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Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind: Narrative Explorations into the Oppressed  
Afrikan Consciousness

by

Samori-Àlào Adéyemí

Under the Direction of Akinyele Umoja, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

## ABSTRACT

Since the onset of colonization, Afrikan people have been forever changed. This change has been observed by thinkers like W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and others. The nature of oppression is to press someone down to a lower status. This pressing alters the consciousness of the person. The purpose of this study is to first reflect on how oppression has affected oppressed Afrikan people. Then, explore how oppressed Afrikan people can resist oppression. Finally, investigate how the consciousness of an oppressed Afrikan person is changed after converting from an Abrahamic belief system to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or worldview. At the meeting of two opposing consciousnesses, what can be born? After interviewing three descendants of enslaved Afrikans using a narrative qualitative methodology, I discovered that people's relationship to nature, the broader Afrikan community, and themselves changes after integrating Indigenous Afrikan Spiritual ideals into their being. I uphold that this can be used to construct new paradigms of humanity to bring about a Sankofa Revolution for the liberation of the Afrikan World.

**INDEX WORDS:** Afrikan, Colonization, Oppression, Abrahamic belief system, Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality, Consciousness

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2023

Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind: Narrative Explorations into the Oppressed  
Afrikan Consciousness

by

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May 2023

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to *Olódùmarè* and Spirit, Allness, to my *Egbé Orun* who have walked with me through so many times and spaces; to my Ancestors, known and unknown, whose lineage I have incarnated into over and over. It is dedicated to my mother, Annie Johnson, *Òrìṣà bi iyá kò si, iya là bá má a bọ*; to my father, David Nichols, *iba ye*; to my nieces and nephews who are my children; to the Branch community, and the men I have learned from who hail from those lands. This thesis is dedicated to Afrika, the Indigenous People and Spirits of that Land; and dedicated to all Indigenous Peoples and Beings that have suffered under white destruction.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give praise to the spirits of this occupied land. I give praise to the spirits of Afrika and their teachings. I give praise to my *Orí*, I give praise to *Şàngó*, I give praise to all the *Òrìşà*, and I give praise to myself. I give praise to all of my siblings, and I thank them for their love. I give praise to my friends who are family, and my family. I give praise to my lover present, my lovers past, and my lovers future. *Àşẹ*. Amen.

I want to personally thank Theron Wilkerson for recommending this program to me along with the brave people who fought for this program. I also want to thank all of my professors thus far, and Makungu Akinyela, Sarita Davis, Maurice Hobson, Akinyele Umoja, Ifasola Ajigunwa, and Vivian Tamkin. I have to give a shout out to my amazing cohort family. Finally, I want to thank the Afrikan Spiritualists who be Afrikan Spiritualists out loud and share what you have learned with the world.

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## PREFACE

I decided to take on this work because I noticed that there was a major disregard for indigenous knowledge ways in the world in general and in the Afrikan community. This disregard is by design; and it is used to keep oppressed people in a state of oppression by making us (Afrikan people) believe that this way of living is the only way. In a way, it places Afrikan people in this matrix of control where we believe that this is the only reality, or that this is how it has always been. These false beliefs are very dangerous because they give away our power and agency. They give away our power to imagine a better world! I see a way forward for us but only by us re-connecting with our source—our own *Afrikan* source.

When I say this, I am speaking from my own experience because I once was a devout Christian, but now, I am a devout Afrikan. Through the process of decolonization, I shed Abrahamic teachings and became a new man. Abrahamic teachings and belief systems had me believing that I was to dominate nature, that men were over women, and that I was an abomination. On the contrary, the indigenous teachings of Afrika taught me that I was nature, that the Masculine and Feminine were both necessary and divine, and that who I am is who I am. Abrahamic belief systems were/are used as vehicles of oppression. They perpetuate ideas of rampant consumption, patriarchy, homophobia, etc. Just as indigenous spiritual teachings inform indigenous cultures, oppressive Abrahamic spiritual teachings heavily inform the cultures of the West. For this reason, we (Afrikan people) must recognize that colonization was not just a physical phenomenon.

We were also spiritually colonized which disconnected us from our spiritual foundations and understandings. Now, to create a better world, a better culture, we must re-connect with our own spiritual practices and indigenous knowledge ways since colonization and Abrahamic teachings have led us to an era of climate crises, rampant individualism, and an era of self-hatred

so powerful that we take it out on people that look like us. To heal these issues, we must return to the source, for there is a balm in Afrika.

Although the ideas I have previously mentioned and will conclude with are liberatory, they also give a certain lens to how I view things. I am not a fan of Abrahamic belief systems—to put it lightly, and I wholeheartedly believe that Afrikan people need to return to our own belief systems and cultures. All of these things will manifest as biases within this study. It is important that I and the readers recognize this as we engage with this work.

To end, I recognize that there are some who have so-called returned to the source, but still look, sound, and act like their master. I condemn these people. I condemn those who charge exorbitant prices to those coming to them for healing. I condemn those who hide behind status and symbols to harm vulnerable people. I condemn those who practice dogma. I condemn those who bring the same Abrahamic, oppressive nonsense into our Afrikan spiritual spaces, such as patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia. To recognize beings that exist outside and beyond gender while also believing in various dimensions and realities just to still have ire for human diversity and the infinite ways it manifests, is a powerful stupidity. I want any who believe this to know that they are my enemy, and if we truly want a New World, we must uphold ideals that uphold *all* of us

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people. The questions being asked are how has oppression changed the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people, how can oppressed Afrikan people resist the harmful effects of oppression, and what can be born from the meeting of the consciousness of the oppressor and the consciousness of the oppressed? To explore this last question, I will investigate how the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people who once practiced an Abrahamic belief system changed after converting to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality. To begin, this chapter will explain and define any terms that need defining, dive into the background of my thesis, state the problem, purpose, and significance.

### 1.1 Terminology

In this study, Afrika and all its derivatives will be spelled with a “k” in the tradition of Black Nationalism and with respect to the many Afrikan languages that do not use the letter “c” (Debo, 2006). The names of this country, united states and america, will be lowercased in recognition of the Indigenous people of this land who had names for this land; and who have had those names stripped by settler colonials who desecrate their land and who have created one of the vilest empires in history. The word “remember” will be spelled “re-member” to denote the process of putting oneself back together rather than just recalling something. Sankofa Revolution will be used in lieu of what other scholars call an Afrikan Renaissance (Rabaka, 2022; Zounmenou, 2010). I will do this because as Rabaka (2022) states, “*Sankofa* entails taking from the past those things which are deemed to be most useful in the present with the ultimate intention of moving forward, of making positive progress.” I also choose to use certain Afrikan words and concepts rather than European ones as a form of resistance against European language

domination, and the destruction/disregard of indigenous words and concepts. For instance, *Houngan* and *Mambo* are roughly translated to English to mean male Vodou priest and female Vodou priest, respectively, but I will add that when the words are broken down etymologically, *Houngan* would be closer to spirit doctor and *Mambo* would be closer to one who talks to spirits (Desmangles, 2006; Chaz Arcana, from Mississippi, personal communication, January 2023). I pay homage to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o by practicing this, for Ngũgĩ stopped writing in English, instead writing in his indigenous language, Kikuyu. He noted in his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, “...the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation (Thiong’o, 1986).” This is also why I will use Afrikan honorific titles of respect like “*Baba*”, “Ancestor”, and “Mother” where necessary. “*Baba*” is a common word used in Afrika that is used to refer to one’s father and/or a respected person (Richter & Morrell, 2006; Richter & Morrell, 2008). “Ancestor” and “Mother” are honorific titles used in Hoodoo (Derrick Lyles, from Mississippi, personal communication, October 2020). Furthermore, *Ayiti* will be used in lieu of Haiti because *Ayiti* is Haiti in *Kreyol Ayisyen* (Haitian Creole), and the word *Ayiti*’s linguistic origins harken back to the indigenous Arawak and Taino people’s name for their home which roughly means “great” or “mountainous land” (Boese, 2022). The *Lwa* or just *Lwa* are the spiritual forces in *Ayisyen* (Haitian) Vodou (Consentino, 2009). Also, the word *Àşẹ* will be used as a form of confirmative utterance (Asante & Mazama, 2009).

I will use Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality (IAS) to refer to the indigenous belief systems of Afrika/Afrikans which will also include the belief systems that were born in the Afrikan Diaspora due to enslavement, such as Hoodoo, Lukumi, *Ayisyen* Vodou, etc. because I observe these systems as the indigenous systems of the Afrikan people who were kidnapped and brought

to various places around the globe. Spirituality will be used in place of religion which was explained in an interview of Jacob Olupona where Chiorazzi (2015) cited Olupona saying:

...the word “religion” is problematic for many Africans, because it suggests that religion is separate from the other aspects of one’s culture, society, or environment. But for many Africans, religion can never be separated from all these. It is a way of life, and it can never be separated from the public sphere. Religion informs everything in traditional African society, including political art, marriage, health, diet, dress, economics, and death.

