be.  
I have to do something/ to make it right.  
If I see/ what’s wrong I/I can’t just live/ my whole life/ just complaining,  
“O this is wrong this is wrong, this is wrong”  
I/you gotta fix it.

And/ I don't think all of the problems/that/causes blackness/ to be devalued/  
that causes Africa/ to be devalued/I don't think /all those problems/are  
external.

I think/ many of these things/ are internal  
many of these things/ we cause /ourselves, we do/ ourselves.  
Then/we got to fix/you know/and I don't believe/I can take /the problem  
to the World Bank /and say "Please can you fix it."  
I don't think/ I can take it/ to the IMF /and say "please can you fix it."  
I think that/ individuals/ have to take/ their responsibility  
and /do it/ ourselves.

Now/this issue of/ how did you just/ decide to up and move/ to Africa.  
Well/you can't really/ just decide that/ I think/one  
because of issues of citizenship.

We're all born/ where we're born/whether we like it/ or not  
we become /citizens /of that country.

That guarantees you/ rights/and confers on you/ responsibilities  
within/ that certain/ geographical space.

Outside of that/you just can't/ move /to somebody else's country  
of which you are not a citizen.

Now, I think that has/ its own /problematic/ because  
I see myself more as a world citizen/and in many ways  
I feel more at ease/in African countries  
in certain ways/ than I feel in the U.S./not in ALL ways/but  
I feel myself/more at ease.

Well just being the majority/Just being not the one that's different.  
Not being one /of two black girls/ in track one/ in your high school.  
And everybody wonders/ why you so special/it's different/ not being one  
of Ohio University, not being one of/you know twenty-nine black faculty  
members out of a faculty of six hundred and fifty/you know  
just not/I feel more at ease/ because/

I can go down the road and get my hair done.

In Ohio/ you gotta drive/ two hours/hehe!

That's not/ the way it is/ in all places/ in the U.S.

but there are places /where black/ is just not IN.

I also feel like, as a woman,

I can walk down the road/ and/ men will look at me /and think/ I'm attractive.

There are places /in the U.S. /where sisters, *beautiful* sisters,  
you know/you can't get a date.

You know/even the messiness here, people/ are HAPPY.

And it's not to glorify a situation/where there are/ lots of problems /and  
challenges, because/ there are lots of challenges/ and problems. (*Aubrey  
laughs.*) But the bad/ comes/ with the good.

Bad/ comes/ with the good, and /at the end of the day, if I'm/ struggling, and  
I'm teaching/ and/ I'm busting my ass /to talk about race and gender,  
equality, human rights, justice.

I need to be out here/ doing that/ for us.

At the end of the day/ that's really/ what I feel.  
You know /because sometimes /I feel/you know/who do I turn to/to talk about  
we need to build unity.  
We need to build unity/unity/ is /important.  
And of course /the diversity of opinions/ is important.  
I/I'm tired of waiting /on other people/on /to try/ to fix/ our problems.

Similar to Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual, Walter Rodney argues that "the black intellectual, the black academic must attach himself to the activity of the black masses" to "learn from them what Black Power really means" (63). Aubrey's dedication to a transnational struggle and to be within the midst of the everyday brings her from the United States to the continent of Africa in order to do what she does. Aubrey's sense that "her work could not be relevant" without the transnational connection demonstrates that she too believes she needs to not only research and teach about these connections but actively be a part of it as well. This is evident, when Aubrey states, "at the end of the day, if I'm struggling, and I'm teaching, and I'm busting my ass to talk about race and gender, equality, human rights, justice. I need to be out here doing that for us." Rodney's version of the organic intellectual and praxis enacted by Lisa Aubrey is specific to the empowering of black peoples that suffer under the biopolitical effects of included exclusion.

Much in the same way that Aubrey's dreadlocks "represent" Black pride and politics that combat Fanon's description of alienating assimilation, her need to live and work in and from Ghana combats the representations of inferiority that stems from the included exclusion of blackness. Aubrey points out the undervaluing of Africa's and its people are connected and "our struggles in the Caribbean, in Latin America, in Asia, in the U.S. will never be won, can't ever be fair, until Africa is respected as a continent." Her work and presence in Ghana aims to place a focus of value onto Africa, which will in turn place value on the peoples tied to it like "Asia and Europe." Aubrey's work in Ghana is also connected to her belief that a

factor of empowerment is to take responsibility for re-creating ourselves and Africa materially and ideologically. The internal problems Aubrey mentions in this sense is representative of Fanon's black subjects' alienating assimilation, which reinforces the belief that the black subject is inferior to the actions, ideals and subjects of the Western world; these internal problems are connected to the political economy of Africa.



**Figure 4.9: Closer view of Ghanaian woman working in abandoned tomato canning factory.**

Aubrey is wary of Africa's political economic dependency on the IMF and the World Bank, which stems from her belief system that is against neocolonialism. According to Kwame Nkrumah, neocolonialism is "Any oblique attempt of a foreign power to thwart, balk or corrupt or otherwise pervert the true independence of a sovereign people..." (Nkrumah *Consciencism* 102) As Aubrey refers, neocolonialism is not limited to foreign power; in fact,

it greatly influences the space it invades through its people and leaders. Nkrumah describes the effects of this influence and the dependency that accompanies it: “In neocolonialism...the people are divided from their leaders and, instead of providing true leadership and guidance which is informed at every point by the ideal of the general welfare, leaders come to neglect the very people who put them in power and incautiously become instruments of suppression on behalf of neo-colonialists.” (Nkrumah *Consciencism* 102) The political and economic suppression of neocolonialism keeps constant the devaluing of Africa and the peoples connected to it. It is in this sense that Aubrey call for ownership and responsibility.

Aubrey’s sense of ownership and its connection to Black pride and empowerment resonates with Malcolm X’s argument that, “The black man can never become independent and recognized as a human being who is truly equal with other human beings until he has what they have, and until he is doing for himself what others are doing for themselves” (*Autobiography of Malcolm X* 281). In order to “build unity” and make change, connections of struggle must be made along with taking responsibility for change. For Aubrey, these actions go hand in hand. She believes that communal bonding arises from real life connections in and of the everyday through which empowerment and change arise; hence, her life in-between the United States and Africa. Rodney’s reference to what Black Power *really* means echoes also Mbembe’s and Gilroy’s description of communal bonding as a tactic for survival. This appears in Aubrey’s feelings of belonging and pride that she gains while living in Ghana. She no longer *feels* different simply because of her blackness. In the simple act of walking down the road to get her hair done, there is a comfort of security that she does not possess in the United States. In this sense, she *feels* the power of a conscious communal bond. Aubrey’s repetitive call to take responsibility and “fix the problems”

fundamentally relies on these connections to the material everydayness of life. As Rodney expresses one of the primary elements of Black Power is “a sitting down together to reason, to ‘ground’ as the Brothers say. We have to ‘ground together’” (Rodney 64). This grounding together can not only provide a space where problems can be fixed, it can also combat the aforementioned notion that Africa is of less value than other countries and continents.

**Figure 4.10:**

**Ernesto  
“Che”  
Guevara  
practicing a  
global,  
socialist  
praxis in  
Ghana in  
1965.**



Lisa Aubrey  
and her

politics echo Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s process of “becoming a minoritarian.” As Deleuze and Guattari describe, the process of becoming a minoritarian is the continued deterritorialization of subjectification.<sup>87</sup> ‘Becoming a minoritarian’ is described in multiple ways for Deleuze and Guattari.

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<sup>87</sup>See Chapter Two. Subjectification is the making of subjects and usually refers to the components and processes by which the subject, or subjectivity, is created. For more on subjectification see Felix Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies* or Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*.

For instance, Guattari describes the process of becoming a minoritarian as heterogenesis, a process of continuous resingularization. Heterogenesis “is an active, immanent singularization of subjectivity, as opposed to a transcendent, universalizing and reductionist homogenization” (*The Three Ecologies* 90). It is “an expression of desire, of a becoming that is always in the process of adapting, transforming and modifying itself in relation to its environment” (*The Three Ecologies* 90). Through refusing to be part of any space and identifying as a “world citizen”, she demonstrates that she is recreated with every entry into a space and with every encounter. Her politics are constantly and continuously being remolded along with her very being or perhaps becoming. Aubrey’s struggle for freedom that does not fall into the trap of “reductionist homogenization” is evident through her belief that good comes from everywhere not just Africa. Guattari states, “Individuals must become more united and increasingly different” (*The Three Ecologies* 69). This is precisely Césaire’s call for a universal filled with particulars mentioned in Chapter Two and exactly Aubrey’s transnational struggle for change in the name of humanity.

### **Conclusion: Humanity for Consciencism**

Along the same lines as Dubois’ strategy for social justice and human solidarity, Kwame Nkrumah calls for a practice of consciencism to combat neocolonialism. Nkrumah’s consciencism is a combination of theory and practice that is founded on the underlying objective of egalitarianism. Nkrumah states, “The emancipation of the African continent is the emancipation of man. This requires two aims: first the restitution of the egalitarianism of human society, and second, the logistic mobilization of all our resources toward the attainment of that restitution” (Nkrumah *Consciencism* 78). Interestingly, Nkrumah

discusses a practice of egalitarianism and communalism that occurs both prior to colonialism and during colonialism which can continue through a practice of consciencism. Nkrumah's underlining of egalitarianism corresponds to Mbembe's paradoxical subject formation that arises out of the terror and loss brought about by colonialism and slavery. It is through this egalitarian, communal bond that Nkrumah, like Dubois, calls for change. Moreover, similar to that of W.E. B. Dubois and Kwame Nkrumah, Lisa Aubrey's activist work aims toward social solidarity for all on a global scale. In this sense, the aforementioned "Parable of the Good Samaritan" reflects Lisa's practiced notion of consciencism apparent throughout her life. It is my hope that through the underlining of Dr. Lisa Aubrey's oral history performance, Aubrey's praxis appears to fight both against positions of included exclusion and for human solidarity in general.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ‘THEORIES OF THE FLESH’: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PRACTICES OF SURVIVAL

“I am smoking weed with my cousins in a car on 5th Ave and 120-something. A cop car blasts over the loudspeaker. ‘You niggers get out the car!’ We kept smoking. Once again: ‘You niggers, get out the car, now!’ Suddenly somebody knocks loud on the window. I roll down the glass and a cop shouts: ‘I told you niggers to get out the car!’ I say: ‘But we’re Puerto Rican.’ He spits back: ‘I don’t care what kind of nigger you are. Get the fuck out the car!’”

Comedian Herbie Quiñones as told by Pete Díaz, (qtd. in *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* 26)



**Figure 5.1: Corner entrance to *Thomas Jefferson Public Housing*, East 112<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Spanish Harlem, New York.**

One of my fondest childhood memories are my summer trips with the *Thomas Jefferson Public Housing* community in East Harlem. Each summer these trips provided many

of the children in the surrounding neighborhoods of East Harlem, including myself, with access to activities that we might not have otherwise experienced.

Financial constraints, ignorance of existing recreational activities, and/or limited means of transportation were but a few of the reasons that kept many of the children from experiencing the social and recreational opportunities available in New York. Whatever our reasons, the community programs offered at *Jefferson Public Housing* helped us participate in social activities outside of our neighborhoods. Mrs. Gloria Moráles, my godmother, or as she would have me say, *mi madrina*,<sup>88</sup> was the person responsible for organizing the trips that brought the children to the various activities.

