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KUL SHAE MIZEAN—MOROCCAN RHETORIC OF RACISM: Obscured Moroccan Racism and Its Effects on Sub-Saharan African Refugees' Integration in Rabat

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KUL SHAE MIZEAN—MOROCCAN RHETORIC OF RACISM:
Obscured Moroccan Racism and Its Effects on Sub-Saharan African Refugees' Integration in
Rabat

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Independent Study Project
SIT Morocco: Migration and Transnational Identity
Spring 2017

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the overarching rhetoric surrounding racism against the Black community in Morocco, specifically targeted toward refugees and migrants, and how the presence of racism—and the absence of a public conversation about its manifestation in Morocco—impacts the extent to which Sub-Saharan African¹ refugees feel they have been able to integrate. This is an attempt to find how the blindness of the majority of Moroccans to racism promotes its perpetuation and hinders refugees' integration, and to understand how, by acknowledging and speaking out against racism, the human rights of refugees can be better advocated for by NGOs and the Moroccan government at large.

The research in this paper is primarily based on interviews conducted with the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs, the UNHCR², the UMT³, AMAPPE⁴, refugees living in Rabat, as well as extensive background research on Morocco's historical relationship with racism, slavery, and nationalism. This work is supplemented by a survey distributed to Moroccans living in Rabat in which I ask about the presence of racism and whether or not the participants see it as an ongoing problem in Morocco and how this diverges from the perspectives of those subject to racism's effects. Further, as part of my research, I present a rhetorical analysis of King Mohammed VI's speech on King and People's Revolution Day last year. In this analysis, I examine how the king's rhetoric consistently promotes a problematic and

¹ The term Sub-Saharan is contested, and that the experiences of Africans from the multitude of countries South of the Sahara cannot be generalized; however, for the purposes of my study which focused on Africans of a similar age and "race," but no common nationality, the term is useful and more accurate than other possible descriptors.

² The United Nations' Refugee Agency representation in Morocco, located in Rabat.

³ Acronym for the Union Marocaine Du Travail (Moroccan worker's union).

⁴ Acronym for L'Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise. (Moroccan Association for the Promotion and Support of Small Business).

inherently racist perspective of “enlightenment,” and recurrently situates Morocco outside Africa, perpetuating a principle of hierarchical racial classification delineating Moroccans and sub-Saharan Africans. The conclusions of this research suggest that, while there is certainly a legacy of anti-Blackness alive and well in Morocco, Moroccan nationalism has dangerously shrouded it—most Moroccans deny the existence of racism, and thus a very essential public dialogue about racism is being neglected both by the Moroccan people and the Moroccan government. Though the interviews were limited in scope, they provide an important narrative that appears common amongst sub-Saharan African refugees: racism in Morocco is present, growing, and inhibiting their integration into the Moroccan workforce and society. In order to improve refugees’ quality of lives in Morocco, this research indicates that the Moroccan government must fight racism; however, it must first start listening to the narratives of sub-Saharan African refugees when they assert that Moroccan racism is, indeed, unquestionable.

Introduction

“This is not fighting immigration—this is a hunt for blacks.”⁵

Since the second half of the 20th century, Morocco has developed into one of the globe’s leading nations of immigration. According to Hein de Haas, co-director of the International Migration Institute of the University of Oxford, Morocco has increasingly become a site of immigration for sub-Saharan African immigrants⁶. The Migration Policy Centre estimates that in 2012 there were 77,798 foreign nationals residing legally in Morocco out of a population of

⁵ Driss Maghraoui, “Islam and Cultural Diversity in Morocco,” in *Who Can Act for the Human?*, ed. Taieb Belghazi, Mohammed Ezroua, and Ronald Judy (Casablanca: Imprimerie Naiah El Jadida, 2008), 204.

⁶ Hein de Haas, “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?” *Migration Policy Institute*, March 19, 2014, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/morocco-setting-stage-becoming-migration-transition-country>.

around 33 million. There was also a population of long-term undocumented migrants of somewhere between 30,000 and 60,000. Meanwhile, a steady flow of migrants continue to attempt transit to Europe through Morocco.⁷ However, as restrictions on migrants hoping to reach the European Union increase steadily with time, these migrants are remaining in Morocco for extended periods of time or indefinitely. As this community of immigrants grows steadily denser, its relationship with the receiving society in Morocco also grows more tense; since the government's campaign to provide papers for migrants began, racially motivated attacks and harassment have increased.⁸ Thus, the issue of integrating both regular and irregular immigrants and refugees has become a prominent issue with which Morocco has yet to successfully grapple.

To that end, my research aims to investigate how the increasingly prominent racial tensions in Morocco impact the ability of sub-Saharan African refugees to integrate into the Moroccan workplace and social fabric. I also seek to analyze how the overwhelming silence about race issues from the Moroccan government and popular media perpetuates racism and its impacts on the lives of those subject to it. This is a timely research question because, while the public dialogue remains absent, mounting hostility of racism in Morocco is only growing more sinister as the Black migrant community grows. "Africa has become a synonym for poverty and violence for many Moroccans who wish to dissociate themselves from these negative images," says sociologist Fatima Ait Ben Lmadani, "and this affects the relationships they have with African migrants."⁹ This phenomenon is verified in a recent study done by the Moroccan

⁷ Harvard Field Study, *In the Same Boat: Morocco's Experience with Migrant Regularization* (Department of Global Health and Population, 2016). 4-10.

⁸ Aida Alami, "My Name is Not Negro," *Al Jazeera*, 16 April 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/name-not-negro-2014467119127512.html>.

⁹ Crétois, June and Hassan Hamden, "Moroccan Survey: African, But Not Completely," *ALMONITOR*, 3 Feb 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2013/02/morocco-survey-african-heritage.html#>

Association of Migrant Studies and Research in which Moroccans were assessed for their opinions on sub-Saharan peoples. This study concluded that 40% of those surveyed did not relate to sub-Saharan Africans as their neighbors, 70% would refuse to share housing with someone of sub-Saharan origin, and 60% would not marry someone from this region.¹⁰

Thus, while only 14% of Moroccans surveyed in 2014 believed racism was an issue in Morocco, it feels all too real to the Black community trying to integrate in the country.¹¹ In another study by AMERM, the vast majority of sub-Saharans surveyed felt that they were “held in contempt” or “viewed as inferior or threatening” by Moroccans.¹² Considering how this socio-cultural context exudes hostility toward living, working, and cohabitating with sub-Saharan Africans, the difficulties of integration for refugees seem self-evident. While a number of studies have been published examining racism in the Moroccan context and many scholars have explored Morocco as a burgeoning world leader in immigration, none have analyzed the intersection between these two phenomena. As such, my work will seek to uncover this relationship and why it is important: the tangible impacts it has on the quality of life of some of Morocco’s most vulnerable populations, sub-Saharan African refugees. While examining the implications of government discourse, I also hope to amplify the voices of refugees for whom racism is a daily reality.

Through the course of this paper, I argue that, though the overarching public and institutional discourse in Morocco denies a role in “othering” the Black community (in fact, a public dialogue about race in Morocco is essentially nonexistent), racism in Morocco is in fact

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ian Law, “Mediterranean Racisms: Connections and Complexities in the Racialization of the Mediterranean Region,” (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pg. 47.

¹² Crétois and Hamden, “Moroccan Survey.”

imbedded into the cultural landscape and is currently being highlighted by its recent influx of immigration. Moreover, I argue that racism negatively impacts the extent to which sub-Saharan African refugees feel that they can integrate into the Moroccan workforce and society at large. To make my argument, I begin by exploring the literature around these topics: broadly, Moroccan's historical precedent of nationalism and racism, and then theories of integration. I then discuss my theory and methodology as well as my positionality as a student doing research in Morocco. My paper continues to discuss my findings: first, of my rhetorical criticism of government discourse surrounding race and integration, secondly of my survey assessing the general awareness of and sensitivity to racism by Moroccans, and finally of my interviews with sub-Saharan African refugees and the organizations aiming to support their integration. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on the limitations of my study, making suggestions for future research, and elaborating on the broader implications of my work.

Literature Review

I. *Moroccan Nationalism and Racism*

“The repressive aspect of nationalism comes more smoothly in the guise of equality and fraternity because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”¹³

“They refuse to be African while being incapable of being European.”¹⁴

In order to better understand the modern manifestation of racism in Morocco, it is essential to first examine its history and the ways in which it has been nurtured in Moroccan culture. To start, my research has been informed by Laura Menin's analysis of anti-Black racism

¹³ Driss Maghraoui, “Islam and Cultural Diversity in Morocco,” page 212.

¹⁴ Ibid. Moustapha, Senagalese student in Morocco.

in the context in Morocco's legacy of slavery in the anthropological journal *Shadows of Slavery*¹⁵. In her work, Menin argues that, due to its combination of colonial legacy and history of black slavery, Morocco is subject to a "hierarchization of the pro-slave society," in which it becomes culturally self-evident that white skin holds primacy to black skin.¹⁶ Established by Sultan Moulay Ismail's forced conscription of black bodies for his army in the 17th century, the ideological foundation of a society divided by color remains a very real facet of Moroccan culture. By conflating blackness with slavery, Sultan Moulay Ismail set a precedent that, much like it did in the United States, relegated black bodies to an association with physical labor and servitude. Further, she asserts that the historically rooted anti-Black prejudices are deeply entangled with and shaped by current media and political discourses, prolonging and reifying Morocco's veiled racism—something I examine further by means of rhetorical criticism of King Mohammed VI's speech from last year.

