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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Global Africana Review

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Chair's Note

Welcome to Volume 4 of *Global African Review (GAR)*! The outstanding work of our students and this year's Executive Editor, Professor Claude Clegg, has made the publication of this volume possible. I extend my thanks to Rebekah Kati of the Davis Library for all her help as we geared up for the publication of this year's volume. Without financial support from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, it would have been very difficult to publish the research generated by students. As such, many thanks to the Dean's Office for supporting the publication of their generative work in this volume of our undergraduate research journal. Thanks to Stephanie R. Fore, who designed the cover while working in the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. Finally, special thanks to faculty colleagues who mentored students as they worked on their articles for this volume.

Eunice N. Sahle, PhD, FAAS
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Author Bios

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Anna DeGrauw graduated from UNC Chapel Hill in May 2019 with a B.A. in Political Science and Honors B.A. in Global Studies with a minor in Public Policy. During her time at UNC, DeGrauw interned for grassroots organizations including the Binti Pamoja Girl's Empowerment Center at Carolina for Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya. Her honors Global Studies thesis applied legal and geographical concepts to community development in Kibera under the guidance of Dr. Eunice Sahle from the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. DeGrauw is currently a master's degree candidate in International Affairs at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Bologna, Italy. DeGrauw is interested in the influence of grassroots organizations on constitutional and international law.

Elondra Harr graduated in May 2019 from UNC-Chapel Hill with a B.A. in African American Studies and Anthropology. She currently works as a research assistant in the UNC School of Medicine, working on a project specifically catered to African American family caregivers in rural counties of North Carolina. Elondra plans to obtain a master's in Public Health, and ultimately earn a PhD in Anthropology to continue human rights and social justice research.

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Kellan Robinson is a graduating senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, double majoring in Contemporary European Studies and Global Studies (focus on International Politics and Africa), with minors in French and African American and Diaspora Studies. She conducted a self-designed research project about multidimensional Blackness in Europe in 2019 with support from the Center for European Studies' European Summer Research Award. Kellan has also attended the Afro-European Conference and the Black Europe Summer School in Amsterdam.

Sierra Marie Vines is a native New Yorker completing her senior year at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Seeking a career that intersects culture and health, she finds her passion in studying Biology and African American Diaspora Studies. In her spare time, she works with college ministry, creating atmospheres of vulnerability, spirituality and community. Her major goal is to actively engage with people while challenging herself and others to critique systems that attempt to divide and erase truth.

Hanna Watson is an African, African American, and Diaspora Studies major and Creative Writing minor in UNC-Chapel Hill's Class of 2020. Originally from Wichita, Kansas, Hanna focuses her archival and ethnographic research on African American migration and the history of the Black Church. As a poet and speaker, Hanna explores the joys and struggles of blackness, womanhood, and justice through the lens of Biblical truth.

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Introduction

Claude A. Clegg III

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

As with our previous editions, this fourth annual issue of the *Global Africana Review* (GAR) features the rich and varied scholarship of our undergraduate students. The articles and reviews published here illustrate the intellectually engaged ways in which these emerging scholars grapple with issues of gender, race, citizenship, criminal justice, culture, memory, and social mobilization, building arguments and conclusions around an array of source materials and interpretative interventions. In the best tradition of scholarly publication, these pieces have been reviewed, edited, and revised to enhance their intellectual impact and discursive clarity. This process has allowed these scholars the opportunity to experience writing for a professionally arranged journal, along with the additional rigor and illumination that this work entails.

Brianna Brunson's article on the musical culture of enslaved people in the United States offers a fascinating take on how spirituals were both vehicles of African American grievances, aspirations, and memories as well as artifacts of a fully-formed black expressive tradition that survived enslavement and became embedded in post-emancipation life. Relatedly, Sierra Marie Vines offers a revealing study of how food culture and culinary arts among enslaved people in North Carolina produced a robust and enduring matrix of identity, affirmation, and resistance that helped root individuals in notions of community and generational continuity. Elondra Harr's piece explores state policies and policing practices in Brazil, with particular attention focused on how Afro-Brazilians have attempted to navigate matters of criminal justice under successive governments that have exhibited varying degrees of authoritarian leanings. Moving to the other side of the Atlantic, Anna DeGrauw analyzes the place of land tenure and dispossession as it relates to the postcolonial geography of Kenya, delving into how different parties (e.g., government officials, NGOs, and protesters) have contested the meaning and usage of land for various purposes. Finally, Kellan Robinson discusses how women took advantage of the political and social upheaval in the wake of the Jasmine Revolution and the Arab Spring to advance agendas and interests that had heretofore been illegible in postcolonial Tunisia.

Taken together, these articles lay bare the myriad ways that people across the world have struggled to define the terms of their existence and identities within often repressive circumstances that militate against such agency. Moreover, the authors have each demonstrated the relevance of local context and regional specificity to the unfolding of events, while showing how individuals and communities can be driving forces for change.

In addition to these five articles, this issue of the GAR includes two book reviews. Hanna Watson rigorously probes issues of identity, history, and memory as experienced by those dealing with the aftermath of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic in her examination of Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. Watson's review manages to investigate the many poignant themes enmeshed in Hartman's work without losing sight of the narrative's shifting positionality as a historical study, travelogue, and personal meditation. In her discussion of Tanisha Ford's *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*, Tochi Okeke brings an expansive, transnational lens to assaying how the

book presents black women as cultural signifiers and agents of change across several continents from the 1950s to the 1980s. Okeke specifically delves into how Ford characterizes the women's use of style, including manner of dress and hairstyles, to gain power in what had been traditionally a male-dominated movement for rights.

As the executive editor of this issue of the GAR, I have been gratified by the hard work of our student authors and their engagement with the publication process. I am also thankful for the valuable feedback, guidance, and support that faculty mentors, AAAD Chair Eunice Sahle, and Managing Editor Angela Pietrobon provided all along the way. With both pride and confidence in their achievement, I am happy to present the fruits of their collective labor to our readers.

Dr. Claude A. Clegg III

Executive Editor, *Global Africana Review*

Distinguished Professor, Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies

“Jes Go Back to de Fiel a Singin”¹: The Spiritual as a Vehicle of Resistance in the Antebellum South

Brianna Brunson

ABSTRACT

This article examines the contributions of spirituals—culturally black, southern, religious songs recognized at the turn of the nineteenth century—as vehicles of emotional resistance for those enslaved in the antebellum South. Spirituals, through their charged language, religious overtones, and outlook toward life without/after slavery, attested to the humanity of the enslaved peoples who sang them. These songs allowed people to display desire, happiness, anguish, and opposition, despite their bodies and souls being commodified by dominant society. Singing thus represented the enslaved African’s claim to a certain degree of agency in the midst of bondage. Born out of suffering, spirituals emphasized the harsh realities of slavery while challenging its attempts to police matters of the mind and spirit. By consulting relevant literature, interpreting documented antebellum spirituals, and analyzing testimonies from the Federal Writers’ Project, this article will detail the ways in which songs negotiated the repression of enslaved people’s identity and emotions, making singing a political act of resistance.

Keywords: slavery, freedom, spirituals, song, resistance, antebellum South

Introduction

The generations of African-descended peoples subjected to the brutalities of North American chattel slavery have historically rejected the conditions of their oppression. Enslaved communities throughout the American South employed both large-scale demonstrations and everyday disruptions to undermine an institution that thrived on the ownership, control, and abuse of the black body. In attempting to understand the function and impact of slave resistance, it is important to acknowledge that the relationship between the oppressed and his/her oppression is necessarily complex, as there are both physical and psychological processes that bind individuals to the conditions under which they exist. Slavery was “imposed and maintained by violence” (Berlin 2004, 46), and the ability to impose on the minds and hearts of enslaved people was an essential mechanism of control. Understanding this to be true begs consideration of how mental and emotional dissent can function as tools for subversion, working alongside and underlying physical acts such as uprisings, slowdowns, and escapes. This article will detail the contributions of slave spirituals—culturally black, southern, religious songs recognized at the

¹ Interview with Fannie Moore, 21 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 127–37, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

turn of the nineteenth century—as vehicles of emotional resistance for those enslaved in the American South between 1700 and 1900.

Those who maintained slavery and white supremacy attempted to strip enslaved Africans of their identities, forcing them to live as property and steering them away from conceptions of their own innocence, a connection to a Christian God, and a right to freedom. Spirituals, through their charged language, religious overtones, and outlook toward life without/after slavery, attested to the humanity of the enslaved peoples who sang them. The songs allowed people to display desire, happiness, anguish, and opposition, despite dominant society’s attempts to commodify their bodies and souls. Singing thus represented the enslaved African’s claim to a certain degree of agency in the midst of bondage. Born out of suffering, spirituals emphasized the harsh realities of slavery while challenging its attempts to police matters of the mind and spirit. In a society that “forcibly repressed even the most modest acts of disobedience,” songs allowed the enslaved to construct “a social space in which discontent could be articulated, or the social hierarchy blurred” (Barker 2015, 370). It was a mechanism through which enslaved individuals “could be relatively candid in a society that rarely afforded them that privilege” (Barker 2015, 370). By consulting relevant literature, interpreting documented spirituals, and analyzing testimonies from the Federal Writers’ Project, this article will detail the ways in which these songs enabled enslaved people to negotiate the repression of their identity and emotions, making singing a political act of resistance.

Limitations

It is important to consider the inherent complexities and limitations of this analysis, as there are several elements of song and singing that make analyzing them an imperfect exercise. Due to limited information, this article will not consider how the elements of song in the colonies pre-nineteenth century may have informed the makeup or messages of the spirituals.

Studying songs from the pre-American Civil War era is particularly difficult for reasons rooted in the very nature of slavery in North America. To begin, the earliest songs were sung in the enslaved peoples’ native African tongues, making it difficult for those who did not speak or understand the language to study the lyrics of the songs (Fisher 1953, 103). Moreover, slave traders consolidated Africans of dissimilar ethnolinguistic origins to discourage communication and dissent after their arrival in the colonies. This may have curbed the spread and impact of these songs, as there was initially no shared language through which the enslaved people could understand and share them.

Enslaved people’s eventual adoption of the master’s English allowed researchers to document and interpret spirituals, several of which will be presented in this piece. Even still, one cannot draw definitively accurate conclusions about intended meanings in the language used. The people’s “limited exposure and lack of familiarity” with the English language (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 382) must be considered in attempts to dissect words, phrases, and connotations. Neither researchers of the period nor those of today can be completely confident in their interpretations.

Furthermore, the dynamics of master-slave/white-black relations of the period warrant a degree of caution in interpreting songs. Collectors also had limitations in the area of literacy (Fisher 1953, 112). The combination of the language limitations of the enslaved persons and those of the antebellum collector may have led to misquotes or misunderstanding throughout the informing process, and thus may impact dialogue around the topic today. Moreover, although both collectors and informants spoke a variation of English, often collectors were uninformed

about the everyday life experiences of the enslaved and thus may not have been able to fully articulate the significance of certain words or practices. This was the case for the abolitionist authors who wrote the first and most influential collection of spirituals, *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867). Although collectors made efforts to win the confidence of their informants, the default culture of distrust between the white master and African-descended enslaved person could have led to the exchange of deceptive or incomplete information (Fisher 1953, 89). Given that the singing of spirituals was naturally expressive and the lyrics subversive, it may have been especially difficult for collectors to gather accurate renditions of these songs—particularly those that directly critiqued the dominant white supremacist culture or inspired radical thoughts and actions.

Lastly, the prosperity of the slave market, instances of truancy/escape, family relocations, and progression of time caused enslaved people, along with their culture and knowledge, to span many regions. Many antebellum spirituals traveled through word of mouth and across various localities before their lyrics could be documented and their meanings decoded. Spirituals may also have been altered over time, either intentionally or accidentally, and thus the ways that researchers have come to understand them may be flawed. The issue of geographical movement also contributes to the difficulty of revealing the precise origins of songs and their time of creation, which informs interpretations of their functions and meanings—for the singers and in the greater social sphere.

Despite the inherent limitations of this work, the songs that collectors and scholars have been able to analyze over the past four centuries offer meaningful insights into the everyday lives and expressions of those who experienced chattel slavery. In fact, many of these limitations underscore this article’s argument that songs and singing emphasized the humanity and autonomy of enslaved people, in that they constructed for themselves an art form that could not easily be recorded or understood by dominant society, then or now.

Freedom, Agency, and Expression

To fully engage with the argument presented here, one must understand how this article utilizes the word “freedom” in the context of bondage. Freedom, or “the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint” (Oxforddictionaries.com 2020), must be considered broadly. One can be free from someone or something, tangible or otherwise. This article will sometimes refer to “freedom” in its literal sense, as the “absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or acting” (Merriam-Webster.com 2020), or as “liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another” (Merriam-Webster.com 2020). However, in understanding singing *as* freedom, one must also contextualize the definition within the constraints of enslavement, looking deeper than liberation or emancipation. Consider one’s freedom to think, freedom to express, freedom to imagine, freedom to hope, and, specific to this case, the freedom to believe in or work toward his/her own freedom (whether through the laws of the state, escape, or death). This article does not aim to re-imagine the enslaved person as free, as that would be an irresponsible projection, but rather it urges the recognition of singing as many sorts of freedoms for the un-free. Singing can be emotionally freeing or even be a gateway to literal freedom. Spirituals emphasized the people’s *consciousness* of freedom, which alone demonstrates a certain degree of agency, as it functions in direct opposition to the impositions of the master.

This perspective is grounded in what American feminist historian Stephanie Camp calls “the slave’s third body: a thing to be claimed and enjoyed, a site of pleasure and resistance...pride,

and self-expression” (2006, 67–68). The third body was a site of tension between the master and enslaved person, as one sought to destroy it and the other to maintain it. Camp contextualizes this body as a political entity and asserts that the people’s enjoyment of themselves through illicit gatherings and sensual pleasures, such as singing and dancing, was just as “politically loaded” as the master’s violence and exploitation. The politics of pleasure functioned “in opposition to slavery’s symbolic systems and economic imperatives” (Camp 2006, 68), establishing the mental and emotional release achieved through singing as a subversive act. The enslaved person’s third body, which reveled in the free expression of song, allowed him/her to re-contextualize the grief of today and anticipate a better tomorrow.

It is important to note that associating singing with “a site of pleasure” does not insist that singing was indicative of the person’s contentment in bondage, for the connection is much more complex. Previous scholars have helped to articulate this complexity, juxtaposing the pleasures of expression and resistance with the suffering and heartache suggested by the very need for that expression and resistance. Song was believed to have “raised low spirits, passed the time during tedious tasks...heightened group feeling, and afforded psychological escape from poor conditions” (Lippard and Gallagher 2014, 1150). This speaks to the positive impact of song, but does not suggest that singing reflected the enslaved person’s happiness. Authors of *Slave Songs of the United States* argue that spirituals were “the embodiment of the mental and physical anguish of a bruised race—the safety valve of their complaining and revolt against oppression” (Charters 2015, 285). Sirinides argues that “spirituals speak of suffering, but without bitterness; they speak of hope for a better life to come (1997, 3). While spirituals helped emphasize the brutalities of slavery, they offered escape from its realities.

African American abolitionist, writer, and former enslaved person Frederick Douglass also helped to articulate the complexity of slave spirituals in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). Douglass writes that these songs “breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish” (1845, 19). To those who interpret slave songs as evidence of the people’s contentment in bondage, Douglass explains that the songs “represent the sorrows of [the enslaved person’s] heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears” (1845, 20). Thus, people who sang were not joyous under the constraints of bondage, but rather their singing was positive insofar as it allowed them to vocalize their pain. As tears indicate the presence of sorrow while also having the capacity to assuage the crier, slave spirituals highlighted the sorrow of the people while also functioning as a vehicle of comfort.

Religious Origins

Spirituals spread throughout the American South from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries as enslaved people slowly adopted Christianity (Gomez 1998, 263). Distinct from the typical European Christian worship of earlier times, worship during the “revival” era featured antislavery content and undertones of various traditional African religious practices. Michael Gomez writes that the “revivalist experience” allowed people to “respond to the preaching of the gospel in a fashion that was entirely consistent with their roots in indigenous African religion” (1998, 252). The “emotionalism” that arose in the church post-Great Awakening was described as a “very African response to the divine” (Gomez 1998, 253). Worship was marked by dancing, jerking, singing, and shouting. Enslaved people also brought the ring shout, which was used during harvest festivals and ancestor worship in West and West-Central Africa, to their ceremonies in the American South (Gomez 1998, 226). For the ring shout, they would gather in the center of their worship space and shuffle around in a circle, jerking their bodies (Allen,

Garrison, and Ware 1867, xiv). Sometimes they would move silently, but they would most often “stand at the side of the room...singing the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on the knees” (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, xiv). Naturally, the songs born out of these moments contained meaningful religious messages and were filled with emotional language.

Throughout the 1790s, white Christians began to reject the antislavery ideals of the revival “and the rural African-based community was denied further access into formal and officially recognized Christendom” (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, 255). Masters attempted to convince enslaved individuals that their places in heaven were dependent upon their obedience to their masters on Earth (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 384). However, James Cone writes that people “rejected white distortions of the gospel” (1991, 33) and believed that God would “vindicate the suffering of the righteous blacks and punish the unrighteous whites for their wrongdoings” (1999, 19). The disconnect between the master’s use of the Bible to justify the existence and maintenance of slavery and many enslaved people’s use of the Bible to reject the institution created tensions that inspired resistance. The uprisings of Denmark Vessey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831 are prominent examples of enslaved people using their own interpretations of the Bible to justify their rejection of and uprising against slavery. In response to these shifts, masters forbade enslaved individuals the right to assemble without the surveillance of whites (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 257).