Before many of these trips, my mother and I would spend the night at Madrina's home, so we would not have to bear the almost two hour commute from Brooklyn to our old neighborhood in East Harlem. I can recall waiting patiently downstairs from Madrina's building as she along with a few other organizers checked the presence of those who signed up for the trip. There were crowds of people excitedly waiting to get their names checked off the list and enter the buses that were set to take us to our destination. Alongside people, the sidewalk displayed coolers filled with meats for the grill, "sides," and beverages, and no less than three "boomboxes" that blasted an array of salsa, freestyle, and hip hop. At least two buses were parked on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and East 112<sup>th</sup> Street. While our destinations varied from theme parks, camping sites to beaches, what remained consistent was the experience of community. I remember a feeling of safety and belonging. This feeling was apparent throughout the day; there were signs of communal bonding, children playing and eating together, adults talking with one another, preparing and cooking food. The scene was reminiscent of a family reunion or picnic that had been extended to those who had one neighborhood in common. There was not any feeling of lack because for one day I did what I imagined other children did during the summer. And, although the event lasted for only one

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<sup>88</sup>Godmother in Spanish.

day, the “bragging rights” of my trip continued well into the next week when I returned to my new neighborhood in Brooklyn, keeping me satisfied as I awaited the next *Jefferson* housing trip.

These childhood memories are incumbent upon the community work that Mrs. Moráles, and others like her, participated in and created to ensure possibilities of homespace. As a child, I didn’t recognize the feeling of safety and belonging as a way that enabled me to cope with the limited access to simple childhood pleasures; nor did I perceive my shared sense of belonging as a strength that would later inform me that I was not alone in the face of racism. However, in retrospect, like that of Dr. Aubrey and Dr. Woodland, these types of feelings shielded me from the dyer effects a position of included exclusion can possess. These possibilities of homespace incur from communal belonging. As stated in Chapters Two and Three, homespace is the space where those who are included by their very exclusion within biopolitical life both acknowledge and resist the effects of an included/excluded position. As Dr. Woodland stated in Chapter Three, “there are many activities for urban youth to do afterschool and a large percentage of those activities are not good.” These activities only expand throughout the day during the summer. Local outdoor activities such as cookouts and outdoor sports, and excursions to the public pool and Coney Island made available through community organizing helped combat the effects and obstacles of inequality.

These practices of belonging combat what Frantz Fanon describes as the normalized sense of inferiority and guilt, brought about by the subjection of blackness as a signifier of fear and in the realm of nature rather than civilized humanity (Fanon *Toward the African*

*Revolution; Black Skin White Masks*).<sup>89</sup> They instill hope and, with this hope, open possibilities for alternative ways of life. My childhood memory of these practices also illustrates that the communal space is not fixed to any geographical location; it travels with those who practice it in so far as we carried this shared sense of community with us when we went on these summer trips. Moreover, the members of the community who illustrate such practices become role models for leadership and alternative possibilities where access to agency, solidarity and equality are probable. Along these lines, Mrs. Moráles and such community organizers utilize their theories of the flesh to acknowledge and create a shared sense of insider outsider position, in turn creating such activities to socialize their theories of the flesh for the larger community. In this sense, they become the protective factors as well as the combatants of the traps that await children of color who are victimized by the proliferation of racism. This Chapter highlights the creation of these bonds through Mrs. Gloria Moráles' oral history performance. It is through Mrs. Moráles' oral history performance that this chapter underscores how everyday lived experiences can help empower subjects to help empower others and enable the creation of homespace and thus, possibilities for change.

### **‘Making Do:’ People of the Everyday Still Matter**

Chapters Three and Four touch on how both Dr. Malcolm Woodland and Dr. Lisa Aubrey interacted with groups of people who helped shape them into social activists. For Woodland, his mother and the members of his neighborhood's community center play a significant role in the creation of his homespace. The roles these community leaders played

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<sup>89</sup>For more on included exclusion and its link to racism, and the signifier of blackness as fearful and close to nature or animalistic, see Chapter Two.

enabled young Woodland to survive the traps of indirect death that awaited him.<sup>90</sup> This later prompted him to dedicate his life to both community leadership and activism that aims to institutionalize these types of practices in communities of color. For Aubrey, it is her parents as community and church leaders as well as her exposure to the black nuns in her Catholic school that provide her with a sense of egalitarian practices that eventually grounds her global activism. The nuns become the role models for a young Lisa Aubrey to understand that black women could exert strength in opposition to both direct and indirect racism, classism, and sexism in her everyday life.

At the very least, these community members helped young children of color see beyond their everyday. They helped provide a safety network that instilled hope for alternative futures that was not necessarily consistent with a feeling of lack.<sup>91</sup> The people that are credited for playing this significant role are described as those members of the community who have an investment in change due in part to their own experiences of struggle against included exclusion. This is evident through both Woodland's and Aubrey's description of their mothers. In both cases, none of the people that Aubrey and Woodland describe are people who have achieved the same status as *Dr. Malcolm Woodland* and *Dr. Lisa Aubrey*. Nonetheless, their dedication to socio-political change is demonstrated through their direct hand in creating homespaces for community members like young Woodland and

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<sup>90</sup>Indirect death is Foucault's term that refers to the modes at which particular groups of people are systematically denied access to agency, which is brought about by the relationship between an insider outsider position and racism. See both Chapters Two and Three for further details on the traps of indirect death.

<sup>91</sup>The feeling of lack that I refer to here is manifested in multiple ways. However, it ties directly to the subjectification of the "black" as the (once) colonized other. Aimé Césaire points out that colonization has torn millions of men from life, "millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair and behave like flunkies" (43). Traces of fear and inferiority remain with the position of included exclusion, evident in Chapters Two, Three and Four, through depictions of "traps", indirect murder and guilt.

a young Aubrey. In other words, they do not have the specialized knowledges<sup>92</sup> that Woodland and Aubrey possess.

However, without these community members' guidance Woodland and Aubrey might not be on their current path of activism. One such person that practices creating homespaces for communities of color is Mrs. Gloria Moráles. Mrs. Moráles worked for different sections of the East Harlem community for over forty years aiming to make a difference through community building. Within those forty years, she created an after school community center for the children that live in or by the *Thomas Jefferson Housing Projects*. She continues to work at the local Catholic school, conducts fundraisers, and has practiced a communal unity that is both against racism and beyond essentialist and exclusionary practices of identity throughout her life. This chapter highlights how Mrs. Gloria Moráles' life experiences prompt her to create homespaces where solidarity for social change is made possible.

“Particularly for people of color, life lived, whether on the concrete pavement of inner city streets or in the backwoods of a rural southern community, is the root of our beginnings and the root of our understandings” (Madison ““That Was My Occupation”” 214). In this sense, Mrs. Gloria Moráles' life experiences stand in for the specialized knowledges that were available to both Dr. Woodland and Dr. Aubrey. This is not to say that one is better or the same but rather that Mrs. Moráles ‘makes do’<sup>93</sup> with her limited access to

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<sup>92</sup>Patricia Hill Collins' notion of specialized knowledges refers to the practice of theoretical and critical thought that validates innovative forms of knowledge (Madison ““That Was My Occupation”” 214). For more on how I use the terms specialized knowledge, see Chapter One.

<sup>93</sup>An example of Michel de Certeau's 'making do' is the use of dogs in Vietnam. Traditionally, it is very common for dogs to eat excrement in Vietnam; dogs are actually depended on to rid the streets of such waste. This normal process of both “feeding” the dog and ridding the streets of waste relates to the notion of ‘making do’ through a Vietnamese saying that states, ‘if there isn’t any dog to eat waste, get the cat to eat it.’ ‘Making do’ here is layered and two-fold: the dog is fed and the waste is gone, but even if there isn’t any dog, the waste is gone because of the cat. The lesson of the saying is that you can always ‘make do’ with what you have because you must.

agency such as that provided by formal education. As Michel de Certeau points out, the activity of ‘making do’ is a tactic where *what* is used and the ways it is being used *matters* as a survival tool within everyday life (34-39). Because of Mrs. Moráles’ layered included/excluded position, access to knowledge was limited. Thus, she ‘makes do’ with her life experiences as a bed of knowledge that enables her to create homespace and spaces for unity and change.

In this sense, the obstacles that prevent access to agency leave particular groups to ‘make do’ with what they have available. Hence, “life-lived” proves that her community building and leadership become all the more important in spaces that possess limited to no opportunities for social and political growth and mobility; or, as Dr. Woodland phrased it in Chapter Three, these practices combat those that perpetuate “active resistances” against particular groups of the populations. These “traps” of indirect murder are circumvented by such people in the community through their own theories of the flesh, the racism experienced in the flesh that propagate awareness and, in turn, the possibility for change (Anzaldúa *This Bridge Called My Back* 34).<sup>94</sup> This is precisely the reason why theories of the flesh matter and why community members like Gloria Moráles matter. As such, this chapter highlights the significance of theories of the flesh as it relates to survival tactics against the effects of included exclusion fueled by racism.

### **Where ‘Theories of the Flesh’ Make ‘Good Sense’**

Through her life experiences, Mrs. Gloria Moráles understands the norms that reinforce positions of included exclusion do not differentiate among the plethora of bodies

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<sup>94</sup>For further explanation of how I use “theories of the flesh” see Chapter One.

that represent blackness. As Walter Rodney argues, “The definition that is most widely used the world over is that once you are not obviously white than you are black, and are excluded from power...The black people of whom I speak are non-whites—the hundreds of millions of people whose homelands are in Asia and Africa with another few millions in the Americas” (Rodney 16). Rodney’s general distinction of non-white black people encompasses a wide range of formally colonized peoples worldwide. Rodney’s point here is for such peoples, who are included in society yet excluded from access to power, to identify with each other by their exclusion. As stated in Chapter Three, Rodney’s definition that is derived from the norms that have divided humanity into subgroups resonates with Stuart Hall’s politics of identification. For Hall, “the concept of identity deployed here...is not essentialist but a strategic and positional one” and “does not signal that stable core of the self...identical to itself across time” (*Questions of Cultural Identity* 3). Gloria Moráles’ childhood reflects the experience of subjection to racism that makes these politics of identification possible.

Moráles’ experience is congruent to that of the quote that begins this chapter. According to the racist logic that fuels biopolitical life and justifies the tools of disciplinary and regulatory apparatuses of biopower,<sup>95</sup> it doesn’t matter “what kind of nigger you are.” Mrs. Moráles describes the racism that she experienced as a child in New York City:<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>See Chapter Two for details and Chapters Three and Four for illustrations.

<sup>96</sup>Puerto Rico became a “protectorate” of the United States after Spain lost the *Spanish American War* in 1898. In 1917, all Puerto Ricans whether born on the island or in the United States possessed U.S. citizenship under the “Jones Act”. Puerto Rican migration to the United States occurred as soon as P.R. became a protectorate and its population rose to 5,000 Puerto Ricans living in New York City by 1920. Between 1947 and 1957, there was a massive wave of Puerto Rican migration to the United States. By 1951 and 1956, the average annual migration to New York City was over 48,000. Migration declined heavily by the 1960’s because of what was referred to as the “revolving door” practices of Puerto Ricans who go back and forth from the U.S. to Puerto Rico due to their citizenship status. For more on the history of Puerto Rico and the United States, see María Pérez y González’s *Puerto Ricans in the United States*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000. Mrs. Gloria

At that time, this area/was divided/like um  
on Third Avenue/we had a trolley/and the train/but  
you could not cross/ on this side /of the street.  
‘Cause this side/ was just for the Italian people  
So/ we were not /allowed to come/on this side.  
On that side/ from Third, Lexington, Park and Fifth  
was the Puerto Rican  
and the other side /was the Black ones.  
You was not/ allowed /to walk /on this /side/ of the  
street. ‘Cause if the Italians/ people catch/or /the kids/  
whatever, they’ll/ beat you up/that/ was a no, no,/ you  
know.  
And the kids, because/ they were raised/that way,  
you know/ they didn’t mingle with the Spanish kids  
or the Black kids.  
So kids were being /brought up/ in that area/where the  
kids hated /the Puerto Ricans/ or/ the Blacks.  
That’s the way /it was/ in those days,/ you know.  
So/ I went to a public school/ ‘cause uh, like/ how  
you know, I/ didn’t have/ my father/my mother there,  
so  
we were poor,/ I’m /poor, so/I went to public  
school/and it was on 111<sup>th</sup> Street/between Fifth and  
Lennox.  
Um/it was hard /because/ you know/it was public  
school and/and it wasn’t as bad/as it was now/because  
public school now is.  
It/it/but it was/it’s uncomfortable/you know  
it was hard for us/ because/ we were poor.  
Oh, (*She drags her ‘oh’*)  
how/can I/explain this?/ umm/the area/was not the  
best. Cause /it wasn’t a/a/very nice area/where we  
lived/ because there was/you know/um/in those days  
they had/ a lot of/ prostitutes.  
And /they would be like/ in the corner/but  
these girls were/young girls/‘cause I would talk to  
you know/I went/to school/and I would see them  
and say/ ‘hi, hi’/ and they would talk to you/like/and  
my mother/of course/didn’t tell us, she told us one day  
you don’t talk/ to these women/but they were young,  
they look SO young, (*Her voice gets louder then  
quickly drops in volume*)  
they looked like/maybe/twenty years old/and

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Moráles’ parents migrate to the United States prior to the first “Great Wave” of Puerto Rican migrants to the United States. The experience that Mrs. Moráles is describing took place in approximately 1938.

nice looking girls/ and /they were so /sweet/ and friendly. Really /nicely dressed/you know/nothing under/exposed or nothing like that.  
So/we would go/ to school, come home.  
Did my work, my/ housework/do my homework, and then you stayed /home.