Menin's work is supplemented in my background research by Leila Chreiteh's "A Racism Without Race: A Moroccan Case Study of Race Denial."¹⁷ Chreiteh's article expands upon Menin's analysis of Morocco's historical relationship with slavery while providing modern-day examples of Moroccan nationalism and a discussion of its racialized discourse. Chreiteh asserts that slavery's application of gradation in relation to racial classification delineates the realm of possibilities for each race; "higher beings," or those with whiter skin, are naturally of greater worth, as discussed by Menin. Over time, however, this conception of race has become archaic; instead, a principle of "racial difference" has replaced blatant racism in

¹⁵ Laura Menin, "Anti-Black Racism": Debating Racial Prejudices and the Legacies of Slavery in Morocco," *Shadows of Slavery in West Africa and Beyond, An Historical Anthropology*, (2016).

¹⁶ Ibid. Page 3.

¹⁷ Leila Chreiteh, "A Racism Without Race: A Moroccan Case Study of Race Denial," *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, 2016.

public dialogue about race.¹⁸ In this conception of racial discourse, light-skinned people acknowledge the ideological and false foundations of “race” and thus declare that, seeing race as social construction, all people are the same—effectively erasing and denying the existence and effects of racism. This is problematic because, though racial categories are certainly constructed and fluid, they are socially and culturally very real, as are their effects on the quality of life of racialized bodies. Chreiteh affirms that the denial of racism does not eradicate Morocco’s racist history or racist expressions, but rather continues to deploy the same classifications of worth with different, discursively formed justifications.¹⁹ Chreiteh argues that this racial discourse exhibits itself in Morocco as a consequence of Morocco’s hyper-nationalism.

In her article, Chreiteh examines how nationalism was utilized as a tool to unite Moroccans under the State after independence in an attempt to reaffirm authority after colonization. Further, nationalism is often used as a means to classify pure and impure racial identities. When state apparatuses utilize racialized discourse, modes of exclusion help to maintain authority and power—human bodies are classified, ordered, valorized, devalued, forced to work, alienated from their labor product, disenfranchised, and restricted in their right of social entry and mobility.²⁰ In this way, the state and its racialized discourse “codefine each other’s respective epistemological authority and power by successfully conditioning the populace,” providing the perfect fodder to nurture nationalist and “othering” ideologies.²¹

Finally, Chreiteh assesses the social consequences of the Eurocentric civilizational rhetoric embedded in Morocco’s post-colonial cultural foundation. According to her article, the

¹⁸ Ibid. Page 13.

¹⁹ Ibid. Page 13.

²⁰ Ibid. Page 14.

²¹ Ibid. Page 14.

Moroccan mentality places Europeans and their values on a pedestal—specifically civilizational and enlightenment rhetoric. “The colonizers manipulated the modern ideology of nationhood to justify their presence in the barbaric African lands as a means of civilizing them and bringing them into the New World,” and this rhetorical legacy coupled with Moroccan hyper-nationalism promotes further exclusion of Black bodies in Morocco.²² Considering many Moroccans do not see themselves as part of Africa, Moroccans often see Black Africans from south of the Sahara as “less developed” than themselves, the “civilized” and lighter-skinned North Africans. This sentiment is expounded by “Who Can Act for the Human,” a conference held by the Faculty of Letters at the University Mohammed V in Rabat.²³ In this conference, Driss Maghraoui from Al Akhawayn University explores enlightenment thought in the Moroccan context. In his work, Maghraoui asserts that one of the most important effects of the colonial encounter in Morocco was the “elaboration of a dominant language directly drawn from the universalizing claims of the enlightenment as a bourgeois culture,” imposing a hierarchy of progress and rationality.²⁴ In this way, the cultural inferiority of Africans was absolutely fundamental to the colonial project and enlightenment thought. While a powerful ideology about how to rationalize the organization of human societies, the enlightenment was replete with racism and remains a hindrance to an atmosphere that respects cultural diversity and fruitful cross-cultural exchange.²⁵

This paper will be extrapolating on and working within the context of this existing research surrounding Morocco’s nationalism and “racial difference” rhetoric. While the existing literature examines the existence of racism and hyper-nationalism, it does not analyze how this

²² Ibid. Page 27.

²³ Driss Maghraoui, “Islam and Cultural Diversity in Morocco,” page 212.

²⁴ Ibid. Page 205.

²⁵ Ibid. Page 207.

socio-cultural context impacts the ability of Black refugees to attain the quality of life they deserve in Morocco. In this way, I believe my research will be able to provide a new dimension to the existing literature. Before my research can examine the element of integration, however, it is important to better understand what “integration” means and the methods by which it can be achieved.

II. Refugee Presence and Integration

The first piece of literature that informed my research about integration was an article published by the Department of Migration Management of the International Organization of Migration (IOM).²⁶ Established in 1951, the IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration; with 166 member states, the IOM has been able to cultivate a uniquely global and inclusive conception of what integration means to migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people. In this conception of integration, the IOM emphasizes that there are two parties involved in the integration process: immigrants and the receiving society. Though these actors must work together to achieve integration, they are inherently unequal: the receiving society, in terms of its institutional structure and in the way it reacts to migrants, has substantially more agency in the outcome of the process.²⁷ In this way, it is particularly important for the receiving societies’ government and its institutions to prepare its constituents for the arrival of newcomers and to promote inclusivity. The IOM aptly asserts that “integration and exclusion are mirrored concepts,” and without a community’s moral leader (in the Moroccan context, the Monarchy and his Ministry) reflecting an inclusive example, integration is unlikely.²⁸

²⁶ “Migrant Integration,” *International Organization for Migration*, last modified January 2017, <https://www.iom.int/migrant-integration>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The complexities of integration are further expanded upon in Violette Gul-Rechlewicz's article, "The Role of the Non-Governmental Organizations in Multicultural Society," presented at the International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences in 2016.²⁹ This article examines NGOs in the Netherlands and the services they offer to migrants and refugees in respect to their process of integration. This case study is relevant because many Dutch NGOs are often staffed by immigrants and refugees themselves, or their children, and thus have a profound understanding of the realities of immigrant and refugee settlement and integration. In her work, Gul-Rechlewicz presents lessons to be learned from the Dutch context. First, the processes of immigration integration cover several levels. The first relates to the existential problems; housing, work, education, and the willingness of the admitting environment to accept newcomers.³⁰ The second involves the "consolidated-institutional" level, or activities in the socio-cultural environment and engagement with the political sphere. However, it is important to acknowledge that "the job of the state is to ensure good existential conditions to newcomers, therefore an effectively managed immigration law-oriented policy on labor, education, and housing takes place first on the governmental level," thus the process of integration must begin with action taken by a government and perpetuated by law and policy meant to protect the rights of immigrants and refugees.³¹

Theory and Methodology

To start, I felt it was imperative that I examine the way in which institutional narratives were ignoring (or shrouding) the very real racism found in Moroccan culture and society. In

²⁹ Violette Gul-Rechlewicz, "The Role of the Non-Governmental Organizations in Multicultural Society," *ADVED 2* (2016): 419-427.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Page 423.

³¹ *Ibid.* Page 426.

order to understand the perspective of the Moroccan government in general, this paper will engage in a rhetorical criticism of King Mohammed VI's speech on King and People's Revolution Day in 2016. This speech was selected because it focuses on integration of sub-Saharan African refugees, and occurs shortly before Morocco's reintegration into the African Union, a significant moment in the history of Morocco's relationship with sub-Saharan Africa. Defined by Sonja Foss, rhetorical criticism is a qualitative research method designed for the "systematic investigation and explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes."³² In other words, this paper will attempt to understand *how* the King's speech works rhetorically and what we can learn about the rhetor's personal beliefs woven into his dialogue.

My analysis will focus on the artistic criterion of King Mohammed VI's speech and engage in a psychosocial criticism of how those criteria contribute to the rhetor's persuasiveness. According to Jim Kuypers in "The Art of Rhetorical Criticism", the psychosocial perspective of rhetorical criticism is one in which we focus on the language, description, and evidence that "exert strong emotional influences on viewers and listeners."³³ Here, the critic's primary goal is to analyze and explain how and why the audience is affected by the King's persuasive techniques. This kind of criticism focuses on the audience, the rhetor, and the way in which the rhetor's message engages the audience; there is a strong focus on the psychological power of evidence and language on audiences.

³² Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2009), 209.

³³ Jim Kuypers, *The Art of Rhetorical Criticism* (Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 2004), 147.