These attempts to police the religious practices of the enslaved community led to the creation of an invisible black church, characterized by its placement “in the woods and thickets and other clandestine places of the southern countryside” (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 263). Those who wished to pray and sing without the surveillance of the master had to host meetings in covert locations. Enslaved worshipers also established a tradition of “turning down the pot,” where they placed pots in the center of their gatherings to prevent the masters from hearing their voices. Scholars have explored the possibility of the iron pot having a spiritual significance, being rooted in African cultural practices, but this article references the iron pot strictly for its functional significance in muffling the echoes of worship. Harriet Cheatam, born in 1843 and enslaved in Gallatin, Tennessee, and interviewed in 1941, said that people would meet in their “quarters...[and they] would take the pots, turn them down, put something under them” so that their “voices would not go out and [they] could sing and pray to [their] heart’s desire.”² Former enslaved woman Chana Littlejohn said, “when we sang we turned down de washpots an’ tubs in de doors, so dey would take up de noise so de white folks could not hear us.”³ This phenomenon highlights the power of religious expression and importance of singing for this community, lending support to the idea of singing as freedom in two ways. First, enslaved people exercised a certain degree of agency simply by defying the master’s orders and singing out of their own desire. Second, they exercised freedom by clinging to sentiments that rejected the teachings of a white supremacist society. Although the official black church could easily be surveilled and marginalized, the invisible black church and “the less formal aspects of spirituality (that which can be found in music) could not” (Barker 2015, 369). Singing created “a space in which the hegemony of the White ruling class could be subverted, adapted, and resisted” (Barker 2015,

² Interview, 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 5, Indiana, 1941, p. 54, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.050/?sp=3>.

³ Interview by T. Pat Matthews, 26 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 1, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 56, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

363). It was part of a process through which the enslaved could reclaim their body and mind for themselves in a society that only recognized them as property.

Style and Content of Spirituals

The slave spiritual was distinct from European-style psalms and hymns in both style and content, and many of its components were derived from traditional African music (Sirinides 1997, 4). Traditional singing of the spirituals is described as “continuums of various group performances,” where, if heard separately, “might have seemed somewhat unmusical,” but that together produced “a bewitching effect” (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 382). In the absence of musical instruments, sways, tapping, and clapping helped people to maintain the rhythm (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 382).

The singers used blue notes, glissandos, growls, and polyrhythms, which are all heavily employed in African song. The traditional call-and-response pattern found predominately in African music (Sirinides 1997, 6) features the overlapping of leader and chorus, where the chorus repeats the words of the leader and maintains the rhythm and the leader subsequently uses ad-libs to decorate the song as s/he chooses (Tracy 1999, 23). Johnson and Johnson hold that the leaders of the groups that sang spirituals had to possess “a gift of melody...a strong voice, and a good memory” to lead members of the chorus in song (1925, 54).

Prominent literature of the nineteenth century helped articulate the broader society’s perception of the unique elements of slave spirituals and singing. The authors of *Slave Songs of the United States* suggested that black people had “a peculiar quality that nothing [could] imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper” (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, iv). In *Journal of a Residence of a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, notable white, British actress and author Frances Anne Kemble writes of the people’s high and unified voices, and the “admirable time and true accent with which their responses are made.” She also refers to slave singing as having “little skillful adaptation and instrumentation,” and as “barbaric” and “semi-savage” (Kemble 1961, 218). Other writers have pointed to “the odd turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect” of the songs (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, xi). Frederick Douglass called the tones “loud, long, and deep” and was fascinated by the choruses of words that many would call “unmeaning jargon,” but that were full of meaning to those who sang them (1845, 19). The ways in which both past and present-day writers describe this singing emphasizes its importance as a vehicle of resistance, as it is expressive and cannot easily be understood by those outside of the communities to which it belongs.

Analysis of Spiritual Lyrics

Spirituals highlighted enslaved persons’ longing for freedom, both within the context of legal emancipation and spiritual transcendence. They were critiques of social conditions, a “testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains” (Barker 2015, 26). A number of songs highlight the belief that bondage is in direct conflict with the teachings of the Bible (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 396). Many highlight Jesus’s capacity for protection and a yearning for a place in heaven after death. In some spirituals, the desire to go to heaven is directly related to one’s discontent with his/her pain and suffering on Earth.

“My Body Rock Long Fever,” said to be one of the most widely sung of all African hymns, speaks of an enslaved individual with a pain-ridden, feverish body (Allen, Garrison, and Ware

1867, 32). The speaker urges his brother and sister to be true believers, presumably in the Lord and in their destiny. S/he expresses his/her “wish” to be in the “kingdom” sitting alongside the Lord, who will offer comfort. With “de help ob de Lord,” the speaker can “rise up again”—physically into heaven and symbolically past the anguish of his/her current condition.

Wai’, my brudder, better true believer,
 Better true be long time get over crosses;
 Wai’, my sister, better true believe,
 An’ ‘e get up to heaven at last.

O my body’s racked wid de feveer,
 My head rac’d wid de pain I hab,
 I wish I was in de kingdoom,
 A-settin’ on de side ob de Lord.

By de help ob de Lord we rise again,
 O de Lord he comfort de sinner;
 By de help ob de Lord we rise up again,
 An’ we’ll get to heaven at last.

“Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” is a spiritual that was created during the slavery era, but not published until 1867 (BalladofAmerica.org). In the version of the song presented here, the speaker addresses the Lord, directly discussing his/her troubles and sorrow.

Nobody knows the trouble I’ve been through
 Nobody knows my sorrow
 Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen
 Glory hallelujah!
 Sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down
 Oh, yes, Lord
 Sometimes I’m almost to the ground
 Oh, yes, Lord
 Although you see me going ’long so
 Oh, yes, Lord
 I have my trials here below
 Oh, yes, Lord
 If you get there before I do
 Oh, yes, Lord
 Tell all-a my friends I’m coming to Heaven!
 Oh, yes, Lord

The speaker admits that, despite continuing forward each day or “going ’long so,” s/he faces trials that sometimes hurt his/her spirit. Nonetheless, the speaker makes clear his/her belief that heaven is his/her fate. The tone with which the speaker says “tell all-a my friends I’m coming to Heaven” is unclear. However, it seems as though heaven—and necessarily, death—is something

the speaker looks forward to as a direct response to his/her troubles on Earth. Heaven is the escape from the everyday ills of slavery.

Songs such as “Not Weary Yet” (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, 12) and “Steal Away to Jesus” (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 390) treat heaven as a destination that is inextricably linked to emancipation in an even more direct way. In “Not Weary Yet,” the speaker makes the connection between life on the plantation and his/her belonging in heaven.

O me no weary yet,
 O me no weary yet
 I Have a witness in my heart,
 O me no weary yet.
 Since I been in de field to fight.
 I have a heaven to maintain.
 De bond of faith are on my soul.
 Ole Satan toss a ball at me.
 Him tink de ball would hit my soul.
 De ball for hell and I for heaven.

The speaker proclaims that s/he is not yet weary from whatever hardships s/he may be experiencing on Earth. The lines “since I been in de field to fight/I have a heaven to maintain/de bond of faith are on my soul” suggest that s/he refuses to let life get him/her down because s/he has faith in the Lord and in his/her destiny. The song mentions Satan’s unsuccessful attempt to “toss a ball” at and harm his/her soul. The ball is “for hell” while s/he is “for heaven,” and therefore the ball is incapable of harming him/her because his/her faith in God is a protection. “I have been in the field to fight” potentially provides a dual meaning—as a literal reference to cotton fields, and a symbolic reference to the mental and emotional battleground where the enslaved individual has conquered the everyday brutalities of slavery. With this interpretation, one can see how God is regarded as a provider of both freedoms. The speaker seems to look toward heaven as something rightfully owed to him/her for his/her arduous life in bondage and due to a belief in Christ. S/he is not made unbearably weary by his/her condition yet because s/he knows that there is a place in heaven waiting for him/her.

In “Steal Away Jesus,” (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 390), the speaker claims that the Lord calls upon him/her, through the thunder and by the trumpets in his/her soul, to leave.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus!
 Steal away, steal away home, I ain’t got long to stay here.
 My Lord he calls me. He calls me by the thunder.
 The trumpets sound within my soul.
 I ain’t got long to stay here

This spiritual is believed to have a double meaning. It uses Jesus’s name to “mask an open and obvious invitation to the slaves to steal away to freedom” (Lawrence-McIntyre 1987, 390). Here, an escape to Jesus in heaven is conflated with an escape from bondage. The subsequent call to “steal away home” illustrates heaven as home and death as a return home. This importantly highlights the speaker’s belief in his/her ultimate belonging in heaven, which directly rejects the notion that enslaved people are soulless property.

“My Father How Long,” collected in Florida, is also said to have a double meaning:

My father, how long,
 My father, how long,
 My father how long,
 Poor sinner suffer here?

And it won't be long,
 And it won't be long,
 And it won't be long,
 Poor sinner suffer here.

We'll soon be free
 De Lord will call us home.

We'll walk de miry road
 Where pleasure never dies.

We'll walk de golden streets
 Of de New Jerusalem.

My brudders do sing
 De praises of de Lord.

We'll fight for liberty
 When de Lord will call us home.

The collectors of *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867) write that their informant, “the little drummer boy,” explained that the line “de Lord will call us home” is symbolic (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, 93). De Lord is code for “de *Yankees*,” who the enslaved people believed would mobilize to free them (Allen, Garrison, and Ware 1867, 93). There is a juxtaposition between the suffering that is “here” and “home...where pleasure never dies.” This song very clearly conflates freedom through emancipation and freedom in heaven.

Some songs played a direct role in leading enslaved people to freedom through their covert messages and directions. Spirituals that featured directions or warnings, sometimes referred to as map songs, helped people navigate the difficult and dangerous tasks associated with escape. Harriet Tubman (1820–1913) led individuals to freedom via the Underground Railroad between 1850 and 1860. According to the biography of American writer Sarah Hopkins Bradford, Tubman sang a number of songs before and during journeys to discreetly make her presence and intentions known (Bradford 1869; see also harriet-tubman.org). For example, spirituals such as “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” would indicate to enslaved individuals that the time to escape was approaching (harriet-tubman.org).

Swing low, sweet chariot,
 Coming for to carry me home,
 Swing low, sweet chariot,

Coming for to carry me home.
 I looked over Jordan and what did I see
 Coming for to carry me home,
 A band of angels coming after me,
 Coming for to carry me home.
 If you get there before I do,
 Coming for to carry me home,
 Tell all my friends that I’m coming, too.
 Coming for to carry me home.

The “sweet chariot” referred to the Underground Railroad that would soon take the people to freedom, or otherwise “carry [the enslaved person] home.” The song is rooted in religion, as it references the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized, along with angels. “Follow the Drinking Gourd” similarly helped people escape to freedom, but is said to have provided much more detailed instructions (followthedrinkinggourd.org).

When the Sun comes back
 And the first quail calls
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.
 For the old man is a-waiting for to carry you to freedom
 If you follow the Drinking Gourd.
 The riverbank makes a very good road.
 The dead trees will show you the way.
 Left foot, peg foot, traveling on,
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.
 The river ends between two hills
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.
 There’s another river on the other side
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.
 When the great big river meets the little river

“Follow the Drinking Gourd” offered directions and advice to those escaping to the North from Mobile, Alabama. Drinking gourds were used by enslaved people as water dippers and are code for the Big Dipper, which points to Polaris, or “The North Star.” “The dead trees will show you the way” refers to the fact that in the northern hemisphere, moss grows on the north side of the trees and can thus be used to point travelers in the right direction in the absence of the North Star.

Slave Narratives from The Federal Writers’ Project, 1936–1938

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from The Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938 contains over 2,300 personal accounts of former enslaved persons in the United States. In 1941, a set of the transcripts was put onto microfilm, and in 2000, the Library of Congress digitized them and made them accessible online. This section of the article utilizes parts 1 and 2 of Volume 11 of the project, which contain interview transcripts with former enslaved individuals from North Carolina. In these interviews, several men and women spoke of their relationship to and

experiences with spirituals on the plantation, and their responses highlight the roles of spirituals in resistance.

During an interview on May 27, 1937, Clay Bobbit of Raleigh, North Carolina, stated that he and the other individuals “ain’t had no pleasures ’less [we] runs away to habe ’em. Even when [we] sings we had ter turn down a pot in front of de do’ ter ketch de noise.”⁴ In this account, Bobbit’s use of the word “even” suggests that singing was one of the few pleasures they enjoyed. His account, like many others, refers to the aforementioned process of “turning down the pot,” where an iron pot would be turned upside down in the middle of a room to drown out the singing and keep their activities hidden from the master.

Another individual interviewed, Lizza Bakers, stated that enslaved blacks turned down the pots to kill the sounds of singing, but “once [the master] heard us, nex’ mornin’ dey took us and tore our backs to pieces.” The master would say “Are you free? What were you singing about freedom?”⁵ Her testimony, like Bobbit’s, emphasizes that singing was not permissible in the presence of white society. Furthermore, her response attests to the centrality of “freedom” in many of the spirituals. The use of violence as punishment for singing indicates the extent to which the master felt threatened by it. Singing of freedom challenged white supremacist culture and its teachings, supporting the claim that singing was a meaningful demonstration of slave resistance.

W. L. Bost, an interviewee from Asheville, North Carolina, provided further insight into the roles of religion, education, singing, and freedom in his community. He asserted that the “white folks feared for niggers to get any religion and education, but I reckon somethin’ inside jes told us about God and that there was a better place hereafter.”⁶ This attests to the aforementioned fact that the white population was opposed to enslaved persons practicing religion freely and developing their own relationship with God. Bost’s connection to God and his belief in a positive destiny are thus acts of subversion. While he does not specifically mention song here, his association of God with a “better place hereafter,” presumably heaven, highlights the connection between freedom and the religious expression he projects through spirituals. Bost went on in his interview to recount the times when he and others gathered in the woods behind a barn on the plantation, and how his mother “sing an’ pray to the Lord to deliver us out o’ slavery.” The song went something like:

we camp a while in the wilderness, in the wilderness, in the wilderness
we camp a while in the wilderness, where the Lord makes me happy
And then I’m goin home

In this song, the wilderness is painted as a place of comfort and happiness, and this happiness is related to the workings of the Lord. Without any further context, one cannot be sure of what exactly the singer means by “goin home.” It is possible that this simply refers to the travel back

⁴ Interview by Mary A. Hicks, 27 May 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 119, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

⁵ Interview by Ma Patt Matthews, 26 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 58, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

⁶ Interview by Marjorie Jones, 27 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 139, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

home after being out in the woods, but the song’s mention of the Lord introduces the possibility of home being heaven.

The last and perhaps most intriguing mention of song in the North Carolina Slave Narratives is from Fannie Moore of Asheville, North Carolina. Moore recounts in her interview how the master hated Moore’s mother because she fought him after he beat her children. One day, while in the field, Moore’s mother “stat’t singin’ an’ a shoutin’, an’ a whoopin’ an’ a hollowin.” When her master came and threatened to get the overseer to “cowhide [her] ole black back,” she replied, “De Lawd done told me I’s saved....I ain’t gwine grieve no more. No matter how much yo’ all done beat me an’ my chillun de Lawd will show me de way. An’ someday we nevah be slaves.” She gets whipped across the back for her response, but she does not yell. She “jes go back to de fiel a singin.”⁷ Although an outsider cannot fully project meaning onto Moore’s internal processes, this story draws an important connection between singing and freedom. Drawing again from Camp’s theory of the third body, Moore’s mother’s enjoyment of the sensual pleasure of making sound is an act of resistance. She began to sing when she became overtaken by the realization that God would someday free her and her children from bondage. After being whipped, she did not cry, but sang instead. While more abstract than previous examples, Moore’s story makes a meaningful connection between freedom and song.

Conclusion

The institution of slavery was dependent upon control of human beings. Generations of families and businesses taking part in slavery could only profit from the system insofar as the enslaved person was repressed physically, mentally, and emotionally. The plantocracy rejected all expressions of free movement, sound, and thought because they had the potential to destabilize the politics of containment on which white supremacy thrived. This article has attempted to articulate the ways in which slave spirituals reflected and maintained people’s consciousness of freedom, despite the notion and practice being forbidden by the master. Any song that allowed the enslaved individual to express pain, suffering, loss, longing, joy, and an outlook toward freedom helped to free the un-free. In speaking of singing spirituals as an enslaved person’s exercise of freedom or autonomy, this article does not attempt to discern how the enslaved internally processed their experiences, but rather it aims to show how the very nature of free expression was subversive in itself and undermined the institution.

Although this article has centered the stories and expressions of those who experienced African-descended chattel slavery, its foundational ideas can be useful for further research on the intersections of race, religion, surveillance, and song. Grounded in the main arguments of this work is the idea that the resistance of marginalized bodies has many different faces. Black people have a long and rich history of creating spaces of counterculture where they can express themselves freely, much like the ones enslaved people created for themselves. The selected testimonies from the Federal Writers’ Project tell singular stories of surveillance and subversion that can be applied to black American culture on a larger scale and well past the Civil War era.

As state-sanctioned slavery and racialized violence takes a different shape and mechanisms of surveillance become more modernized and expansive, it is worth considering that the tradition of “turning down the pot” is very much still metaphorically alive in marginalized communities

⁷ Interview by Marjorie Jones, 21 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 127, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

today. This research also begs consideration of how black people in the United States, many of whom are descendants of those who turned down the pots on their masters’ plantations, utilize music and singing as a means of expression. One question to explore is whether there exists a genre of black music today that plays a role similar to that of the spiritual in communities of enslaved persons in the past. Contemporary scholarship can benefit from further discussions on black expression as a vehicle of black resistance. The argument presented in this article is one small, foundational piece of that conversation.