Lisa: So okay, the way the neighborhood was divided. Did you ever cross into the other side?

Mrs. Moráles: OH, yes, I used to cross/every Saturday/ to buy/my mother her chicken. Right there/ on 112<sup>th</sup>.

Lisa: But, you weren't supposed to be there?

Mrs. Moráles: Oh, no/ honey/ and you/ better run, because/ if they catch you/ they beat you up.

Lisa: Why did your mother send you there?

Mrs. Moráles: Well my,/ to my mother /she told you to do/ something you're gon/na do it.  
That's/ the way/ it was.

Lisa: Did she know that? (*As if anticipating my question Mrs. Moráles answers me before I finish asking the question.*)

Mrs. Moráles: She knew that/ this was a prejudice side/that you/ were not supposed/ to be/ here, but, she figured/if you run/from there to there/get my chicken/and then you run back.  
Once you get on that side of the street/I was safe.  
It was just this block here,  
because from there/ to there,  
it was all Italian/yeah/I mean  
it/ was/ ALL/ and a lot of mafia,  
a/lot/of mafia/You bet  
I 'member one time/I went to the pool/because I would go/and/ I went to Jefferson.  
Now/that pool belongs to the housing.  
YOU know /that Jefferson pool,/ Jefferson.  
I went to the pool, and um,  
I went to the pool with my friends.  
When I went/ to get in the water  
they took my bathing suit off, so

I had to walk out of the pool/without clothes,  
no bathing suit.

Lisa: How old were you?

Mrs. Moráles: Like/ maybe/what 10 years old,/very /little.

Lisa: Oh my God, you WERE little. And your friends were  
Puerto Rican and Black?

Mrs. Moráles: Yeah! Yeah!/ Oh/I had white friends, I/ had this one  
guy who was Irish, he/ was a/ he used to live/like, on  
Madison, he was an Irish fella.  
And/ he used to/you know/he was raised  
he was a friend of/a/the family/But he was/the only  
white guy we used to hang around with.  
He was/ the only one,/ his name was/ uh/William.  
He was Irish.  
As a matter of fact/ he/ became a fireman,/ nice guy.  
And that/ was the only white guy/ we knew. You know,  
yeah/but they took/ my bathing suit/ off, they sure did.  
And then/I had to get out of the pool,  
otherwise/they would have/ drowned me /in there.  
And then/somebody threw me a towel/I took my, you  
know my, stuff, I go/ into the locker/ got my clothes  
and then/ I had to come /home,/ run/ home.

Lisa: And where were your friends, they ran too?

Mrs. Moráles: Oh /hell,/ EVERYBODY ran.  
*(Her tone is as if my question was naïve.)*  
EVERY/BODY/ran,/ you better run,/ 'cause/ IF/ NOT  
they/ beat you up, they/ would beat,  
for NO/ reason, they/ would beat you up.  
It was/horrible/it was.

Mrs. Moráles experiences the violence of racism as a young girl living in East Harlem. As she states, the streets acted as racial dividers, an invisible line that kept Puerto Ricans and Black Americans from the Italians. This invisible line was upheld with the threat of violence; Mrs. Moráles emphasizes the extent of which the threat of violence has impacted her as she vehemently shook her head from side to side, while recalling that crossing the

street “was a no no.” As she differentiates between the Italian adults and their children, there is sense that both adults and children are terrorizing Puerto Rican and Black American children (and quite possibly the adults). She expresses that these children are taught to hate Puerto Ricans and Blacks and to express their hatred through force. This hatred reinforces the notion that different ethnic and racial identities are *all* perceived in a similar way when it comes to biopower and biopolitical life.

According to the Italians, there are no differences between Blacks and Puerto Ricans in much the same way the police officer did not care or differentiate between “what kind of nigger” the Puerto Ricans were in the quote that begins this chapter. The racism that Puerto Ricans and Black Americans face(d) directly speaks to how the division of humanity into subgroups both justifies and perpetuates the victimization of those who belong to the signifiers of blackness. As stated in Chapter Two, one of the primary functions of racism in biopower is to justify the murder of particular subgroups of humanity (Foucault “Society Must Be Defended” 255). This terror echoes the terror that marks the historical context of included exclusion: colonialism and slavery as a state of exception,<sup>97</sup> the point at which biopower first exercises its racist strategies of continuous direct and indirect murder (Foucault “Society Must Be Defended” 103, 255-256). The terror the invisible division signified also lies in Mrs. Moráles’ explanation that Puerto Rican and Black children “were being brought up in an area” where they were hated because of their race. This terror greatly affects the conditions at which the notion of home is perceived, felt, and lived. As Paul Gilroy explains it in his analysis of W.E. B. Dubois, the hateful residues of the system of slavery turned spaces into “an armed camp for intimidating black folk” (Dubois qtd. in

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<sup>97</sup>See Chapter Two.

Gilroy *The Black Atlantic* 118). Home in this sense becomes a place of terror and intimidation brought about by violence and brutality.



**Figure 5.2: Mrs. Morales as a young woman on the roof of a building wearing her bathing suit.**

The norms that are tied to particular raced-human subgroups further justify brutal behavior that echo similar terrors of colonialism. Interestingly, brutal behavior is practiced, not by those who represent “uncivilized,” but by those who present themselves as “normal” and “civilized.” In his description of “the

boomerang effect of colonization,” Aimé Césaire proclaims “that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal” (*Discourse on Colonialism* 41). Even though Césaire is specifically speaking about the relationship between the colonizers brutality against the colonized, Césaire’s description rings true for the relationship between those who exercise racist oppression and brutality against black subjects in biopolitical life. This is evident through Mrs. Morales’ experience at the pool.

On a hot summer day with her neighborhood friends, young Moráles decides to defy the Italians' forbiddance of Puerto Ricans and Blacks swimming in the Jefferson public pool. She jumps in only to have them accost her and then force her to get out of the pool in a display of public humiliation. Much like how Dr. Lisa Aubrey "talked back" to the officer in South Africa, a young Moráles *talked back* to the Italians through her subversive act of swimming in the pool.

Regardless of whether this was a ten year old girl's conscious act of defiance or not, the act itself demonstrates young Moráles' refusal to accept "the way it was." Her act is demonstrative of Scott's "bad ass wolf" for in acting out her refusal to submit, she could have paid with her life (Scott 41), a threat she believes is real as demonstrated by her belief the Italians would have drowned her if she stayed in the pool. Furthermore, Moráles' revelation that she had to get out of the pool in fear for her life further demonstrates Césaire's description as well as the fear and terror that accompany the brute victimization of racism.

As if the enforced inability to swim because of her blackness is not enough, the Italians strip her of her swimsuit as punishment for defying "the way it was." This public display of stripping a young Gloria Moráles coupled with the chasing of all the children of color out of the public pool shows precisely the brutality that Césaire describes. Similar to that of Dr. Weinstein's abusive behavior with his patients in Chapter Four, the Italians' behavior, though brutal and as Césaire describes animal-like, illustrates exactly what biopolitics perpetuates and deems normal. As such, Césaire argues that a civilization that practices colonization is already a sick civilization (*Discourse on Colonialism* 39). Even though what Césaire argues is historically specific to colonization, parallel to Foucault,<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>See Chapter Two as it alludes to the development and expansion of biopolitics and biopower since colonialism.

Césaire accounts for a development and expansion of biopower and biopolitics. In fact, he states that “the barbarism of Western Europe has reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed, it is true—by the barbarism of the United States” (*Discourse on Colonialism* 47, 76). Césaire’s warning corresponds to the extent to which biopower is exercised within and in the name of the United States.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, Césaire’s description and warning deems true and mirrors the normalcy of such behavior as that of the Italians. Young Moráles understands this from her ordeal and Moráles’ comprehension of this will eventually incite her to create practices of communal bonding to combat it.

*Merriam Webster’s Dictionary* defines “home” as a “familiar, usual setting, a congenial environment;” to feel *at home* is to feel “relaxed and comfortable: at ease.” However, to occupy an insider outsider position, included exclusion, is to be in a position where the safety of home is not a given or even a luxury. Mrs. Moráles’ description of her everyday child activities *at home* reflects this position. Mrs. Moráles’ description of the benign act of going to the store for her mother ironically becomes a game of “chicken,” running from one street to the other in the hope of avoiding bodily harm. Even though Mrs. Moráles’ mother understands her daughter’s weekly exposure to the risk of violence, the chicken must be purchased in order for young Moráles, her mother, and her three siblings to eat. Young Moráles can either risk subjection to the wrath of the Italians or guarantee subjection to the wrath of her mother for disobedience, which might still entail having to run across the street thereafter and risk another beating from the Italians. As Mrs. Moráles

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<sup>99</sup> In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also claim the United States exemplifies the exertion of biopower through its domestic and global imperial practices. For more detail, see Chapters 1.1, 1.2, 2.5 and 2.6 in *Empire*.

explains it, when her mother told her to do something, she had to do it and that was the way it was in her home.

As Mrs. Moráles briefly mentions, by this time in her childhood she “didn’t have [her] father.” He had been murdered in an argument during a card fight.<sup>100</sup> For Mrs. Moráles, attending public school illustrated how much more impoverished her family became after her father’s death. Poverty is also demonstrated through the prostitutes that young Moráles encounters daily on her way to and from school. Historically and ideologically, western countries have explicitly associated “women with danger, especially in terms of sexuality” (Shildrick 30). This association is apparent in Moráles’ description that her neighborhood was “not the best” or “so nice” as exemplified through the presence of prostitutes; hence, the prostitutes mark the dangerous state of the neighborhood as well as the “risk” of immorality to her family. This is evidenced by her mother prohibiting her children to speak to the young prostitutes. Hence, from Moráles’ mother’s perspective, the normative construct of the clean and proper family “is under constant threat...from the circulation of all those dangerous bodies—of women” (Shildrick 71). Between the physical threat of the Italians and the perceived threat of the prostitutes, young Moráles seems a prisoner in her own home.

On the surface, the prostitutes signify the economic and moral decay of the neighborhood. However, Moráles’ recollection of how these prostitutes were “very nice looking” young girls and “so sweet” disrupts the link between poverty, danger and moral

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<sup>100</sup>Mrs. Gloria Moráles’ father, Jesus Leon, was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He came to New York City in search of his love, Sara, who was sent to the United States to live with her aunt. Sara’s mother, Morales’ grandmother, sent Sara away because she believed Sara was too young to marry Jesus. Jesus followed Sara to New York City, found and married her, and every year thereafter Sara gave birth to a child until Jesus was stabbed to death during an argument that took place at a card game. The stories that circulated the neighborhood placed Jesus at the card game and in an argument with another man over one of his sisters. During a scuffle, the man pulled out a knife, stabbed Jesus in the chest, and as Jesus turned to run away from the man, the man stabbed him again in the back. The murderer was never found.

decay and the young girls. Mrs. Moráles' lived experiences help her to empathize with others even if their behavior is deemed "bad." This is demonstrated through Moráles' interaction with the young girls, despite her mother's reaction, which also depicts a young Moráles developing a sense of subjugated knowledge. Michel Foucault describes subjugated knowledge as a type of knowledge that is not universal or common, but local and "derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it" ("Society Must Be Defended" 8).<sup>101</sup> Here, Foucault is concerned with the knowledges that possess the potential for other knowledges and practices to exist. Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of theories of the flesh, however, takes into consideration the experiences that are specific to the effects of racism.