To further investigate the ways in which the Moroccan public at large conceptualizes race and racism, I conducted a survey-based study based on whether the participants felt race was an issue in Morocco and whether they felt sub-Saharan Africans felt welcome and integrated into Moroccan society. Working within a limited two-week time frame, I tried to gather responses from as many people as possible by making the survey available online. I was able to interview 18 people living in Morocco (questions included in Appendix). As the surveys were conducted online, I was unable to ask for clarification or to ask follow-up questions about interviewees' responses; further, the survey was written in French, as I am not fluent in Arabic, making the survey only accessible to those literate in French. My participants were accessed through my advisor, who distributed the survey to his students, and my Moroccan peers who distributed the survey to their friends. Due to the small sample size and limited scope of participants (those who live in Rabat and have access to smart phones or computers), assumptions cannot be made about all Moroccans, but the findings of my research generally coincides with conclusions found by existing research on the subject.

Finally, considering the goal of my research was to understand the impact of racism on sub-Saharan African refugees' integration, I hoped to focus my research on interviews with refugees themselves. However, considering the nature of many refugees' personal histories, many are understandably hesitant to have their narratives recorded and written about, even anonymously. I was able to interview with two sub-Saharan African refugees about their experiences with racism and how it related to their integration in Morocco—I made my initial contact through a program site visit to Africulture, a local NGO run by and for migrants and refugees in Rabat. Africulture, officially recognized in 2013, provides a myriad of services for migrants and refugees: transportation to schools, distributing food donations, supplies for

mothers, and assistance with complicated forms and documentation necessitated by the Moroccan Ministry. After this original interview, this participant graciously agreed to help me find peers of his to be part of my research, but most people understandably erred on the side of caution and chose not to participate. However, I was able to connect with a friend of my colleague's host family who was willing to participate in my research. In addition, I was fortunately able to find other varied narratives in previous studies about race and racism in Morocco to supplement my own research.

In total, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with sub-Saharan refugees; I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured interviews because my intention was to explore peoples' narratives to a greater depth than what structured interview would allow. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible and allow for a natural flow of conversation, providing not only the opportunity to discuss more subjects, but also an environment more suited to making participants comfortable discussing them. The overarching goal of each of these interviews was to find whether these participants felt that racism was an issue in Morocco and in what ways the racism to which they have been subjected has impeded their ability to integrate into the Moroccan workforce and society at large. Ultimately, my intention was to engage with and amplify the oft underrepresented voices of those exposed to the covert racism of Morocco in contrast to the predominant silence about the issue from the institutional narratives and media.

In order to conform to appropriate ethical standards, I ensured that my contacts were made through those who my participants could trust: their peers or organizations with whom they have worked in the past. Before conducting interviews, I obtained informed and positive consent from my participants orally and by presenting them with a consent form (see Appendices) in French. I also made sure to obtain consent to record interviews and informed my participants that

I would delete their recorded accounts once my research was completed. My participants also had my contact information so they would be able to contact me at any point if they wished to withdraw any of their statements. I have omitted the names of participants to preserve anonymity, and have omitted any details that could clearly and easily expose the identities of my participants.

Finally, it is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research. As a white, cis-gendered, college-educated United States citizen with the socioeconomic privilege to study and perform research in Morocco, there is an inherent power imbalance between myself and the participants of my research, as there is in all academic research of this nature. Throughout the research process, I attempted to address this power imbalance by staying cognizant of which questions would be appropriate, and which would be putting the participants in a vulnerable position; additionally, I strove to prioritize the comfort and safety of the participants by emphasizing the control they had over the progress of the interview. Ultimately though, it is impossible to entirely mitigate power imbalances in an interview setting; power and privilege, as in all facets of our lives, impact the way we relate to one another and how comfortable we feel in our environments. Thus, I hope to continue to acknowledge my position as a researcher and how it biases my writing (and to also acknowledge how my privilege blinds me to the ways I likely still have to grow as an ally to those impacted by my research). My conclusions are not the objective truth—they are colored by my privilege and personal life experiences. Though my subjectivity is inevitably present in my research and analysis, I aim to present my findings in a manner that does justice to the narratives of the participants.

Findings

I. Rhetorical Analysis

“Denial of racism, for the political elite, is a very powerful element to its reproduction.”³⁴

The subject of this rhetorical analysis is King Mohammed VI’s address on August 20, 2016, the 63rd anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People. To perform this analysis, I utilized Morocco World News’ English translation of the original text.³⁵ In this text, the King takes this opportunity to discuss Morocco’s impending reunion into the African Union, an international organization promoting African solidarity from which Morocco broke away after the seating of the self-proclaimed Saharan Arab Democratic Republic in 1984.³⁶ This rhetorical act is centered around the King’s desire to promote feelings of solidarity and mutualism between Morocco and the rest of Africa; he emphasizes the work Morocco has done to support its African brothers, both within Morocco’s borders in reference to sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees as well as abroad, and addresses how Morocco can benefit through partnership with the African Union. By critiquing the rhetoric used by the King throughout his rhetorical act, I believe there is much to learn about Morocco’s motivations behind African solidarity as well as the Moroccan government’s willingness to acknowledge and fight racism against sub-Saharan African refugees in Morocco.

³⁴ Chreiteh, Leila. “A Racism Without Race.” pg. 8

³⁵ “Text of King Mohammed VI’s Speech on King and People’s Revolution Day,” *Morocco World News*, 20 August 2016, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2016/08/194754/text-king-mohammed-vis-speech-king-peoples-revolution-day/>

³⁶ Anouar Boukhars, “Morocco and the African Union: Back into the Fold,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 25 February 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/02/25/morocco-and-african-union-back-into-fold-pub-68130>

King Mohammed VI opens his rhetorical act by discussing the exile of King Mohammed V on August 20th, 1953, the historical event that gave rise to the tradition of the King's public address on August 20th. To the Moroccan people, this day represents a climax in the battle between King Mohammed V against French occupation. "To the dismay of the colonial power, [the King's exile] contributed to strengthen the domestic front in Morocco and the unity of Moroccans behind their legitimate sultan," a collective memory for the Moroccan public in the success of their nationalism.³⁷ The French colonizers then installed a puppet sultan which further inflamed nationalist passions until Mohammed V returned in 1955.³⁸

"Besides having deep-rooted national significance relating to the Moroccan citizens' strong attachment to their King," claims the rhetor, "the celebration of this event is also associated with Morocco being part of the Maghreb and of Africa." Here, the rhetor's use of language is already defining his relation to his audience and promotes multiple personae. By emphasizing the "Moroccan citizen's strong attachment to their King," Mohammed VI asserts himself as a beloved and well-respected leader. Further, as he elaborates on the sacrifice made in the name of Morocco's freedom and independence, he situates himself as a sort of legacy—he and his government are the culmination of decades of sacrifice and struggle. By selling these personae to his audience, the King is laying the groundwork for his rhetorical authority; based on Morocco's historical precedent of nationalism, the Moroccan people should trust and respect their King. His introduction also serves to introduce the primary subject of his rhetorical work: finding a "proper" location for Morocco in its conception of Africa.

³⁷ Gerald Loftus, "Revolution, King, and the People: Morocco 1953," *Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies*, 20 August, 2013, <https://legation.ipower.com/blog/?p=111>

³⁸ *Ibid.*

He goes on to detail the problems plaguing “African peoples” such as “backwardness, poverty, migration, wars and conflicts, in addition to despair and succumbing to extremist and terrorist groups,” and expresses that his interest in rejoining the African Union is a clear illustration of Morocco’s commitment to “continue supporting the causes of African peoples.” This phrasing is particularly poignant; here and throughout his rhetorical act, the King situates Morocco and Moroccan people outside of the African context. Moreover, Morocco is consistently placed on a civilizational hierarchy far and above the rest of Africa (as not “backward” or “succumbing” to extremism, for example). Here, the rhetor highlights the ways in which Morocco has developed infrastructure, built schools and training centers, and financially supported smallholders in sub-Saharan African nations. “Morocco always gives to the peoples of *its* continent,” claims the King, as Africa is the “embodiment of the country’s strategic depth.” This is an interesting rhetorical switch—somewhat reminiscent to a colonial mindset, Mohammed VI is boasting about his civilizational mission in Africa (in fact, he uses the word “develop” or “development” nine times throughout his rhetorical act and oddly refers to Africa as *Morocco’s* continent) while subtly acknowledging there are tactical benefits to Morocco’s alliance with the African Union.

It is certainly true that there are strategic benefits to Morocco’s return to the AU. According to Anouar Boukhars of the Social Science Research Council, while Morocco has sought to maintain influence in the African Union, opting for the “empty chair,” in recent years “it has become clear that an empty chair ceded the strategic advantage to its adversary,” or the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).³⁹ Morocco’s immediate goal, it seems, is to nudge the AU toward neutrality and garner support for a political solution to the Western Sahara

³⁹ Anouar Boukhars, “Morocco and the African Union.”

dispute. Morocco's trade relations with the European Union are entangled in court rulings and legal considerations over the Western Sahara, and thus Morocco's need has "never been greater" to not only mitigate its contest with the SADR, but also to lessen its dependence on European markets through a rebalance toward Africa's quickly growing economies.⁴⁰ Thus, while the King vaunts his civilizational project for sub-Saharan Africa, he explains that "it is natural that Morocco should benefit from cooperation with African sister nations," (though apparently excluding the SADR), his words toe precariously close to colonial rhetoric in which the players are seen as anything but equals. Because of this, the totality of the King's rhetoric of African solidarity is exposed as tenuous at best.