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Out of the Belly Shall Flow Rivers of Truth: Food as an Analytical Lens into Slavery in Nineteenth-Century North Carolina

Sierra Marie Vines

ABSTRACT

How can one gather new understandings of the experience of enslaved peoples without locating new historical archival documentation? The dilemma is not resolved through the discovery of new sources, but instead addressed by viewing those same sources with a new lens, a food lens. Food, whether it be in terms of the diet, its distribution, or in the body itself, has the power to control and inspire. This research uses food to illuminate the experiences of the enslaved as recorded in their own narratives in North Carolina during the late nineteenth century. Through the voices of the people themselves, it was discovered that food was not just a source of pain or control; it also inspired resistance, community building, and black culture. The breast milk of enslaved mothers was viewed as a source of nourishment for their children, yet also a window to introduce racial inferiority to black children. The growing and stealing of food was a method for black men to reclaim their masculinity and for the enslaved to resist their subjugation. Food contextualized the hierarchies of relationships within North Carolina during the period under study. Slave owners used food as a mechanism of both punishment and reward, while the enslaved used food to aid runaways and to foster community. The cultural significance of food and its consequential health associations within slavery have implications for the present. Thus, food became a medium through which enslaved people spoke their truth, allowing for a new perspective on nineteenth-century North Carolina history and later times.

Keywords: slave resistance, slave narratives, North Carolina, food, slave diet

Introduction

Are there any new and novel ways to think about the experiences of enslaved peoples in North Carolina during the nineteenth century? To begin answering this question, one must navigate through the multiple relationships between enslaved individuals and their masters that were defined by hierarchies, punishments, and rewards within southern society. The intricacies of gender, family, culture, and resistance, and the dichotomies between the psychological and the physical must also be touched upon to comprehend the human experience within the context of slavery. At first glance, an impossible task appears to arise due to the multi-dimensional experience of a person enslaved. The answer to the original question set forth above begins on the ground and ends in the stomach. Food is necessary to survival, and thus the power it holds physiologically can be understood; however, the emotional, mental, and cultural implications of food are equally important. Food, whether it be in terms of the diet, its distribution, or the body itself, has the power to control and inspire. And who better to inform this journey into the slave society than through those individuals who experienced it first hand? Therefore, this article will

analyze slave narratives using food as a theoretical framework. An analysis of slavery from a food vantage point reveals the horrors of black oppression, the building of the black family, complexities of black health, and the creation of black culture, all while showcasing the people's humanity, despite their oppressors' tactics of control within nineteenth-century North Carolina.

Looking into the Slave as an Individual

For many of the enslaved people in North Carolina, the scheduling of their day revolved around food, following what is called an "agricultural clock and calendar" (Allen and Jewett 2004, 194). The time that most individuals arose for work in the morning, the amount of time they spent toiling in the fields, and their sleeping schedule all depended upon the planting, harvesting, and processing of food in each cycle of the agricultural year (Allen and Jewett 2004, 194). The enslaved person's daily activity was controlled by food, as many plantations produced food as one of their main sources of income or grew food, such as corn, for local consumption (Hilliard 2014, 125). Therefore, the structuring of an enslaved individual's life was regulated by food and this same form of food regulation was also applied to their physical body.

The meticulous control over the food produced by the bodies of enslaved black mothers illustrates the psychological and physical oppression they endured. Harriet Jacobs, a woman enslaved in Edenton, North Carolina, told of her family history in her autobiography. Jacobs recounted that her mother and her mother's mistress were both "nourished by [her] grandmother's breast....[I]n fact [her] mother had been weaned...[so] that the babe of the mistress might obtain sufficient food" (Jacobs 2000, 9). Black women being forced to nurse children that were not their own was not uncommon, and Jacob's narrative shows that from birth, black children went without so that white children could have more. Martha Allen, a former enslaved individual from Raleigh interviewed by the Federal Writers' Project, stated that black mothers would "stick de babies in at de kitchen do' on dere way ter de fields" so that the enslaved cooks could breastfeed their babies while they worked.¹ Recognizing that food was important for nourishment, enslaved mothers navigated within the confines of an oppressive system in order to ensure their children were fed, which demonstrated resilience. In spite of their efforts, a forced gap between black mothers and their children emerged out of the suppression of their sharing of food. Moreover, the utilization of the domestic worker within the slave society as a source of food had greater implications than simply their supplying of breast milk.

The enslaved domestic workers' ability to eat the leftover food of their masters, their access to quality food, and their duty to prepare food to the master's liking positioned them uniquely within North Carolina slavery (Blassingame 1979, 250–51). Charlie Barbour, an ex-enslaved individual born in 1851 in Smithfield, recalled that his mother was a cook in the master's house and that she would "sneak [him] a cookie or a cobbler an' fruits."² In this instance, stealing food from the master's house was a mechanism that domestic workers used to show affection and care for others, and was in fact another form of resistance. Many historians suggest that a hierarchy was established among the enslaved working in the house versus the field, and that the differential access to food between the two types highlighted a kind of class division

¹ Interview with Martha Allen, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 14, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

² Interview with Charlie Barbour, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 77, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

(Blassingame 1979, 251). Enslaved persons working in the house experienced more instances of abuse due to situations involving food; for example, if the master did not like the food prepared, they were often punished physically (Covey and Eissach 2009, 54). An individual from Blue Wing, North Carolina, shared with an interviewer a story about another person who was whipped by the master because she burned his biscuits.³ Thus, the role of females in feeding their families as well as their masters' families placed a lot of pressure on them, notably in ways that were very different from the experiences of enslaved men.

As a method of regaining status within the black family, enslaved men, when given the option of hunting, fishing, or gardening, often did it with zeal, because the ability to provide food was an expression of authority and manhood (Blassingame 1979, 179). Louisa Adams, born in the 1850s in Richmond County, recollected that her family was allowed to keep a garden and hunt for game in order to supplement their meals, yet the food was still not sufficient.⁴ However, Ms. Adams's father, she said, "raised his chilluns on game....He would work all day and hunt at night."⁵ The provision of food was an entry point for black men to gain respect from the men around them and "lead their wives" (Blassingame, 1979, 179). Although Ms. Adams's father did "back-breaking" work during the day, he decided to hunt in order to feed his children. Following the historian Blassingame's (1979) thought process, perhaps this was a way to reclaim his identity as a man. The intricacies of the family life of enslaved persons and the contrasting gender roles are illuminated through the lens of food and can be even more instructive when analyzing the lives of the children.

Children had a different relationship to food. The diet of an enslaved child was distinct from that of an enslaved adult and this could affect their perception of slavery as a whole, sometimes in a way that showcases a structured and generational servitude that characterized a slave society. On some plantations, for children, eating took a ritualized form.⁶ For example, every Sunday on a plantation in Raleigh, the children had to go to the big house to eat and had to be "bathed, dressed" and have "their hair combed."⁷ The spectacle was meant more for the slave masters than for the benefit of the enslaved children. Providing these young people with food was one thing, but to make them get dressed up for it as an occasion suggested that eating in the company of whites was a luxury. According to Ms. Anderson, also from this plantation, the owners "believed in giving the slaves plenty of fruit, especially the children."⁸ The practice of ensuring that the next generation of the enslaved was properly nourished did not result from slave masters having softened their hearts toward black children. Instead, it stemmed from the assumption that if children were fed well at a young age, their survival rate would increase significantly (Vlack 1993, 120). This is why Ms. Anderson's master had doctors present every Sunday at these dinners to help ensure the health of the next generation of the enslaved.⁹ As a child within this system, Mary Anderson did not comprehend the totality of what happened to

³ Interview with Travis Jordan, 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 45, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

⁴ Interview with Louisa Adams, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 2, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ Interview with Mary Anderson, 23 August 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 21, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

her. She ended up believing that slavery was good; this is important because it reveals the limitations of narratives as a source of data that reflects the entire scope of black experience.¹⁰ Aware of her limitations, she said, “I think slavery was a mighty good thing...but I can only speak for those whose conditions I have known during slavery and since.”¹¹ Nonetheless, Ms. Anderson’s story reveals the psychological impact that occurred due to the presence or absence of food among the enslaved.

Looking into the Slave Master

Slave masters used positive reinforcement, a form of psychological control, by rewarding the people with food for adhering to their established rules and regulations. Moreover, they used food to create a system of surveillance in which some enslaved individuals looked for opportunities to inform on others to keep their masters abreast of any news they might find useful. This phenomenon can be seen in the account of Blount Baker, an ex-enslaved individual from Wilson, who told his master that a patrolman coerced him into stealing a belt so that he might go see his lover in another plantation, then beat him later for doing so.¹² The master in return gave the “honest slave” a possum to eat that Mr. Baker expressed “wuz shore good.”¹³ The master was able to use food as an incentive due to its scarcity. If the enslaved had enough food to sustain themselves, then being given food would not have motivated them to betray the trust of another of the enslaved or help their master in any manner. The power dynamic between the master and the enslaved individual was thus made all the more uneven by the master’s control of nourishment.

Access to food was a cornerstone of the material inequality between masters and enslaved persons. The very nature of handing out a set amount of rations to another human being, despite their requests or need for more, highlights the oppressive power that food had over the people enslaved (Blassingame 1979, 179). Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese noted in her study of the plantation household that the mistress was in charge of the distribution of food for her family, and that only occasionally would she involve herself in the rationing of food for the enslaved on the plantation (Fox-Genovese 1988, 102). The reason being was that the “master usually preferred to distribute the slave’s rations himself, thereby demonstrating his role as provider and source of all largesse” (Fox-Genovese 1988, 102). There was a distinct difference in the roles of the female slave master, often referred to as the mistress, and her male counterpart, the master. Bob Jones, an ex-enslaved person from Raleigh, commented on this difference and noted how the master was nicer than the mistress, because she would often beat the enslaved individuals who worked in the home based on her attitude.¹⁴ Having seen how the power of food defined relationships between themselves and their masters, while defining the difference between master and mistress, the enslaved people often graded the kindness of their masters on how well they were fed.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview with Blount Baker, 10 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 64, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Interview with Bob Jones, 17 August 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 24, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

Throughout the interviews, formerly enslaved individuals equated how “good” or “bad” their masters were based on the amount of food they were given or the freedom to obtain food for themselves. Bill Cump and Richard Moring, both from Raleigh, spoke well of their masters, but also mentioned that they were allowed to raise animals, had enough to eat, and were able to grow food from a garden (Cump 1941, 208; Moring 1941, 139). They were enslaved on separate plantations, but both Mr. Cump and Mr. Moring shared the similar ideology that plentiful food correlated with having a good master. On the other side of the spectrum, when interviewees spoke about the cruelties of their masters, this was often followed by them disclosing that they did not have enough food. Jacob Manson, an ex-enslaved person also from Raleigh, told his interviewer, right after he spoke of the whippings that he had witnessed, not only about the enslaved people being hungry, but also that they “was fed outen trough,” meaning a large container used for animal feeding.¹⁵ The fact that all three men were from the same area, yet had completely different experiences, illustrates that there was not a set system for feeding enslaved people within a certain area; it often depended upon what the master decided. However, among slave masters themselves, food was sometimes used to judge their character.

In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass eloquently captures the extent to which masters judged each other in Maryland based upon whether they gave the enslaved people enough to eat (Douglass 1968, 35). He states, “every city slave holder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well,” demonstrating this social ranking amongst slaveholders, which revolved around food (Douglass, 1968, 35). This judgment system based upon the distribution of food also existed among slave masters in North Carolina. Isaac Johnson, an ex-enslaved person from Lillington, did not have poor quality food; in fact, he recalled that he had enough to eat.¹⁶ However, Mr. Johnson shared that because his master provided his people with such quality food, “other white folks said he loved a nigger more den he did white folks.”¹⁷ This obvious utilization of food as a mechanism of comparison within the social context of slave masters illuminates the usefulness of food as a lens into one aspect of slavery as well as the enslaved people’s experience.

Looking into Resistance and Punishment

An obvious form of resistance that enslaved individuals partook in was the stealing of food from their masters (Vlach 1993, 122). Slavery was built upon the premise of using someone else’s labor to receive the benefits of that labor, while denying the individual actually doing the labor any gain. Many North Carolina interviews touched on instances in which the enslaved persons stole food. Such practices were so common that an ex-enslaved individual from Raleigh stated that she believed that the habit of stealing in order to prevent starvation was a trait that was passed down generationally.¹⁸ There was even a song that was created and sung by the enslaved to denote how often they stole: “Some folks says a nigger wont steal, I caught six in my corn

¹⁵ Interview with Jacob Manson, no date available, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 96, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

¹⁶ Interview with Isaac Johnson, no date available, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 30, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with Louisa Adams, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 2, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

field. Run nigger run, the patteroller ketch you, Run nigger run like you did the other day.”¹⁹ This learned practice of stealing food not only demonstrates the relative scarcity of food, but also the daily forms of resistance that were present amongst the enslaved. However, there was a danger to stealing food as addressed in the song, and the master’s retaliation for the act was one of the mechanisms used to maintain black subjugation and obedience.

The punishments that the enslaved experienced while attempting to feed themselves were often cruel, yet the people fought back by using food to build relationships. Harriet Jacobs told of an individual that she knew who, having stolen “a pig from his master, to appease his hunger,” was beaten so badly that he ran away and only returned because he assumed he was dying from the severity of his wounds (Jacobs 2000, 52). Jacobs herself was punished for attempting to stop at her grandmother’s house to get food while on her way to the fields, Her grandmother, “to avoid detaining [her], often stood at the gate with something for [her] breakfast or dinner” (Jacobs 2000, 13). Masters inflicted physical harm on those who were already trying to relieve themselves of the pangs of hunger, but in doing so they not only strengthened the bond between the enslaved people but provided them with an avenue of support through the sharing of food.

Stephanie M. H. Camp’s work discusses the idea of truancy, in which enslaved people hid in the woods to escape their masters for a short duration of time. While the truants were absent, others would leave food in secret places to aid them (Camp 2004, 84). This act of communal resistance was also present within North Carolina. Charles Manly served as governor from 1849–1851, and his son Basil Manly was later elected mayor of Raleigh (Cartledge and Von Storch, n.d). Bertcha Lane worked for this elite family as the maid for Caroline Manly, the wife of Basil Manly, and at one point ran off into the woods for three weeks because she believed that Caroline was going to kill her (Camp 2004, 48). Ms. Lane was beaten randomly and for no apparent reason.²⁰ It is clear that Bertcha’s family as well as other enslaved individuals around her knew that she was being treated unfairly, because when Governor Manly asked them for Bertcha’s whereabouts they did not disclose any information. According to an interview with Bertcha’s daughter, “niggers on different plantations fed [Bertcha] by carrying things to certain places and hidin’ places” to support Bertcha’s truancy.²¹ It was not until Governor Manly promised Bertcha’s safety upon her return that she came out from hiding, showcasing the leverage that some of the enslaved used to advocate for themselves in a system built for their suppression.²² In light of this, we can conclude that food not only gave the people the means to perform acts of truancy, which they used in pursuit of better treatment, but provided the enslaved community members with a mechanism to stand in solidarity with each other through collective resistance.

One way that slave masters sought to incentivize the enslaved to continue the laborious tasks of their bondage rather than resist was with a form of food-based entertainment called candy-pullings. Candy-pullings were an uncommon treat for the people. This was an activity where two people would “stick their hand in lard...then dip their hands in [cane] syrup...and take it out to cool,” before enjoying the sugary dessert (Covey and Eisnach 2004, 184). The food product cane

¹⁹ Interview with John C. Bectom, 1 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 95, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

²⁰ Interview with Hannah Plummer, no date available, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 180, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²² *Ibid.*, 182.

was not native to North Carolinian soil, so many slave masters paid money for a shipment of cane to their plantation so their enslaved people could partake in this recreational activity (Covey and Eisnach 2004, 184). Cornelia Andrews recalled in an interview that her master had candy-pullings for the enslaved once a year, even though she noted that they did not “raise no cain” on their plantation.²³ Many other ex-enslaved individuals from North Carolina also decided to include their memories of candy-pullings in their interviews. The rarity of this form of entertainment, coupled with the fact that masters supervised and orchestrated its parameters, suggests that this event was to placate the enslaved rather than reward them for good behavior. However, could this qualify as true entertainment since it was controlled by privileged individuals who inflicted pain and anguish daily? In seeking autonomy from the uncertainties of bondage, some of the enslaved community members initiated their own events to express their joy with food and dancing, while others made use of the space they were allotted by their masters to entertain themselves through food.

Looking into Slave Culture

While the preparation and sharing of food among the enslaved during festivities cultivated a sense of black community, it was also yet another setting for masters to promote psychological acquiescence to enslavement. Among the secret signals that informed the people of a potential secret gathering, enslaved women would go off into the woods “in order to cook in secret” in preparation for the late-night festivities (Camp 2004, 49). The joy that enraptured the people as they danced at these secret social gatherings, freed from the watchful eyes of their masters, fostered black community, and cooking was foundational to these events (Rawick 1972, 71). John Bectom, an ex-enslaved individual from Fayetteville, noted that his masters did not allow them to attend dances, but some of the people “slipped off to the unknowin’s.”²⁴ Therefore, the presence of secret gatherings within North Carolina for the purpose of uncensored entertainment was “especially important to [slaves]” (Blassingame 1979, 106). Many slave masters did not allow their enslaved to engage in these community-cultivating activities, not only because the food that was prepared was usually stolen, but because it exposed people to a feeling that masters could not control: unity. For example, Charlie Barbour’s master, after allowing his enslaved people to have a feast and a dance, thanked them for their work and said that they were “good, smart slaves.”²⁵ Thus, food, having the power to unite and build community, was also used to control and encourage blacks to be faithful enslaved individuals.