Young Moráles illustrates subjugated knowledge through her understanding that the prostitutes in her neighborhood were sweet as opposed to amoral. Although she might not have articulated the possible reasons as to why these young girls prostituted themselves, her behavior demonstrates that her understanding is quite different from the status quo; whereas her mother exemplifies the common belief of innate immorality through forbidding her children to talk to the girls. Similar to Moráles' empathetic view of the young girls, she retrospectively describes how the Italian children *learn* their race-hatred for Puerto Ricans and Black Americans. Moráles' reflection on how the Italian children's behavior is learned and in her interaction with the prostitutes, she demonstrates her sense for the possibility of change. Neither act is essential or natural. Each is learned or is done for reasons that exist outside of the subject; hence, Moráles understands that alternative ways of becoming are possible.

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<sup>101</sup>See Chapter One.

Moráles' comprehension that outside factors had greatly influenced the Italian children's behavior and the girls' sexually objectified commodification is congruent to her realization the Puerto Rican and black children are the same. In her everyday actions, young Mrs. Moráles quickly recognizes that she has much in common with both her Puerto Rican and Black friends; they are all victims of racism and the race hatred that stems from it. Their victimization is positional and fleeting to the point that William, the one Irish child, also runs in fear of a beating. William might have possibly escaped the beatings the other children faced, precisely because, given the context, his "Irish-ness" no longer occupied a position of included exclusion. However, because of his association with the children of color, he, too, must run. The difference between William and the other children is that William's whiteness provides him with a choice the other children do not possess. The common bond between the children of color that have suffered the oppression of included exclusion is therefore one that is not essential but positional and dissipates only when the politics of identity come into play.

Mrs. Moráles describes the division that is created not by the Italians but by and between the children of color in school:

And/even in school/you know, like/the school/we went to, my school/I/I used to go to/P.S. 170/and/that's between/Fifth and Lenox/that/ was the school, white, black/you know /whatever.  
But um/there/the majority/were black/ because that was near Lenox.  
From Fifth to Lenox, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth/was just black. The majority/were black.  
You know, there were/maybe one/or two Puerto Rican families/but/they were majority/was black there/and um/I had trouble/THERE/because some /of the Puerto Rican/girls/didn't like me/too much.  
I can't help it/if/ I spoke English/and/of course/then

my hair/ was long/and whatnot, you know/so  
 they thought I was cute/and/I used to wear/like/two  
 braids here, you know like that (*She gestures to her  
 hair, both of her hands sliding from the back of her  
 head grazing her neck to the front of her chest*).  
 And/I never forget/one time/these two girls  
 they were black girls/they were twins/one of them came  
 and cut one of my braids off.  
 Li/te/rally/CUT/IT/OFF.  
 I came home/OH/oh my God  
 my mo/ther/want/ed/to kill me.  
 So/ I told my mother  
 'Hey, there were two of them what could I do?  
 You know/but I had a girlfriend/her name was  
 Emma/Emma McBride,  
 may she rest/ in peace/ and uh, she/ was black,/ so she,  
 the next day/when she came to the house and saw me.  
 I was crying/she told me 'what happened?' I told her.  
 She said, 'What happened?'  
 I told her/ one of the twins /cut my hair.  
 She said 'one of the twins,'  
 I said 'yeah,'  
 So/ next day /she went to school/ with me.  
 She beat the hell/ out of both /of them. /BOTH!  
 (*As she talks about Emma her voice sounds of deep  
 affection.*)  
 The blacks didn't like me/because they knew  
 I was Puerto Rican, and  
 the Puerto Ricans didn't like me  
 because I used to speak/ English/So/they were not  
 you know /until then/I said,  
 'Well, what the heck. I got a friend/who was very  
 nice/and she was black/and that/was my /best friend.'  
 I can count the/I didn't have many Spanish friends.  
 Because /the Hispanics/ in those days/were/  
 really/really Puerto Rican/they didn't speak English.  
 So /to them/ I was/they thought/I was better/ because  
 I spoke English.  
 No/it's just/that/I was born here.  
 I went to school here/they didn't.  
 They were born in the island and a lot of  
 them kids/didn't go to school.  
 You know/so/when they came here  
 it was just Spanish/so it was difficult for them.  
 But still/ because /that's the way,  
 you would have to live/whether/or it was

Puerto Rican or a black  
never with the white person.

Lisa: But they knew you were Puerto Rican.

Mrs. Moráles: Yeah, they know /but/ because I spoke English  
they didn't like it.  
So you see/ that's/I always said/when I grow up  
I'm/I'm not gonna/I'm not gonna /raise my kids/ that  
way, NO./I'm gonna raise them/everyone's the same  
I don't care, /just like they say,  
you take a black person/and you skin him/and  
you take a white person/ and you skin it/ and  
under their skin/we're the same color  
RED/and/ALOT of people/are/SO stupid  
they don't see it that way.  
That's why/ we have all these fights/ and  
people /are always/ killing themselves/ for shit.  
That's why, I said 'When I grow up,  
I was gon/na try and help/you  
know/unite/kids/together.' And I always worked with  
kids/all my life  
I've worked with kids.

Similar to how Frantz Fanon describes a developed self-hatred and a desire to adapt the oppressor's social and cultural norms mentioned in previous chapters, Gloria Anzaldúa describes how the colonized internalizes “Western Culture” and the “white colonizer's system of values, attitudes, [and] morality” (*Making Face, Making Soul* 142). Anzaldúa explains, “their perspective, their language, their values...have us doing to those within our own ranks what they have done and continue to do to us—Othering people. That is, isolating them, pushing them out of the herd, ostracizing them” (*Making Face, Making Soul* 144). Moráles' experiences in school illustrate Anzaldúa's description of how those who experience exclusion practice the very act of exclusion with others. Moráles reveals that she has “trouble” with the other children in school because of her difference. As Moráles states, “The blacks didn't like me because they knew I was Puerto Rican, and the

Puerto Ricans didn't like me because I used to speak English." She is ostracized because she is not perceived as the same as the Puerto Rican children nor is she identified as the same as the Black American children.

As Mrs. Moráles recalls, Puerto Ricans do not like her because she speaks English and "they were really, really Puerto Rican and they didn't speak English." Moráles' repetition of really accompanied by the insinuation that *real* Puerto Ricans did not speak English point to static notions of identities. Unlike Stuart Hall's strategic politics of identification that are "temporary attachments to the subject position to which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall *Questions of Cultural Identity* 6), these politics of identity signify a shared history of oneness and commonality that possesses a fixed sense of self and/or selves. Anzaldúa continues, "Para que sea "legal," she must pass the ethnicity legitimacy test we have devised. And it is exactly our internalized whiteness that desperately wants boundary lines...marked out and woe to...anyone who doesn't measure up to our



standards of ethnicity" (*Making Face Making Soul* 143). Because a young Moráles speaks English and is born in the United States she does not "fit" the essentialist signifiers of what is deemed Puerto Rican.

**Figure 5.3: Mrs. Moráles' sister (left) and one of her aunts (right) on Christmas.**

Mrs. Moráles occupies the position of a Nuyorican,<sup>102</sup> which in this sense becomes a signifier of identification that is not quite the identification of Puerto Ricans from the island.

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<sup>102</sup>The film, *West Side Story*, focuses on two rival gangs in New York City, Puerto Rican *Sharks* and the *Jets* and centers on the teenage love of Tony and Maria, who cannot be together because Maria is the sister of *Sharks* leader, Bernardo, and Tony is a member of the *Jets*. Through this tragic love story, the film critiques racist practices of violence and reveals the racial divide between the working class immigrants of the past and

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the newly migrated Puerto Ricans. However, what is significant in this film is the beginning representation of the interethnic divide between Puerto Ricans. The young Puerto Rican women and men perform a call and response play out a sham fight of sorts on the rooftops of tenements in Spanish Harlem that focuses on the competition of islands: Puerto Rico versus Manhattan via the song, "America." The women sing the many reasons why living in America is far better than life in Puerto Rico and the men respond with the opposite view. The song represents two points of view that inevitably shape Puerto Rican culture and history, one that becomes what is termed Nuyorican and the other, Puerto Rican (from the island). Nuyorican as stated in Chapter One refers to the new cultural performance of generations of Puerto Rican families that have settled and lived in New York City. The following are the complete lyrics to *America*, sung by Anita and Bernardo in the film *West Side Story*:

**Anita:**

Puerto Rico,  
My heart's devotion  
Let it sink back in the ocean.  
Always the hurricanes blowing,  
Always the population growing,  
And the money owing.  
And the sunlight streaming,  
And the natives steaming.  
I like the island Manhattan,  
Smoke on your pipe and put that in.

**Female Chorus:**

I like to be in America,  
Okay by me in America,  
Everything free in America -

**Bernardo:** For a small fee in America.

**Anita:** Buying on credit is so nice.

**Bernardo:** One look at us and they charge twice.

**Rosalia:** I'll have my own washing machine.

**Juano:** What will you have, though, to keep clean?

**Anita:** Skyscrapers bloom in America.

**Another girl:** Cadillacs zoom in America.

**Another girl:** Industry boom in America.

**Male Chorus:** Twelve in a room in America.

**Anita:** Lots of new housing with more space.

**Bernardo:** Lots of doors slamming in our face.

**Anita:** I'll get a terrace apartment.

**Bernardo:** Better get rid of your accent.

**Female Chorus:** Life can be bright in America.

**Bernardo:** If you can fight in America.

**Female Chorus:** Life is all right in America.

**Male Chorus:**

If you're all white in America.

*(Interlude of WHISTLING and DANCING)*

**Anita and Consuelo:** Here you are free and you have pride.

**Bernardo:** Long as you stay on your own side.

**Anita:** Free to be anything you choose.

**Male Chorus:** Free to wait tables and shine shoes.

**Bernardo:**

Everywhere grime in America,  
Organized crime in America,  
Terrible time in America.

**Anita:** You forget I'm in America.

*(Interlude of MORE DANCING)*

**Bernardo:** I think I go back to San Juan

These essentialist identities further exclude those who already possess a position of exclusion just as Anzaldúa argues. Moreover, it further reinforces and keeps constant exclusion based on racist, sexist, and classist norms and hierarchies. As a response to her exclusion, Mrs. Moráles points to these Puerto Ricans' lack of education as one of the reasons why they did not like her. Her tone depicts her sense of their jealousy at her opportunity to attend school in the United States and learn English as her primary language.<sup>103</sup> Even though this justifies the Puerto Ricans' behavior and helps Mrs. Moráles make sense of her exclusion, it too maintains the division between young Morales and the other Puerto Rican children. Nevertheless, this does not lessen the pain Mrs. Moráles' feels

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**Anita:** I know a boat you can get on.

**Bernardo:**

Everyone there will give big cheer.

**Anita:** Everyone there will have moved here.

The lyrics from "*America*" reveal the material colonial effects on Puerto Rico. Anita's hatred of the island and her love for America illustrates precisely what Lisa Aubrey described in the last chapter in terms of how everything that is related to Africa is devalued. Puerto Rico, as part of the third world and its continuous status as a colony, verifies Aubrey's problematic. Bernardo's response to Anita's blind hope for the American Dream: socio-economic mobility (precisely how Governor Tomas Marín persuaded Puerto Ricans to leave the island in mass, later termed operation bootstrap") reveals how racism in the United States and his further included/excluded position prevents him from achieving the American Dream and his awareness of this fact. Moreover, its people's relationship to the black Diaspora and its depiction of brownness further evidences Aubrey's claim. Brownness becomes even more problematic in its depicted "in-between" state. All the Puerto Ricans in *West Side Story* were one shade of brown reinforcing a notion that Puerto Ricans are a race in between black and white. This notion enables Latinos to be victimized by the oppressive and suppressive disciplinary and regulatory apparatuses of biopower as both black and white throughout history as stated in Chapter Two (see for further details).