The King continues on to address sub-Saharan Africans who live within Morocco's borders as well. "We attach as much importance to improving the livelihood of *Africans in their countries* as we do to African migrants in Morocco," he says, again ignoring Morocco's geographical relation to Africa. Mohammed VI introduces Morocco as "one of the first countries" to adopt a policy regarding sub-Saharan migrants and emphasizes its focus on humanitarian values. Rhetorically, the King is presenting Morocco as a global leader and an impassioned actor in the fight for human rights. In this way, the rhetor hopes to insulate Morocco from critique; essentially, he is insinuating that the international sphere should not decry Morocco's efforts if others are doing less. The king makes this clear later in his rhetorical work: "as for those who criticize Morocco, or dare to disparage my country, they have yet to provide migrants with something—if only a fraction of what we have offered," essentially deflecting any critique on Morocco's integration policy on completely unrelated policies adopted in the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Mediterranean. This logic is not only questionable⁴¹, but dangerous: it presents Morocco and its institutions as entirely hostile to evaluation of its integration policy and thus unwilling to hear criticism of those in greatest need.

It becomes increasingly clear, by the end of the King's speech, that this is precisely the case. Mohammad VI claims Morocco's policy for migrant and refugee integration "*has provided* the conditions needed for migrants to reside, work, and lead a dignified life within our community." He speaks in the past-tense here, as though this policy has already succeeded in creating an environment perfectly suited for migrant integration, while migrants and refugees continue to struggle to find work, housing, and build lives for themselves in Morocco. This word choice is important because it insinuates the "conditions needed" have been provided—migrants have everything they need to flourish, and if they fail, it has nothing to do with legislative framework, but rather it must be the personal failure of migrants. The rhetor goes on to pronounce integration as all but inevitable considering the "generosity, hospitality, and warmth of [Moroccans'] welcome" to sub-Saharan refugees and migrants. Finally, he goes as far as to explicitly say that any difficulties encountered by sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco "have nothing to do with the color of their skin, their nationality, or their status as migrants. They enjoy the same rights," as though legislation can be equated to practice. Here, we see the Moroccan institutions' perception of race in Morocco: racism does not exist, and any problems that sub-Saharan African refugees chance upon have nothing to do with race or Morocco's legislative framework.

⁴¹ This is an example of a logical fallacy referred to as *tu quoque*. *Tu quoque* is a very common "Red Herring" tactic in which one attempts to defend oneself or another from criticism by turning the critique back against the accuser, as though he himself is not guilty of the accusation. <http://www.fallacyfiles.org/tuquoque.html>

In concluding his rhetorical act, the King has acted out a true post-colonial nation-state performance. The Moroccan government is expected to adhere to dominant attitudes and ideologies of democratic and humanitarian norms and ideals and thus must protect against accusations of intolerance and racism from the international community, as well as accusations which contest the pre-colonial notion that the region could not attain nationhood, homogeneity, or cohesion.⁴² Thus, at the expense of ignoring the voices of sub-Saharan African victims of racial violence and exclusion, the King claims that Moroccans constitute a homogenous welcoming community which is effectively “colorblind.” The sociodiscursive implications of the anti-African, pro-Arab, and Francophone nationalism pervading the conception of “Moroccan-ness” are found throughout King Mohammad VI’s rhetorical act and point to a significant disparity between the image of Morocco promoted by its government and the reality for the Black community trying to integrate into its society.

II. *Survey: Is Race a Problem in Morocco?*

“*Everything is great: we are all Moroccan*” — كل شيء لباس: كلنا مغاربة

In order to analyze the results of my survey, I intend to compare my survey responses based on three words the participants were asked to define: race, racism, and *azzi*, a slur used in Morocco targeting Black people, and the extent to which they felt race was a problem in Morocco. Though I initially intended to divide the surveys into categories delineating the nationalities of the respondents based on the assumption that socialization as a Moroccan would play a determining role in their views on race, only one of the respondents was not born in Morocco, so I decided instead to focus on definition and its relation to public discourse. Participants responded to open-

⁴² Leila Chreiteh, “A Racism Without Race,” pg. 26.

ended questions about how they would define their own race and the words “racism” and “*azzi*.” I will compare these results to those found in Leila Chreiteh’s work in which she assesses how often these words are heard by her participants in order to examine any patterns between exposure and understanding of these terms. Lastly, I asked whether race was a problem in Morocco and to what extent participants see the Moroccan government engage with a public dialogue about race in Morocco. For a complete list of the questions asked in my survey, see the Appendices.

“Race”

The following are the responses given when asked how respondents defined their race:

Moroccan	7
Arab	4
“white skin”	2
Human	2
Male	1
“Brune”	1
“Chelh”	1

In order to assess the general understanding of what the word “race” means, I asked respondents to define their own race. As shown in the table above, the answers for this question varied the most of all my definitional questions. The most frequent response, Moroccan, was a very interesting response in the context of my research. While representing an overall mistaken conception of race (Moroccan being a nationality rather than a race), it also embodies, at least within the context of this limited survey, the Moroccan brand of nationalism discussed in Maghraoui’s work. There were some interesting answers here—the human race generally and the concept of skin tone, both vaguely pointing to features constitutive of the concept of race but certainly not interchangeable definitions. “Male” is another curious answer to define one’s race, and may either indicate that this respondent views the sexes as separate species of people, or that he simply did not know how to define his own race beyond his sex. The final two responses,

“brune” and “chelh” are unknown to this writer, beyond potentially being surnames used in Morocco. It is possible these respondents either did not understand the question, simply did not know how to define race, or attempted to define their race in verbiage unfamiliar to me. It is important to note that French may be a second or third language for many participants and this could also account for the uncertainty with terms used.

In any case, most respondents failed to define themselves in terms of a racial category. Most respondents used either their nationality or vague descriptions having to do with features of race. Considering the variance in answers being the greatest of all definitional questions asked and the inaccuracy of a majority of them, it would seem this is not a term used frequently in public racialized discourse in Morocco; Chreiteh’s work confirms this. When asked how often participants heard the word “race,” they could respond never, sometimes, monthly, frequently, or daily. In this case, 89% of the participants heard this word used less than once a month; 33% claimed they had never been asked about the term used before.⁴³

“Racism”

The following are the responses given when asked what the meaning of “racism” is:

Racial hierarchy	5
Discrimination; difference as inferior	4
Hierarchy of human groups	2
Actions of white people without culture or conscience	1
Inequality between skin color, sexual preference, or race	1

Here we see a variety of responses that, while similar, insinuate a very different image of the social consequences of racism in each respondents’ perspective. For the purposes of my research, I will be using the Anti-Defamation League’s definition of racism as follows: “Racism

⁴³ Leila Chreiteh, “A Racism Without Race,” pg. 48.

is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another, that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics."⁴⁴ Thus, while the most common answer was in line with this definition, the answers following represent a vague demonstration of inequality or discrimination in general, without racial implications. The most interesting response for me was "the actions of white people without culture or conscience," which, while alluding to the distinction between racism's concentration on race as opposed to general discrimination, fails to acknowledge the varied manifestations of racism (racism is not simply action taken, it can exist latently), and though an argument can certainly be made that white people are generally the arbiters of racism, it is not exclusive to white people. As discussed by Menin, racism is inherently hierarchical; while white always holds primacy, anyone with light skin holds a superior position on the hierarchy than those with dark skin.

Therefore, when compared to the definition of racism above, a majority of respondents were unable to correctly identify what "racism" is. Based on the varied definitions provided in this survey, the interviewees indicate that there is not a frequent accurate usage of this word in the racialized discourse of Morocco they have been exposed to. This is, again, verified in Chreiteh's research. Her study found that, of all her respondents, 84% heard the word "racism" used monthly or less.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Racism," *The Anti-Defamation League*, last updated January 2017, <https://www.adl.org/racism>

⁴⁵ Leila Chreiteh, "A Racism Without Race," pg. 48.