The celebration of holidays like Christmas were joyous from the enslaved community’s perspective because of the amount and type of food that they were provided. The religious undertones of Christmas were not the main messages throughout the slave narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project interviews in North Carolina, yet the large feasts prepared by masters for the entire plantation marked this day as a holiday.²⁶ Julius Nelson, an ex-enslaved person

²³ Interview with Cornelia Andrews, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 28, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

²⁴ Interview with John C. Bectom, no date available, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 93, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

²⁵ Interview with Charlie Barbour, 7 June 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter, 1936, p. 74, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>.

²⁶ Interview with Richard Rountree, no date available, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 233, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

from Raleigh, recounted that he and others would serenade their masters and receive fruits and bags of candy.²⁷ Mr. Nelson's account was common, and many historians note that, around this season, often plantation owners made feasts for their enslaved people that included "whole hogs, cooked sheep, peach cobbler and apple dumplings and alcohol" (Blassingame 1979, 107). If this type of food made community members like Julius think that holidays were "happy times" because of the variety and quantity of food available, it is necessary to pursue a deeper understanding of what types of food made up the diet of the enslaved people in North Carolina.²⁸

The average diet of the enslaved in North Carolina, although grossly limited, revealed the cultural significance of food, since "slave food" became understood as southern food. Anna Wright of Wendell encapsulated this metamorphosis by asking her interviewer, "Does you know de old southern way of makin' baked chicken dressin'?"²⁹ The ingenuity that the enslaved used to not only cook their food, but to utilize unpopular food defined southern culture over time (Covery and Eisnach 2004, 4). The usual diet provided by the masters consisted of "cornmeal, side-bacon and molasses" (Rawick 1972, 68). However, from the time of their arrival to America, enslaved people were "preparing savory stews and rice dishes for their owners quite unlike the lightly seasoned English dishes they had known" (Blassingame 1979, 103). The food metamorphosis began as an extension of African culture, yet as time progressed the circumstances of slavery for blacks produced a new southern food culture. However, there is no escaping the "fundamental fact that whites had greater opportunity to vary their diets" (Hilliard 2014, 52), and the repercussion of blacks not having a well-rounded diet negatively impacted their health.

Looking into Health and Medicine

The complex issue of the North Carolina slave diet was not simply a matter of the low quantity of food; the diet did not meet nutritional requirements consistent with the people's labor-intensive work schedules (Dunaway 2003, 106). On plantations that had less than ten enslaved individuals, the masters were economically unable to provide them with produce that was not self-grown (Dunaway 2003, 106). In rare cases in which whites and blacks were fed the same meals, usually on small plantations and farms, the enslaved people still suffered from malnutrition because their intense physical labor required a nutritional variety that was nonexistent (Dunaway 2003, 106). In Julius Nelson's interview, he shared that the enslaved had "Ashe cakes for supper and breakfast" and "De smart nigger et a heap o' possums an' coons."³⁰ In order to survive, the people could not rely on what their masters gave them and thus had to rely on hunting, stealing, and growing food in a garden. Some were only able to consume food that was of poor nutritional value, being that some masters only let their people eat fruit when it had fallen from the tree and was already rotten (Dunaway 2003, 105). Insofar as the enslaved ate a lot of pork and corn, they developed pellagra from a lack of niacin (Clay, Schmick, and

²⁷ Interview with Julius Nelson, no date available, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 145, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Interview with Anna Wright, 17 August 1937, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 423, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

³⁰ Interview with Julius Nelson, no date available, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 145, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

Troesken 2019). Also, some developed scurvy from a lack of fruit, and others suffered from rickets caused by a vitamin D deficiency (Dunaway 2003, 105).

Rather than accept the health impediments that slave masters inflicted on them, enslaved blacks utilized food as a source of medicine. There were apparently two methods of obtaining healthcare while laboring under slavery in nineteenth-century North Carolina. One ex-enslaved individual from Raleigh described it best in her interview, stating, “When we got sick you sees we stayed with the doctor, he looked after us, but we had our herbs too” (Lassiter 1941, 41). The level of distrust in doctors to adequately treat slave-specific illnesses increased the people’s preference for traditional healing mechanisms, and sometimes the successes of those alternative healing practices were persuasive in and of themselves (Schwartz 2006, 62). Slave masters also grew medicinal herbs in their gardens, but the enslaved blended the medicine that they learned about from the doctors with traditional remedies, using any resources they had (Schwartz 2006, 62). Fannie Moore, an interviewee from Asheville, gave a detailed account of the medicines her grandmother made to cure colds, fevers, stomach aches, and colic in babies, using plants including sassafras, cabbage leaves, snakeroot, and rat veins, respectively.³¹ This role of healer was not limited to the female enslaved, as George Rogers spoke of an “old colored man” who doctored the children, giving them “roots and herbs.”³² The genius of many of the enslaved in transforming food into medicinal treatment for themselves not only demonstrates their ability to adapt, but also their intelligence in the cultivation of food for their health. The reverberations of the ingenuity of enslaved blacks were not limited to this specific time in history, but indeed continue to affect the present day.

Looking into the Present

Contemporary African Americans, many of whom are descendants of enslaved blacks, continue to construct social systems representative of their culture, while coping with discrimination. The popularity of soul food and the health issues associated with black populations are uncovered by an analysis of how food is contextualized in their lives. Fried chicken, collard greens, candied yams, pig’s feet, and peach cobbler are just a few of the dishes that characterize the African American food experience, and are best known by the colloquial term *soul food*. This specific terminology characterizing this type of food emerged during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s as a means to connect blacks dispersed throughout America to their cultural roots (Penrice 2018). Although food was able to foster cultural unity among African Americans, it has also been responsible for disproportional incidences of chronic illness. Blacks in America are prone to developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity at higher rates than their white counterparts (Satia 2010). The reason for this occurrence has roots in slavery, being that enslaved people received poor nutritional content that erupted in illness, similar to the numerous present-day blacks that live in obesogenic environments that limit their access to healthy food (Dunaway 2003, 101; Lovasi, Huston, Guerra, and Neckerman 2009). Thus, analyzing food in present-day America reveals the continued health disparities that have traversed generations of African

³¹ Interview with Fannie Moore, 27 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 134–35, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

³² Interview with George Rogers, 27 September 1937, Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. II, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, p. 223, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/>.

Americans. However, there are many initiatives that have been undertaken by blacks to take control over their health and channel empowerment from food, rather than accept illness, as witnessed in community outreach programs that provide resources and information.

Conclusion

The insight that food has provided into the complex lives of enslaved people in North Carolina during the nineteenth century describes but a microcosm of what enslaved blacks experienced throughout America during the antebellum period. Food was not only a route to physical health, but a source of control for the slaveholders, as well as a source of inspiration for blacks to be creative enough to meet their needs, build relationships, and resist their oppressors. According to George Rawick, interviews with those formerly enslaved “enable us to see maltreatment of the slaves within the context of the total life of the slaves who, while oppressed and exploited, were not turned into brutalized victims, but found enough social living space to allow them to survive as whole human beings” (Rawick 1972, 55). Thus, using food as an analytical lens into the experiences of enslaved people helps retain the humanity of blacks in terms of their handling of oppression, building of social structures, and creation of cultural traditions. The same challenges that many blacks face in America today in being innovative, having families, experiencing joy, and benefiting from good health in the midst of an inherently racist society can also be understood through the lens of food. In attempting to understand how a person navigates through society, looking at what they eat can reveal many truths.

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The Militarization of Police in Favelas: Effects of an Underlying Authoritarian Regime on the Brazilian Political System

Elondra Harr

ABSTRACT

In Brazil, the political system has had a major influence on Brazilian culture and social norms. In order to address Brazilian racism, it is necessary to analyze the institutions in which racism is allowed to prevail, including political systems/state apparatus. While the official military regime is said to be over, it should be noted that the military regime never completely disappeared; rather it became “invisible” due to Brazil’s government perpetuating the belief the country is a “racial paradise.” Despite this, the prevalence of the military regime is still recognized in Afro-Brazilian communities through the physical presence of the military police. The residue of the official military regime in Brazil’s history has trickled down to affect Afro-Brazilian citizens today at the local level with the militarization of policing practices in favelas, predominantly Afro-Brazilian urban communities. This article will examine the aftermath of Brazil’s authoritarian regime from the 1960s to 1980s, and its effects in creating racialized practices of “protecting the state” via the militarization of police in Afro-Brazilian favelas.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian, authoritarianism, democracy, police brutality, favelas, racism, necropolitics

Introduction

On January 1, 2019, Jair Bolsonaro was inaugurated as president of Brazil, resulting in the government’s drastic shift toward right-wing ideology and policies. This threatened the progressive turn that Brazilian society had begun to make with former leftist presidents such as Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva (2003–2010) and Dilma Rouseff (2011–2016). President Bolsonaro did not shy away from making misogynist, homophobic, and racist remarks throughout his campaign and the first year of his presidency. He also gained support from other right-wing leaders across the globe, including US President Donald Trump (Lempp 2019). Prior to his presidential election, Bolsonaro regularly praised Brazil’s previous authoritarian regime of 1964–1985 and aligned himself with political ideologies that reflected this, including the idea that Brazil is a “racial democracy,” as well as the notion that Brazil should be recognized as a “mestizo (mixed-race) nation” (Lempp 2019, 3).

Although Afro-Brazilians make up the majority of the population in Brazil, they are significantly impacted by racial democracy ideology and authoritarian regimes, which cause many issues that affect this particular group, such as police brutality, to be ignored by many right-wing Brazilian elites such as Bolsonaro. The idea of racial democracy suggests that Brazil is a “paradise” where races have been blended via miscegenation and interracial relationships to the point that all Brazilians belong to a mixed race, and therefore racial inequality, and largely,

social inequality, do not exist. Racial democracy ideology perpetuates the notion that racial groups should assimilate to become a singular Brazilian race in order to be integrated into society, which would supposedly lead to amicable race relations. However, assimilation strategies are often coercive and significantly onerous in relation to non-white racial groups such as Afro-Brazilians, essentially sweeping issues that specifically affect them under the rug.

As demonstrated by Brazil's current right-wing turn, authoritarianism has not yet been eradicated. After the 1964 coup, Brazil became a military regime run by right-wing elites, who continuously used repressive strategies to control the general public and stay in power. In 2019, President Bolsonaro signed into law an anti-crime bill that expanded Brazil's penal code to place an emphasis on tackling organized crime, such as drug gangs (Mello 2019). However, many critics of the bill fear that this will actually lead to an increase in police violence against civilians. In an illustrative case, a woman received a call on May 17, 2019 from a family member stating that there had "been an accident with Brayan," her nephew whom she had been taking care of (Stargardter 2019). Once she arrived at the scene in the Rio favela where she and her family lived, she found her 19-year-old nephew lying in the street, shot dead. This scene was near a street stall where a police drug raid had just taken place. Police found no evidence that Brayan had been involved in any illegal activity and concluded that he was killed by "being in the wrong place at the wrong time" (Stargardter 2019). New authoritarian anti-crime laws may result in more cases like Brayan's, where police forces enact violence in favelas using military-style practices.

Authoritative mechanisms have been hidden under notions of Brazil achieving racial harmony, marking the nation as a "racial paradise" while Afro-Brazilians continue to be disregarded as second-class citizens (Caldwell 2007, 3). Although many Brazilian elites claim to believe in the notion of racial democracy, a person's "blackness" is seen as a threat to right-wing notions of Brazil having achieved racial harmony through the unification of a singular, Brazilian race. This fiction essentially implies that characteristics of blackness should be "whitened" in order for Brazil to be united. This idea also insinuates that the needs of certain groups, such as Afro-Brazilians, are not factors that should be considered when developing a unified nation. The militarization of police and police brutality are interconnected and should not be thought of as separate issues. These acts of state-sanctioned police violence against Afro-Brazilians represent the continuing presence of authoritarianism in Brazil's political system. This article therefore examines the effects of a lasting presence of authoritarianism in the Brazilian state via racialized practices of police violence against Afro-Brazilians and militaristic practices of repressive policing in favelas.

The Authoritarian Regime and the Transition to Democracy

Brazil endured an authoritarian military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985. During this time, the military was allowed much more power and influence regarding policymaking and policy enforcement (Skidmore 1990, 15). The Brazilian military gained a foothold in essentially all realms of the Brazilian state. This occupation even included civil institutions such as local police forces. This style of political reign lasted for twenty-one years, until the democratic election of President José Sarney de Araújo Costa in 1985 (Skidmore 1990, 15). However, although Brazil had gained a duly elected president, it did not lose its military-style politics, which were now embedded within the Brazilian state.

When political systems undergo transition, an opening is created where old forms of politics can be eradicated or amended. However, such openings are rare and only infrequently lead to

true governmental and societal change. From 1985–1990, Brazil experienced an “abertura” period, in which its political system attempted to transition from the authoritarian military regime to a democracy (Rochon and Mitchell 1989, 307). During this time, the official military regime was declared to have come to an end, but the military and authoritarian elites manipulated this transition period to benefit themselves. They created an electoral process that enabled elections to appear to be democratic, but in fact allowed for elites to have control over Brazil’s electoral process (Rochon and Mitchell 1989, 308). For elites, the purpose of the abertura period was to create a system that resembled democracy to appease Brazilian citizens, but that still allowed them to maintain the power they had during the former authoritarian regime. Elites used this “transition opening” to further their agendas by using their high-status positions to perpetuate political practices that benefitted them the most. In this case, keeping democratic institutions in a frail state was the best way for elites to continue to hold authoritative power over the Brazilian state. These political arrangements were naturalized during this transition phase and continue to condition both current and future political systems and possibilities.

In a democratic society, representatives of the government serve as buffers between the state and civilian populations. For Afro-Brazilians, the exercise of state authority is manifested by the judiciary and the street-level behavior of police (Mitchell and Wood 1998, 1005), who are officially representatives of the Brazilian state. Policing practices that are enacted by civil and military police forces in favelas are essentially undemocratic, authoritarian methods of policing Afro-Brazilians. These mechanisms are inconsistent with a respect for the human rights of Afro-Brazilian citizens.

Afro-Brazilians and an Undemocratic Justice System

The ways in which the term “citizenship” is defined ultimately depend on what type of society and political community a country would like for its citizens to have (Mouffe 1992, 70). In an authoritarian military regime, power, which is determined by access to resources such as money, education, and political influence, is held solely by dictators and their immediate subordinates. In Brazil, many elites restrain access to political rights, thereby truncating the political power of Afro-Brazilians. This is accomplished by Brazilian elites having influence over governmental policies that hinder Afro-Brazilians’ representation in politics. Democratic citizenship differs in the sense that citizens are typically allowed to actively self-advocate for policies that will benefit them and their communities and promote equitable distribution of resources and power (Mouffe 1992, 71). This distinction contrasts with authoritarian subjugation, where government has a monopoly over the creation of policies that only serve to allow for autocratic leaders to maintain power and control over citizens. A democracy is intended to encompass a broader portion of the public, which assumes that there must be active participation of citizens in the distribution of resources (Mouffe 1992, 71). In this sense, citizenship is always being negotiated, as citizens participate in democratic practices to change their rights and obligations. This definition of citizenship has proven to be problematic for Afro-Brazilians, who are negatively affected by judicial and policing institutions. This continuous struggle for citizenship destabilizes power dynamics between Afro-Brazilians, as their citizenship powers are being stripped away, and those who are involved in taking their power, namely law enforcement and judicial institutions.

The realities of citizenship in Brazil are revealed in the discretionary prerogatives open to the criminal justice system, whose function changes depending on the skin color and social class of the individuals with which it interacts. In Brazil, the facts of a particular case are regarded as true or not based on the judge’s discretion in the courts. The judge must analyze the facts that the

police found within the context of the information gathered from the parties and circumstances involved. This situation can lead to mistreatment of defendants through ignoring the rights of the accused in order to protect the interests of the state (police institutions). According to Mitchell and Wood, the manner in which the “facts of the case” are determined in Brazilian courts results in a system where judges lend “substantial credence to the physical and emotional demeanor of the accused, making determinations that are highly responsive to the defendant’s comportment and appearance of truthfulness” (1998, 1007). Historically, Brazil’s legal system has been particularly biased against certain criminal defendants, usually the poor and nonwhites.

The ways in which the term “criminal” is defined depends largely on the desires and beliefs of Brazilian elites. As Caldeira (1996) states, “At the most general level, people of all classes stereotypically associate criminals with the poor, with black people, with migrants from the northeast of Brazil, with sons of single mothers, with consumers of drugs, with promiscuity, and with cortifos (tenements) and favelas (shantytowns)” (as quoted in Mitchell and Wood 1998, 1007). As blackness is seen as a threat to a unified white Brazilian nation, the term “criminal” is commonly associated with blackness and ultimately with Afro-Brazilians. This direct correlation between criminality and dark skin color leaves Afro-Brazilians vulnerable to official repression. Blackness, in other words, is seen as criminal, and this connotation renders Afro-Brazilians more susceptible to state-sanctioned acts of violence.

Policing Practices and Police Brutality

Brazilian police behavior is influenced by an authoritarian political framework that uses military tactics to control the public and employs symbolic and physical forms of violence to exert control over a particular population. Even after the creation of the new Brazilian Constitution of 1988, when “police forces came under the control of state governors (rather than the army), their internal structure, daily protocol, and relationship with civil society continued much the same” (Garmany 2014, 1242). Although Brazil returned to democracy in the late 1980s, the institutional practices established under the dictatorship, including its militaristic structure, officer training programs, and the freedom to act without accountability, have not yet been reformed.