Chiorazzi (2015) continued to cite Olupona who said, “African spirituality simply acknowledges that beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life, and therefore African religion cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane. African spirituality is truly holistic.”

Since I observe the belief systems of Afrika as integral facets of everyday living over religion that some take on and off like I coat, I will use the word spirituality in this study in reference to indigenous Afrikan belief systems. Also, when I say Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality, indigenous Afrikan belief system, or indigenous Afrikan knowledge bases, I am also referring to the culture that informs and is informed by Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality, for just as Olupona explained: Afrikan spirituality cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane (Chiorazzi, 2015).

Furthermore, this study will be centered on oppressed Afrikan people even if the word “oppressed” is used generally. I am always speaking about Afrikan people, and in this study, I will use the word Afrikan to refer to every child of Afrika whether they were born on the Continent or in the Diaspora. Where appropriate, differentiation will be used. When I say Abrahamic, I am referring to any belief systems or teachings that come from Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism, or Islam, specifically. For this study, when I mention Abrahamic belief

systems, I am referring to Abrahamic belief systems and Abrahamic ideologies that have been and are used in an oppressive manner. For the most part, that is most of them, but there are some Abrahamic practitioners who have done and are doing the work of challenging and deconstructing their Abrahamic beliefs. I offer kudos and respect to them. Finally, my participants will be either converts to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or converts to an Indigenous Afrikan worldview. According to Thabede (2008), an Afrikan worldview is a worldview that is informed by Afrikan culture. To conclude, this study will center Afrika and the children of Afrika's experiences beginning with the Ayitian Revolution.

## 1.2 Background

“...The god of the whites orders crimes, but our god calls upon us to do good works... Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty that speaks in the hearts of us all (Joseph, 2011).” These words were spoken by *Houngan Dutty Boukman*, a Maroon and spiritual leader, at the *Ceremonie Bwa Kayiman*. This ceremony also featured *Mambo Cécile Fatiman* along with droves of enslaved Afrikans who decided that they wanted the liberation in their hearts to be manifested in the physical, thus, the *Ayisyen* Revolution began (Thylefors, 2009).

The *Ayisyen* Revolution is historically hailed as the most successful enslaved Afrikan rebellion in history, but what is not hailed is that the revolution was first planned during the *Ceremonie Bwa Kayiman*, a Vodou ceremony, where a black pig was sacrificed by *Mambo Cécile* to the *Lwa*, *Erzulie Dantor* and *Ogou*, and pacts were made in blood and spirit to fight for the liberation of the enslaved people of *Ayiti* (Thylefors, 2009; marshallapothecary, personal communication, November 11, 2022). By using Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality, the oppressed

people of *Ayiti* were able to defeat the French which led to the creation of the first free Black republic in history.

The first part of *Houngan* Boukman's prayer where he said that we all should "...throw away the image of the god of the whites who is so pitiless and listen to the voice for liberty that speaks in all our hearts" puts me in the mind of a battle of two consciousnesses (Joseph). One consciousness is aligned with the image of the white man's god. The other is a consciousness that told the oppressed people of *Ayiti* to rise up against the oppressors.

This is a dialectical relationship which is a relationship where two opposing forces meet. A common occurrence in this present age that is explained in Igbo cosmology which states that the *Chi* (primordial spark of existence) and *Eke* (creation) of *Atu* (the pre-universal singularity) separated from *Atu* "ushering in a new phase of universal existence known as the Age of Duality (Ofodirinwa, 2020; Ofodirinwa, 2021)." The age of "*Chi na Eke*" (*Chineke*; *Chi* and *Eke*) where all things exist in pairs and manifest or find completion in twos. "From this separation came the idea of similarity and distinction, beginning and ending, time and space, cause and effect (Ofodirinwa, 2021)." Ofodirinwa (2021) explained that according to ancestral thought "things exist because they are observed by something else", and this is the thing that makes them whole in the Age of Duality. Since there is an up, there is an observance of down, and these two things are two parts of a whole that need each other to exist. Ergo, if one were to disappear so would the other (Ofodirinwa, 2021). Light exists because of an observance of dark, *Bon Dyé* because of the god of the whites, a slave because of a master, an oppressed person because of an oppressor. The last two dialectical relationships mentioned are curiosities in that according to Hegel (1998), the master/oppressor Self-Consciousness wants to kill the slave/oppressed Self-Consciousness because if the slave/oppressed Self-Consciousness exists it negates the master/oppressor Self-



Consciousness, but if the master/oppressor Self-Consciousness kills the slave/oppressed Self-Consciousness then the master/oppressor Self-Consciousness will cease to exist because both consciousnesses need each other to exist. To mitigate this conundrum, the master/oppressor Self-Consciousness will relegate the slave/oppressed Self-Consciousness to servitude and exploitation through the power and machinations of oppression which result in the shattering and deconstruction of the self-consciousness of the oppressed. That is what has been done to Afrikan people in this present age. That is also what will be explored in this study, but if, according to the Igbo, we are in a present age of duality then that means that if there is oppression then there is also resistance. With that being said, the nature of this study will be a dialectical exploration where I will investigate how imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy has affected the consciousness of oppressed people, how the oppressed can resist imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy, and finally, by using Afrikan spirituality as resistance, what can be born from the dialectical process of decolonization and re-Afrikanization.

An example of two opposites becoming whole or of a phenomenon where a person was changed due to a change in consciousness can be seen by looking to the changes that occurred in Malcolm X over time. In “From Malcolm X to Omowale Malik Shabazz”, Akinyele Umoja (2008) juxtaposes two persona of *Baba* Malcolm that he identified as Malcolm X and Omowale Malik Shabazz. I would argue that the Malcolm X persona was operating from a more colonized consciousness, and the Omowale Malik Shabazz persona was operating from a more synthesized consciousness. For instance, Umoja (2008) mentions how *Baba* Malcolm first called for the “civilization” of Afrika during what Umoja calls “the Malcolm X stage” (p. 43). This thinking is similar to oppressive ideas that stated that Afrika was an uncivilized place that needed to be colonized to bring civilization to Afrika. A scholar who is partial to Du Bois and double

consciousness might argue that Malcolm X was looking at his Afrikan kindred from the consciousness of the oppressor—a colonized consciousness. This is at odds with the stage that Umoja (2008) calls the “Omowale Malik Shabazz stage” where *Baba* Malcolm called for a cultural, philosophical, and psychological migration back to Afrika (p. 43). Umoja (2008) continues by saying that *Baba* Malcolm believed that new Afrikan centered philosophies and social structures could be created if Afrikan people grounded themselves in Afrikan culture (p. 43). This ideal is reminiscent of Cabral’s concept of returning to the source which will be further explained later in this study (Rabaka, 2022). For example, at the founding rally of *Baba* Malcolm’s Organization of Afro-American Unity, he shared something that the Minister of Culture in Ghana, Nana Nketsia, shared with him:

He said that as an African his concept of freedom is a situation or a condition in which he, as an African, feels completely free to give vent to his own likes and dislikes and thereby develop his own African personality. Not a condition in which he is copying some European cultural pattern or some European cultural standard, but an atmosphere of complete freedom where he has the right, the leeway, to bring out of himself all of that dormant, hidden talent that has been there for so long. (p. 63)

In this, I would say that Nana Nketsia was speaking to returning to the source—with the source being Afrika—rather than the consciousness of the oppressor. To this, *Baba* Malcolm mentioned how Black musicians draw on their creative root, their soul to improvise musically and create something new:

I’ve seen it happen. I’ve seen black musicians when they’d be jamming at a jam session with white musicians – a whole lot of difference. The white musician can jam if he’s got some sheet music in front of him. He can jam on something that he’s heard jammed

before. If he's heard it, then he can duplicate it or he can imitate it or he can read it. But that black musician, he picks up his horn and starts blowing some sounds that he never thought of before. He improvises, he creates, it comes from within. It's his soul, it's that soul music. (p. 63)

*Baba* Malcolm pushes further during this rally saying that this same creativity can be used in other spheres, specifically, political, economic, and social spheres:

Well, likewise he [Afrikan people] can do the same thing if given intellectual independence. He can come up with a new philosophy. He can come up with a philosophy that nobody has heard of yet. He can invent a society, a social system, an economic system, a political system, that is different from anything that exists or has ever existed anywhere on this earth. He will improvise; he'll bring it from within himself. And this is what you and I want. (p. 64)

And this is what I want to convey to the reader that oppressed people can create new paradigms by reconnecting with their root (source) and reconciling the two consciousnesses within. *Baba* Malcolm showed us how this evolution is possible and how new ideas can be created that bring forth change that does not reinforce the status quo. Imagine if oppressed people in masse did the work to synthesize the two warring consciousnesses within themselves. What could be birthed?