“Azzi”

The following are the responses given when asked what the meaning of “azzi” is:

Black skin	7
“Negro, n*gger,” stigmatized	4
African, stigmatized	1
African, no qualifiers	1
Term of endearment for Black friends	1
N*gger, no qualifiers	1

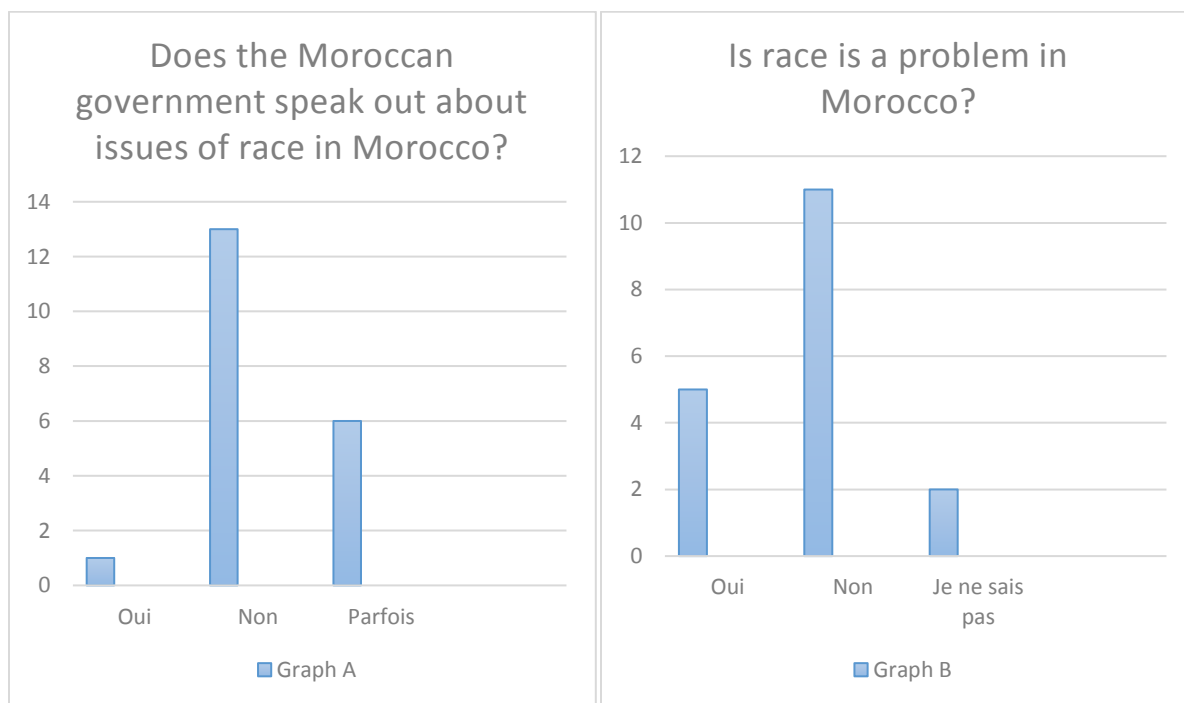
This term accumulated even more variance than “racism” among respondents. While all six responses refer somehow to Blackness, this word also came with more contextualizing than any of the other definition questions. For instance, black without any qualifiers, black but stigmatized as a means to differentiate Moroccans from the Black community, specifically related to African Black people, Black as a nickname for a friend, or as relating to well-known slurs used against the Black community in the United States. As far as acknowledging the term’s relationship to a history of racism and anti-Blackness, only five of the respondents specified that the term is used in a deprecating manner. While all responses engaged with the word’s use as a tool to define Blackness, the way in which interviewees explained their responses was particularly interesting—these answers were overall the longest of all the questions in my survey.

While there is an overall lack of consensus about the specific meaning of the word “*azzi*,” about half of the interviewees discussed using the word themselves and insisted the meaning was dependent on the intent of the user. The variance in responses is interesting in light of Chreiteh’s findings about its frequency of use. 77% of Chreiteh’s participants heard the term “*azzi*” at least once a month, with 42% hearing it used frequently or daily.⁴⁶ The apparently ubiquitous nature of this racial slur, if following the previous pattern in my research, would indicate that

⁴⁶ Leila Chreiteh, “A Racism Without Race,” pg. 48.

respondents should have a relatively homogenous, accurate conception of what this term designates. However, the manner in which participants qualified their answers and their personal use of the slur provides some insight into the discrepancies. Because many of the participants use this term casually with their peers, they do not view it as weaponized racialized discourse, but rather a neutral term of racial designation. Further, the belief that the intent of the user can negate the racist historical legacy of the term may impact the extent to which respondents feel the term is stigmatized against the Black community.

I was also interested in finding how the exposure to and understanding of these terms may impact the extent to which Moroccans are aware of race and race issues in their country in order to examine how the absence of a necessary institutional discourse may inhibit Moroccans' understanding of racism. I asked participants if they hear their representatives discussing race and provided an open-ended option to explain when and why the Moroccan government talks about race. I then asked respondents if they felt there were racial tensions present in Morocco.



Graph A represents respondents' perspective of whether or not their government is taking an active stand against racism and whether or not an institutional dialogue about racism exists in Morocco. While a vast majority of participants responded that they never hear the Moroccan government discussing "issues of race" in Morocco, I provided an open-ended response in which they could elaborate on *which* "issues" the government discussed and when. Only three participants chose to elaborate, but each said the same thing: rarely, but generally in reference to integrating migrants. This is interesting because, within the context of my research, I have found that when the king discusses race in reference to integrating migrants, he is merely denying its influence (see section III.I, Rhetorical Analysis). Thus, it appears that there is very little (if at all) institutional dialogue about racial tensions in Morocco. This is increasingly important because, according to discourse analysis scholar Teun van Dijk in *Discourse and Denial of Racism*, "if leading politicians and the media refuse to acknowledge racism, there will be no public debate, no changing of public opinion, and, thus, no substantive change in the system of power relations."⁴⁷ In a country like Morocco, where the popular media is controlled and managed by the government, this would make the fight against racism difficult indeed.

Finally, I asked participants if they felt that race was a problem in Morocco (Graph B). Considering how integral it is for a nation's government to lead and facilitate honest and realistic conversations about race, I was interested to see how this lack of dialogue from the Moroccan government could influence the general public's opinion. Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming majority asserted that they did not feel race was an issue in their country. "Kul shae mizean; we're all Moroccan," claimed one respondent. Though there was only one participant who said they were not born in Morocco, they responded that they *did* in fact believe race was a problem

⁴⁷ Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse and the Denial of Racism," *Discourse and Society*, pg. 96.

here, as well as stating they felt they were treated differently due to the color of their skin. This is a poignant result as it points to the gaps between the rhetoric promoted by the Moroccan government and social landscape of nationalism and the actual lived experience of migrants in Morocco. Further, it represents the difficulties that arise when the overarching discourse is that racism simply does not exist.

III. Interviews: Experiences with Racism and the Struggle to Integrate

“You can have paper, you can have ID, but you are afraid all the time. You are not protected.”⁴⁸

Through the course of my interviews with refugees and the organizations with whom they work, I sought to answer three important questions I believe give vital insight into the experience of Black African refugees trying to integrate and build lives for themselves in Morocco. First, I strove to find what “integration” means to those attempting to achieve it. Then, I sought out the Black Africans’ perspective of the question about whether or not race was a problem in Morocco to compare that perspective to those of light-skinned Moroccans (see section III.II, Survey). Finally, I hoped to find some insight into how the absence of public conversations surrounding race have impacted the lives of those subject to racism in Morocco.

What is integration?

In order to truly understand how race plays a role in integration in Morocco, I believe it is essential to first define what integration looks like to those striving to attain it. Perhaps the most common theme I found throughout my interviews was the need for a greater accessibility to the

⁴⁸ Interview with Elombe; name changed for the protection of the interviewee.

workforce. During the first interview I conducted with Elombe,⁴⁹ a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who has lived in Morocco for ten years, I asked him what he felt must be the first step in integrating refugees in Morocco—he immediately answered that a refugee must have work, in order to pay for his home, his food, and his healthcare. Reminiscent to the theory of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Elombe explained how one must have some basic sense of stability and security in order to achieve more complex needs, like social belonging or cultural integration. This sentiment was echoed in my interview with AMAPPE, whose slogan states, “Through work, we can integrate socially.” Both Elombe and the representatives at AMAPPE argued that, in order for refugees to have true autonomy over their lives, they must be able to support themselves independently. Not only does a steady income provide independence, it also presents sub-Saharan African refugees an opportunity to meet and engage with Moroccans—during my visit to the UNHCR, they firmly highlighted the importance for Moroccans and refugees to work *together*. The workplace, they said, is one of the central spaces in which populations of people can blend and learn about one another.

Unfortunately, sub-Saharan African refugees encounter immense difficulty in finding employment, formal or otherwise, in Morocco. During my interview with Muzuri,⁵⁰ a refugee living in Rabat from Senegal, he argued that Moroccan employers prefer to hire Moroccans, a fact elaborated upon during my interview with the UNHCR. They explained that there is a “Moroccan-first” policy, necessitating that employers try to hire Moroccan nationals before any immigrants. Refugees are supposed to be exempt from this policy and treated as a Moroccan, but the UNHCR claims many employers are unaware of this precedent; Muzuri asserts that, often,

⁴⁹ Name changed for the protection of the interviewee.

⁵⁰ Name changed for the protection of the interviewee.

employers simply refuse to hire refugees even when they are informed. He elaborated also on the difficulty of refugee workers in acquiring work contracts. Generally, he says, Moroccan employers avoid giving sub-Saharan refugees work contracts—work contracts force the employer to do a great deal of paperwork with the government and pay some form of taxes. Without a work contract, any sense of stability with ones' income is stripped from him; Elombe described his frustration with his inability to retain one job for more than a year at a time.