On May 5, 2019, footage of current right-wing Rio governor Wilson Witzel circulated across Brazil, showing him riding in a police helicopter as it flew over a favela in the southern Rio de Janeiro city of Angra dos Reis, with the sound of gunfire in the background. In the video, Witzel states,

Hello people, we are starting today, in Angra dos Reis, along with the mayor Fernando Jordão, an operation, with CORE (Civil Police special forces), with the Military Police, and the Civil Police to end once and for all this banditry that is terrorizing our marvelous city of Angra do Reis. We are starting our operation today. We are ending this mess. We are going to put our house in order. Let’s go! (Mier 2019).

This incident displays a direct abuse of power and the interconnectedness of the military and state. The state uses military-style tactics in the form of policing practices to over-surveil and commit violent acts against Afro-Brazilians. Even in today’s supposed democratic Brazilian state, right-wing extremist governor Witzel and politicians like him use authoritarian tactics, through military and civil police forces, to perpetuate violence and racist narratives against Afro-Brazilians that serve to allow right-wing politicians such as themselves to maintain power.

This emergence of right-wing forces, including Bolsonaro's presidential candidacy and election, has sparked an increase in violence across Brazil, particularly against Afro-Brazilians, with civil and military police forces killing 5,144 people in 2017 (Roth 2019). These rates had increased about 20 percent since 2016 and reveal a trend in the rise of state violence in Brazil (Roth 2019). However, it should be noted that these numbers are based on reported statistical data. They do not account for the many unsolved murders and unreported cases of violence that are perpetuated against the Brazilian population by civil, military, and federal police forces.

There are three different sets of police forces in Brazil: civil police, military police, and the federal police force. Military police are responsible for patrolling and preserving order in public spaces, while civil police are charged with detective and criminal investigation work, and federal police look after "the nation's interests, serving as its judiciary police, controlling drug traffic, and guarding the frontiers" (Garmany 2014, 1242). Due to elite leaders of the Brazilian state's encouragement of military-style policing practices, some of the responsibilities and purposes of the three differing police forces have essentially melted together, causing abuses of power on the part of these forces. Afro-Brazilians are subjected to terror tactics in favelas, where civil police often invade looking for "suspected criminals." This approach is very similar to the military practices of soldiers looking for suspected enemies of the state during times of war. This militarization of policing practices causes police to "regard themselves as 'waging war' against criminals" (Mitchell and Wood 1998, 1007). This approach places a higher priority on eliminating the "criminal class" and a lower priority on protecting the rights of citizens (Mitchell and Wood 1998, 1007). State-perpetrated acts of terror serve to reiterate the authoritarian powers of Brazil's government and suppress political activism in Afro-Brazilian communities. As non-white racial narratives are seen as threats to Brazilian racial democracy, along with notions of economic and social inequality, authoritarian elites aim to exert political power and control in Afro-Brazilian communities to instill fear. The main motive for this continued racialized violence is to maintain political superiority and power over the nation.

Latin American police departments frequently lack adequate funding and resources to implement effective policing strategies. Consequently, this scarcity leads to aggressive policing, which quickly deteriorates into a repressive, militarized system of fighting crime (Dammert and Malone 2008, 37). There are varying styles of policing that the civil and military police forces use against Afro-Brazilians. One method of policing favelas involves "zero tolerance." In zero-tolerance strategies, which stress comprehensive, aggressive law enforcement with "no holds barred" (Dammert and Malone 2008, 38), police forces often fight crime with an extreme form of *mano duro* (iron fist): suspected criminals are severely sanctioned, sometimes extra-judicially. By way of this approach, state actors can hold suspects accountable for an alleged crime or offense and carry out punishment without legal process or supervision from the judicial system (Cotta et al. 2016). Punishment is often violent and results in an excessive use of force from state representatives like the military police force.

In contemporary Brazil, death squads often carry out target killings and other acts of violence. Death squads can be described as vigilante groups that either murder for hire or murder for their own interests, mainly stemming from right-wing notions of using physical violence to protect Brazilian citizens from organized crime and drugs, as well as other citizens who are deemed as threats by the state. They are formally separate from the Brazilian state, but members of these groups often are ex-police or military members, and in some cases even off-duty cops who act in their own interests. On September 19, 2007, residents of Bairro da Paz, a low-income neighborhood along Avenida Paralela in Salvador, discovered five young men shot to death in a

ravine, where four of the victims had had their necks tied together with rope. This scene was photographed and appeared on the front page of a local newspaper. At the scene of the crime, investigators found “shell casings exclusively used by the National Armed Forces of the government (*Forças Armadas*), and crack rocks in the victims’ pockets” (Smith 2013, 177). These murders were committed by death squads in order to display their power as vigilantes and their willingness to inflict extralegal penalties on Afro-Brazilians. Photos of the crime scenes and dead bodies circulated around surrounding areas, symbolizing a larger issue of police brutality and state violence in Brazil. Vigilantes imitate the actions of police officers who abuse power and assert authority over the poor and Afro-Brazilians, which serves to strengthen the Brazilian state’s authoritarian governance. The circulation of explicit photos depicting violence and death serves to perpetuate the notion of Afro-Brazilians being “foreign invaders” who hinder the idea of whitening the nation to achieve a “racial paradise” in Brazil. Vigilante groups such as death squads commit these acts of violence as a way to stop Afro-Brazilians from gaining power, as this would essentially dismantle the illusion of a racial paradise (Smith 2013, 178).

According to Christen Smith, “death squads are egregious examples of police related violence in Brazil and the hallmark of police brutality in Bahia” (2013, 179). Although death squads are not exclusively tied to the police, there is a correlation between the emergence of death squads and the excessive use of force by police officers who abuse their powers to assert authority over Afro-Brazilians. These patterns are linked to Brazil’s history of military dictatorship and the lingering legacy of the oppression of citizens through government abuses. Death squads are a physical and symbolic representation of the oppression and control of Afro-Brazilian people, which transforms them into objects, rather than subjects or citizens.

Smith (2013) has argued that the intentional positioning of dead black bodies in the Brazilian news and media is used to reinforce white supremacy through the practice of necropolitics. Drawing on the work of Achille Mbembe (2003), necropolitics can be defined as “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” (as quoted in Smith 2013, 182). The practice of necropolitics is a racialized and normalized practice that is being justified through policing institutions under the notion of “protecting the state,” while simultaneously negatively affecting marginalized groups like Afro-Brazilians. The torturing and disfiguring of racially “other” bodies, including displaying them spectacularly and circulating images of these scenes as keepsakes, represents the role that racial terror has played in defining Brazilian culture (Smith 2013, 182). According to Smith, “Scenes of police terror and death squad executions are intensely visible, deeply racialized, hyper-spectacles of violence” (2013, 182). Smith also argues that this institutionalized form of control and racism through police violence is becoming naturalized in Brazil. Due to this infliction of a kind of psychic violence, such practices and images become ingrained in the minds of Afro-Brazilians, working to perpetuate racism both physically and mentally. This observation suggests that Brazil’s claim of being a racial democracy with amicable race relations is fallacious.

Challenges to Police Reform

There are certain practices that allow for the conditions in which police are allowed to perform violent acts against Afro-Brazilians and maintain power. Some of these practices that demonstrate the continuity of racialized power in Brazil involve resistance acts, where Afro-Brazilians are essentially blamed for resisting authority; this leads to physical action from police, panoptic media framings of danger that depict Afro-Brazilians as dangerous and criminal, and housing geographies of blackness, which confine Afro-Brazilians to specific places that

geographically isolate them from the rest of society (Amar 2014, 306). “Resistance acts” are displays of “self-defense” against the police by alleged suspects in the context of a supposed armed exchange, usually during a raid or invasion of a favela by police (Amar 2014, 306). The justification of these acts of racialized violence under the guise of “self-defense” persists because of the continuing belief that black male youth in favelas embody danger. A “shoot first” policy remains, “legitimate in the public imagination, despite a decade of mounting evidence that the (overwhelmingly black) youth who are killed by police because of ‘resistance acts’ are often shot in the head or neck at close range, from behind, and without any evidence of the youth being armed or posing imminent danger to the officer” (Amar 2014, 306).

The media also aids in the persistence of police brutality. Coverage of BOPE (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais, or Special Police Operations Battalion) by major television networks like *Globo Network* as the group invades favelas in order to “cleanse” the communities of drug dealers, helps generate feelings of danger among white Brazilians that are allegedly associated with Afro-Brazilians. The media works to create a particular image of “racialized horror, showing live coverage of ‘crime wars,’” where Afro-Brazilians are portrayed as criminals and the police are portrayed as the heroes who fight against them, “with each scene emotionally over-exaggerated by the worried facial expressions of the reporters themselves” (Amar 2014, 307). These media portrayals serve to perpetuate the notion that it is necessary for Afro-Brazilians to receive “punishments” that involve acts of violence and brutality from state agents such as police. It also perpetuates the notion that black communities are separate entities that should be considered as dangerous, poor, and undesirable spaces. These acts of brutality and violence against Afro-Brazilian communities are rationalized as necessary for the protection of the rest of Brazilian society. However, policing practices enacted by officers in Afro-Brazilian communities actually contribute to the racialization of Afro-Brazilians, which in turn negates the notions of Brazil having racial harmony and being a racial paradise and leads to the further isolation of Afro-Brazilian communities. This isolation allows for extreme policing practices like death squads to exist in these communities, without much intervention from the rest of society.

The concept of personal discretion covers up the state’s role in allowing violent policing practices, ensuring that “any challenges to the system are rebuffed as particular instances of the exercise of discretion rather than the more fundamental existence of state power behind the institutions in question” (Garmany 2014, 1244). Police officers perform their duties in the name of bettering Brazilian society and are legitimized and encouraged by the state, as the state legally allows for the use of military-style policing practices against Afro-Brazilian citizens. Their use of personal discretion serves to cover up how state power operates in everyday forms of violence against Afro-Brazilians. It hides the fact that authoritative military-style policing practices are openly supported by the Brazilian state, which uses the police to “maintain order” in Afro-Brazilian communities. Law enforcement is performed in a manner that allows for racialized violence and police brutality against these particular citizens in the name of “protecting the state.” This observation also points to a paradox in the function of Brazilian law enforcement. Police must collaborate with civilians in order to facilitate better governance and maintain order, but they continue to struggle to do so because of the current authoritarian relationship between themselves and civilians, which constitutes their power and legitimacy (Garmany 2014, 1244). This dilemma complicates approaches to policing practices and allows for a space in which police are acting to maintain power, as opposed to serving the public, further contributing to the state’s repressive governance over Brazilian citizens. In order to realize police reform, the ways in which the state operates to exercise power must be challenged.

Looking Forward: Democratizing Police Institutions

Authoritarian governing practices are embedded in the Brazilian state and are perpetuated through agents who represent the state. Authorities such as police officers use repressive practices to inflict terror and violence on Afro-Brazilians. The police forces that patrol favelas are extensions of a state that uses military-style policing practices in the name of “protecting the Brazilian state” to maintain control of favela community members who are predominantly Afro-Brazilian. Transforming the police into a democratic institution continues to be a challenge faced by many newly established democracies, including Brazil. The interconnectedness of Brazil’s government, civil police forces, and military police agencies creates a pernicious system that lacks checks and balances. This situation causes marginalized groups, such as Afro-Brazilians, to suffer political suppression through a lack of representation in politics, police brutality, and racism enacted by multiple sectors of Brazilian society, including civilian-led death squads. Controlling police violence in Brazil is particularly complicated due to the authoritarian legacy embedded in the state’s political practices and the surge in right-wing political ideologies that can be partly traced back to Brazil’s severe economic recession in 2014, which led to President Bolsonaro’s election (Meyer 2018, 2). Part of the explanation for the continuing abuse of authority arises from the lack of state action taken against death squads, and the maintenance of two police forces that surveil Afro-Brazilian communities, the civil and military police. The military police, who are responsible for patrolling the streets in places like favelas, “are responsible for many deaths but have been largely unaccountable to the civil justice system” (Caldeira 2002, 236). Nevertheless, popular support for police who are allowed to kill is a key element in the continuation of police violence, as well as a major obstacle to reform. Surprisingly, this support of police violence conflicts with “an overall negative evaluation of the police, and a high level of victimization of working-class people from the police” in Afro-Brazilian communities (Caldeira 2002, 237). This paradox can be attributed to “a long history of several factors: the disregard for civil rights, distrust of the judicial system, and biased functioning in the form of racial and social inequality within institutions of the Brazilian state” (Caldeira 2002, 237).

In order to enact police reform and reduce the occurrences of police violence against Afro-Brazilians, the Brazilian state must eradicate the existence of death squads and other vigilante groups, as well as the military police force. The idea of a military police force is paradoxical in and of itself. The purpose of the military is to serve and protect Brazil and its citizens from harmful forces. Afro-Brazilians are supposed to be a part of a democratic Brazilian society, particularly since Brazil claims to be a “racial democracy.” If Brazil were truly a political as well as racial democracy, Afro-Brazilians would not be treated as foreign invaders who need to be surveilled and controlled through military force. If military-style policing and the military police force were eradicated, vigilante groups such as death squads would not feel emboldened to enact terror against Afro-Brazilians under the guise of “protecting the state.”

Additionally, it is important to challenge the structure of Brazil’s state, which allows for conditions that encourage police violence. As highlighted throughout this article, Brazil’s current democracy is still flooded with residue from the authoritarian regime of the 1960s. Keeping in mind that Brazil’s democracy is relatively new, efforts should be made to restructure the state in a way that allows Brazil to become a true democracy. For example, Brazil needs to see an increase in the number of Afro-Brazilian politicians, so that they can address and eradicate issues that affect the Afro-Brazilian population, including authoritative political practices that sanction excessive police brutality against them. This would allow for a fair and accurate political

representation of Afro-Brazilians that could lead to an increase in policies that advocate for Afro-Brazilian rights. Brazil's political system should be challenged to increase democratic practices across various matters, including the ways in which the state attempts to control crime. This includes the eradication of policing practices and policies that enable Brazilian state-sanctioned forms of terror and violence against Afro-Brazilians. True reform will require persistent efforts by Brazilian citizens themselves to challenge the political system and advocate for democratic practices across all aspects of society, which is only possible through the recognition and inclusion of Afro-Brazilian citizens.

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Placemaking in Kibera: Spatial Justice Amongst Dispossession and Displacement

Anna DeGrauw

ABSTRACT

Human rights articles in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya institutionalize freedom from discrimination, security from violence, and compensation for property loss. Demolition projects violate these human rights. This article analyzes the land commission acts that legally permit such demolition projects to occur. Demolition projects destroy not only physical constructions, but also social cohesion within that space. Although there is destruction of space, there is also revival of space. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are active participants in placemaking and in seeking spatial justice. This case study is focused on Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi County. The article begins with a historical analysis of Nairobi city in the context of urbanization and demolition projects and introduces the theme of seeking spatial justice (Soja 2010). Demolition projects pre-dating the 2010 Constitution of Kenya in Kibera are discussed. The article analyzes human rights articles and land commission acts in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, in addition to how placemaking is involved in the process. Finally, it examines how CBOs are involved in placemaking efforts in Kibera through interviews with community leaders. Space and place stretch beyond mere physical geography and include the complexities of power and social cohesion, even in the face of land policies that contribute to dispossession and displacement for some Kenyan citizens.

Keywords: 2010 Constitution of Kenya, placemaking, spatial justice, land rights, informal settlements

Introduction

This article aims to illustrate the intricacies of a place that stretches beyond mere physical geography and demonstrate the complexities and power of social cohesion. Place and space can be destroyed through land tenure policies, but also revived through experiences of residents in informal settlements; both are significant contributions to placemaking, which will be explored in the following sections. The power of a place extends beyond its physical boundaries. This case study is focused on Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi County. The article will begin with a historical analysis of Nairobi in the context of urbanization and demolition projects and introduce the theme of seeking spatial justice. The second section will focus on demolition projects in Kibera that pre-date the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. The third section will analyze human rights articles and land commission acts in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, in addition to the process of placemaking in Kibera. The final section will discuss how Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are involved in placemaking efforts in Kibera.

Placemaking and Historical Land Reforms

The national phase from the 1960s to the 1980s witnessed an explosion in the size of urban centers. Informal settlements accommodated the migration of people into urban Nairobi. These settlements offset the “shortages of accommodation, high rents, and overcrowding” (Olima 2001, 7). In the midst of rapid population growth, property rights were difficult to define as land and construction materials were costly (Ouna 2017). Because of a high economic barrier, “failure to formalize property rights leads to eroded security of tenure and hence land transactions are carried out in informal land markets which are difficult to regulate” (Ouna 2017, 6).

One example is Kibera, which grew at a rate of 220 percent in 1969 (Olima 2001, 8). As informal settlements grew in size, the national policy from 1963 to the early 1970s was to “eradicate informal settlements” (Olima 2001, 11). In this period, “politicians used slum demolitions as a way to reward wealthy supporters with land or punish opponents” (Kloop 2008, 297). Eviction and demolition policies were remnants of “futile colonial shanty management strategies” (Otiso and Owusu 2008, 150). In the 1950s, demolition projects were aimed at oppressing the Mau Mau anti-colonial movement. In 1953 and 1954, these projects rendered approximately 31,000 people, from informal settlements or “shanties” around Nairobi, Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru, homeless (Kloop 2008).

The demolition of urban space has contributed to the politicization of space and control. Demolition is a historically grounded process of placemaking in informal settlements. For the purposes of this article, space will be defined in accordance with Henri Lefebvre’s three definitions: (a) *perceived space*, shaped by materialized and objectified spatial practices; (b) *conceived space*, understood through maps, laws, and normative practices and within subjective representations of space in ideas, images, ideologies; and (c) *lived space*, involving individual and collective temporal and social actors (Lefebvre 1992). Space is consistently being remade and reconstructed by actors within a multiplicity of layers. As Coleman (2011) mentions, places are sites of dynamic cultures, ecologies, and economies. Even amongst the friction of actors in placemaking, there is a “hegemonic understanding of the nature of space itself, and of the relation between space and society” (Massey 2005, 64). Rooted in the process of urbanization, space has been used as a mechanism for control, especially in regard to the status of “informal” public spaces. Land policy has manifested control over the production of place through forced peripheral displacement, such as demolition and dispossession. An inequality of power exists for residents in informal settlements who cannot practice formal and legal ownership over land, reinforcing differences between society and their spaces.