To dive into this query, I will first engage the works of great thinkers like Ancestor William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Ancestor Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire, etc. to explore their ideas and experiences around the consciousness of oppressed people. I will then conduct interviews on three descendants of enslaved Afrikans who were enslaved in the united states of america who were once followers and/or proponents of Abrahamic faith systems and/or

Abrahamic worldviews who eventually converted to Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or incorporated an Indigenous Afrikan worldview into their way of life. During these interviews, three broad spheres will be explored: how they viewed nature, the broader Afrikan community, and themselves while operating from a colonized consciousness and how this changed after their conversion to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or Indigenous Afrikan worldview.

### **1.3 Significance**

The significance of this research cannot be underestimated being that it provides a continuation in the conversation surrounding the consciousness of colonized people and the oppressor/oppressed dialectical relationship. For example, Ancestor Du Bois' double consciousness speaks to how oppressed people have their own consciousness and the consciousness of the oppressor that causes them to operate and see themselves from two warring viewpoints (Du Bois, 1903). It is hoped that this research will give a possible solution to the issue of double consciousness and/or the disparate oppressor/oppressed dialectical relationship. I also hope to provide oppressed people with alternative ways of viewing reality that come from their own people rather than the people that oppressed them. By doing this, I hope that the Afrikan community can learn to return to the source to create sustainable paradigms for a more abundant future because if Afrikan people continue to do things like white people/the oppressor, we will continue to perpetuate the same harms that have been laid on us for centuries.

### **1.4 Problem and Purpose**

The onset of colonization saw the mass destruction of indigenous ways of life around the globe. White colonizers also committed mass genocide and mass enslavement. These acts changed the world into what we have today. A world of the machine, industry, where we face climate calamities, mass poverty, incessant war, and insatiable greed, exploitation, and

consumption (Mgbemene et al., 2016; Wadanambi et al., 2020). Prior to this, indigenous people around the globe had various practices that revered and respected nature with nature including the people because the people are also apart of nature. According to Sena Voncuji (2022), a practitioner of *Eve* Vodun, the climate crisis started when the predominant spiritual worldview of humankind switched from one that saw humankind as being a part of nature to one that viewed humankind as being superior to nature. Voncuji (2022) argued that Abrahamic religions labeled nature-based spiritual practices as idolatry which led to the predominant worldview becoming one that separated man from nature. Then, Voncuji (2022) explained that in Afrikan spiritual traditions, all natural things have a consciousness which “is why nature is used to heal in almost all indigenous cultures.”

I am arguing that the crimes that have been committed against humanity and nature can be healed by returning to the source. As I have noted above, Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality has knowledge bases that can be drawn on that are the antithesis of the colonial exploitative practices that have been spread around the globe due to colonization. By drawing on these knowledge bases, I foresee a way to the future where humanity reconnects with nature and builds systems that work for all of humanity rather than the capitalists, bourgeoisie, and “one percenters”.

Unfortunately, presently, indigenous Afrikan practices are seen as backwards and superstitious, and many Afrikan people and Afrikan leaders are “phenotypically Afri[k]an but ideologically Western” (Voncuji, 2022). Plus, I would add that many Afrikan people operating from a colonized consciousness do not even know that they are doing so because cultural hegemony has usurped and weaponized the following institutions of culture: the media, church, and education. Cultural hegemony is when an oppressive group legitimizes their domination through the institutions of culture and the subsequent consent of the oppressed group (Lears,

1985, p. 569). Ergo, I am proclaiming that through the machinations of cultural hegemony oppressed Afrikan people are kept oppressed because the institutions of culture indoctrinate them into the “imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy” which is a term coined by Ancestor bell hooks that explains the integrated systems of oppression that uphold white domination and those who fit what Ancestor Audre Lorde coined “the mythical norm” which includes those who are white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure while those who fall outside those identities are oppressed, exploited, and less than (Nichols, 2022; Lorde, 2021). All these things combined create a situation where oppressed people become actors in their own oppression. *Baba Carter G. Woodson (2006)* stated that:

With "mis-educated Negroes" in control themselves, however, it is doubtful that the system would be very much different from what it is or that it would rapidly undergo change. The Negroes thus placed in charge would be the products of the same system and would show no more conception of the task at hand than do the whites who have educated them and shaped their minds as they would have them function. (p. 14)

Freire (1970) proclaimed that “the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors” because the oppressed want to be men (human), but to the oppressed to be men (human) is to be oppressors! Thus, it is of paramount importance for oppressed Afrikan people to return to the source because Indigenous Afrikan knowledge bases can teach us that to be human is to be useful to the community, and that being or becoming human is a process that is achieved with the aid of community (Sesanti, 2017). In addition to this, Sesanti (2017) recorded that indigenous Afrikan ethnic groups have phrases for people who do not appreciate and revere all of nature which includes the animate and inanimate because all of creation is sacred with “nature being a part of human beings and human beings being a part of creation.” Sesanti (2017) documented the

*Yorùbá* phrase for falling below the expectation to live in harmony with plants and animals is *Ki i se eniyan*, the *baSotho* is *ha se motho*, and the *amaZulu* is *asingomuntu lowo*. All of these phrases along with the *Ayisyen* expression *li/ou pa moun* mean that such a person is not a human being (Sesanti, 2017; Kreyolizasyon, 2022). In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to showcase how *Sankofa* or returning to the source can teach us new ways of being that oppressed Afrikan people can use in the present to create a better future.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that will underpin this study will be Afrikana critical theory with an emphasis on Fanon's revolutionary decolonization and Cabral's returning to the source and re-Afrikanization or re-humanization which will be used interchangeably since I am asserting that through the process of re-Afrikanization, oppressed Afrikan people re-humanize themselves by re-connecting with their indigeneity. The way that I am engaging Cabral's return to the source is different from what he was mentioning. I am stating that all Afrikan people need to return to their indigenous root so that Afrikan people can be culturally free. According to Bassey (2007), Afrikana critical theory encompasses philosophical questions that are engaged with concerns of freedom, anguish, agency, responsibility, sociality, and liberation. The previously mentioned research questions that this study will explore are philosophical queries that are centered in concerns about the freedom, agency, and liberation of Afrikan people. The research questions also engage the dialectical ideas of deconstruction and reconstruction and domination and liberation which are two major dialectics of Afrikana critical theory (Rabaka, 2009). For the purpose of this study, I am choosing to coincide deconstruction with the process of revolutionary decolonization that comes from Fanon and reconstruction with the process of re-Afrikanization (or re-humanization) that comes from Cabral. I am doing this to put the dialog of

the two theorists mentioned above, *Baba Fanon* and *Baba Cabral*, in conversation to bring forth what Rabaka (2022) called “a groundbreaking dialectic of revolutionary decolonization and revolutionary re-Africanization”; a dialectic that Rabaka (2022) went on to say is “a modernization and continuation of the concept of *Sankofa*: the *use of knowledge from the African past to positively alter the African present and ensure the African future.*” A concept that I am also grounding this study in.

When speaking to deconstruction, in this study I will investigate how the consciousness of Afrikan people has been changed due oppression. Then, I will probe notions of liberation and reconstruction (re-Afrikanization) while investigating how oppressed Afrikan people can resist oppression because *Baba Fanon* (1968) proposed that revolutionary decolonization is the creation of a new man or a new humanity. Also, according to Rabaka (2014), colonized Afrikan people become human by providing revolutionary answers to the questions of liberation and identity. Finally, I will fully engage with the notion what can be born through the process of re-Afrikanization, re-humanization, and returning to the source to apply the past to the present for a better future since Ancestor Cabral said that people who have been foreignly dominated will not be culturally free unless they return to the source (*Sankofa*), and do not shirk the contributions of other cultures (Cabral, 1974; Rabaka, 2009).

## **1.6 Limitations, Assumptions, and Delimitations**

To explore the issues of this study and its research questions, I decided that qualitative methodology would be best because I am studying the change in someone’s consciousness over time. A narrative will give me a fuller story while also allowing my participants the ability to express themselves more fully through words rather than numbers like if I were to use quantitative methods, but in the future, quantitative methodologies could be used to increase the



number of participants to possibly make the results of a study such as this more generalizable. Future studies could also have participants who are not solely of Afrikan descent to explore the consciousness of indigenous, non-Afrikan people who have been oppressed, and future studies could also be conducted by researchers who are not practitioners of an Afrikan spirituality. Since I am a practitioner and convert, I have biases and expectations for this research study.

This study also recognizes Abrahamic belief systems as oppressive. More studies in this area could include parameters around the deconstruction of Abrahamic belief systems. This study will also investigate Afrikan spiritualists who have integrated humanitarian values into their being. Hence, the use of the word worldview in the research parameters. I say this because there are many Afrikan spiritualist who are Afrikan on the outside, but they are Western on the inside. Despite these limitations and delimitations, this study's emphasis on spirituality is unique being that the Western academy shirks indigenous spiritual science. This study will also illuminate the ways in which Afrikan people globally can learn to re-engage with nature, the Afrikan community, and themselves through a Sankofa Revolution. Thus, I hope that this study aids in the creation of what *Baba Fanon* called a "new human" (Fanon, 1968). I am honored to be walking further down a path laid out by Afrikan teachers like *Baba Frantz Fanon*. I am also a witness to this "new human", for I feel that I have begun to synthesize the two consciousnesses in me which is what I assume my participants will align with, but there is, of course, the possibility that my participants will not feel the same way as I do; though this would be unfortunate, it would create a gap that could be studied more in the future.