Another common theme throughout my interviews impressed the importance of a feeling of belonging, dignity, and respect among refugees in Morocco. Essentially, refugees want to feel comfortable, safe, and valued; understandably, they are seeking a sense of belonging. During my interview with the UMT, they explained that supporting refugees in finding a sense of community is one of their primary goals. “To help someone feel like they belong to something bigger is a true comfort,” one representative said, “coming here alone is hard.” Life in Morocco as an immigrant is certainly difficult—trying to cultivate a life in a cultural foundation that is not one's own, attempting to find a sense of comfort in a foreign place using a foreign dialect—and this is particularly true for refugees. Refugees are not afforded the privilege of being selective about where they find asylum and often do not have the time to master the cultural knowledge of their host country before arriving. Consequently, refugees are in a particularly vulnerable position in which they are urgently seeking a sense of safety but have very little control in attaining it. Supporting a refugee in feeling that “they can trust someone or something” is a pursuit UMT asserts is fundamental to integration.

However, this too presents itself as an often insurmountable challenge. In the struggle to maintain a sense of dignity and self-determination, refugees in Morocco must combat not only the inherently flawed 2013 migration policy (a policy not remotely centered to their specific

needs as refugees but is merely extrapolated to all “outsiders”) but must also confront belittlement from the Moroccan government. When I asked Elombe about how the existing legal framework for migrants in Morocco impacts his daily life, he responded with a great deal of frustration. Having to renew his residency card yearly, he argues, makes long-term projects nearly impossible. Banks will not give out loans to people they do not trust to stay in Morocco, which not only impacts refugees’ abilities to pursue business or housing opportunities, but is also degrading. Refugees cannot travel outside Morocco’s borders because they do not have institutional documentation; for the last 10 years, Elombe has “lived here like it’s a prison—refugees should be free, not like in jail.” Thus, while the Moroccan government may espouse equal opportunity for sub-Saharan African refugees, the actual practice of these policies are rarely regulated.

Further, should a refugee seek to express frustration or disappointment about these policies with the Moroccan Ministry, the accessibility to create legislative change is highly limited. Muzuri shared a troubling account of his experience trying to reach out to the Ministry. “Three years ago, the Ministry called refugees to come talk to them about what they thought could be improved,” he explains, “but up until this day, we have no response to that. We make a response and send it to them. And no answer,” he says, clearly frustrated by what he perceives as an acute disrespect from the government. In fact, my own encounter with the Ministry of Immigration was quite frustrating. Despite the fact that I have a myriad of resources at my disposal—a smart phone, 24/7 access to Wi-Fi, a laptop, and the contacts afforded to me through the SIT program—accessing demographic or policy-specific information from the Ministry was incredibly difficult. During my interview with a representative from the Ministry (which had to be rescheduled three times), he was not only half an hour late, but he was also grossly

unprepared for the interview and failed to answer a majority of my questions before cutting the interview short after about twenty minutes. I believe this experience says a great deal about accessibility to information for those with substantially less resources than I have, as well as the Ministry's commitment to and respect for the people for whom they are supposed to be working.

Is race a problem?

While there are clearly barriers to integration for sub-Saharan African refugees, I wanted to explore to what extent they were informed by refugees' Blackness. According to Elombe, the color of his skin plays a major role in his quality of life: "here for me, many doors are closed. If they open the door, many Black men will come here, and they don't want that." For him, one of the central reasons it often feels to refugees like everything is working against them is because it *is*: according to him, the system is deliberately manufactured to discourage Black men and women from coming to Morocco. Muzuri shares this sentiment—he believes that many Moroccans fear Black Africans. Moreover, regardless of immigrant or refugee status, once in Morocco it is the "same reality—if we are black, they consider us like a slave here." Thus, regardless of any rhetoric of inclusivity and an "open arms" attitude toward immigration from the Moroccan government, there must be some foundation to these intense feelings of "othering" experienced by sub-Saharan African refugees in Rabat. As opposed to the perspectives of Moroccan nationals presented in my survey, the narratives of Black Africans tell a very different story about race in Morocco.

Elombe discussed Morocco's history of slavery at great length. When I asked him if he felt Moroccans were aware of racial tensions in their country, he explained that racism was essentially a cultural byproduct of their historical legacy of slavery; "it feels natural to them," he said, confirming Menin's analysis. He recounted stories of being forced to pay more for goods

and services than light-skinned Moroccans, stopped indiscriminately by authorities and forced to show his papers, and being denied housing contracts from landlords specifically because of his skin color (there are no laws barring this in Morocco). He also described the racial slurs he encounters on the street. I inquired if he had heard the word “*azzi*” before: he scoffed and said he heard it every day. “It means black,” he explained, “but like a broken black. Like a bad black,” a sharp contrast to the perspective of many of my survey respondents’ perspectives about what kind of connotation the word holds. For Elombe, the word is not an endearing term and does not simply mean “black person,” but a *bad* or *broken* Black person. He described it as a tool to laugh at Black people and to assert dominance over their racialized bodies.

This led me to inquire about his relationship with public spaces—did he feel comfortable and safe walking down the street? Did he feel comfortable and safe approaching authorities? He responded with a distressing account of racially motivated street aggression he confronted two years ago:

We are aggressed all the time here. I was passing my way, I see in front of me and behind me Moroccans. They were yelling, ‘brother, brother, brother,’ and I see he is not a good person. I begin running...I was running and I see they have two big dogs. I couldn’t continue running...they took my money, my jewelry, my watch, my telephone. They have two big knives and they cut me here [gestures to arm]. When I go see police, and tell them that they aggressed me, the first thing they ask me is if I had my papers. I told them I am refugee, here is my UNHCR card, and they tell me they don’t recognize this card. And I was crying, I was telling them to call the hospital, I need care, and they look at me and say, ‘in your country, is there not aggression?’ But this is our life in Morocco.

This narrative is valuable not only because it highlights very clear racial tensions broiling beneath tepid waters of Morocco’s institutional rhetoric, but it also exemplifies the ways in which Moroccan policy is vastly distant from Moroccan practice. While a majority of Moroccans do not believe racism is a problem in their country, Elombe and Muzuri assert that stories like this are common amongst sub-Saharan African refugees.

Thus, from the perspective of the refugees I spoke with in my research, their ability to integrate is heavily influenced by the color of their skin. Stable work and housing are difficult to access, they are asked to pay more for goods while making less money, they feel unsafe in public spaces, and feel mistreated by the authorities who are supposed to be protecting them. The question asked of Elombe by the police after his assault—in your country, is there not aggression? —is emblematic of a grievous and sinister perspective for a host country. It is as though Elombe’s black skin imprints upon him a lesser quality of life and he should accept the bare minimum with gratitude. Poet Zouhair Yata touches on this in her prose piece, *I Am Not A Racist, I Have Black Friends*: “Why not say clearly that since we allow these ‘azzis’ to live with us, our indifference towards them is proof of our tolerance?”⁵¹

Where is the dialogue?

Despite the fact that Black African migrants and refugees continue to assert that racism is alive and well in Morocco, the government and media have yet to prioritize any discussion about it. Instead, when there *is* a conversation about Black migrants, it is generally utilized to benefit the institution or to paint outsiders as a menace. During my interview with the UMT, one representative referred to it as the “itinerary of the media”—more specifically, the itinerary of the government. “The media is controlled—everything is filtered,” she said, meaning the issues of sub-Saharan Africans remain suppressed because it would represent the Ministry poorly. Instead, government-sponsored media outlets choose to cover large “multicultural” events, presenting refugees and migrants as already integrated into a fabricated Moroccan melting pot society. Instead of informing people about the condition of the sub-Saharan migrant in Morocco,

⁵¹ Zouhair Yata, “I Am Not A Racist, I Have Black Friends,” *Morocco World News*, 2014.

they claim, the media instead attempts to “sugarcoat” the very real struggles of the Black community.

On the other hand, the media also capitalizes on sensationalized stories about migrants involved in violence or crime. My translator during this interview spoke up at this point, saying “it is true; as a Moroccan, I feel like sometimes [the media] is indirectly telling us that those sub-Saharanans are just making trouble.” Another UMT representative shared an account in which a story about a Moroccan woman, who was reportedly attacked by a migrant teen, was forced to kill him in self-defense. The story was scandalous and disseminated quickly; however, due to various eye witness testimonies, it was found that most of the story was faked—the migrant teen never assaulted the woman. However, not only were people quick to believe that a Black migrant would engage in violence, they were also quick to conclude that this teen represented *all* Black migrants. This is a political issue; documents do not simply bring integration forth or help one to get a job, and rhetoric like this keeps Black migrants and refugees at the margins.⁵² The fact that they are stigmatized in the media and in political discourses unmistakably creates further difficulties for their integration.

While the media occasionally considers migrants and refugees, either through diluted or sensationalized renderings of their realities, it is devoid of a true understanding of the race relations in Morocco—the dominant discourse remains that there is no racism in Morocco. Racist expression or racist violences are merely a figment of victims’ imaginations. The refusal of Moroccan institutions and media to acknowledge racism perpetuates it in a myriad of ways. One representative from AMAPPE stressed in our interview that one of the main barriers to access for refugees in the job market is that there is no anti-discrimination law enforced in Morocco. “All

⁵² Laura Menin, “Shadows of Slavery,” pg. 19.

we can do is discuss with employers,” she explained, “we tell them: take just one or two refugees in your company, you will be recognized as a company who does social work.” Though the Authenticity and Modernity Party drafted an anti-racism law for work and housing in 2013, it has not yet been discussed or passed by parliament, four years later.⁵³ Thus, Black bodies are consigned to represent public relations ploys by employers—if they are lucky enough to get hired at all. Despite the fact that access to work has been identified as the principal step to integration, without even acknowledging that racism exists, the Ministry has yet to address an anti-discrimination law.