Interestingly, the Puerto Rican actor, Rita Moreno, as Anita, Bernardo's girlfriend was made to wear darker make-up because she was too light for the part of a Puerto Rican. The photos throughout this chapter aim to depict Puerto Ricans as other than one shade of brown as stated in Chapter One in order to combat the ideals that divide Puerto Ricans from other communities of the black Diaspora. These photos depict the various "looks" of a Puerto Rican which stems from a history of colonialism and slavery to which the concept of Puerto Rican is born. As Big Punisher states of the Puerto Rican: "the heart of an Indian, the strength of a black man, the pride of a Spaniard." Like many Puerto Ricans, Big Punisher was made aware of his cultural and historical heritage took pride in an ideology of mestizaje specific to Puerto Rico, the mixing of the Taíno, Spanish, and African "blood." Without delving into essentialist arguments over the Puerto Rican, my argument here is that Puerto Ricans both share a history of colonialism and slavery and remains a position of included exclusion; the Puerto Rican body is in fact the result of conquest, slavery and annihilation. Hence, my aim with these photos is to combat the representation of "brown" that emphasizes a static identity, difference and exclusion, which in turn enables racism and division to continue at the stake of those who are included/excluded.

<sup>103</sup>Even though English is actually Mrs. Moráles' second language, because she was born in the United States, she knows English enough to have it as her primary language at school.

because of her supposed difference; I get a sense that Mrs. Moráles still feels this pain of exclusion as she later expresses to me that she does have not any desire to visit Puerto Rico. She states sharply, “No. I’ve never been there. I don’t wanna go. For what? I don’t *even like* the hot weather.”

The violence Mrs. Moráles faces and then incites further demonstrates Anzaldúa’s point that those who are Othered have internalized the very norms that victimize them. Similar to the violent practices demonstrated by the Italians, the children of color victimize each other. “The internalization of negative images of ourselves, our self-hatred, poor self esteem makes our own people the Other” (Anzaldúa *Making Face Making Soul* 143). As Mrs. Moráles recalls one of her braids gets cut off by twin sisters who were Black American. Hair signifies a young Moráles’ sense of beauty and the jealousy that she feels from the other girls; hence, as she explains it, the Puerto Rican and Black American girls do not like her because of her long pretty hair. The young girls abide by the norm that long pretty hair represents feminine beauty. Interestingly, the theme of jealousy that arises is again more specific to race *and* gender; hair, here, signifies almost the opposite of its role in the previous chapter; for Lisa Aubrey hair was a sign of political identification and empowerment. Here, the cutting of young Moráles’ long hair disempowers her and defeminizes her, which signifies the act itself seemed to have made young Moráles less pretty.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps tellingly, Mrs. Moráles has worn her hair cut very short for at least the past thirty years.

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<sup>104</sup>The cutting of young Moráles’ hair disempowers her and defeminizes her in ways that are reminiscent of the practices during slavery and colonialism. Historically, Black women have shared racial oppression with their male counterparts as well as a gender-specific sexual dehumanization as Black women. During slavery and colonialism, there was a process of defeminization of black women that “enabled Whites to justify her oppression and exploitation. If she were seen as a woman there would be an implied humanity (albeit a lower order than man). Thus... While it’s her womanhood that contributes to her value as ‘property’ based on her ability to reproduce it, the acknowledgement of womanhood would require that the black woman become human” (Abdullah 330). Having an historical trajectory, this process is precisely Anzaldúa’s claim that the oppressed practice the very acts that have oppressed them.

**Figure 5.4: Young Moráles poses in her bathing suit and shows off her hair.**



A young Moráles returns home after the hair incident only to find that her mother was angry with her for not fighting back. This is evident as Moráles' responds there was nothing she could do, since there were two of them. When young Moráles tells her friend, Emma McBride, of the incident McBride beats up both of the twins.

Although McBride does this to defend Moráles and at the same time punish the twins for their behavior, McBride's tactic remains reflective of the internalized violence we project upon each other as Other. "Like fighting cocks, razor blades strapped to our fingers, we slash out at each other. We have turned our anger against ourselves. And our anger is immense" (Anzaldúa *Making Face Making Soul* 143). Thus, the school-grounds become a microcosm of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, where even with the absence of the presumed enemy, the colonizer, the formerly colonized peoples enact the very strategies and ideologies that have oppressed them precisely because the system that perpetuates racism and the racial hatred that stems from it remains intact (Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 148-205). This is further evidenced by Moráles' account that this was the way that Puerto Ricans and Black Americans had to live, but these ways were "never with the white person."

Emma McBride's compassion and loyalty proves to Moráles that her feeling of belonging is with her new best friend. She points out that Emma is Black to demonstrate her sense of exclusion from the "Spanish" children of whom she says she could count as friends

on her hand. Moráles' friendship with Emma marks the point at which little Moráles seems to accept that she is not accepted by the other Puerto Ricans; this is illustrated by Moráles' sentiment of 'Well, what the heck. I got a friend who was very nice and she was black and that was my best friend.' Moráles' friendship with Emma also marks the point at which young Moráles begins to realize that racial hatred is a learned behavior that runs across color



lines and which can be proven wrong and unlearned. This is realized through the close friendship that she carries with Emma into adulthood. In this sense, her experiences of racial hatred within her neighborhood and within school both inspire her to teach her children differently.

**Figure 5.5: Mrs. Moráles' twin nieces, Mary and Margaret, visiting her at home.**

It also helps her to understand that it is precisely racial divide and hatred that perpetuates the murderous violence of people.



**Figure 5.6: Mrs. Moráles' two younger children, Michelle and Louis, with their cousin, her goddaughter (middle).**

It is this realization that enables Mrs. Moráles to dedicate her life to community leadership

in order to "unite" children. In this sense, Moráles' subjugated knowledge becomes Antonio

Gramsci's description of "good sense." For Gramsci, good sense refers to "one's own individual 'original' discoveries" and "the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered, their 'socialisation' as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination, and intellectual and moral order" (Gramsci 325). Moráles' sense that all people are the same because they are all human is a truth she derives from her everyday experiences; her new truth is evidenced by her thesis that under the skin, "we're the same color, red." Mrs. Moráles' theory of the flesh enables her to practice alternative ways of life that is spread beyond herself and her family throughout the community; this is made possible through her years of community work.

#### **"No Black Woman, No Puerto Rican Woman:" Struggling Against the Norms**



**Figure 5.7: Mrs. Moráles with her first husband.**

The last section illustrates how Mrs. Moráles experienced firsthand racism and exclusion as a child in places that are usually deemed safe-havens for children: home and school. These firsthand experiences shape her conception of both a shared sense of victimization that stems from inequality as well as hope for unity. As she becomes a woman, her sense of her position within her everyday becomes more apparent.

Following the trajectory of many other women of color, Mrs. Moráles "must experience the world as both Black and woman simultaneously" (Abdullah 330). With her mother's

permission, Mrs. Gloria Moráles marries her first husband at the age of twenty-one. Soon thereafter he is deployed by the military, leaving his new bride behind *in the care of* her mother. As she awaits the return of her husband, young Moráles receives word that her husband has had a baby with a teenage girl. Having been faithful to her husband, Moráles wanted to separate from him.



**Figure 5.8: Mrs. Moráles’ co-worker at the salsa club at the end of a performance.**

However, much like a young Moráles following her mother’s orders across a dangerous street, she remains obedient. For Moráles’ mother, it was Moráles’ obligation as a wife to honor her vows of matrimony; hence, contrary to Moráles’ desire to leave her husband she remains with him as her mother wished.<sup>105</sup> Despite her performed obedience, Mrs. Moráles begins to dance at a local salsa club unbeknownst to her mother and husband. Similar to her act of defiance in greeting the prostitutes even though her mother forbade her, Mrs. Moráles resists her expected “wife” role. Instead of *being* defined, she defines herself through this act of dissidence, reclaiming her sexuality through dance. Through the practice of defining herself Moráles embodies an act of becoming that is similar to that of becoming a minoritarian, a practice of identification

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<sup>105</sup>Mrs. Moráles eventually leaves her first husband after their first and only daughter is born; she gets her marriage to him annulled on the grounds that he no longer wanted to procreate. This deems satisfactory to her mother and enables Mrs. Moráles to marry in the Catholic Church a second time to her current husband, Luis Santiago Moráles.

that is in a mode continuous redefinition (Deleuze and Guattari 291).<sup>106</sup> Her childhood experiences enable her to continuously recreate her position in order to resist any fixed identity. Thus, although she ultimately decides to try and “make her marriage work,” she empowers herself in her husband’s absence.<sup>107</sup> Similar to that of Lisa Aubrey’s black cheerleaders in Chapter Four, this empowerment takes into account that her dancing both empowers and objectifies her sex and race.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, dancing becomes an immediate source of empowerment in so far as it allows her to express her sexuality and acquire her own money. It also opens possibilities to “redefine sexuality as a source of power rooted in spirituality, expressiveness, and love” for a “progressive black sexual politics” (Hill Collins *Black Sexual Politics* 51) as stated in the previous chapter. Working at the nightclub also brings an unanticipated opportunity for the young dancer when she has a chance encounter with the Mexican comedian and performer, Mario Moreno “Cantinflas.”<sup>109</sup> Mrs. Morales’ encounter with Cantinflas shows both the

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<sup>106</sup>See Chapters Two and Four for detailed explanation Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of becoming a minoritarian.

<sup>107</sup> Mrs. Morales actually begins to dance at a very young age with her older brother William. They dance so well that they win local contests in their neighborhood. When her mother finds out that her children have been dancing without her permission she punishes them and forbids them to dance in the contests. Moráles recalls her and her brother begging her mother to allow them to continue to enter the contests in the hopes of dancing professionally. Moráles expresses her love for dancing and how she sees it a possibility for socio-economic mobility: “To me, I wanted to dance, I liked to dance. That’s something that I always wanted to do, you know because we were raised so poor. You always wanna, you wanna get ahead in life. You want to see the stars. You want to have the cars, you want this and that.” To her chagrin, Moráles mother tells Moráles and her brother that there was no way Puerto Ricans would ever be successful dancers.

<sup>108</sup>Here, race is magnified because, the fact that Mrs. Moráles is identified and identifiable as Puerto Rican through at least her dance and ability to speak Spanish, Moráles’s sexuality is both other and exotic. Her exoticization does not detract from her blackness but adds to it (Rivera 127-8). Moreover, the exoticization of blackness does not limit possibilities of empowerment but it does make more complex both sexual empowerment and objectification. Perhaps the complexities that arise simultaneously reveal the universal particulars practiced by subjects of blackness.

possibilities of agency and the material limits of Moráles' position as a married woman of color:

Mrs. Moráles:           Everybody/did a show/and/that's it/you did/one/dance.  
So, I said to myself/damn, that man/looks  
like/Cantinflas. But/I said, "No."  
So I/I ignored that/so I left/but then/um  
the next time/I went, I saw that guy/there again.  
Oh, this man/looks so/familiar/so I asked him/I said  
'Is your name Cantinflas?'  
He told me 'Yeah'  
I said 'Oh my God.' (*I laugh*)  
I thought/I was gon/na die/you know,  
So/then/we started talking/and talking/so then/um  
I danced with him/one time/then  
he started coming/to my house.  
My God! (*Dramatic pause with a shake of her head  
from side to side*)  
When he used to/come to my house,/ the whole  
building, you couldn't/you couldn't/walk into/the damn  
building. The people,/ 'You know Cantinflas?'  
you know. But/ we became nice/ friends/because  
he didn't speak/very good English, but he did, but  
you know, like he was like/uh, he/didn't know New  
York. So then/when/he used to go to/um, dance  
he used to go/ to a club/on 48<sup>th</sup> St.  
It was those days, when /they had the club, like  
you know/down/like/in the basement.  
So /I did a show/with him/there,  
I did a few shows with him/so/when he went back  
to Mexico, he /wanted to take me.  
But my mother /told me  
'No, you're a married woman, can't do this,/can't do.'  
He told my mother,  
'I don't/I don't/ I don't want her as a woman,  
I want her/ to dance with me/ not sleep with me  
have fun with me.  
I would get her/even a/a/a maid/whatever you want/for  
her. Um/she's not/gonna live with me,  
she gonna live in her own place.'  
My mother said, 'No'  
and/'No'/was 'No.'