## **1.7 Summary**

Igbo spirituality has already informed us that we are in the Age of Duality. Since there is a master, there is also a slave, and since there is oppression, there is also resistance. The *Ayitian*

Revolution showed us that there is power in returning to the source in the face of oppression. *Baba* Malcolm learned this lesson on his path to becoming Omowale Malik Shabazz. Presently, Afrikan people have yet to learn that lesson in mass. Rather than create our own systems that are based on our own indigenous Afrikan knowledge bases, oppressed Afrikan people whether because of indoctrination or by choice continue to perpetuate the same harms onto other oppressed Afrikan people (Freire, 1970; Woodson, 2006). But history has shown us that it is possible to return to the source and create something for a better future. I hope to illuminate the power and possibilities that comes from reconnecting with one's indigeneity. Hopefully, future research will build on the various facets of this study, so that we may dream of new paradigms. May the children of Afrika keep imagining a new world. *Àşę.*

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, I will explore the works of scholars who theorized on the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people. I will also discuss the disparities in their research where appropriate. I will first engage the germinal literature, and then move to the seminal literature. This will be followed by a conclusion and brief summarization of the key points presented in this chapter.

### **2.1 Double Consciousness**

To begin, perhaps the most auspicious name in the conversation surrounding the consciousness of oppressed Black people is Ancestor W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk* was first published in 1903. In it, *Baba* Du Bois pens the term double-consciousness. He explained:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this

American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (pp. 8-9)

Here, *Baba* Du Bois is speaking to the shattered consciousness that is being Black and living in America. He said that this world does not give Black people their own self-consciousness, but only lets Black people see themselves through the eyes of the other world which leads oppressed Black people to internalize the ideas of the other world—of the Other, the oppressor. Du Bois (1903) went on to say that Black people do strive to attain their own self-consciousness—strive to reconcile the two warring consciousnesses within, but he does not give a prescription for how to reconcile the warring consciousnesses (p. 9).

He did state that a child of Emancipation grew to a youth with self-respect and a growing self-consciousness. Du Bois (1903) said that this person realizes that for them to attain a place in this world they must start to be themselves, but how can one be themselves if their only understanding of selfhood comes from someone else, the oppressor, and how can one be themselves if their selfhood has been taken away from them because of oppression? How are oppressed Afrikan people to escape this phantom zone—this zone of nonbeing?

## **2.2 The Zone of Non-Being**

The zone of non-being is the hypothetical dimension that *Baba* Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In this zone, identity and humanity is taken away from oppressed Afrikan

people and replaced with objecthood. Oppressed Afrikan people are seen as objects. Fanon (2008) says that he came to the realization that he was an “object in the midst of other objects (p. 109).” Fanon (2008) added to this shattered existence by mentioning an incident on a train where he was repeatedly called a “Negro”. He attempted to laugh it off until an additional exclamation of “Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!” He remarked that he could not laugh at this. He said that he came to the realization that he exists triply. The body that he had occupied three spaces which were his own space, his race’s space, and his ancestors’ space (pp. 111-112). In this world, he could not simply be a man. He was a “Negro” man. An identity that affected other’s perception of him (Black or white), and his own perception of himself. *Baba* Fanon through tragic prose explained how his body was desecrated by the revelation of the other world saying:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up. All round me the white man, above the sky tears at its navel, the earth rasps under my feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me ... (pp. 113-114)

*Baba* Du Bois would say that *Baba* Fanon awakened his second sight that day on the train. *Baba* Fanon realized that his body was not his own under the white gaze, and in poignant, descriptive language he recited several things that “the Negro” was with none being his Mama’s child. He

was describing himself through the eyes of the other world. This is the terrible power of oppression. The ability to desecrate the self-consciousness of the oppressed.

*Baba's* Du Bois and Fanon showcased the dehumanizing power of oppression which *Baba* Fanon said in *Wretched of the Earth* turns the native into an animal (Fanon, 2004). Jean-Paul Sartre attested that oppressive violence was not only used to keep enslaved people at arm's length; but it was also used to dehumanize them (Fanon, 2004). He expounded saying, "Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours (Fanon, 2004, p. 15)." In this statement from the preface, Sartre was explaining how oppression destroys the indigenous culture of the peoples being oppressed which subsequently destroys their identity. The oppressor then usurps the indigenous culture with their own which creates an inferiority complex in the minds and souls of the oppressed "by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" (Fanon, 2008, p. 18). Then, by coming face to face with the language of the oppressing nation, and in proportion to the adoption of the cultural standards of the oppressor ("mother country"), the oppressed/colonized is elevated above their jungle status; becoming whiter as they renounce their Blackness, their jungle (Fanon, 2008, p. 18). *Baba* Fanon was describing how oppressive violence causes the oppressed to look down on their own culture and aspire to emulate the culture of the oppressor. Gikuyu is primitive while English is regarded as the language of sense in that when people are confused by what someone is saying they repeat the idiom "speak English". Vodou is demonic and evil meanwhile Christianity and Islam are blameless; even though, they have been two of the main vehicles of homicidal oppression if one looks at the Crusades, jihads, and European and Arabic enslavement. This flipping of the script eventually becomes accepted, and the oppressor eventually does not have to do much—if anything—to maintain their hegemony because the

oppressed does all the work for them. The oppressed sees themselves from the eyes of the oppressor; the oppressor has relegated the oppressed to objecthood; the oppressed see the oppressor's culture as a superior, civilizing, saving entity. The buy in from the oppressed that is created and sustained by cultural hegemony reproduces the oppressive society. Fanon (2004) said:

In capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behavior—all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably. (p. 38)

*Baba* Fanon illuminated how in a capitalist society the educational system is used to produce submissive, inhibited workers for the system which makes the task of control that much easier. This is what cultural hegemony does by weaponizing the educational institution of culture, and this is not only seen in the public school system but also at the collegiate level. The education system whether it be elementary, secondary, or collegiate operates to reproduce society. The question now becomes how do oppressed people resist being dehumanized and brainwashed?

### **2.3 Return to the Source**

Ancestor Amilcar Cabral said that we must return to the upwards paths of our own cultures or return to the source (Cabral, 1974; Rabaka, 2022). But the source that Ancestor Cabral was speaking of was not just a return to traditions which is what I meant above when I said that Sankofa is not enough (Cabral, 1972). Ancestor Cabral's return to the source was meant

to be a conscious, anti-colonial revolutionary act (Rabaka, 2022). For instance, a major element of Ancestor Cabral's idea of "return to source" is the meeting of two dialectically opposing opposites that results in the creation of something new (Rabaka, 2022). Rabaka (2009) proclaimed:

...the only way anti-colonial intellectual activists can decolonize their minds is by plunging themselves into the depths of those elements of their indigenous thought, culture, and traditions—precolonial, colonial, and neocolonial—which could potentially aid them in their efforts to develop revolutionary theory and praxis. (pp. 179-180)

In other words, so-called anti-colonial intellectual activists must reconnect with their root to decolonize their minds of the effects of cultural hegemony. Plus, Indigenous Afrikan ideas are to be transformed by the struggle against oppression and "the reconstitution and synthesis of progressive precolonial and recently created revolutionary anti-colonial African traditions and values" (Rabaka, 2022). This is the birth of something new through the meeting of two opposing forces. Rabaka (2022) went on to say:

Cabral's concept of "return to the source" can be considered a major contribution to the African Renaissance in light of its emphasis on the ways in which African culture and African indigenous knowledge should be used simultaneously as a "form of resistance" and to forge a "vision of liberation" specific to the special needs of modern Africa. (p. 423)

Ancestor Cabral was telling us that, yes, we need to look to the wisdom of Indigenous Afrika, but we also need to recognize that the world has been changed due to oppression; therefore, we must radically imagine new ways of using the indigenous wisdom of Afrika along with post and neocolonial Afrikan wisdom to instigate the process of revolutionary decolonization and

revolutionary re-Afrikanization (Rabaka, 2022; Chabal, 1983; Chilcote 1991). *Baba Fanon* (1968) declared that “decolonization is the veritable creation of new men” of “new humanity (Rabaka, 2022).” This is the natural progression of colonization followed by decolonization. What colonization destroyed can be re-created through the processes of decolonization. Thus, revolutionary decolonization should bring about new ideas around what it is to be human—and/or Afrikan. This is a part of the necessary evil that Ancestor Cabral (1966) mentioned and said aids in bringing on cultural progress.