Analysis

Through an analysis of institutional rhetoric, a survey of the general Moroccan attitude toward racism, and the testimony of sub-Saharan African refugees, we can see that the official rhetoric surrounding racialized discourse constructed by the Moroccan government does not remotely relate to the reality of the Black community trying to integrate in Morocco. The above findings raise a number of important implications for the understanding of and fight against Moroccan racism and thus the ability for Black refugees to integrate successfully.

The first key finding of my research is that Pan-Arab nationalism coupled with Eurocentric enlightenment ideologies is a potent fodder from which anti-African racism is growing in Morocco, particularly as the limited resources of the host society continue to stress against a growing immigrant and refugee population. As a legacy of the colonial period in Morocco, a culture of racism has been embedded in the country’s social framework; however, as opposed to the Europeans verses the barbaric “others,” the Arabs and Amazigh natives, it is now

⁵³ Rhanem, Karma, “I am Moroccan, I am African: A Campaign to Combat Racism in Morocco,” *Moroccan World News*, 2014.

the enlightened Moroccans contrasting the “backward” Africans. One does not have to be an academic studying the relationship between nationalism and racism in the Moroccan context to see this connection: in my interview with Elombe, he aptly surmised that “they are in Africa, but to them, they are ‘white’ people, or European, or American—I don’t know.” As examined Chretieh’s *A Racism Without Race: A Moroccan Case Study of Race Denial*, this is largely due to the Moroccan State and elite. “Throughout the transition of power from the French colonizers to the Moroccan elite in post-independence, the new State inherited and, consequently, reproduced the culture of racism inherited from colonial times,” and manipulated an ahistorical claim of solely Arab roots to position themselves and the new country within Pan-Arab nationalism.⁵⁴ This allowed the newly independent government to reify its legitimacy and unite its people under the king. This notion presented itself clearly in my rhetorical analysis.

King Mohammad VI opens his rhetorical act describing “African peoples” (of course situating Morocco out of Africa) as backward, poverty-stricken, despairing, and having succumbed to extremism. Here, we see Africa having become a synonym for ignorance, poverty, gloom, and violence; the King’s rhetoric is emulating the racial difference argumentation discussed in Chretieh’s work. Utilizing similar classifications used by their own colonizers, the Moroccan elite is implicitly justifying its covert racism. This speech repeatedly manipulates enlightenment and civilizational rhetoric in order to rationalize the ways in which Morocco stands to benefit from its return to the African Union. Researched in *Who Can Act for the Human*, enlightenment discourse reinforces the idea of culture in the singular—there is one “correct” way to exist in this world. This mindset is absolutely counter-intuitive to cross-cultural exchange and acceptance. Thus, in this rhetorical act, the King has demonstrated an intersection

⁵⁴ Chretieh, Leila, “A Racism Without Race,” pg. 42.

between Morocco's legacy of colonialism and its modern-day nationalism by simultaneously perpetuating the belief in African cultural inferiority and denying the presence of anti-Black racism in Morocco.

The second implication to consider from my findings is the lack of linguistic tools available to Moroccan citizens to suitably discuss racism. Shrouded in their State's denial of racism, and lacking the proper vernacular, Moroccans cannot be engaged in fruitful discussion about race and racialized issues in their communities. It was very clear based upon the widely varying and sometimes contradictory sample of the Moroccan conception of race, racism, and racist terminology in my survey that a rewarding discussion amongst Moroccans about race and racial issues would be difficult indeed. As a byproduct of the aforementioned State rhetoric, Moroccans today struggle to understand contradictory notions of race, racism, and their positionality as an Arab country with African roots. The survey also suggests that racialized discourse in Morocco is rare and the dominant media and institutional dialogue has failed to educate and prepare its constituents about the immigrant and refugee communities entering their nation. This is important because, as examined by Gul-Rechlewicz, the State holds the primary role in supporting newcomers' acceptance in a host society. It is the State's responsibility to support the "integrity of multicultural cities and creating an immigrant-wise country," which, without a public dialogue and the proper linguistic tools, Morocco certainly lacks the ability to be "immigrant-wise."⁵⁵

Mirroring the King's outburst in his rhetorical act in which he angrily dismisses those who "dare to disparage [his] country," it is also worth noting that many of the survey respondents were deeply defensive when asked about race and racism in Morocco. Many

⁵⁵ Gul-Rechlewicz, "Role of NGOs."

respondents were confused as to *why* I was asking questions about racism, and some were genuinely offended by the insinuation that race may be an issue in Morocco. *What is the relevance? Are Black men not killed in the United States? You have only been here a few months, you do not understand our culture.* It would appear that the sociodiscursive implications of the Moroccan government and general media's silence have created a deep-seated discomfort with discussions about racism. Thus, we find a sociocultural context within which not only is a rewarding conversation about race difficult because of a lack of linguistic tools, but it is essentially taboo. There is clearly a very limited explicit race discourse happening in Morocco, leaving the majority of the racialized discourse to manifest as assumptions and cultural norms. It is difficult to imagine how someone attempting to fight against racism could breach the subject in a constructive way, particularly considering Menin's assertion that uprooting a dominant dialogue (or lack thereof) without the assistance of the State is nearly impossible.

Lastly, the final implication of this research finds that the presence of racism has a fundamental impact on the extent to which sub-Saharan African refugees feel that they can integrate in Morocco. In my interviews with sub-Saharan African refugees and the organizations dedicated to their integration, it became clear that racism not only had an impact on the day-to-day quality of life of Black Africans in Morocco, but it also inhibited their ability to find stability, comfort, safety, and a sense of dignity in their new home. In my interviews with Elombe and Muzuri, they shared stories of how the racism they encounter in their everyday lives has stripped them of their personal sense of security—both due to racial slurs encountered daily and racially motivated physical violence. Moroccan discrimination and overarching assumption of the cultural inferiority of Africans also makes it more difficult for dark-skinned refugees to find housing and work, a sentiment echoed in Dennis Young's work about the impact of the

2013 migration policy on sub-Saharan participation in the formal economy.⁵⁶ In his work, Young interviews 10 sub-Saharan migrants about accessibility to the workforce in Morocco; when asked what changes they would need for a better quality of life, each focused heavily on issues of racism in Morocco (particularly those migrants who had been completely barred from work).⁵⁷ Just as Elombe shared his experience with being denied housing and work because of the color of his skin, the migrants with whom Young interviewed expressed that, even if they have residency cards, Moroccans refuse to hire them—they expressed that Moroccans do not treat Black men like they are human.⁵⁸

Additionally, it is not only racism perpetrated by Moroccan citizens that constrains the ability of sub-Saharan Africans to integrate, but also the covert racism of the Moroccan Ministry. The Ministry's refusal to acknowledge the discrimination of racialized bodies by employers, landlords, and other people in positions of power, obstructs the ability for anti-racist advocates to create legislative change. As the Ministry disregards the Authenticity and Modernity Party's 2013 anti-racism law for work and housing, their rhetoric remains that they are "taking steps" to improve the living conditions of sub-Saharan African migrants; logically, the first step should be to *listen* to migrants and refugees when they express what they need. However, it should come as little surprise that institutional rhetoric fails to correspond to reality. While the King boasts Morocco's welcoming attitude toward migrants and refugees, transnational migration policies often play out violently and deeply affect the difficult situation of Black Africans in Morocco. Menin examines this at length in her work. She cites instances of authorities abandoning

⁵⁶ Dennis Young, "Laboring under Exception Discourse: Moroccan Migration Policy and its Impact on Sub-Saharan Participation in the Formal Economy," *School of International Training ISP*, 2016.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Page 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Page 38.

refugees who have lost their paperwork in the border city of Oujda or simply robbing members of the vulnerable population. Further, she notes that some “fundamentalist” politicians emphasize the differences in Black migrants and refugees’ religion, serving to solidify the rifts between communities.⁵⁹ In conjunction with Elombe’s personal narrative attempting to seek help from authorities after being victim of a hate crime, it becomes clear racism is an institutional problem as well as an individual issue in Morocco.

Limitations

While this study provides suggestions, both about the experiences of sub-Saharan African refugees and about the motivations and shortcomings of institutional rhetoric, the study remains fundamentally limited in a number of ways. First, an important limitation to address is the fact that my rhetorical criticism was executed based upon a translation of a speech made by Mohammad VI, originally in Arabic. Rhetorical criticism relies heavily on a close examination of word choice and insinuation; because of this, unless the translation was made with a great deal of nuance and care, there are likely some phrases or words that had slightly different intent which would impact my analysis. Perhaps the most important limitation is the restricted number of interviews, and thus narratives, used in my findings. Considering my research was limited to sub-Saharan African refugees, this vulnerable population is particularly difficult to engage due to most refugees’ understandable desire to maintain privacy and thus a sense of security. Further, both of my interviewees were male, and their experience is discernibly different from that of a sub-Saharan African refugee woman. The experiences of sub-Saharan African refugees are far more varied and complex than my research indicates.