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<sup>109</sup>Mexican actor and performer, Mario Moreno Reyes was also famously known as "Cantinflas." His most popular crossover appearance was in the film, *Around the World in 80 Days*.

Lisa: She didn't see that as an opportunity?

Mrs. Moráles: NO,/no,/ in those days, no/ opportunities.  
 Not/ for the Spanish people,  
 And/ that's the way /she said it.  
 She didn't want to hear,/ she didn't want to hear it/ and  
 it was no,/ no is no/ is no/ is no.  
 And you know /those things hurt/because  
 I really would have loved/ to try.  
 He sent me/cards from Mexico,  
 I got letters/here.  
 I got letters, I got pictures.  
 Um/one time/ we went downtown because/he had to  
 take/um/he had to see his, was it a lawyer, somebody  
 they took pictures of me/when I was with him.  
 And he had/ sent me /letters/you know  
 he wanted me/ to go/ on a trip/Um/Oh my God,  
 so many beautiful letters.  
 And my mother said 'No.'  
 And she said, 'No, no, no, no, no.'  
 And that/ was NO.  
 That was another/ opportunity/ that I lost/ because  
 my mother /didn't believe that/the  
 Puerto Rican people were gon/na amount /to anything.  
 That way, I/ guess she was raised /that way  
 I don't know/but she didn't believe in it.  
 And/because /she didn't believe /in it, it/ was no.  
 No, but/then/I/of course, and then after that,  
 there was nothing /I could do.  
 He was there/I was here, and /he had sent me letters  
 you know, and/he always told me,  
 the day that you/ want to come/you're more/than  
 welcome. And I, /and I,/ you know/ like, I /used to  
 write to him/ and the years went by/ and I stopped/  
 because (*Pause*)  
 What can I do? (*Second Pause*)  
 There was nothing I could do.  
 Then /I was married, so /there was no way of going  
 over there/THEN, you know.  
 So/I had/I just/and I used to love,/I used to love, to,  
 Oh God/when I use to go/to those clubs/it was so nice.  
 They were all Mexicans/ because /that's,  
 it was a Mexican club.

Lisa: So, your mother didn't, so your mother knew he was famous. Why didn't she think you could make it?

Mrs. Moráles: Because, she said/in those days/ there were/no, there weren't that many Puerto Rican/uh actresses or actors/and of course my skin wasn't as light/you know. No/in those days/no. We didn't have that right/to her/we didn't have that right or she didn't believe that a Puerto Rican woman could get that recognition/uh/as a talented as a dancer or a singer. No. No, she said no no Black woman or no Puerto Rican woman/has ever has, for what reason/she said that/ I don't know. But that's the way/ she thought. When you're young/ you don't/ think /about those things you don't think/ about your rights /and /you don't think about/you know, being prejudice/ nothing like that, 'cause you're young/you know everything is given/to you every/thing was there, you don't, you can't/ see that as much. And you know /when you're here/ now, now/ you can tell you go to an area/they look at you/ from top to bottom What the hell/you doing here?/ You don't belong here. You know what I'm saying. But um/you know/I think it was easier /for women now, because the women/ nowadays /are getting an education. And in those days they didn't get that much/of an education. Especially Spanish/ or/ the Blacks, come on, now/Oh no, no. That/ was only for the whites/and/ you had to have/ money. Oh no, YOU crazy? *(She directs the question to me and shakes her head from side to side as she says "No.")* No.

Arjun Appadurai argues there are five dimensions of global cultural flowscapes; he uses the suffix –scape to describe the fluidity of these bordered landscapes and how these fluid and pliable borders are historically, linguistically, and politically situated by multiple actors (329). These multiple actors continuously negotiate relationships with, and within,

these landscapes through their lived experiences, desires, and fantasies that are shaped by the perspectives and expectations of these landscapes. These fantasies and desires help form what Appadurai terms *imagined worlds*, “the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the world” (329). These imagined worlds, in turn, take shape in material landscapes through multiple subjects’ active embodiment and interactions. For Mrs. Moráles, dancing in the club enables her to imagine she is not limited by her sex or blackness.

Much like how Appadurai describes flowscapes, Moráles’ encounter with Cantinflas followed by her interactions with him actualizes the fluidity of her position as a married woman of color. Within the moments of accompanying Cantinflas as a dancer, a Spanish-English interpreter, and a New York City tour guide, Moráles and Cantinflas both embody a traveler of sorts. Cantinflas experiences a side of New York City that he would likely not have encountered without Moráles; Moráles provides him with the opportunity to move freely through New York City and more importantly *El Barrio*.<sup>110</sup> In exchange, Mrs. Moráles travels beyond the hidden borders of *El Barrio*, an experience that exposes her to a different place and culture; this is evident in her mention of going to Mexican clubs and a club on 48<sup>th</sup> Street, which is beyond the borders of *El Barrio*. Moreover, her relationship with Cantinflas makes the possibilities of her becoming a professional performer in Cantinflas’ shows nearly a fantasy made real. This is evident through his visit to her mother to secure permission for Moráles to leave with him to Mexico. Moráles’ joy with her relationship with Cantinflas and what it could possibly entail is illustrated through her description of how her

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<sup>110</sup>*El Barrio* was the name given to East Harlem after the first “Great Wave” of Puerto Ricans; it signified the section of Harlem that was predominantly Puerto Rican.

neighbors reacted to his presences and her description of the nice atmosphere of the Mexican clubs.

Despite the fluidity of borders through the exchanges between Moráles and Cantinflas, Moráles cannot move beyond the vicinities of New York City and her position as a married woman of color. This is due in part to the rigidness of Moráles' raced, sexed, and classed position of included exclusion. John L. Jackson, Jr. adds to Arjun Appadurai's flowscapes and introduces the notion of racioscapes as "the inescapably non-*flow*like constancy of racial inequality as an effective analytical template for understanding globality, diasporic relations, and transnational interconnections in the past, present and foreseeable future" (*Real Black* 56). In this sense Jackson's racioscapes account for the effects of racism, the racial inequality that stems from racism, and its relationship to included exclusion. Mrs. Morales embodies this sense of racioscapes in both her imagined and material world with barriers that prevent her from the opportunities she might have otherwise possessed. This is evident through her mother's vehement refusal of Cantinflas' offer despite the opportunity for upward economic mobility.

Moráles' mother's sense of what a married woman signifies trumps the extent to which the possible flow of exchange and opportunity is realized. Hence, Jackson's account of the non-*flow*like continuity of racism rings true in Moráles' experience. This is further reinforced by her mother justifying her refusal through her own belief that ultimately "Puerto Rican people" wouldn't "amount to anything." Moráles' mother's comment underscores how viciously jarring the affects of a layered position of included exclusion can be. Historically, "the political dimension has denied African American women the rights and privileges routinely extended to white male citizens" (Hill Collins "The Politics of Black

Feminist Thought” 396). Perhaps to protect her daughter, Moráles’ mother warns her that particular opportunities are kept from Puerto Ricans and Blacks, especially Puerto Rican and Black women. Moráles’ mother solidifies her claim by example, which is juxtaposed with her daughter’s visible signifier of belonging to blackness—her skin. The fact that “there weren’t that many Puerto Rican actresses or actors” and, if there were, they were light-skinned convinces Moráles to accept her fate. Moráles concedes, “Of course, my skin wasn’t as light, you know, no, in those days, no.”



**Figure 5.9: Mrs. Moráles’ mother, Sara.**

There are, however, moments of resistance to her own concessions when Moráles describes the limits of Puerto Rican and Black women as her mother's belief: "We didn't have that right, to her, we didn't have that right or she didn't believe that a Puerto Rican woman could get that recognition as a talented dancer or a singer. No. No, she said no, no Black woman or no Puerto Rican woman." Much like Moráles' childhood observation that both the Italian children and the young girls' practices were practices that were learned, Moráles' comprehension that this was her mother's belief demonstrates that she continues to hope for another possibility. These possibilities conflict with the teachings of her by her mother and the images (or lack thereof) that she saw in the media. As if deferring to her mother's beliefs in order to console her decision, Moráles reflects on her youth and naiveté about her rights as a woman of color as well as the limited opportunities women of color possessed at the time.

As Patricia Hill Collins argues, "The large number of young Black women in inner cities and impoverished rural areas who continue to leave school before attaining full literacy represent the continued efficacy of the political dimension of Black women's oppression" ("The Politics of Black Feminist Thought" 397). This is illustrated through her description of the lack of opportunities for formal education for poor people of color; almost echoing her mother's sentiment, Moráles admits that opportunities such as those were reserved only for white people with money. Through her reflection she also re-members the pain: Moráles mother's acceptance of the world only leaves for Moráles the path of a working class, married woman of color in an urban area. Moráles' lack of support from her mother returns to the beginning of this chapter and its emphasis on the importance of community leaders like Mrs. Morales. Much like Mbembe's paradoxical subject formation mentioned

previously and unlike her mother, Mrs. Moráles utilizes her theories of the flesh and creates possibilities for alternative paths of becoming that attempt to combat the inequalities of included exclusion. Mrs. Moráles applies her theories of the flesh with their possibilities in her everyday life on behalf of Other(ed)s perhaps to give them the support she believes she did not receive from her mother. This practice is demonstrated in the following section.

**“She’s a Woman, I Can Use Her Panties; I Cannot Use Your Son’s Shorts:”**

**Theories of the Flesh in Practice**

bell hooks explains that “in the church of the home, where the everyday rules of how to live and how to act were established, it was black women who preached...in a language so rich so poetic” (“Talking Back” 207). Mrs. Moráles and the women in her family were not unfamiliar with hooks’ description. The home, and predominantly the kitchen, would become a place of politics, where women’s talk can create spaces of empowerment. In one such instant, Mrs. Moráles was talking with her cousin’s wife, Luna, during a routine visit;<sup>111</sup> Moráles listened as Luna confided that her husband had pushed her during an argument and that it was not the first time. Mrs. Moráles recalls that when Luna repeated the events to her mother-in-law, Moráles’ aunt advised the young wife to avoid upsetting her husband and warned that if she did anything she could then get “into trouble in this country.”<sup>112</sup> Acting against the interests of her aunt and cousin, Mrs. Moráles then advises Luna to “fight back”

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<sup>111</sup>Luna and Mrs. Moráles were very close and saw each other at least three times a week. In fact, the entire family got together once a weekend for a night of eating, drinking and dancing. These nights were preceded by the women in the kitchen discussing their weekly experiences, problems and solutions.

<sup>112</sup>Luna was unfamiliar with the laws and norms of the United States because she was a newly arrived immigrant without any means of support except for her husband and his family.

physically and defend herself. Luna does so and her husband never raises his hand to her again.