He says the armed struggle for liberation launched against the oppressor is a “painful but effective instrument” in developing the cultural level of the leadership of the liberation movement and the people who take part in the struggle (Cabral, 1966). Cabral (1976) expounded on his point of a “painful but effective instrument” and said:

As we know, the armed liberation struggle demands the mobilization and organization of a significant majority of the population, the political and moral unity of the various social categories, the efficient use of modern weapons and other means of warfare, the gradual elimination of the remnants of tribal mentality, and the rejection of social and religious rules and taboos contrary to the development of the struggle (i.e., gerontocracy, nepotism, social inferiority of women, rites and practices which are incompatible with the rational and national character of the struggle, etc.). The struggle brings about many other profound changes in the life of the populations. The armed liberation struggle implies, therefore, a veritable forced march along the road to cultural progress. (pp. 54–55)

Here Cabral is telling us that an armed struggle aids in creating a unified, cohesive force that breaks down barriers between different peoples which results in a forced march towards cultural progress for the actors in the struggle because without this change the struggle will eventually



fail. As of now, oppressed Afrikan people in the United States are not involved in an armed struggle against the oppressor, but there is a struggle, nonetheless. Also, at some points in the history of the United States, there has been an armed struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. With that in mind, Ancestor Cabral's words can still be used in relation to the present struggle of Afrikan people in the United States—especially if the masses are included in the struggle. Ancestor Cabral (1972) proclaimed:

When the “return to the source” goes beyond the individual and is expressed through “groups” or “movements,” the contradiction is transformed into struggle (secret or overt) and is a prelude to the pre-independence movement or of the struggle for liberation from foreign yoke. So, the “return to the source” is of no historical importance unless it brings not only real involvement in the struggle for independence, but also complete and absolute identification with the hopes of the mass of the people, who contest not only the foreign culture but also the foreign domination as a whole. Otherwise, the “return to the source” is nothing more than an attempt to find short-term benefits—knowingly or unknowingly a kind of political opportunism. (pp. 45–46)

Essentially, Ancestor Cabral is saying that aesthetic performances of decolonization or reconnection with Indigenous Afrikan wisdom will only yield short term benefits. Certainly, if the return to the source is not communal. There has to be a radical change in the consciousnesses of oppressed Afrikan people to bring about a Sankofa Revolution.

Ancestor Cabral gave oppressed Afrikan people much to consider. He not only provided oppressed Afrikan people with a revolutionary praxis, but he also said that the source of a people's identity and dignity is contained in their history and culture (Cabral, 1972). Along with the history and culture, I would also add language (Fanon, 2004). These things are significant

because by disrupting the history, culture, and language of oppressed Afrikan people, white oppressors were able to disrupt or shatter the identity and consciousness of Afrikan people.

#### **2.4 The Cultural Bomb and Its Shattering**

A proponent of indigenous Afrikan languages, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), described the shattering of oppressed people's culture as a "cultural bomb" saying:

The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as a wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves, for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces that would stop their own springs of life. It even plants serious doubts about the moral righteousness of struggle.

Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency, and a collective death-wish. (p. 20)

*Baba* Dr. John Henrik Clarke spoke vehemently about the cultural bombing of Afrikan culture and its affects saying, "They laughed at your clothes; and made you change your clothes, they laughed at your names; and made you change your name; but more importantly they laughed at your god; and made you change your god (Ancestral Voices, 2018)." *Baba* Dr. Clarke is explaining how the oppressor was able to infiltrate the minds of the oppressed by using ridicule while also reinforcing the inferiority complex instilled by oppression which is similar to what Fanon stated by saying that an inferiority complex is created in the minds of the oppressed because of the destruction of their "local cultural originality" (Fanon, 2008).

Likewise, just as Fanon (2004) mentions that by coming face to face with the language of the oppressor the oppressed is elevated above their jungle, Ngũgĩ (1986) mentioned how the cultural bomb makes oppressed people want to distance themselves from the wasteland that is their cultural past and align themselves with “that which is furthest removed from themselves”, and *Baba* Dr. Clarke also spoke in a similar vein as *Baba* Woodson when *Baba* Woodson said that the oppressor no longer has to control the oppressed after they have infiltrated the consciousness of the oppressed, but by reconnecting with the root, oppressed Afrikan people are able to begin the process of revolutionary decolonization (Woodson, 2006). That is, a return to the source. Rabaka (2022) proclaimed:

...the “return” is not and should not be to the past or any “dead” traditions, but to those things (spiritual and material) from our past (e.g., moralities, philosophies, sciences and technologies) which will enable us to construct a present and future that is consistently conducive to the highest, healthiest, and most humane modes of human existence and experience[!] (p. 425)

With this, I must also cite a Facebook comment by Àdísà Àjàmú (2022) where he stated, “...We need an evolution in African consciousness anchored in humane concepts like *Ìwà pèlé* or *Ma’at* that creates cultures whose spiritual systems reflect the highest aspirations of those divinely human values in daily praxis.” *Ìwà pèlé* is balanced character, and it is a concept that comes from the *Yorùbá* people of West Afrika (Asante & Mazama, 2009; *Baba* Ifasola Ajigunwa, *Ifá* devotee, personal communication). *Ma’at* comes from the ancient Kemetic people who are commonly called the ancient Egyptians, and this concept refers to order, balance, harmony, justice, and truth (Asante & Mazama, 2009). In other words, these thinkers were saying that there must be a humanitarian revolution that honors and uplifts the greatest ideals of humanity,

but how do we obtain this? Cabral (1973) stated, “A reconversion of minds—of mental sets—is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement. Such reconversion—re-Africanization, in our case—may take place before the struggle, but it is completed only during the course of the struggle.” Fanon (1968) also sustained that there must be a change in the minds of the oppressed stating, “we ought to uplift the people; we must develop their brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings.” Fanon (1968) also made it clear that he was not talking about filling them with European ideas or trying to get them to catch up to Europe and declared, “[w]e today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe.” The final question becomes “how do we renew the minds of oppressed people?”

## **2.5 What We Gotta Do?**

The answer that *Baba* Fanon (1963) gave was political education saying:

Now, political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Cesaire said, it is “to invent souls.” To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. In order to put all this into practice, in order really to incarnate the people, we repeat that there must be decentralization in the extreme. The movement from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top should be a fixed principle, not through concern for formalism but because simply to respect this

principle is the guarantee of salvation. It is from the base that forces mount up which supply the summit with its dynamic, and make it possible dialectically for it to leap ahead. (pp. 157–158)

*Baba Fanon's* conception of a decentralized movement towards liberation that works *with* the people is very similar to what Paulo Freire described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire (1970, p. 65) declared, “Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated.” *Baba Fanon* and Freire were saying that oppressed people’s humanity must be observed by including them and their ideas in the liberation struggle; to not do so is to do the same thing that the oppressor did which is to treat the oppressed as objects. Freire (1970) expounded on this point saying:

A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. (p. 69)

And this knowledge is re-created with dialogue. Freire (1970) argued that dialogue is a powerful weapon against oppression, but this dialogue must have these characteristics: critical thinking, hope, trust, faith, humility, and love. We must be able to critically analyze ideas together while also trusting each other enough to be able to dialogue with each other. We also must have humility and not come at each other like know-it-alls. Finally, we must have hope and love for each other because without hope there is no motivator and without love there is nothing (Freire, 1970).

*Baba* Du Bois famously explained how the consciousness of oppressed people has been changed through his conceptualization of double consciousness. With this conceptualization, *Baba* Du Bois was telling us that double consciousness allowed oppressed people no self-consciousness because whenever oppressed people assessed themselves, they were assessing themselves through the white gaze (Du Bois, 1903). *Baba* Fanon tapped into the same understanding with his postulations on the white gaze and the zone of none being where he said that oppressed people are subjected to objecthood under the white gaze, and oppressed people cannot just be humans since oppressed people carry the weight of themselves, their race, and their community under the white gaze (Fanon, 1968).

## **2.6 Summary**

These scholars and more illuminate the ways in which the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people has been shattered and infiltrated by the Other due to oppression which destroys the self-consciousness of the oppressed and presses them down to the consciousness of the animal (Freire, 1970; Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1968; Fanon, 2008; Ngũgĩ, 1986; Woodson, 2006). Despite this pressing, this oppression, or some may say because of it, and the nature of this age of duality, oppression is met with resistance. To resist this oppression, oppressed people must first go back to their root, then bring this knowledge to the present to apply it to the present condition, and all of this must be done together—communally—and with love (Cabral, 1974; Freire, 1970; Rabaka, 2022). Freire (1970) proclaims, “Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation (p. 89).” And Ancestor bell hooks attests, “The moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate

ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom (hooks, 2006).”

### **3 RESEARCH METHODS**

This chapter will restate the purpose, explain this study’s research method and design, and outline the population being sampled along with the data collection procedures. I will also explain how the data will be analyzed. Then, this chapter will end with a brief summarization. As I stated previously, the purpose of this study is to showcase how returning to the source can teach us new ways of being that oppressed Afrikan people can use in the present to create a better future. This study will have a qualitative methodology. I decided on a qualitative methodological approach because I knew that qualitative methodologies would allow my participants the ability to fully articulate their thought processes before and after re-connecting with their indigenous root. A qualitative approach will also let my participants speak to their change in consciousness in a chronological manner that will allow for thematic observances. I want to emphasize this because my participant’s narratives will be analyzed thematically. For these reasons, a qualitative approach is more appropriate than a quantitative approach.