⁵⁹ Laura Menin, “Shadows of Slavery,” pg. 17.

Moreover, the language barrier also limited the possibilities of my study. Though most of the people with whom I interviewed spoke English, it was generally their third or fourth language and were consequently likely limited in their personal expression. For the interviews where I used translators, I cannot always be entirely sure that my interviewees' ideas were correctly or completely relayed to me. Additionally, in reference to my survey, making it available in either Fus'ha or Darija would likely have increased the pool of respondents I was able to acquire, as would publishing physical copies of it for distribution as opposed to making it exclusively available online.

Recommendations for Future Study

Considering the limitations of my study, there are a number of avenues of future study for this topic. First, I believe making contact with more refugees of varied age, gender, or education level would provide a more comprehensive and dynamic perspective of the reality of the sub-Saharan African refugees' quality of life in Morocco. Additionally, I think this subject of research would benefit from an examination of how racism in Morocco plays a role in accessibility to specific aspects of the lives of sub-Saharan migrants. Assessing how access to health care, housing, or education distinctively are impacted by race would give greater substance to the existing literature on racism and integration in Morocco. Future research could also evaluate the similarities and differences between the experiences of Arab refugees as opposed to sub-Saharan refugees; this could provide an interesting angle into how Moroccan pro-Arab nationalism is juxtaposed against its anti-African racism. Moreover, local hierarchies of status and power are also important to keep in mind and were not addressed in my limited research. There exist different forms of racism in Morocco, between Moroccan Black citizens, foreign-born Black nationals, and the historical legacies of the bourgeoisie of Fez when slavery

was rampant in Morocco. Finally, future research could engage to a greater extent with institutional rhetoric about integration. Because my interview opportunity with the Ministry of Immigration was underwhelming to say the least, I was unable to learn much about what integration means to the Moroccan government and how they believe race plays a role in integration. I think engaging with these voices may suggest new insights and provide a nuance to arguments about the racialized discourse in Morocco.

Conclusion

Based upon an analysis of institutional discourse, it would appear that *kul shae mizean* in Morocco—newly reunified with the African Union, Moroccans and the rest of Africa are brothers again. Describing the 2013 migration policy as “humanistic” and “unprecedented,” King Mohammad VI asserts that Morocco, owing to the peoples’ culture of generosity and hospitality, has already provided the “backward” and “poverty-stricken” Africans with all they could need to live a dignified and comfortable lifestyle. However, the testimonies of sub-Saharan African refugees present a vastly disparate narrative. From the above research, I argue that the Moroccan State’s hyper-nationalism, in which it denounces its African roots and panders to Pan-Arab nationalism and Western notions of modernity, shapes the way in which citizens are grappling with the current influx of immigrants and refugees being introduced into their society. As racial tensions are straining, the overwhelming silence about racial issues from state-controlled media and blatant denial of racism in institutional rhetoric perpetuates Moroccans’ blindness to it. Despite the fact that an overwhelming number of the Moroccan survey respondents deny that race is an issue, my interviews with sub-Saharan African refugees reflect an entirely different reality. Furthermore, my interviews emphasize the ways in which racism indisputably inhibits the ability of Black African refugees to integrate in Morocco.

More broadly, this study suggests the importance and power of institutional rhetoric in fighting racial discrimination and violence. Partially blinded by the State's denial of racism and thus, without a commonly used vernacular to articulate racial biases as racism, Moroccans cannot engage in fruitful discussion about existing racial problems within their community. Without this discussion, creating change for those subject to racism's malice—in this case, sub-Saharan African refugees—is mired in inaction and empty rhetoric. Examining the divide between institutional discourse and the lived reality of the Black community in Morocco is integral to understanding where current policy has room to grow. Consequently, this research suggests that engaging with the narratives of marginalized groups is essential to truly understanding their experiences and assessing the success of policies intending to aid them. Before Morocco can declare its humanitarian values, this claim must first be verified by its most vulnerable citizens.

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Appendices

Consent Form; French

Déclaration de consentement

L'objectif d'étude

Je veux mieux comprendre l'effet de la convention de 2013 sur les expériences des immigrants sub-saharien et leurs travaux.

La durée et les éléments d'étude

Cette étude sera dirigée pendant une période de trois semaines. L'étude inclura les observations et les interventions des participants en incluant leur travail sur terrain.

Les risques

L'étude n'a aucun risque prévisible pour les participants. Cependant, si vous ne vous sentez pas confortable avec le procédé d'observation ou d'interview, vous êtes libre de terminer votre participation.

Compensation

La participation à cette étude ne sera pas compensée, financièrement ou autrement. Cependant, votre aide est considérablement appréciée par notre équipe de recherche.

Confidentialité

Tout effort de maintenir votre information personnelle confidentielle sera fait dans ce projet. Vos noms et toute autre information d'identification seront changés dans la description finale, et seulement connue à l'équipe de recherche.

Participation

Je soussigné....., confirme avoir lu les rapports ci-dessus et compris que ma participation à cette étude est volontaire tout en ayant la liberté de retirer mon consentement à tout moment sans pénalité.

Signature

Date

J'ai pris conscience que cette étude puisse comporter les entrevues et/ou les observations qui peuvent être enregistrées et transcrites.

Signature

Date

Survey Questions; French

Je vous demande de participer dans une étude de recherche menée par Hannah Mangen (mange026@umn.edu) de la School for International Training. Le but de cette étude est de comprendre le racisme au Maroc. Cette étude contribuera à mon projet d'étude indépendant. Toutes les réponses ont anonymes.

Votre participation est volontaire. Vous êtes libre de choisir de ne pas participer. Si vous choisissez de participer, vous pouvez retirer à tout moment sans aucune conséquence. Vous ne devrez pas de répondre à toute question individuelle sans conséquences.

En poursuivant l'enquête suivante, vous acceptez les conditions suivantes:.. "Je l'ai lu ce formulaire de consentement et je comprends ce qui est demandé de moi en tant que participant à cette étude. Je consens à participer. Des réponses satisfaisantes me ont été données à mes questions. Je certifie que je suis 18 ans ou plus âgées."

1. Quelle âge avez-vous?
 - a. 18-20
 - b. 20-25
 - c. 25-30
 - d. 30+
2. Quelle est votre race?
3. Êtes-vous né au Maroc?
 - a. Oui
 - b. Non
4. Qu'est-ce que l'effet de votre race à votre vie quotidienne?
5. Au Maroc, est-ce que les gens vous traitent différemment à cause de la couleur de votre peau?
6. Pensez-vous qu'il y ait un problème de race au Maroc?
7. Que veulent dire ces mots?:
 - a. Racisme
 - b. *Azzi*
8. Est-ce que le gouvernement marocain parle de problèmes de race au Maroc?
 - a. Oui
 - b. Non
 - c. Parfois
9. D'après vous, est-ce que les réfugiés sub-Saharan African intégrés au Maroc? Pourquoi?

Interview Questions for Refugee Participants;

Interviews were semi-structured, so these questions served as an overarching structure of the interview but the actual questions asked varied depending on the direction the interview and what the participant was comfortable talking about.

1. Tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from? What do you do?
2. Morocco implemented its first migration policy in 2013.
 - a. Do you feel that this policy is complete/comprehensive?
 - b. What are the remaining challenges?
3. What does “integration” mean to you?
4. What must be the first step of integration?
5. Are refugees integrated into the workforce in Morocco?
 - a. In which sectors?
 - b. Are there instances of exclusion in the workplace? In housing?
 - i. How does it impact integration?
 - ii. What do you feel is the government’s role in fighting exclusion and racism in the workforce and housing?
6. As a refugee, what is your relationship with:
 - a. Safety in public spaces?
 - b. The authorities?
 - c. Moroccan citizens?
7. Do you feel you have the ability to advocate for your own human rights?
8. Do you feel Moroccan people are aware of the racism you notice every day?
9. Do you feel the Moroccan Ministry and Monarchy are aware of the racism you notice every day?
10. How do the needs of refugees differ from those of immigrants or migrants in Morocco?

Interview Questions for Non-Governmental Organizations;

Interviews were semi-structured, so these questions served as an overarching structure of the interview but the actual questions asked varied depending on the direction the interview and what the participant was comfortable talking about.

1. How would you describe the work you do with refugees specifically?
2. Do refugees have different needs compared to migrants?
3. According to you, what does “integration” mean for refugees in Morocco?
 - a. What is the first step?
 - b. What is your role?
4. How does the national origin of a refugee impact his or her ability to integrate?
5. Are refugees integrated into the workforce in Morocco?
 - a. In which sectors?
 - b. Are there instances of exclusion in the workplace? In housing?
 - i. Why?
 - ii. What is the Moroccan government doing to combat this exclusion?
6. Has socio-economic integration for refugees become more accessible since the 2013 migration policy?
 - a. How so?
 - b. Is this policy comprehensive?
 - i. Where does it have room to grow?
7. What future plans do you have to continue advocating for refugees’ human rights in Morocco?