Mrs. Moráles illustrates the repercussion of and the reasoning behind her advice:

Mrs. Moráles:            So/my aunt/called my mother/and she told me.  
                                  'I'm going over there/to your house/and  
                                  I'm gonna smack Gloria/in her face.  
                                  How dare her, tell her, for her, for Luna to hit Harry.'  
                                  My mother told me/'Gloria your aunt,'  
                                  I said 'Ma, you better call my aunt/and tell her  
                                  if she comes to my house/and put her hand on my face,  
                                  I will give her a smack right back.  
                                  I respect her,/ she's my fathers' sister, but  
                                  she's not gonna hit me for something like this.'  
                                  I'm doing/what I think/ is right/ you know.  
                                  So/she told my mother  
                                  'Oh I'm going there, I don't care what she's gonna do,  
                                  babababa, I'm gonna smack the hell outta'  
                                  I said 'no,' so then, she didn't come around/ooh,  
                                  for the longest time.  
                                  So,/OH, for months/ she didn't come to my house.  
                                  So then/I think/ one time she came over /or/ I met her  
                                  somewhere, and she told me/ she says,  
                                  'How dare you tell Luna to hit my son.'  
                                  I said, "Wait a minute, do you have a daughter?"  
                                  I says/she tell me/'yeah'/and/I said  
                                  'Would you like for any little son of a bitch  
                                  come and hit on your daughter?' I said  
                                  'She's a woman/just like me,  
                                  and I don't let/ no man /hit on me  
                                  and nobody's/ gonna hit /on her, just because/ she's  
                                  was,  
                                  she ain't /got nobody /here/no, no, no, no,  
                                  no/body/ is gon/na hit her.  
                                  No, and that was it, I/ wouldn't let/ no/body hit Luna.  
                                  She never forgave me/I said,  
                                  'Your son is a dog, your son is a natural dog'  
                                  you know/'cause that boy /don't love nobody/ but  
                                  himself.  
                                  I swear/Luna /used to take care of [their daughter],  
                                  clean that house, that/ house was always/ clean,  
                                  go do her shopping/ she did the cooking/I mean  
                                  immaculate. I said,

'No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No esta bueno.'  
 Gloria /had to put her/ two cents in  
 they didn't like me/ too much /but I didn't care. You  
 know She/'Gloria mind your business Gloria,' I said  
 "Please/this IS MY business  
 she's a woman  
 I/ can use /her panties,  
 I cannot /use your son's/ shorts."  
 I would tell her just like that.  
 What could she say?  
 'But you don't understand that's her husband.'  
 I don't care who he is/that's not right.  
 I wouldn't like/ my daughter/for a guy to treat/ my  
 daughter like that, I wouldn't allow it!  
 No way/in hell/I don't care!  
 I would not allow it.  
 Oh you gonna/Why?/You know/come on  
 her daughter-in law/I mean/especially/she's a nice girl  
 who loved him/who took care of him  
 who cleaned for him/did everything  
 and/ he's gonna treat her/ like that/oh no.  
 If my son/was to treat his wife/ like that,  
 I would take a bat/ and break my sons'  
 my sons' back.  
 Why?/Especially/if she's good to you.  
 And then my/my/aunt/she took advantage of her a lot  
 and I could see that.  
 I was the only one /who dared/ said anything/so  
 I was no good/ because/ I opened my /big mouth.  
 Nobody, eh/Tita<sup>113</sup> /didn't say nothing,  
 she saw/what was going on.  
 Alberto<sup>114</sup> /better not say nothing,  
 because my aunt /would beat/ the shit/ out of him.  
 You know, nobody else/ in the family/ said anything.  
 No, but/ I had to /because I/ got a big mouth.  
 So I did/that's what I was supposed to do,  
 I did it and I'm not/I'm not sorry/and I'll do it/again  
 if I have to/ for anybody.

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<sup>113</sup>Tita was Mrs. Morales' Aunt's daughter and Morales' cousin.

<sup>114</sup>Alberto is her aunt's husband.

Mrs. Moráles defends Luna but ultimately defend herself from her aunt's fury. In the process, Mrs. Moráles defies the traditional norms that entail respect, demonstrated in previous sections by her interactions with her mother. She talks back to her mother and sends a message to her aunt that she will not tolerate any physical violence. Interestingly, Moráles tries to remain respectful, as evidenced by her explanation that her "Titi"<sup>115</sup> is her father's sister and she respects her," even when she proclaims that she will smack her aunt as well. Like Moráles' mother, her aunt is the matriarch of the family, which is evidenced through her aunt's sense that she can go over to Moráles' house and "smack her in the face." Moráles' statement that her Aunt has taken advantage of Luna and that nobody in the family has spoken out in Luna's interest further testifies to Moráles' aunt's privileged position in the family. As Mrs. Moráles recalls, not even her aunt's husband would say anything, "because my aunt would beat the shit out of him."

hooks discusses how certain models such as the self sacrificing black mother implies that "such a gesture is not reflective of choice and will rather the perfect embodiment of a woman's natural role" ("Homeplace" 451). Here, these naturalized roles of perfect woman, perfect daughter, perfect niece, perfect wife, etc., become shattered with one conversation in the kitchen followed by Mrs. Moráles' assertiveness. Mrs. Moráles' comprehension of the politics *she* must practice as a woman, a mother, a wife, a niece, etc. demonstrates that she is her own subject, going against the norm by her thought process and actions. This is evidenced through her explanations that if it were her own son she would have broken his back. In this sense, Moráles embodies Anzalúa's proclamation that as women of color "we do not excuse, we do not condone, and we do not out up with" the abuse of women even if "we "understand" the root causes of male hatred and fear" (*Making Face Making Soul* 383).

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<sup>115</sup>TiTi is aunt in Spanish.

“As subjects people, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those who are subject...Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects (hooks *Talking Back* 43). In this sense, the performer of these roles, both Mrs. Moráles and Luna become empowered through their roles as subjects continuously recreating themselves as opposed to objects suppressed by behavioral expectations. The naturalizing self sacrificing mother can also be reflective as the position that both Moráles’ mother and her aunt possess.

It is this naturalized role that enables Moráles’ aunt to take advantage of Luna and threaten her niece on behalf of her son. In mimicking the self-sacrificing mother, Moráles’ aunt further oppresses and exploits her daughter-in-law and threatens to do so with her niece as well. Moráles’ aunt’s behavior is reminiscent of the children of color’s behavior toward each other. As Gloria Anzaldúa argues, “the borders and the walls that are supposed to keep



the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death” (*Making Face Making Soul* 379). Her practices in this sense replicate and reinforce the very exploitative nature that suppresses herself and family.

**Figure 5.10: Mrs. Moráles and her first child, her daughter Antonia.**

Mrs. Moráles practices of theories of the flesh are not limited to identifications with positions of included exclusion that she has experienced. She also practices a sense of communal bonding and unity with Other(ed)s that she has encountered. Hence, in this sense, her empathy and compassion enables her to bond with others simply from the fact that she believes that we are all the same *and* different; we are a universal of particulars. This illustrates on her part a process of continuous deterritorialization<sup>116</sup> that prevents her from further excluding those who suffer already from included exclusion. This is evident in her encounter with Tommy:

Mrs. Moráles: Tommy/Tommy was/uh um/I met Tommy/cause Tommy used to come/ and sell me things/you know He would sell me things/ at the door. He would sell things /at the door; he would sell things in front of the door. Tommy was/um/he was Chinese. Tommy was Chinese. But because he was gay/his family didn't/you know disowned him. He was sleeping in a car outside,/ an abandoned car, so that's how I met him. So then/ one day/I told him/ 'Tommy, where do you live?' Cause you/he would come here /like once a week. And he used to tell me, 'Oh, I live right there.' I said, 'Right where?' He says, 'You see that blue car across the street that's where I live. I said, 'What do you mean you live in that blue car?' He said 'I'm homeless.' So I told him, I said, 'Well, as of today, you gonna live in my house.' And he said, 'Oh no no no no I wouldn't do that because um, I don't wanna get in trouble with your husband' and all that. I said, 'Listen, this is MY house, you gonna live in my house.'

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<sup>116</sup> See Chapters Two and Four.

He goes, 'No/no/ no/please/please ask your husband first and then/you know/so then uh, I told [my husband],

'This boy uh, he's gonna start living in this house. He has no place to live, until he get his own place.

Lisa: So what did [your husband] say?

Mrs. Moráles: Fuck! He didn't like it/ but/what he gonna do. *(She says this as a statement as opposed to a question.)*

He didn't/ he didn't say, well/you know/he don't say much.

I know/ he didn't /like it. But/ I didn't care/ anyway. So/ he started sleeping in the sofa here.

Then/my son, where did/Louis went to the service or/anyway/I know that/ finally /he slept /in my son's room. He had so much talent that boy/I didn't know. Uh, but uh,/ I didn't know nothing/ about him or his family you know, but um, as time went on, he got a job, he started working/ and then /one time, he was doing like a/a/a/painting.

I found out/ when he died /that he painted in St. Ann's all those saints/ on the wall.

And then /as he got/you know,/ little better, he got a job he moved/ to Queens, he had a beautiful he was living in a house.

And from there he lived there for a while, then he started gettin' sick.

Then one time, one time/ he sent me/ uh, somebody called me/ that he was in the hospital.

And I said, "Tommy's in the hospital?" "What for?," you know.

But Tommy/ when he was young /he had a rough life.

I didn't know Tommy /that many years, but what little time/ we had, he/ was wonderful.

He was good, he cleaned/ you know, he helped me wash dishes, /he did everything/ here.

This/ was his home,

to me/ he was,/ he used to/ call me 'Ma.'

And he died, and/ that was another good person,

Oh/ he was such/ a nice guy.

Oh/ he was sweet/ and /everybody loved Tommy.

My whole family, thank/ God, he was /like part/ of the family.

But/ he suffered /a lot.

They used to /beat him; he went through /so much/ shit.

Lisa: Who?

Mrs. Moráles: Oh, the people /you know,/ the men abused him, the women hated him/ ‘cause that’s how it is when you’re gay. /He,/ he ugh,/ he went through/ a lot.

Lisa: You mean like from growing up or his family?

Mrs. Moráles: No, no/ his family, no/ his family had nothing/ to do with it.

Lisa: But in this neighborhood, like they treat him badly, or?

Mrs. Moráles: No/they knew him. Abey knew him. Like /everybody, no, you know why/ because/one time/ I think he was in, in some department store/ and he stole /something. They took him/ to the basement/ and/ they gave him such a beating/ that/ they put him /in the hospital. For something stupid that he stole/ a pair of gloves, or whatever /the hell/ it was, they beat him, they beat him. And/ once they found out /he was, you know/ how he was, he was/you could tell/ he was gay, they beat him, they beat him. When he came home/I almost got sick to my stomach. I took pictures. I said, ‘We gonna sue,’ but then/ he said “No mom, I don’t wanna sue.” I said, “Tom you could sue. They’re not suppose to beat you up.” Ooh, man,/ when you saw him /his whole body /was black and blue/here, *(She points to his ribs and back.)* his face/ his neck, oh,/ they beat him. Those sons of bitches/but of course, gay/ and /that’s what happens. But he went/ he went/ through a lot, he went /through a lot/ in his life. He went /through a lot/ in his life, his family disowned him because/he was/ the way /he was.

In Moráles’ telling of Tommy’s story, she expresses the same tone that she did with her childhood best friend Emma McBride. Although there are obvious differences, her sense of love and admiration for Tommy is there just as it was for Emma. Moráles provides this

sense as she explains how talented Tommy was and how her entire family loved him; she states, “He was like part of the family.” Just as she described her best friend Emma as Black, Moráles points out that Tommy is Chinese and gay. Even though she recognizes what could easily become essentialist signifiers of identity, she focuses on how Tommy’s family disowns him because he was gay. In this sense, for Moráles, Tommy’s Chinese and gay identity becomes signifiers that make him a target of the victimizing efficacies of included exclusion. Moráles identifies with Tommy’s experience of ostracization because of her own experiences. Hence, it is this contextual position of identification that creates this bond between Moráles and Tommy. Moreover, it is through this bond of identification that Moráles provides Tommy with a sense of home. Tommy’s literal homespace is apparent in Mrs. Moráles’ description: I didn’t know Tommy that many years, but what little time we had, he was wonderful. He was good, he cleaned you know, he helped me wash dishes, he did everything here. This was his home, to me he was, he used to call me, ‘Ma.’”