#### **3.1 Research Questions**

This study will have a narrative design. According to Creswell (2014), a narrative research design allows the researcher to investigate specific topics through the narration/stories of their participants. The topic being investigated in this study is the phenomena of conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview. I will investigate this experience through the lenses of my participants by asking them a series of questions that pertain to their ideals and values pre and post conversion. Thus, the theoretical framework that will underpin this research will be Afrikana critical theory with an emphasis on

Fanonism's revolutionary decolonization and Cabralism's re-Afrikanization/re-humanization.

The following overarching research questions will allow me the ability to investigate my phenomenon while also applying my study's theory. My research questions will be:

1. How has imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy affected the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people?
2. How can oppressed Afrikan people resist imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy?
3. How can conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview help oppressed Afrikan people resist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy, decolonize, and re-Afrikanize their consciousness?

All of my research questions will be aligned with one of the central tenets of Afrikana critical theory which is philosophical inquiry into the reality of Afrikan people (Bassey, 2007). My research questions will also illuminate revolutionary decolonization and re-humanization through the lenses of my participants.

### **3.2 Site, Sample, and Screening**

The population I will draw my participants from will be people of Afrikan descent living in the United States ages 18-50 years old who were once proponents of an Abrahamic belief system, but eventually converted to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or worldview. I will recruit my participants through Instagram and Facebook. To do this, I will post my recruitment flyer on my Facebook and Instagram stories while also creating posts with pictures of my recruitment form. Interested parties will be sent the informed consent form via email that will explain the study and all other necessary parameters. Once the informed consent has been read, understood, and signed by both the researcher and participants, a screening form will be used to



make sure that the participants fit the parameters of the study. If the participants do not fit the parameters of the study, they will be thanked for their time and compensated \$5. The screening form will ask the following questions:

1. Are you a descendent of Afrikan people who were brought to the United States and enslaved?
2. Do you currently live in the United States?
3. Were you once a follower/believer/proponent of an Abrahamic belief system (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Catholicism, etc.)?
4. Did you eventually convert from an Abrahamic belief system to an Indigenous Afrikan Spiritual system (*Iṣẹṣe*, Hoodoo, Vodou, Vodun, etc.) and/or Indigenous Afrikan worldview?

The participants must be descendants of Afrikan people who were brought to the United States and enslaved because this study will focus on oppressed Afrikan people in the United States. The participants will also have to be converts to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality and/or worldview because the main focus of the study is the change in consciousness that happens due to this conversion. Ultimately, there will be three participants. The participants will be contacted via email to schedule the interview that will likely last 1 hour and 30 minutes.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

I will conduct interviews with my participants to gather the data I need for my study. This method is best suited for my study because I will be able to interview my participants one-on-one unlike with a focus group meeting. Interviews will also allow me to go more in depth with my participants unlike conversations which can be short and surface level. Interviews will create room for more probing questions that will give me the opportunity to inquire into the

consciousness of my participants. I will use Zoom to conduct the interviews because it will give me, and my participants access to each other while being miles apart. Plus, Zoom will keep me and my participants safe from contractable illnesses, such as COVID-19. One of my phones will be used to record the audio while my other phone will be used to transcribe the audio. The audio and the audio transcription will be stored in a secure, password protected, file on both phones. Only the student researcher will know the password.

The data will be analyzed by focusing on three parameters: nature, the broader Afrikan/Black community, and the individual. I am going to ask my participants if their relationship with nature changed after conversion, if their relationship to the Afrikan/Black community changed after conversion, and if their relationship to themselves changed after conversion. I am focusing on these three parameters because they will showcase how my participant's ideologies, values, and conceptions changed after conversion. Also, nature and community are very important in Indigenous Afrikan belief systems, but in Abrahamic belief systems, nature and community are not valued the same. If my participants show a change in their ideologies, this can also exemplify how important Indigenous Afrikan belief systems are in the discussion of Black liberation which I will speak more on in my final chapter. To end, follow-up interviews will be scheduled if needed, but I do not foresee that being necessary.

### **3.4 Validation & Coding Strategies**

As I stated above, I used two devices to record my participant's interviews. One device was used to record the audio only while the other device was used to record their words—a transcript. I then used these two recordings together to maintain fidelity, and to make sure that I was correctly quoting my participant's words. After this, I did a preliminary round of coding where I went through my participant's interviews to find commonalities between all three,

specifically, how they came to Abrahamic belief systems and their idea shifts after leaving Abrahamic belief systems. The second round of coding was me determining the emerging themes which were respect/reverence for nature, communalism, and empowered self-regard. Finally, I went through my data and pulled out direct quotes that spoke to the ideological transformations that my participants experienced after re-connecting to IAS.

### **3.5 Date Collection Process**

My data was collected using Google Meets, a digital platform, that allowed me to interview my participants. I used Google Meets over Zoom because Zoom would have cost money while Google Meets was free up to a certain video length. All of my interviews were under 2 hours in length. I used one cellular device to record the audio of the interviews while another was used to record the transcript. The data that was collected and placed behind non-cloud storage password protected file managers in my cellular phones. After interviewing, I asked for my participants Zelle, a digital cash exchange platform, to send their compensation. I decided to use Zelle rather than sending giftcards through the mail because it would be an instant transaction. One of my participants, John, decided that they did not want to be compensated since I was using my own money rather than research money that should be provided by the university. During the interviews, I asked questions that were on the protocol and more probing questions if necessary. The results of this study are provided below.

### **3.6 Summary**

By using qualitative methodologies, I will answer my overarching research question which is what happens to the consciousness of oppressed Afrikan people who convert from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview. Interviews will give me the ability to dive into the consciousnesses of my participants and draw out

common themes. These themes will be used to comprehend the new ideas, ideologies, etc. that my participants develop because of the phenomenon of conversion from an Abrahamic system to an Indigenous Afrikan one or worldview in a world that has been built on Abrahamic cosmologies (Ani, 1994).

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to discover how conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview can help oppressed Afrikan people resist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy, decolonize, and re-Afrikanize their consciousness. Through narration, I explored how the consciousness of my participants changed through the process of conversion or what one of my participants, “John”, called an “awakening”. Using an interview protocol, I explored this process with my participants. The first two questions were designed as openers, so I can understand my participant’s journey to converting or awakening. These questions were also used to showcase how my participants came to be—what I would call—colonized by Abrahamic beliefs. The rest of the questions were aimed at exploring the transformation that happened within the Afrikan person’s being after conversion which is aligned with central tenets of Afrikana critical theory. All in all, the interview protocol was an exploration centered in Afrikana critical theory being that I explored questions that centered on the liberation, agency, and freedom of Afrikan people. To explore this transformation and the aforementioned concepts, I focused on the way in which my participant’s views changed in relation to nature, the broader Afrikan/Black community, and how their views changed in relation to themselves. I will note the emerging themes and use what I have discovered is to give a prescription to the Afrikan world. I aim to show how through re-

Afrikanization, Sankofa, etc. Afrikan people can create new ideologies, road maps, thought processes, etc. that will transform and fortify our community against the oppression from white Western society.

#### 4.1.1 Emerging Themes

There was much commonality between the experiences of my participants. They all had experiences growing up in or in proximity to Abrahamic spaces. My participants were also all masculine identifying with one of my participants, Jeremiah, being genderfluid. When I asked my first participant about his spiritual upbringing, Charlie Brown noted that his parents and some of his parent's siblings are part of the Pentecostal faith. John said, "I believe I was born into a family that was Baptist. The only church I've ever known as Mount Zion Baptist Church." Jeremiah recalled how his Mom wanted him to have a better education and enrolled him in a Catholic school when he was younger. They said, "The real, the real way that I actually became a practitioner of Abrahamic faith was through schooling." Regardless, Jeremiah explained that Christianity was the prevalent belief system in his home growing up.

Despite these differences in the ways in which my participants were exposed to Abrahamic belief systems, the new ideologies that they gained after conversion were similar—if not the same. These new ideologies are my emerging themes, and I will discuss them in detail below. The emerging themes were:

- Respect/reverence for nature
- Communalism
- Empowered self-regard

#### 4.1.2 Nature

In Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality—and other Indigenous belief systems across the globe—nature is revered and respected. Above, I cited my “brotha”, Sena Voncujovi, who asserted that we have come to this climate crisis because dominant ideologies that are centered in Abrahamic belief systems see humankind as being dominant to nature rather than seeing humankind as being *a part* of nature (Voncujovi, 2022). In the Bible, the religious text of one of the largest belief systems in the world due to colonization, the first book says “...let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (*King James Version*, Gen. 1.26). Here, the word dominion is important and is reiterated in verse 28 saying, “...and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (*King James Version*, Gen. 1.28). These ideas of dominion and subjugation of nature are the antithesis of ideas of coexistence and mutual regard for nature that are prevalent in Afrikan Spirituality, and my participants made sure to emphasize how their relationship to nature changed after converting or awakening.