According to Edward Soja, seeking spatial justice is part of reclaiming space and agency to “promote participatory forms of democratic politics and social activism to mobilize and maintain cohesive coalitions of grassroots and justice-oriented social movements” (2010, 6). Spatial (in)justice “locates it in the specific condition of urban life...and in the collective struggles to achieve more equitable access of all residents” (Soja 2010, 32). Demolition projects are products of social injustice. Seeking spatial justice is complementary to the role of human rights and activism in contending with political issues. Spatial justice is more political in nature than placemaking and focuses on empowering socio-spatial relations (Soja 2010). When states are the primary agents of justice, they “may assign...and build with certain powers and capacities to act, [and] typically [have] some means of coercion, [and] partial control [over] the action of other agents” (O’Neill 2001, 181). Secondary agents of justice “meet the demands of primary agents, most evidently by conforming to any legal requirements they establish” (O’Neill 2001, 181). In the form of individuals or CBOs, secondary agents of justice may lack the capacity to fulfill the

same ordinances as a primary agent of justice but can seek spatial justice and claim agency. Within a place, the “geography of social relations forces us to recognize our interconnectedness and underscores the fact that both personal identity and the identity of those envelopes of space-time are constructed” (Massey 2009, 122). When there is a violation of space and place through state-led demolition tactics, interconnectedness is degraded by infrastructure development, and injustice threatens the integrity of the primary agent. Spatial justice is not in opposition to social justice and cannot be separated from social issues (Soja 2010). The next section will focus on demolition projects as a form of placemaking in Kibera.

Demolition and Infrastructure Projects in Kibera

In Kibera, demolition projects in 2004 left roughly 9,600 people homeless and 190,000 additional residents at risk of homelessness (Mulama 2004). The calamity was triggered by the construction of a bypass through Kibera (*BBC News* 2004). In 2009, demolitions were framed as “slum clearance” and families were incentivized to move into homes constructed and managed by the Slum Upgrading Programme (SUP) (*BBC News* 2009). While making room for new housing units that would be rented for the equivalent of \$10 per month, residents in Kibera made claims to the land plotted for the new houses (*BBC News* 2009). SUPs completed in the early 1990s included public housing development and served as a method for the government to construct houses according to standards set by the Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP), a joint initiative of the government of Kenya and United Nations Human Settlement Program (Syagga 2011, 2). In addition to infrastructure changes, tenure regularization through legal titles could be used by residents to obtain housing improvement loans (Syagga 2011, 6). However, there would be high legalization costs to obtain these housing improvement loans (Syagga 2011, 6).

The SUP in 2009 was initiated in the Soweto East Zone. From this region, 5,000 of the 6,288 people residing there were relocated to Lang’ata and required to pay a monthly rent six times higher than their typical amount (Fernandez and Calas 2011, 5). Evictions and demolitions supported the urban spatial segregation policy around informal settlements, ensuring that “land use standards [were set so high that] the poor could not meet them, and the government forced them to informal and peripheral areas” (Olima 2001, 13). The 2009 relocation efforts affected how individuals and small business owners were able to participate in an informal market economy, reach customers, and afford rent (Fernandez and Calas 2011). The destruction of these social networks ultimately caused psychological disorders to emerge in some individuals (Fernandez and Calas 2011, 10). The 2004 demolition project and 2009 infrastructure development project in Kibera occurred before the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. As a key point of intervention for human rights, the 2010 Constitution provides a legal framework against disenfranchisement.

Human Rights and Land Acts in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya

The Kenyan national and Nairobi County governments act as primary agents of justice (O’Neill 2001), and are active participants in placemaking efforts in informal settlements. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya “heralded the deep desire of Kenyans, as individuals and communities, to live in a society that respects and protects their liberties and livelihoods without discrimination” (Akech 2010, 7). The National Land Commission Act (NLCA) of 2012 and Physical Planning Act (PPA) of 2012 outline the power dynamics of public and private space. This section will first

describe four articles of human rights that emphasize state protection: Article 21, *Implementation of Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*; Article 27, *Equality and Freedom from Discrimination*; Article 29, *Freedom and Security of the Person*; and Article 40, *Protection of Right to Property*. The second part will focus on the NLCA and PPA of 2012, and demolition projects in Kibera in 2018. Overall, this section outlines the methods through which the Kenyan national and county governments are involved in placemaking.

Article 21 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, *Implementation of Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, outlines the “duty to address the needs of vulnerable groups within a society, including women, older members of society, persons with disabilities, children, youth, members of minority or marginalized communities, and members of particular ethnic, religious, or cultural communities.” Article 21 secures protection for individuals, specifically in vulnerable situations, in the context of space and access to government representation. Article 27, *Equality and Freedom from Discrimination*, states that “every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit [and] women and men have the right to equal treatment including the right to equal opportunities in political, cultural, and social spheres.” Article 29, *Freedom and Security of the Person*, provides “security of the person, which includes the right not to be subjected to any form of violence from either public or private sources.” Article 29 states that security against all forms of violence in both public and private sectors is pertinent in the provision of land ownership.

Article 40, *Protection of Right to Property*, provides housing rights for citizens. Its clause (2) states that “Parliament should not enact a law that permits the State or any person (a) to arbitrarily deprive a person of property” (Constitution of Kenya, Article 40, 2(a), 2010). In addition, clause (3) of Article 40 states that the

state shall not deprive a person of property of any description, or of any interest in, or right over, property of any description—unless the deprivation (a) results from an acquisition of land or an interest in land or (b) is for a public purpose or in the public interest and (i) requires prompt payment in full, of just compensation to the person; and (ii) allows any person who has an interest in, or right over, that property a right of access to a court of law (Constitution of Kenya, Article 40 (3a, 3b, i-ii), 2010).

The 2010 Constitution provides equal protection and security against forms of violence in public and private sectors, specifically security against vulnerable situations, freedom from discrimination, security from violence, and compensation for property loss. Demolition projects contradict the rights of citizens as provided in the 2010 Constitution’s Articles 21, 27, 29, and 40. Because Kibera is considered public land, the state has power to exercise authority in the construction of space. If the state acquires public land where people live, it is required that they be compensated for their loss or provided access to a court of law. As previously mentioned, the NLCA and PPA are the legal structures that root demolition projects.

The legal framework governing the land sector contains a range of land policies. However, the National Land Commission Act (NLCA) of 2012 and Physical Planning Act (PPA) of 2012 will be the focus of this article because of their relevance to demolition projects. Created as a “constitutional body” under Article 67 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, the NLCA is to “manage public lands on behalf of the national and county governments” (NLCA, Article 5, revised 2016). The NLCA is concerned with four aspects of land rights: ownership, value, use, and development (Ouna 2017). The NLCA is able to adjudicate historical land injustices, which are defined in its Section 15 as “violation[s] of a right in land, result[ing] in displacement from

habitual residence, occur[ing] between 1895 when Kenya became a protectorate under the British East Africa Protectorate and 2010 when the Constitution of Kenya was promulgated.” Moreover, according to Section 15 of the NLCA, claims to unjust acquisitions of land are permissible under the following reasons: “colonial occupation; independence struggle; pre-independence treaty or agreement between a community and a government; development-induced displacement for which no adequate compensation or other form of remedy was provided, including conversion of non-public land into public land; inequitable land adjudication process or resettlement scheme.” The NLCA thus addresses historically unjust acquisitions of public land.

The PPA of 2012 gives power to “local authorities” in the management of physical planning under the following selected conditions: to “(a) prohibit or control the use and development of land and buildings in the interests of power and orderly development of its area, (b) control or prohibit the subdivision of land, (c) consider and approve all development applications and grant all development permissions, and (d) formulate by-laws to regulate zoning in respect of use and density of development” (PPA, Section 29, 2012). The PPA also outlines conditions for demolition practices. The act establishes a “basis of local authority to remove, alter or demolish and to prohibit, regulate and control the maintenance, alteration and reconstruction of any building which obstructs the observance” (PPA, Section 24(2), Article 13, 2012). While the NLCA manages public lands and unjust land acquisitions, the PPA decides how public lands are changed.

In the context of devolution from the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, “local authorities” have the jurisdiction to decide where construction and demolition will take place (PPA, Section 24(2), Article 13, 2012). Local authorities decide which land will become roads or reserves through the Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA), which is a state corporation under the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. There is an intricate balance of jurisdictional power between national and county provisions for road construction. For example, the Kenya Roads Bill passed in 2015 described three classes of roads, rather than the two classifications constitutionally recognized to distribute power between the national government and county government (Githae 2015).

The NLCA and PPA determine the legal parameters of ongoing demolition projects for the perceived and lived spaces within informal settlements. However, in the 2010 Constitution, equal protection for residents in Kibera is provided in Articles 21, 27, 29, and 40. Divisive policies based on economic class reiterate a historical paradigm of land grabs and related policies. Public spaces occupied by residents in informal settlements are usually the first to be grabbed (Ouna 2017). Article 21, the protection of vulnerable citizens, is threatened by public land grabs. The NLCA supports the formal construction of perceived space, which is physical, abstract, material, and visual, through the process of legalizing formal spaces (Lefebvre 1992), as it supports the property rights of people who are able to afford private land. Conceived space, as a set of normalized rules within a community, is demonstrated through the NLCA because it considers unjust acquisitions of land. The NLCA degrades lived space and social spheres for communities that live in informal settlements because they are considered to be on public land. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya outlines Article 21 as the duty to address the needs of groups placed in vulnerable situations within a society, yet its protection is contradicted by the PPA for people in informal settlements, who are blocked from access to living as permanent residents and affording private housing. Residents in informal settlements without the financial means to access formal land tenure endure violations to rights promised within the Constitution, specifically access to

either a court of law or compensation for their loss (Constitution of Kenya, Article 40 (2a, 3a, 3b i-ii)).

Demolition projects affecting urban informal settlements have contributed to the politicization of space and control. The demolition and displacement policies in 2004 and 2009, as previously mentioned, occurred in Kibera before the 2010 Constitution was ratified. However, the June 2018 demolition projects in Kibera were the largest in recent history. Demolitions in 2018 were resisted by the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR). Houses, schools, mosques, churches, and small businesses were demolished by KURA in preparation for a highway segmenting two areas of Kibera, resulting in the eviction of 30,000 people from their homes (OHCHR 2018). For people in Kibera whose homes, businesses, and places of worship were demolished or forcibly abandoned, access to informal markets, customers, and communities was eradicated. Residents were not compensated for their loss (Tilve 2018). Demolition projects in Kibera led to the degradation of perceived space as physically constructed place, conceived space as the projection of norms and values, and lived space as social cohesion. Demolition projects displace economies, communities, and families, which threatens human rights and placemaking for residents in informal settlements. However, national and county governments have an opportunity to secure land tenure rights for residents in informal settlements as a “public purpose” (Community Land Act, Article 27, revised 2016).

There is a structural connection between the human rights articles and land commission acts of the 2010 Constitution that legally permit demolition projects. Human rights articles in the 2010 Constitution provide a legal protection for *rights to the city*, which is defined as “shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made and [doing] so in a fundamental and radical way” (Harvey 2003, 2). Demolition projects are thus a form of spatial injustice. Spatial justice alludes to the ways in which Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are actively involved in the process of placemaking, which is the focus of the next section.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Kibera

This section describes how Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are seeking spatial justice as secondary agents of justice in Kibera (O’Neill 2001; Soja 2010). In the process of placemaking, residents are seeking spatial justice by organizing and acting as agents of justice. As illustrated through the author’s interviews with leaders of CBOs in Kibera, placemaking serves as a key component to seeking spatial justice in the community, especially for organizations centered on human rights for women. Interviews focused on female community leaders from Power Women, Carolina for Kibera, and Habari Kibra who were actively involved in the production of space and place. For purposes of anonymity, interviewees’ names are not provided.

Space is the product of interrelations from global to local scales and a process under construction through interrelations (Massey 2005, 10). When interviewees were asked about the meaning of community, common themes emerged, such as “just a group of people who do together—for something like salt, an African tradition, when you lack something, you go and ask your neighbor. A community carries different people with different characters” (Interview I). In this definition, a community within the same geographical area experiences an exchange of resources despite the differences in identity, and is a process of placemaking through reciprocal relations. However, other interviewees mentioned a certain level of “sameness,” which contributes to the production of community as a lived space in a geographical region. A

community, for some, is a “set of people who live together in the same geographical region, and they share common amenities, such as schools, hospitals, the same road, the same inception spot, and they share the same values” (Interview II).

Furthermore, one interviewee said a community is a “group of people coming together with the same objective. What I think community development is, is what people in the community are implementing in terms of activities. The activities that community members implement to improve and transform their lives” (Interview III). The shared values and objectives within the social fabric unite and transform the realities of placemaking, even in the midst of projects of displacement. For community leaders in Kibera, community is defined as a reciprocal exchange within the same place to fulfill shared objectives (Interviews I–III). The operational definition of community, from the perspective of the interviewed community leaders, situates it in a place where community, and the production of placemaking for all residents, has the potential to unite and empower residents. Throughout all three definitions of community given in the interviews, the description of a shared experience aligns with the theoretical conceptions of place as perceived and conceived, and as lived spaces that are also interrelations of real and valued practices of everyday life (Lefebvre 1992; Massey 2005).

One group working as an agent of justice responsible for community development, according to Interviewee I, is the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support the health and well-being of HIV positive girls and women. Power Women, for example, contributes to the production of place focusing on economic opportunities and health-care awareness campaigns for young women in Kibera. Power Women is an agent of justice, although it is limited to formally certifying trainees and participating in the formal sectors of the economy (Interview I). The organization aims to support the production of economic revenue and health care for residents, and is an example of how an informal settlement is contributing to building the capacity to organize (O’Neill 2001). Mentors at Power Women address daily issues in the community, and are proactively changing the ways in which people are able to build individual capacity despite barriers to entering formal markets in Kibera.

Carolina for Kibera (CFK) is a non-profit organization that began in 2001 through a partnership between Tabitha Festo, Salim Mohamed, and Rye Barcott to create an organization focused on health development, youth empowerment, and gender equity. The headquarters of CFK are located near Power Women in the Olympic Estate of Kibera in the Binti Pamoja (“Daughter’s United”) building. The organization focuses on education equity, primary health care within clinics, girls’ empowerment, and youth development. In the area of education equity, the organization supports secondary schools in promoting the mentorship and holistic development of children within formal and informal schools. Primary health care at CFK is focused on nutrition and health and wellness through community outreach. Programs aimed at empowering girls seek to provide mentoring for teenage mothers who are inside and outside of school systems, and youth development concentrates on future economic development through entrepreneurship and sports programs. The CFK strategy is to first identify the community’s needs and then develop a holistic approach with monitoring and evaluation techniques. CFK’s outreach stretches throughout districts of Kibera and members work alongside local leaders across forty-three ethnic groups represented in the community. The organization’s mission is to develop local leaders, catalyze positive change, and alleviate poverty (Carolina for Kibera 2019).

Binti Pamoja Girls Empowerment aims to empower young women in the community through mentorship and education programs. As one of the leaders at CFK is a mentor and programmer for Binti Pamoja, layers of interrelations between government and non-governmental actors

contribute to the process of placemaking. However, the “organizations are providing support to the community members. Every organization implements a specific activity and the activities which they want to conduct in the community. So, most people benefit from the organizations. Because there are some which offer entrepreneurship skills and they also give soft loans to improve the lives of those living in the community” (Interview III).

The organization Habari Kibra enables the lived space shared between residents of Kibera to tell stories, a key element to how the placemaking has actively responded to election violence in Kibera. The representations of shared values within lived space are documented by Habari Kibra as a form of articulating stories of placemaking, identity, and development through the voices of residents. Collective action is talked about by residents in Saturday meetings at the Kibera Town Center (KTC), “through something known as Kibera Open Discussion and people come and discuss different issues” (Interview V). The agency and voice of the community are fostered through the open dialogue and self-expression of the youth and community. Open dialogues allow explorations of identities and politics, as well as the opportunity to provide value and resources to residents in Kibera, specifically through the physical structure of the KTC. For young people in Kibera, “in terms of leadership and also talent, you find that there are a lot of concerts that are coming in Kibera, people are showing their talents, and in that way, we find that they get to show their leadership skills in a different way, not necessarily in politics, but in a different way” (Interview V). Shared stories and the production of lived space as documented by Habari Kibra are centered on open dialogue and contingent on activities of expression, advocacy, and leadership skills. The themes that emerge from Habari Kibra entail placemaking through the production of lived space. Habari Kibra is involved in placemaking to amplify the voices of residents in Kibera and to promote shared experiences of life in the community.

Conclusion

The varying degree to which the three organizations are involved in the construction of placemaking has led to empowerment projects and agency within the geographical space of Kibera. As part of placemaking, residents organize through CBOs in actions that are political in nature, through individual and collective responses. More research will need to be conducted on whether the placemaking examined here is occurring in direct response to geographical dispossession and displacement through demolition projects. However, residents are seeking spatial justice using the conditions prescribed by Lefebvre (1992) in layering the production of perceived, conceived, and lived space. Organizations discussed in this article are not specifically organizing against the demolition projects but are responding to the barriers of gendered space and economic challenges. These organizations are secondary agents of justice and contribute to forms of placemaking.