Moráles also recognized that this newly found and created homespace did not detract from the cruel brutality that Tommy faced due to his insider outsider position. Moráles illustrates this through the juxtaposition of Tommy’s sense of home with his experiences of rejection, hatred, and violent victimization. Moráles states, “The men abused him, the women hated him ‘cause that’s how it is when you’re gay. He, he ugh, he went through a lot.” After probing her, Moráles provides me with an example of how much Tommy suffered. She describes how he gets beat up so badly that he is put in the hospital, which occurs simply because he is gay. Her tone is similar to when she described her own ordeal with the Italians as purely “horrible.” Moráles’ relationship with Tommy demonstrates that

her ‘theories of the flesh’ enables her to navigate beyond practices of exclusion and do precisely what she aimed to do as a child: create spaces of possible unity.



**Figure 5.11: Mrs. Morales at a park in New York City.**

### **Conclusion**

The way Mrs. Gloria Moráles sees the world, how it makes “good sense,” enables her to disperse this way of knowing to others. It is the actual production of this process within the everyday that make the lives of community leaders like Mrs. Gloria Moráles so significant. As Patricia Hill Collins argues, “U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not only does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory...but...aim to find way to escape from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice” (“The Politics of Black Feminist Thought” 402). Similarly, Amílcar Cabral locates the site of struggle within the material conditions of everyday life. He, too, argues that liberation and culture can be found through

the embodied act and expressions of the people (Cabral 56). Cabral states, “Without minimizing the positive contributions which privileged classes may bring to the struggle, the liberation movement must on the cultural level just as on the political level, base its actions in popular culture, whatever may be the diversity of levels of cultures in the country” (Cabral 59). For Cabral liberation from oppression necessarily entails both the kind of work that people such as Dr. Malcolm Woodland and Dr. Lisa Aubrey do as well as the work of Mrs. Moráles. In similar ways as Dr. Malcolm Woodland and Dr. Lisa Aubrey contribute immensely to the creation of homespace and solidarity for change, Mrs. Gloria Moráles also creates homespaces for the future Woodlands and Aubreys of the world.

## CODA

“...a soul is like a deep longing in you that you can never fill up, but you try. That is why there are stirring poems and brave heroes who die for what is right.”

Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies* (30)

During the seventeenth century, urban development remapped territories in a circular fashion, keeping the capital in the center to maximize the circulation of material resources and minimize what was deemed “risky and inconvenient, like theft and disease” (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 19). As such, peasants resided in the countryside, artisans in town and the sovereign, nobles and the sovereign’s officers were in the center (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 13).<sup>117</sup> The urbanization of such spaces focuses on securing the “well being” of the population. In doing so, certain sacrifices existed for the benefit of the greater good of the population and the newly spaced city. The logic of security, in this sense, is: in order for the population and the city’s economy to flourish, a particular number of the population must be allowed to die. It was argued that “even if inoculation is deadly, as it kills children in the cradle, it is preferable to smallpox that causes the death of adults who

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<sup>117</sup>Foucault’s discussion focuses on Europe, however, because colonialism is already at play these kinds of urban plans manifest throughout colonial spaces as well. Within the colonies, factors of race play a primary role on who has access to the capital and who does not. The included/excluded colonized subject remains on the outskirts of the city producing the goods that supply the city yet unable to gain full access to those very goods. For an example of the urbanization of a colonized space and how the racialization of the colonized Other plays a primary function between urbanization and supposed security, see Guadalupe Garcia’s *Beyond the Walled City: Urban Expansion in and Around Havana, 1828-1909*. History Thesis (Ph. D.); University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006. This dissertation looks at the urbanization of colonial Havana in Cuba and its effects on colonized subjects.

have become useful to society” (A.M. Moulin qtd. in Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 81). Foucault illustrates the logic of security through the smallpox epidemic.

The inoculation of smallpox, though killing children, would eventually serve both the territory’s economy and the population. Hence, the children must be sacrificed to “secure” the working population and the territory this population upholds. Foucault’s illustration of smallpox ends here. However, small pox was also used to gain territory and an advantage over indigenous rebellions throughout Britain’s thirteen colonies. The colonizers provided small pox infected blankets to indigenous peoples as an early form of biological warfare during *The Pontiac Rebellion* under the guidance of Lord Jeffrey Amherst.<sup>118</sup> The distribution of small pox infected blankets is to “to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race” (Amherst). I delve into this explanation of how security works in the name of the population and sovereign territory because it echoes precisely what I discussed in the first two chapters of my dissertation.

Foucault’s historical account of the apparatus of security deals with *only* those individuals who have accepted “the laws of his country” and in doing so “is in the position of having subscribed to the social contract” (Foucault *Security, Territory, Population* 44). Contrarily, I first began this project to highlight those stories that have been hidden and/or erased within academia, such as the indigenous in the aforementioned account of security. The impetus of this focus was to both give voice to the histories that have remained hidden and in turn to find a new approach of understanding the world in the hope for political change. In trying to highlight a particular aspect of the political through the vantage point of racism, I argued that performance ethnography and the use of media as performance grounds

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<sup>118</sup>For more on the small pox blankets and Lorde Jeffrey Amherst, see “Jeffrey Amherst and the Small Pox Blankets” in the *Free Republic*, posted Thursday, December 05, 2002. The following quote is taken from a letter from Amherst to Colonel Henry Bouquet, dated July 16, 1763, found in this article.

my theoretical arguments within the real, material world in Chapter One. Thus, Chapter One introduced how I came to understand my project in relation to the black Diaspora, the history of racism and its direct relationship to the included/excluded position.

Chapter One referred to the creation of homespace as a space that resists the efficacies of racism and included exclusion and possesses the possibilities for change. This chapter also located these tropes within the practices of the everyday through oral history performance and the use of media ethnography as performance. In doing so, it provided an overview of the oral history performances of Dr. Malcolm Woodland, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, and Mrs. Gloria Moráles as well as an illustration of the performance of ethnographic images that were independent of my interaction with Dr. Malcolm Woodland, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, and Mrs. Moráles. Overall, Chapter One argued that the “unmasking” of a political analytic that centers upon racism is incomplete without the people it speaks of and affects. It described the tools that keep me grounded within the everyday and prevent me from theorizing upon theory for the sake of theory.

Chapter Two argued precisely for an analytic that centers upon racism. In doing so, it provided an historical and theoretical analysis of the included/excluded position through the perspective of biopolitical life and biopower; it additionally related this history to present day life in the United States. This trajectory then provided a space of possibility through the notion of homespace. It offered the creation of homespace and its awareness as a space of possibility for a society of becoming or as Aimé Césaire puts it, a “universal of particulars.” Chapter Two also gave way to the next three chapters as illustrations of the function of racism within biopolitical life, its relationship to the included/excluded position, and the

creations of homespace that follow. In this sense, Chapters Three, Four, and Five demonstrate the everyday processes of this conjuncture.

Chapter Three focused on the life history performance of Dr. Malcolm Woodland. This chapter centered primarily on Woodland's childhood and the role that his mother and members of the community center played in preventing young Woodland from becoming a victim of the murder and direct murder that racism justifies and pushed forth within biopolitical life. This chapter focused primarily on the representation of blackness and its racist affects on black subjectivities such as young Woodland. Because of its focus, I relied primarily on the imaginative of the oral history performance as opposed to images; thus the only image depicted in this chapter was the image of Woodland and I in SPGRE to illustrate the beginning of our friendship. This Chapter also focused on how the aforementioned individuals created feelings of homespace for young Woodland as a response to these representations. The Chapter concluded through a depiction of how, as an accomplished adult, Woodland remains a victim of these racist representations of blackness and how this continuous victimization incites Dr. Woodland to aspire to help institutionalize the different practices of homespace.

Coming from a different perspective, Chapter Four focused on the life history of Dr. Lisa Aubrey. This Chapter tied together the relationship between included exclusion and the practices of homespace with a transnational praxis of belonging that promotes global solidarity. Through Aubrey's childhood experiences and her travels to Africa, this chapter realized a practice of homespace that reaches beyond territorial borders. This Chapter also introduced the complexities of an included/excluded position that pertained to racism, sexism and classism. In following with a transnational praxis of belonging and global solidarity, this

Chapter imaged my experiences throughout Ghana, West Africa that centers on the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah. These images helped to exemplify the efforts made to combat socio-economic injustices and racism. Chapter Four concluded with a depiction of Dr. Lisa Aubrey's practices as an embodiment of Nkrumah's consciencism and a photo of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Ghana, who also practiced a transnational praxis of belonging that promoted global solidarity against the injustices of racism.

Coming full circle, Chapter Five returned my dissertation to the everyday creation of homespace with the oral history performance of Mrs. Gloria Moráles. This Final Chapter demonstrated how the position of included exclusion necessarily creates spaces for alternative practices as a mode of survival. The practices depicted through Mrs. Moráles' life experiences enabled her to both survive the oppression she encountered and create feelings of homespaces for others. Through the unfolding of Mrs. Moráles' oral history performance, Chapter Five also tackled with the practices of internalized racism and how hierarchies of difference can in fact further victimize those in the position of included exclusion. The images presented in this Chapter were from Mrs. Moráles and are of her family. They demonstrate how particular raced images uphold hierarchies of difference and further victimize victims of included exclusion. This final Chapter concluded with the importance of Mrs. Moráles' work and everyday practices for predominantly urban, working class communities of color.

As I stated previously, I began this project to reinforce the notion that racism is necessarily a factor in any present day analytic. I used oral history performances and media ethnography as performance to ground my cultural studies approach to the politics of everyday life in the hopes to shed light in new strategies for change. The oral history

performances provide the everyday insight for ontological philosophies of the world. In this sense, the oral history performances provide a window into particular possibilities of becoming, which in turn possess the possibility of change. I must confess, however, that the *theory of using* performance studies was a premature act in the sense that I did not realize the power of the “performance of possibilities” and the “possible real space” that the approach provides. Through the process of interacting with Dr. Woodland, Dr. Aubrey, and Mrs. Moráles, and listening to their stories, some stories I have heard before and some stories new to me, I *felt* precisely why grounding my study within performance ethnography mattered. The stories made the efficacies of how I expand Foucault’s notion of biopower and biopolitical life in relation to people of color *really* matter because the people *really* exist, beyond the theory, beyond the statistics, beyond the argument. The performance of the story, how the story is told, the story that is told, and the interpretation is the highlighting of a particular reality that is contextual.

Moreover, the performance aspect within the oral histories enabled me to return to that space of realization to not just listen to these stories but to comprehend them within the framework of my analysis. To perform the words through poetic transcription, analyze them, and then return to them a second time and sometimes a third and fourth time for the purpose of adding images becomes representative of a second level of dialogue. It is in this sense now a dialogue with the transcription and analysis. This process takes theorizing upon theory and enters into a closer felt engagement with theory. This kind of engagement takes into account the ethical responsibility I have as an ethnographer for both my subjects and my research. Performance allowed for the dialogues to continue beyond the face to face interaction. I achieved this magical process alongside my ethnographic subjects (perhaps not even

alongside them but with them carrying and guiding me) and the result was not that I shed light on their stories but that they shed light upon me and my theoretical argument. After this process, being grounded *does* mean that theory is positioned within the everyday.

Moreover, with performance ethnography, I am vulnerable and humble enough to understand that theory is really only theory without people to make it magical, filled with the material optimism it is meant to possess. Overall, these oral history performances and the images that perform alongside of them demonstrate practices of becoming in everyday life *because of* the position of included exclusion and the acknowledgement of this occupied position. With this, I have learned that possibilities for change already exist through the practices of homespace and are waiting to be transformed into materiality. As Fanon argues, “This means that there is work to be done..., human work, that is work which is the meaning of home...It means that...there are tears to be wiped away, inhuman attitudes to be fought, condescending way of speech to be ruled out, men to be humanized” (Fanon *Toward the African* 16). My purpose as an academic is to bear witness to these practices and to shed light upon them. However, with me or without me, the struggle will keep on, keepin’ on.

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