When asked did conversion effect their relationship with nature, Charlie Brown said, “Absolutely...”; John said, “I love the woods. I love nature. It’s idyllic to me. It’s not some scary space. It’s like go and be in this wonderful, beautiful, divine place.”; and Jeremiah stated, “All the way, all the way, all the way. Wow, I have experienced tremendous healing in nature and relating to nature because of the conversion or the transition I experienced from an Abrahamic faith to African spirituality.” Charlie Brown said this happens because of the connection one grows with their Ancestors and Spirit. John described this call that he felt from nature—almost

as if it was inviting him for refuge during a trying time in his life, and Jeremiah spoke on how his reconnecting with nature was healing in a generational manner. Jeremiah explained how he was able to shed some of the baggage, stigma, trauma, and lack of knowledge to what nature had to offer by simply reconnecting after conversion. There was a common theme of transformation throughout all of my participant's experiences—including how their relationship to the Afrikan community changed after conversion or awakening.

#### 4.1.3 Community

Another point of emphasis in Afrikan Spirituality is community, and I asked my participants if their ideas about the broader Afrikan community changed after conversion. I asked this because the Western world is individualistic, and I wanted to discover if conversion from an Abrahamic paradigm to an Indigenous Afrikan paradigm would change my participant's ideologies. I discovered that just like their views on nature transformed; my participants described how their views on community—or what it means to be in community with people transformed. They all had uniquely profound experiences and viewpoints.

To begin, Jeremiah profoundly stated:

...Sankofa has been the most powerful principle...I've practiced in this journey, in this lifetime thus far because with the wide availability and accessibility to African peoples throughout the world, uh knowledge, and information on the internet. I really just was able to fully embrace who I am and just go right into identifying uh deeper layers to who we are as, as a collective and also the lineages that I descend from. And that was, that was transformative. This is in opposition to coming from an Abrahamic faith where unity is more so based off of religion, but it's also based off of how much you can conform to the white status quo.

With Jeremiah, his conversion led him to recognizing the global community that is the Afrikan world; a global community that he recognizes that he is a part of! He says that this is in opposition to Abrahamic “community” where unity is based off of the religion one practices and conformity. Charlie Brown’s ideas around community were more focused on his own locus of control, but his new values were no less profound.

Charlie Brown described how he was introverted and did not want to deal with other people and their problems until he came into his tradition (Vodou) which he described as being “...about community.” He also described how his Mambo is very community-based, and how her communal stance changed his views on community. Communities are also constructed within these traditions. Charlie Brown detailed the process of “house” making within the Vodou tradition. A house, he said, is a community, a family, and “...a house cannot be birthed without a Mambo”, a woman. Within these houses, a Mambo is the mother while a Houngan is the father, and the initiates are the children. Charlie Brown declared, “They [the Mambo and Houngan] are your parent. They have responsibilities and obligations to you and vice versa.” With both Charlie Brown and Jeremiah, they came to realize that they are apart of something bigger than themselves.

John gained a newfound value for Elders. He explained that because of his awakening, his regard for Black people grew. He explained how he saw Afrikan people as sources of knowledge—including the elderly and poor who are disregarded in white, capitalist, industrial societies. “So, if you see an old Haitian dude your mind starts to fly.” “You know what I’m saying, you know, you see people, poor people in Jamaica, you like ooh, you know what I’m saying, like, what do they know? You know I’m saying, like, and as I got older, what they know might not be some deep spiritual thing. It may just be, you know, these depths of life, but I



always had an empathy and a connection for black people because I was raised to believe that those were my people, but now, cultures become repositories of knowledge just like, you know, we see it, libraries, you know. So rather than viewing, like Haiti as this place where, there are a bunch of people who are poor and they're suffering. You view Haiti as the repository of knowledge of all these African nations that came together and did this phenomenal, amazing thing that really wasn't done elsewhere in the same way, and it becomes like, books and libraries, you know, people become libraries of knowledge, you know. So, the respect and the desire to go connect became totally different. You know what I'm saying?" Here, John was ascribing value to knowledge and to people and places that are seen as unvaluable because they do not produce for the capitalist machine. He also alluded to the *Ayitian* Revolution where many different descendants of various Afrikan ethnic groups came together as a community to fight for their liberation. Above, I explained how the *Ayitian* Revolution was one of the greatest displays of the use of Indigenous Afrikan Spiritual Technology that the world has ever seen.

#### 4.1.4 The Individual

The final parameter I focused on was how my participants viewed themselves after conversion. This parameter is very important since white colonialism, racism, etc. have attempted to imbue Afrikan people with an inferiority complex. Above, I mentioned how double consciousness infiltrates the mind of Afrikan people which makes Afrikan people see themselves through the eyes of the Other, the white man, the oppressor (Du Bois, 1903). Then, there is *Baba* Fanon's (2008) *Zone of Non-being* Belief wherein Afrikan people are relegated to statuses of objecthood—stripped of their humanity, but within many Indigenous Afrikan belief systems, the person is a unique individual who has a unique destiny, a spark from the Supreme Creator, and various other components (Adétáyò, 2022). On the contrary, within one of the biggest

Abrahamic traditions, Christianity, the person is inherently flawed and born of sin which is in opposition to the Indigenous Afrikan paradigm but can quite easily be used to perpetuate limiting beliefs about one's self. Adétáyò (2022) proclaims:

In the African spiritual paradigm, we are not born of sin. We do not operate under the fear of eternal damnation. We are sent here from the realm of the ancestors with a unique destiny, mission, and purpose. With good character and the support of our deities we work to fulfill that purpose.

The concepts of hell and sin have been used to control people through fear while also making people feel unworthy, but my participants were able to explain how after conversion they were no longer controlled by this thinking. They spoke about how they embraced new conceptualizations of selfhood that were empowering. Charlie Brown boldly stated that they no longer believe in hell, there is no hell, and it does not exist. He went on to mention how if someone is controlled by these ideas, they will not do this or that for fear of brimstone. Additionally, Charlie Brown mentioned how he now embodies both sides of himself—his shadow and light side. He stated, "I'm about balance." Charlie Brown recognized that he could be a "both-and" individual rather than an "either-or" individual, accepting all aspects of himself.

Jeremiah said his perspective shifted from him seeing himself mainly as a material being to seeing himself mainly as a spiritual being and "...knowing myself as the essence of the Creator of being a divine being and having the power of the spiritual realm stored within me..." He explained that this is not how he saw himself prior to conversion. In addition to this, Jeremiah recalled on how he allowed the values of the Abrahamic faith to override the control he had over his own life, and he said it no longer resonates with him when people "...say something to the extent of, like, what I'm, I'm just a human being or, you know, this is what this is human nature.

This is human behavior, right?” He made it plain saying that people limit themselves with this belief. Jeremiah declared, “They don’t realize that they can create an alternate and a more suitable reality or relationship to themselves and their healing.” Jeremiah went on to describe how he now recognizes the multiple aspects of himself:

I always see myself or attempt to see myself as a very, as someone, with multiple aspects of self, where, you know, my emotions are one thing, my divi— my higher self, and my purpose, sort of, like nurtures, all of these elements of myself of my physical manifestation. So, whether it be my emotions, where it be my thoughts, whether it be, my, my will, you know—all of these different aspects of myself are things that are cultivated by my higher self, by my purpose, and by my destiny as opposed to allowing those other parts of me to be uncontrollable or imbalanced and not aligned with the will of the Divine. And really the types of, the type of decision I made to be made manifest in this realm. And that's something that indigenous African spirituality in my practice I have embraced and been astonished at how I've been able to grow and evolve. To have better character and really love, love for myself and discernment as well.

Within this quote, Jeremiah described how he empowered himself after conversion which is something that he did not find in Abrahamic faiths. He also expressed how he was able to really love himself. He took *ownership* of himself.

Similarly, to Charlie Brown, John also noted how he does not believe in hell and thinks it is a “ridiculous concept.” His conceptions of himself as an individual also expanded. He said, “My experience of myself became expanded just like Africans are like communal and they kind of see themselves as part of a larger community spiritually. I saw myself as part of a network of spirit as opposed to like maybe just a person—a physical body that has a spirit somewhere,

nebulously.” Then, he went on to list different deities he felt connected to, such as Yemaya and Damballah. This new depth of connection let him know that he was not alone, not an individual, and not solely influenced by himself or physical things, but a “part of this expanded spiritual world.”

#### 4.1.5 Summary

After conversion or awakening, all of my participants described incredible shifts in their ideologies. By converting or awakening to Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality, they were able to re-Afrikanize and re-connect to their cultural roots because a culture’s belief system is informed by a culture’s culture and vice versa. As I stated above, within IAS, nature is revered, and my participants also acknowledged the divinity and power of nature after their re-connection with IAS. My participant’s regard for community also grew after re-connection. They recognized that they were not alone, and that their community went beyond the physical! I noticed that the value of community was a common thread throughout all of my interviews; even coming up in questions that were not about community. Finally, my participant’s relationship with themselves was forever changed to one where they recognized their own power, and they saw themselves as aspects of the divine rather than as wretches unworthy of the divine. A bigger question desires to be asked: What impact can IAS or re-indigenization, period, have on a world where capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy has created a culture of consumption, individuality, and low self-regard?