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya outlines articles of human rights that protect citizens against demolition projects in Kibera. Demolition projects distance and separate perceived, conceived, and lived spaces of residents and their collective movements. This article has shown that place within a community can be destroyed and demolished for political purposes. Grounded within a historical context, demolition projects in Kibera have displaced communities in a form of spatial injustice. However, the seeking of spatial justice serves to mobilize residents, who are actively involved in the role of placemaking. This article has analyzed methods of placemaking in Kibera using the 2010 Constitution of Kenya and the work of CBOs as a foundation. This research has found that although place is embedded with its own contradictions and complications, it also serves as an epicenter for growth, agency, and power.

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“Go back to your kitchens, you whores”: Women, Women’s Rights, and the Tunisian Revolution

Kellan Robinson

ABSTRACT

Women in Tunisia share a unique history in terms of rights due to their interconnected, but nuanced experiences under French colonialism, dictatorial regimes, and the Jasmine Revolution. Before the Arab Spring, Tunisian women had already experienced waves of comparatively progressive policies in relation to areas such as abortion and divorce. However, these policies were a product of actions from above, rather than of grassroots efforts from below. Furthermore, women’s rights policies came to fruition under the regimes of Habib Bourguiba and Zine Al-Abidine Bin Ali, which both employed a paternalistic state feminism that coopted already existing female organizations. This distinctive history and its implications are essential to examining the role that women played in the Jasmine Revolution. Women who fought in the movement that ousted Bin Ali were indispensable to the many spectrums of activism, while also facing forms of violence from both the regime and fellow male protestors. After the revolution ceased and a new constitution was written, more promises were made. But, unfortunately, the legal, written strides do not equate with appropriate implementation.

Keywords: Tunisia, women, protest, Jasmine Revolution, Arab Spring

Introduction

Women are continuously on the frontlines of history, fighting for issues greater than themselves. This truth extends to the political and social uprisings that unfolded across the Middle East North Africa region commencing in 2011; these political movements are now known as the Arab Spring. Tunisia was the country that ignited the Arab Spring. In the Tunisian Revolution, women played an instrumental role, not only in protesting alongside men in the streets and in utilizing social media, but also in influencing the new Tunisian constitution. In relation to the advancement of women’s rights, both in post-colonial countries and across the world, Tunisia can be considered an outlier because Tunisian women had already obtained key rights from the government prior to the 2011 revolution. Although it is important to note that these legal rights were obtained through pressures from “above” rather than “below,” this distinction is crucial in understanding the revolution and its implications for women. While the focus of the revolution was not on women’s rights as it was a mass movement to oppose the current political regime, the constitution ushered in a new set of legal rights specifically for women; although, the extent to which the revolution has impacted Tunisian women’s rights in society is debatable due to legal shortcomings. In this article, I will explore how conditions under French colonialism, the regimes of Habib Bourguiba and Zine Al-Abidine Bin Ali, and the pre-revolution period influenced the roles and lives of women, a lens necessary for understanding this population in the context of the Jasmine Revolution and its aftermath.

The Faux Crusade

Tunisia—like every other territory in Africa with the exclusion of Ethiopia and Liberia—was colonized by a European power. After gaining independence from French rule, Habib Bourguiba became the first elected president of Tunisia in 1956 (El-Masri 2015, 126). Under the Neo-Destour Party, which later became the Destourian Socialist Party, Bourguiba became a trailblazer for implementing women's rights in state policy (El-Masri 2015, 126). The intentions behind his actions did not stem from moral reasons based upon gender equality; rather, he wanted to ensure “a nationalist, secularist and modernist society” could “materialize,” as this was not achievable, according to Bourguiba, “without the active participation of half of the population: women” (El-Masri 2015, 126). In essence, the push for gender equity was not for moral reasons, but because of the political realization that support from this section of the population was necessary to sustain the regime. Furthermore, policy surrounding women's rights at this time in Tunisia was not pushed for “from below,” but was instigated by a privileged class who used these rights to create the fabric of the country as it is today (Gondorová 2014, 31). This promotion of women's rights by the president was a shift from the colonial and colonial revolution era because during the fight for decolonization, all spectrums of society, including “liberals,” subscribed to the belief that “women's emancipation had to be postponed” (El-Masri 2015, 126). This is key, as it demonstrates that there wasn't a strong precedent for women's political mobilization before decolonization.

The highlight of Bourguiba's faux crusade for women's rights was the Code of Personal Status, or CPS, which is composed of various rights for women. According to a 1957 Bourguiba speech, its purpose was to “remove all injustice” and insert “laws rehabilitating women and conferring upon them their rights” into the state (Curtiss 1993). Hallmarks of the CPS included Articles 18, 5, 57, and 6. Article 18 proclaimed the banishment of polygamy, which, if practiced, could result in a fine and jail time (Tobich 2008). Article 5 gave women more freedom in marriage decisions, as it “increased a woman's minimum legal age of marriage to 15” and “granted women the right to choose a marriage partner...free from coercion—especially from her father or legal guardian” (El-Masri 2015, 126). Article 57 granted women rights in the realm of divorce, with “equal rights...to dissolve the marriage” and to “become the principal guardian of their children” (El-Masri 2015, 126). One of the most crucial components of the CPS was Article 6, which deemed that “all citizens have the same rights and obligations” and that “all are equal before the law,” including having the right to vote (El-Masri 2015, 126).

Bourguiba also focused on family planning while in power. His regime started with subsidizing contraceptives and counseling services, and eventually legalized abortion in 1965 for women, if certain conditions were met including “the abortion...[being] performed before the end of the first trimester, the woman [having] at least five living children and the written agreement of both husband and wife” (Hessini 2007, 79). These Tunisian abortion policies were liberalized in 1973, permitting the medical operation for women regardless of marital status, number of children, or the husband's approval (Maffi 2018). These rights were advanced, even compared to Western standards; in comparison, abortion was not decriminalized in the United States until *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Although it is important to note that these legal rights did not translate to just treatment for the women who chose to exercise them. Patients reportedly faced “social pressure, blackmail, and stigmatization” and, after the procedure, some were “forced to accept contraception and even sterilisation in return” (Maffi 2018).

One of Bourguiba's most crucial, symbolic policy actions in relation to women was Decree 108, circa 1981, which banned “the veil” in key spaces including “public buildings, offices,

schools, universities and hospitals” (El-Masri 2015, 126). The ban of the veil, which Bourguiba labeled as “an odious rag” with “no moral significance” (El-Masri 2015, 126), was used as a political tool to push back the regime’s “rising enemy...the Islamic movement,” associated with the Iran-inspired “insistence that its women wear long black veils and its men beards” (El-Masri 2015, 133). To clarify, there was a “rising influence of Iran, as its mullahs tried to export their Islamic model abroad, including to Tunisia,” which influenced the Tunisian regime to institute a ban (El-Masri 2015, 133). The banning of the veil, which Bourguiba considered as “alien to Tunisian society” (El-Masri 2015, 133), was also emblematic because it represented the regime’s desire to cater to the West, as in the viewpoint of Western powers; the religious veil having minimal prominence signaled the “modernity” and “secularization” of a country (Jomier 2011, 11).

Another advancement for Tunisian women before the revolution was the prioritization of education by the state. Not only was education made free for both sexes, but it was also co-ed in some cases. Most importantly, “families were encouraged to enroll their daughters for advanced degrees that would lead to good jobs” (El-Masri 2015, 126–27). These changes to education, although crucial in the trajectory for education equality, are yet another example of a positive sphere—advancement—that was not granted through pushes from those organizing for equal rights.

Bourguiba’s strategy of implementing women’s rights in policy for personal gain was continued by the next president, Zine Al-Abidine Bin Ali, after a “bloodless coup” in 1987 (El-Masri 2015, 127). Under Bin Ali’s regime in the 1990s and early 2000s, “a second wave of women’s rights” was ushered in (El-Masri 2015, 127). Policies enacted during this “second wave” included the establishment of the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs and the renewal of the veil ban, and a “law requiring a husband’s consent for his wife to sign a labor contract was abrogated” (El-Masri 2015, 128). Furthermore, under Bin Ali, women gained improved custody privileges as well as a right to alimony and child support after divorce (Keddie 2012, 141–42). In extension, protection from domestic violence was granted, as these cases were criminalized (Keddie 2012, 142).

Paternalism and State Feminism

Understanding that the legal rights granted to women before the revolution were a product of paternalism and “state feminism” is important, because it contextualizes the implications that the revolution has brought for women’s rights, discussed below. First, it is crucial to understand that, “since the 1950s, it has been the Tunisian state that carried the beacon of women’s rights and not any feminist movement” (El-Masri 2015, 129). Next, one must recognize that both Bourguiba and Bin Ali treated their female citizens as “political pawns” to not only please the West, but also to simultaneously garner the backing of women (El-Masri 2015, 128). This double-edged “woman card” served a paternalistic purpose. It “consolidate[d] [each leader’s] position” not only as the ruler of Tunisia, but, more importantly, positioned him “as the supreme liberator of Tunisian women, [who] spar[ed] them the agony of fighting these battles themselves” (El-Masri 2015, 129). This leadership aspect of the two regimes is paternalistic in the sense that the leaders assumed that by appealing to female rights they could appease women. In fact, Bourguiba and Bin Ali “expected full gratitude and loyalty from women, who were supposed to concentrate on playing their part in modernizing Tunisia, now that their rights were granted” (El-Masri 2015, 129).

In addition to state leaders' paternalism in terms of implementing women's rights policy, "state feminism" was also adopted through a system of cooptation. Within this system, the goal was "to reinforce [state] power and immobilize dissent" (El-Masri 2015, 128) through the cooptation of women-focused organizations. A key example of this was when "Bourguiba merged the UMFT [Union Musulmane des Femmes de Tunisie] with the women's section of his Neo-Destour party to make the Union Nationale des Femmes de Tunisie (UNFT)" (El-Masri 2015, 129). With this merger, the Tunisian state essentially dismantled the essence of the earliest female organization in Tunisia, which was established in 1936 (El-Masri 2015, 125). The unfortunate consequence of this state feminism was that "women's expression of their interests [was] bound to this organization; [and] the continuity of their status depended on the regime's support and its willingness to enforce any further improvement in their economic and political rights" (El-Masri 2015, 129).

Another dimension of state feminism was the use of the first lady as "the representative of Tunisian women and the person in charge of their cause" (El-Masri 2015, 130). Women's rights organizations that were able to operate despite censorship and intimidation were constrained by the first lady's manipulative role, as these "associations were unable to perform their activities without the interference of the first lady Leila Ben Ali" (Gondorová 2014, 33). According to author and educator Louisa Dris-Ait-Hamadouche, this "state feminism was a hollow political language that used first ladies as models of women's liberation to maintain power and was devoid of policies to help rural women" (as quoted in El-Masri 2015, 130). Thus, the true agency and power of women in Tunisia was diminished in this cooptation.

The state's cooptation of feminism influenced the implication of the revolution in 2011, because "state policies under Ben Ali, despite the advancement of women rights through a top-down approach, perpetuated the fragmentation of women's interests and their lack of independence, threatening their ability to negotiate with the state" (El-Masri 2015, 130). Equally as important, the procurement of legal rights "without much feminist struggle made many women take these rights for granted" (El-Masri 2015, 129). Therefore, because of the historical precedent of women's rights being given by the state rather than coming from below, there is a lack of precedent of women themselves lobbying the government for their equity. This is concerning due to continuous shortcomings in gender equity by way of society and the government.

The Jasmine Revolution

With a deep understanding of women's rights and activism prior to the revolution, one can better understand women's active role in the Arab Spring in Tunisia. The Tunisian Revolution, commonly referred to as the Jasmine Revolution, named "after Tunisia's national flower, led to Ben Ali's overthrow on 14 January 2011" after a dictatorship of twenty-three years (Gondorová 2014, 29). The Jasmine Revolution is considered to be the first occurrence of the "revolutionary process" in the Arab Spring (Gondorová 2014, 29), and is regarded by some as "non-political, non-ideological, and non-religious" (El-Khawas 2012, 22). The Jasmine Revolution was particularly triggered by financial complications in 2008, when there was "a sudden drop in the European market demand for Tunisian products [that] resulted in a decrease in exports, a contraction in the industrial sector, and a slower expansion in services" (El-Khawas 2012, 7). This resulted in an economic boost deal propagated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (El-Khawas 2012, 7). Despite this deal resulting in "recovery," there remained issues of "untouched substantial regional disparities and economic inequality between Tunis and

the highly developed coastal areas in the east and the impoverished interior” (El-Khawas 2012, 7). This, predictably, led to the unrest of the poor people in regions such as Kasserine and Gafsa, where “unemployment was more than 22 percent” (El-Khawas 2012, 7). Like the rest of Tunisian society, women mobilized against the Bin Ali regime with this economic catastrophe in mind. The economy incited action especially for rural women, who “felt it [economic hardship] particularly” because “they had suffered from poverty and a lack of infrastructure” due to their geographic orientation (El-Masri 2015, 134). These rural women were active in the revolution due to the social stimulus of being “alienated from the state” (El-Masri 2015, 134). Moreover, these economic and social conditions had built up over time, having lasted “for decades” (El-Masri 2015, 134).

In addition to the economic beginnings of the Jasmine Revolution, there are other motivations to take into account that prompted women’s involvement. First, some were already engaged in activist work through “trade unions, women’s organisations, political opposition parties and informal organisations” (Gondorová 2014, 33). It is important to note that these particular women’s groups were intentionally operating “against state feminism” (Gondorová 2014, 33). Also, partially due to the women’s rights policies implemented under the regimes of Bourguiba and Bin Ali, at the time of the revolution, there was a heightened level of “awareness [that] increased the proportion of politically active women” (Gondorová 2014, 33). This engagement was a result of “changes in literacy” and “the education of women and [their] labour force participation.” For perspective on this educational attainment, in 2008, “the number of female students [exceeded] that of male students in higher education, representing 59% of total tertiary education enrolment” (Tchaïcha and Arfaoui 2012, 218). This increased representation in organized learning resulted in heightened social awareness, fostering more political engagement.

Additional social factors that were a cause of protest included the desire for self-advocacy on a level embodying the touchstones of a just society: “accountability, freedom of expression and political participation” (El-Masri 2015, 134). In addition, these revolutionaries strived to draw attention to other “women-specific issues” that expanded beyond the mainstream revolution goals (El-Masri 2015, 135). These specific issues included “gender inequality with respect to inheritance, and the weakness of legislation against domestic abuse” (El-Masri 2015, 135). In some women’s point of view, “regime change was considered a ticket to a better life,” a chance to alleviate not only mainstream political issues, but also issues related to gender-based rights (El-Masri 2015, 135).

During the Jasmine Revolution, there were also women who were against ousting the Bin Ali regime. Generally, women who did not act in support of the Tunisian Revolution were active in women’s groups like the Tunisian Mothers’ Organization (OTM) and the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT), which were parallel to the state (Gondorová 2014, 28). The UNFT was a product of the state’s cooptation, and as a result “its action plans were actually derived from Bourguiba’s directives” (El-Masri 2015, 129). Similarly, although the OTM was technically a separate feminist organization, it was still bound by the desires of the state because in order to exist legally, it was required to have a “formal” approval from the Ministry of Culture (El-Masri 2015, 131). Thus, the UNFT, the OTM, and other such groups could not be “critical of the regime” if they wanted to maintain their legal status (El-Masri 2015, 131). If they were not a member of one of these associations, the women against the revolution were “associated with Bin Ali’s regime” in some other manner (Gondorová 2014, 28). This situation is important to note in that reflects the deep reach of “state feminism,” as there is a correlation between support of the regime and involvement in coopted groups.

Women who participated in the revolution made “an active contribution” to the movement in various ways (Gondorová 2014, 28). They protested alongside men in the streets, with some “[playing] active and visible roles as both organisers and demonstrators” (Gondorová 2014, 28). The crowds at protests were representative of the nation, a mosaic of “veiled women mixed with unveiled, old with young, educated with illiterate and peasants with intellectuals” (Gondorová 2014, 28). The women on the frontlines, like men, were “attacked by the police...[and] arrested” (Gondorová 2014, 28). However, unlike men for the most part, women who protested against the Bin Ali regime “were victims of sexual assault and harassment” because the regime’s secret police used these crimes “as a tool of repression against female protestors” (Gondorová 2014, 28).

In addition to visibly participating in the Arab Spring, Tunisian women also worked “behind the scenes” by “blogging, posting videos, sharing information and organising themselves within civil rights movements and women’s organisations” (Gondorová 2014, 28). These actors behind the scenes played a crucial role in “mobilizing and maintaining the momentum of the revolution” (El-Masri 2015, 134). One of the many female bloggers in the revolution was Lina Ben Mhenni, who “was instrumental in informing people about repression under the Bin Ali regime” as she did not “want women’s role in the revolution overlooked” (Mhenni 2011). In addition, Mhenni’s blog, titled “A Tunisian Girl,” captured some of the push back faced by women protestors. For example, Mhenni shared with fellow Tunisians and the rest of the world that during peaceful protests, men shouted phrases such as “Go back to your kitchens, you whores” and “What more do you want, you bitches? Do you want to become men?” at women protestors (Mhenni 2011). Thus, women from diverse groups on both sides of the activist method spectrum played a role in the Jasmine Revolution, while facing verbal and physical push back for their actions.

After the Revolution

Women also worked hard to ensure that the new regime after the revolution would be inclusive and support more legal rights for women. The new constitution, approved in January 2014, is purported to be “one of the most advanced of all South and East Mediterranean countries in political transition, especially in terms of civil liberties” (El-Masri 2015, 138). One of the key components of this new constitution is Article 46, which “guarantees parity between men and women in all elected assemblies” (UN Women 2014) and ensures the right for women to be elected as president (El-Masri 2015, 138). This article also “safeguards the rights won by Tunisian women by referring to the Code du Statut Personnel (Personal Status Code) of 1959” (UN Women 2014). The constitution further protects the rights of women because “the state is obliged to act through public authorities by taking measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women” (El-Masri 2015, 138). Moreover, the language in the constitution is intentional in terms of being “gender sensitive” through its articulation that the legal measures are “a right for every citizen, male and female” (El-Masri 2015, 138). This new Tunisian constitution is cognizant of female rights due to the “many months of hard work and sustained advocacy” of NGOs in Tunisia, such as the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) and the Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), which worked in conjunction with the UN Women agency (UN Women 2014).

Although there are liberal and deep-rooted legal rights for Tunisian women, the extent to which they are enforced is questionable. For example, while the constitution promises “gender equality” in accordance to Article 21, this is not fulfilled at all levels of society, as “discriminatory laws continue to exist at lower levels of government” (Norbakk 2016).

Furthermore, there are shortcomings in terms of key rights not included in the 2014 constitution, such as equal inheritance, a fair system in terms of “custody of children in the case of divorce,” and the “right to pass citizenship to a non-Tunisian spouse” (Norbakk 2016). These non-existent rights juxtapose the promises of gender equality in the constitution.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the conditions of women in Tunisia are historically unique, due to the many legal advancements under the two dictatorial regimes of Habib Bourguiba and Zine Al-Abidine Bin Ali. However, these achievements were orchestrated for political reasons from “above,” rather than coming from “below” due to the work of grassroots women’s movements. While state paternalism and feminism ushered in important legal rights, they still worked to suppress women and their diverse, authentic voices and maintained their marginalization in society. This is a crucial lens required to understand that Tunisian women, despite playing an instrumental role in the Jasmine Revolution and the country having a background deeply rooted with women’s rights policies, face a reality where the extent to which these and future progressive policies will be implemented is questionable. In addition, the case of Tunisia and women’s rights as a whole in the country is important to consider because it contradicts Western assumptions around the state of gender equity on the continent of Africa. Studying gender rights on the continent, whether in Tunisia, Namibia, or Rwanda, is crucial in telling a more truthful story of Africa that diverts from Western understandings.

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Review of Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route: Tracing the Unfinished Journey to Finding Identity*

Hanna Watson

Beginning with the Portuguese greed for gold in the fifteenth century, African chattel slavery thrived for generations, acting as fuel for Western capitalism. For many black Americans, bloated bodies of existential questions surface when they cannot identify their specific ethnic origins. As a result, droves have retraced the Middle Passage seeking closure for the still-gaping wound of transatlantic chattel slavery. In *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2008), Saidiya Hartman details her year of research as a Fulbright Scholar in Accra, Ghana, where she learned that these African American longings cannot be satisfied by a return to a place that is only debatably their own. This memoir of sorts takes a fresh angle on the relationship between the diaspora and the Mother Continent, and addresses African conceptions of African Americans, shame, and commodification. Using these themes, Hartman weaves a story of loss and discovery that invites readers to search for hope in unconventional places and reconsider their own understandings of their individual and collective pasts.

Initially, Hartman displays an unusual resolve not to answer questions about her own lineage, but instead amplifies unspoken histories abandoned on the path from the hinterland to the West African coast. *Lose Your Mother* begins by excavating the origins of a word that often stung the author's ears during her travels: *obruni*—stranger, an Akan term that can describe enslaved persons and descendant pilgrims to Ghana. Hartman problematizes African Americans' imaginative construction of an "Afrotopia," a hope for salvation in the homeland that the author experiences as little more than an easily contested figment of a communal imagination (Hartman 2006, 19). Thus, rather than denying the historical truth of her *obruni* identity, Hartman explains that the dehumanizing nature of capitalism invited Europeans to muddy the kinship relationships of entire groups, including her own family.

Subsequently, *Lose Your Mother* navigates a tour of Elmina Castle, a fifteenth-century fortress that acted as a main depot for enslaved persons, to discuss the strained relationship between African Americans and Africans. Elmina constitutes just one of many aspects of Hartman's visceral walk through some of the worst terrors of life and death on the slave route. As the author describes a complicated trip through this infamous fort, she allows the reader a glimpse of the native poverty entrenched in the surrounding area. Hartman compares this to her privileged accommodations in the expatriate district of Osu, as she considers the enduring separation between those whose ancestors were and those whose ancestors were not transported across the Middle Passage.

The journey continues on to explore memory and slavery's residual impacts on locales along the Atlantic slave route. In its discussion of modernity, *Lose Your Mother* illuminates the author's experience of living through Ghana's "Dark Days" in the winter of 1997, during which the government rationed electricity in reaction to a water shortage at the dammed Volta Lake successor (136). Although slavery's divisive legacy causes these outages to burden rural areas most frequently, some of the most acutely harrowing effects of slavery specifically ravaged the region along "The Famished Road" to Salaga, a once-affluent slave trading stop (178). There, in

the wake of the wealth of cowrie shells, warriors, and captives, an impoverished area remains. Here and throughout the narrative, Hartman describes close encounters with native Africans who recognize her difference and considers the seemingly unbridgeable Atlantic gap. She then releases readers from her journey to ponder the difficulties of losing one's heritage and straining to identify the thief who stole it.

As Hartman interprets her own struggles during her stay in Ghana, she comments on the experiences of African Americans under the African gaze. The author focuses on those who have traveled to West Africa in search of soil to fill the holes in their pasts. An expatriate African American couple, Mary Ellen and John Ray, inform much of Hartman's understanding of this transatlantic relationship. Over their decades-long stay in Ghana, the couple had endured feelings of continual shunning by Ghanaian nationals, which caused Mary Ellen to exchange the "African" in her hyphenated ethnic identity for "black" (29). Similarly, while walking the streets of Accra, Hartman bore the weight of being viewed as "a privileged American" whose material assets belied the collective social and economic statuses of the children of the enslaved in comparison to the children of African slavers (56). Thus, in highlighting the fallacies in the Ghana of the black-American imagination, *Lose Your Mother* posits the futility of African Americans' voyages to the Motherland in search of a cultural embrace that remains as illusory in Africa as in the United States.

Furthermore, *Lose Your Mother* considers the African view of African Americans by projecting a shared desire to understand and commune with one another. Hartman juxtaposes Afro-descended people's fantastical ideations against actual lived experiences in order to characterize both African Americans' and Africans' inaccurate perceptions of the other Atlantic shore. Though many academics portray an image of solidarity and progress between these two disparate communities, *Lose Your Mother* truthfully reveals the reality of the otherization of skinfolk that manifests not only in Hartman's suffering through too-casual invocations of slavery by Ghanaians, but also in the prejudiced jokes imbibed in African American homes (217).

By way of its historical work, this narrative uncovers the shame that dims the self-images of Africans and African Americans alike. In a compelling chapter titled "The Dead Book," *Lose Your Mother* describes how in the midst of the ignominy of being counted expendable enough for trade, captured individuals strove for their dignity (145). To some extent, however, the loss of dignity is unavoidable when humans are reduced to values counted in shells. This same "insignia of shame," which compels African Americans to return to Africa in search of redemption, often leads Ghanaians—those faced daily with artifacts of slavery—to limit discussions of slavery to avoid admitting their historical participation in its evils (72–73). As a result, Hartman struggled to find people willing to engage in serious conversations about overcoming the dark history of all those affected by the transatlantic slave trade (203). As such, this book reveals that a full and meaningful healing cannot be attained until all Afro-descended individuals release generational regret, and instead focus on caring for those who differently experienced this trauma.

Much of the shame embedded in this narrative springs from the common practice of commodifying humanity. Scholarship on the history of the Americas has revealed that chattel slavery thrived for centuries because it fueled Western capitalist endeavors. Concurrently, the slave trade became a means of attaining political and social power so coveted that black debtors, nephews, and warriors lived and fled in fear of enemies and neighbors turning them into mere market wares (181). Hartman restores some of the victims' humanity by carving out images of their stories and struggles, rather than simply outlining their monetary value.

Still, this attempt at restoration leaves the lingering effects of commodification unresolved. The practice of manipulating human capital to satisfy desires introduced or amplified through interactions with Europeans has expanded beyond the physical body to exploit the emotional trauma of African Americans. *Lose Your Mother* details how Ghana caters to the descendants of those enslaved because these returnees possess dollars needed by a nation marred by neocolonialism. In particular, the Ministry of Tourism intentionally fills its market of remembrance with public mourning events and castle tours meant to procure donations from diasporic visitors (164). This modern piece of the story complicates understandings of the impacts of capitalism on Afro-descended peoples the world over. Further, it exemplifies how every black person yet lives “in the time of slavery” by experiencing and participating “in the future created by it” (133).

Lose Your Mother deserves acclaim for stylistic choices that accentuate the merits of its content. Hartman successfully excavates neglected discussions about West Africa and its diaspora by narrating her personal experience in Ghana, while limiting discussion of her own lineage. By the end of Hartman's account, the reader understands that although Hartman began her journey to Ghana for strictly academic purposes, she shares widely held experiences of shame, abandonment, and confusion. Additionally, Hartman's artful employment of poetic prose throughout the work entices even the least patient of audiences to read thoughtfully. For example, the reader feels the slave trade's flesh-eating nature through the author's depiction of Elmina Castle as a gluttonous monster hungry for human prey. In this and other examples, the author's masterful handling of language creates an entire world in which anyone who engages with this text can look beyond preconceived understandings of the meaning of black identity.

Although *Lose Your Mother* requires significant emotional expenditure, it is an essential addition to the canon of scholarship on Africa and its diaspora. The themes of the African view of African Americans, shame, and commodification touch on a range of issues that plague the wandering black psyche on both sides of the Atlantic. Embedded within the pages is a recognition that no place or heritage on this earth will ever heal the centuries-long trauma of slavery. Thus, *Lose Your Mother* invites its audience to embark on the unfinished journey to understanding the self. If nothing else, a reader will finish this book having recognized that individual identity is often more complicated and intricately related to broader societal concerns than it appears. Because the author's own exploration of the physical and cultural landscape of Ghana manifested differently than the typical narrative of return, readers leave *Lose Your Mother* with permission to mourn, celebrate, and dig into their own pasts more freely.

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Review of Tanisha Ford's *Liberated Threads: The Unifying Thread among Black Female Activists in the Diaspora*

Tochi Okeke

In *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (2017), author Tanisha Ford examines how black women in the latter half of the twentieth century used fashion as a means of protest. In conversations about politics and activism, topics such as government policies and state structures often arise, but rarely that of fashion. Although fashion and politics are often thought to exist separately from one another, Ford proves that the two are intertwined and highlights how black women used clothing in the soul era as a political statement to further advance their views on equality.

The development of “soul style” became a way for women of various countries and cultures to connect, unify, and reject the policies and ideologies that kept black bodies and minds oppressed across the globe. According to Ford, people of African descent have long believed that the soul—the mind, will, and emotions of a person—can be imparted onto food, music, and clothing and invoke emotional responses in those that engage with them (2017, 6). With a common experience of trauma and oppression, members of the African diaspora developed “soul style”—dress and hairstyles that captured these experiences, embodied resilience and survival, restored pride that had been stripped away by oppression, and protested subjugation. The Afro was one of soul style’s most iconic and visible expressions. The Afro as a popular trend was inspired by the natural hairstyles of Odetta, Nina Simone, and Mariam Makeba. While these styles were short, cropped, and not as full as the Afro, the unprocessed methods of hairstyling were seen as a rejection of Western beauty standards and associated with “Africanness” (32). Representing the power of black women to influence the global market and narratives surrounding fashion and culture (65), the Afro was exported around the world. By the 1970s, women from Harlem to South Africa were sporting the look to challenge notions of subjugation and feminine propriety (159).

Ford shows how, within movements dominated by men, women used what was accessible to them—clothing, traditionally a woman’s territory—to initiate new discussions about the intersections of race and gender. For black people as a whole, these artists sought to instill pride across the diaspora in relation to black history and achievements, which western domination and oppression had stripped away (31). Black women activists were able to arouse this pride, reject heteronormative European standards of beauty, and bring attention to the intersections of gender and race that had been left out of fights for freedom. This connection fostered global solidarity in the fight for racial and gender equality, creating a dynamic where women across continents inspired and drew inspiration from each other in political thought, methods of organizing, and clothing, which served as the armor in their battles for rights.

Providing great detail about the lives and activism of black women around the world, Ford centers their experiences and accomplishments, which are often erased in literature and discussions. The reader is forced to reckon with their arguments, beliefs, contributions, and femaleness. Chapter four, featuring Olive Morris, is particularly compelling, as it highlights her influential and trailblazing work as a Black Power activist in 1970s London (151). Ford places

Morris' activism within a greater cultural and historical context, acknowledging the influences she gained from the Black Panther Party that informed her personal style and method of organization, and drawing similarities between her work and that of black women activists like the women of the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) movement.

The Afro as well as the SNCC skin (e.g., denim overalls, jeans, casual clothes) that women activists donned were a challenge to notions of black middle-class respectability. "The emphasis placed on respectability performed through wearing one's Sunday best and having neatly pressed hair" was used by civil rights leaders to challenge stereotypes of black women as hypersexual and argumentative (72). This formal appearance, which civil rights activists believed was suitable for the camera, was not always practical. To give one example, Ford quotes Anne Moody, a student activist in SNCC, who recalled an incident where she and fellow activists were assaulted with "ketchup, mustard, and sugar pies" during a sit-in (72). Such attacks made it difficult to project middle-class images, especially when activists found themselves in hot, cramped jails, far away from fresh clothing and the attention of beauticians.

As hair straightening was a painful process and adhering to standards of respectability could not protect them from attacks, the women traded their processed locks and church clothes for Afros and denim. Denim, which did not look dirty even when it was, allowed black women to maintain a neat appearance and self-esteem while working as activists (78). It also aided them in making connections to working-class blacks (this "skin" constituted regular attire for laborers), who were often left out of movements for "racial uplift." The women activists' clothing, created out of hardship, became part of soul style, marking a rejection of prior beliefs about respectability and positioning casual clothing as acceptable and fashionable for activism and daily life.

Olive Morris, influenced by the dress of the SNCC women and the Black Panther Party, defied gender norms by dressing androgynously. Ford describes black women as "hyper-visible," visibly different because of their gender and blackness, and marked as threats to the social order (129). By living as "queer" and refusing to conform to societal gender expectations (145), Morris used her hyper-visible body as a black woman to elevate women's silenced voices and draw attention away from male-centered ideas about black power (151). Her activism, and that of her British counterparts, was influential in focusing attention on the oppression of black females and their experience of sexualized violence, both in society and within the Black Panther movement.

Throughout *Liberated Threads*, Ford does an excellent job of placing the fashion and activism of black women, separated by national boundaries and bodies of water, into dialogue with each other. Like Olive Morris, whose influences are included in her story, Ford does not write about movements on different continents separately, but intertwines the development of a region's unique soul style with the historical and cultural influences that went into producing the style. This is important because it demonstrates that fashion was not only a Western phenomenon, but something that women engaged in globally as a means of expression and protest. In a world dominated by Western (predominately American) ideals and perspectives, Ford's presentation of black women in Europe, the Caribbean, and Africa contradicts the popular narrative of them as imitators of American fashion, and traces their role as equal participants and contributors to the global development of soul style. Her method of naming African and Caribbean designers, hairdressers, and activists, as well as characterizing African cities as centers of innovative design, brings them out of relative obscurity. Ford's extensive use of sources—from interviews to speeches, photographs, magazines, and newspapers—further

solidify this point, providing visual evidence of artistry, innovation, and the political statements women made with their clothes. Excerpts from South Africa's *Drum* magazine, for instance, highlight both the integration of African culture and customs and a Western influence that worked to create a style that rejected conceptions of African backwardness and the effects of colonization.

While women drew inspiration from each other, there was also much complexity in the development of soul style. Soul style was a unifying force against racial and gendered oppression, but, as Ford illustrates, women also had differing views on what liberation through dress should look like. What did it mean to be black? Authentically black? What was whiteness, and what did it look like to reject whiteness to achieve the decolonization of one's body and mind? These questions were not easy to answer, and although soul style was a large factor in creating global solidarity, views of black identity sometimes created tension as people sought to use their style as a way to embody their blackness. Black American women, who were pressured to conform to white beauty standards of having long, straight hair, found short hairstyles and Afros to be freeing, a chance to connect to their African roots. However, for many South African women, these styles were not liberating, as they were reminders of an oppressive past, when black girls were forced to cut their elaborate braids under the apartheid system. The Afro, instead of reflecting modernity, was sometimes associated with "imperialism and cultural encroachment" (16). Along with attempts to be authentic, or to connect with one's people or past, came the worry of performative blackness. Ford does not lead the reader toward a particular answer to any of these questions, but instead showcases the diversity of black thought. This is significant because oppressed groups are often unrealistically expected to be uniform in thought and ideology. The creation of a memorable, adaptable, and dynamic means of solidarity such as soul style is proof that diversity of thought is not an impediment to progress. Soul style has once again become popular in the present day, with US and European celebrities and companies collaborating with and recognizing the work of African designers.

By presenting "usable history" (186) and revealing the importance of everyday events like choosing one's dress and individual style, Ford's work becomes relevant to young people, students, and activists looking to make a difference, since even the "little things" can be influential (187). Her book is written for the younger generation of scholars and activists (189), as a way to understand their foremothers' journeys in using fashion as politics and to chart their own paths. For US activists especially—and given America's position in the world as a shaper of narratives surrounding justice—the book offers a broader sense of activism and reminds the reader that civic engagement in different communities and spaces may not look as one might imagine it to look. In our achievement of black liberation, varying human experiences of marginalization and identity will come into play. We are all looking to be seen and heard, to have an equal opportunity to experience and enjoy life. Our differences should not get in the way.

Reference

Ford, Tanisha. 2017. *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.