## 5 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Discussion

I chose to focus on the three parameters above: nature, the Afrikan community, and the Afrikan individual because I felt that these were powerful starting points to show the juxtaposition and contradiction of beliefs around nature, community, and the individual

according to IAS and Abrahamic beliefs. They do not just show a difference in religious beliefs but in cultural beliefs too. Also, these three parameters were used to showcase the deconstruction and reconstruction of beliefs that my participants went through; with deconstruction and reconstruction being aspects of the theoretical framework I used for this study.

Like I said above, IAS was/is the way of life of Afrikan folk. Quiet as it's kept, I also wanted to show how re-connection with IAS is a re-connection with Afrikan culture. My participants showed this by talking about how they got a new value for nature which is a common characteristic with various indigenous people around the globe. My participants were also talking in a communal manner and speaking to their own power. In other words, by re-connecting with IAS, my participants were able to return to their cultural source, re-Afrikanize themselves, and gain new cultural outlooks that were centered in the lived experiences of Indigenous Afrikan people.

In the literature review, I talked about how colonization has affected Afrikan people. I specifically mentioned double consciousness, the zone of non-being, and the cultural bomb. I also said that returning to the root can help Afrikan people fight against the effects of colonization. After doing this research, I can say for sure that returning to the source, re-Afrikanizing, and letting go of oppressive Abrahamic ideals has helped at least three Afrikan siblings renew their minds. Double consciousness talks about how there is this Other within the minds of Afrikan folk; it says that we see ourselves through the eyes of the Other, whiteness. When asked about how he viewed himself after conversion, Jeremiah said:

The deeper that I've been able to go, the more I've been able to let go of limiting myself to what a white man thinks about who I am. You know, that's the last thing I'm thinking

about. When I think about Blackness, I'm thinking about my relationship to my Divinity and my Consciousness.

John talked about how his view of self was expanded to include a communal sense of self.

Charlie Brown talked about how he accepted his shadow and light side. He recognized the duality in himself. All of my participants talked about their value for community. Community was so valued that the way that John talked about his selfhood still mentioned himself in relation to community. By returning to the source, my participants showed how they made a new type of being for themselves—a new humanity. They all recognized that they were a part of something bigger; not relegated to a zone of non-being where they are not considered human. Charlie Brown spoke on how he had to grow out of his introvertedness cuz of the communal nature of his practice while both John and Jeremiah spoke on how they are connected to a bigger collective in the spiritual and physical. Where *Baba Ngūgī* would say the cultural bomb has annihilated people's belief in their culture, I would say re-Afrikanization can provide a balm to the cultural bomb to re-member people back to their culture. My participants showcased this by telling me their stories. Imagine what could happen if the Afrikan World were to return to its own source. What could be created?

Unfortunately, if Afrikan people don't turn back to our own ways, we will keep on doing the same thang that we have done for the past six centuries...which has not done anything for us. Like Mufasa said in the *Lion King*, we have to re-member who we are, and I will add we also have to recognize where and when we are. I say this because there are plenty of so-called Afrikan Spiritual folk who are just some white supremacists in Afrikan face (and I can't stand nun of y'all). They perpetuate the same nonsense, such as patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, individualism, greed, etc. contributing to the de-evolution of our traditions and our people. We

must get these Afrikan belief systems to work for our present condition, so that they can continue to guide us into the future. Our beliefs survived the *Ma'afa* (Afrikan Holocaust) cuz they evolved (Vukelic, 2022). Now, we are at a point in time where they can evolve again, but this evolution must be centered on high ideals of humanity.

We have to re-member the sacredness of nature. How it has held and sustained us when Western medicine turned us away or outright killed us—even into this present moment. We have to re-member how to *radically* love one another fully—not claim to love someone while hating or disagreeing with a part of their humanity. These lines that we draw between each other only end up harming all of us. Humanity is not just cis-hetero and white. We have to love the full breadth of humanity not just the humanity we recognize in our reflections. We have survived thus far cuz we had each other... Finally, we have to love and recognize the power within ourselves. We are not wretches born of sin unworthy of anything. Our value does not start or stop at how much money we make, how voluptuous we are, or how conformist we are. All have a spark of the Supreme Being and come with a unique destiny and purpose. We just have to re-member.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In the future, I hope to see more studies like this that are centered on indigeneity. We need them because indigenous ways of being are looked over all over the world—including in the Western academy. I hope that these future studies include more participants in general and more participants from different backgrounds. This will help with generalization, but the revolution will definitely not be academized. I also hope that future studies will speak to so-called Afrikan revolutionaries, Afrikan spiritualists, and/or pro-Black people who claim to be for Afrikan and Afrikan people until that Afrikan person's humanity is not cis-hetero. These people are a disease

within our community, and if Afrikan people were to gain independence to form our own governments or communities, the same clowns who claim to be for everybody Black would attack and kill the same Black folk who are not like them. I have already condemned these people, and I have made it clear that I detest them. I could not go into the nuance of a few things within this study, but I hope the readers know that I recognize the grey area. Plus, I hope future studies can take this kind of work further.

There is always more to say, but a wise person knows when to be silent. It was never my intention to offer every interpretation for my readers, and I do not need to because my readers already have what they need inside of them. I “ain’t” coming with no timeless or unquestionable truths, and I “ain’t” trying to admonish Afrikan people. I’m trying to remind Afrikan people of our antidote. Afrikan Spirituality is the balm that is to heal the wound of my people. By re-connecting with Afrikan Spirituality, Afrikan people can re-connect with Afrikan culture which can then be used to make new cultural paradigms centered on the highest ideals of humanity. But to get here Afrikan folk must first stop demonizing their spiritual beliefs which is also a demonization of their own culture. According to Jackson (2023), “Our folks [Afrikan people] who reject Afrikan Religion on the grounds of Christianity are involved in a tragedy.” Jackson (2023) is saying that:

The tragedy is our conception of religion is a ill-fitting Western notion we slap onto Africa. When you study people groups in Africa it becomes apparent that African spirituality is tied into everything in the civilization. If you chose the actual rejection of [what] folks call African religion then [that] becomes the rejection of African philosophy, values, our understanding of the value of men and women, the whys behind our



architectural styles, where and how we live, our ecology. We are rejecting an entire civilizational style clear across the continent...

My “brotha”, Jackson, is saying what I have somewhat said above. The concept of religion is a Western/European one. For Indigenous Afrikans, their spiritual practices were not just something they did on Sunday and Wednesday while raising Hell the rest of the week. Jackson (2023) went on to say, “Afrikan spirituality...is not simply a religious practice. It is the way and the record of how and what our people understood [about] the world.” By paying attention to my interviews above, anybody can see that the way that my participants moved was different after leaving that Abrahamic stuff behind. Rejecting Afrikan Spirituality is rejecting Afrikan culture, “and folks choose to reject those things without beginning to understand them (Jackson, 2023).” Jackson (2023) snapped saying, “And so the why of Africa is lost, European standards are slapped on and Blk folks the world over are simply seen as slow to adapt Europeans who will one day arrive. Trapped in someone else’s mind.” I would argue that the idea of being trapped in someone else’s mind is reminiscent of double consciousness, which is something that one of my participant’s, Jeremiah, explicitly stated they left behind when he described how he no longer cares about what a white man has to think about him. This is what can transpire by us returning to our root, re-Afrikanizing, decolonizing, *Sankofa*—whatever you “wanna” call it—we can re-connect with ourselves, re-member our community, and re-imagine our future. Seek and ye shall find.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A-Informed Consent

Georgia State University

Department of Africana Studies

Informed Consent

Title: Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind: Narrative Explorations into the Oppressed Afrikan Consciousness

Principal Investigator: Akinyele Umoja

Student Principal Investigator: Samori-Alao Adeyemi

#### I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore how the consciousness of an oppressed Afrikan person's consciousness is changed after converting from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview, and to showcase how returning to the source can teach us new ways of being that oppressed Afrikan people can use in the present to create a better future. You are invited to participate because you are an Afrikan person who is a descendent of enslaved Afrikans brought to the United States and was born in and lives in the United States. Also, you once practiced/believed in an Abrahamic belief system (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Catholicism) and/or held an Abrahamic worldview but now practice/believe in an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality (Vodou, Hoodoo, etc.) and/or hold an Indigenous Afrikan worldview, and you are at least 18 years old. A total of three participants will participate in this study. Participation will take approximately 60-120 minutes, and the study will be conducted in one sitting. Follow up interviews will be discussed if extremely necessary.

## II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a screening form which will determine if you are eligible to participate in this research study. You will not be personally identified in this study. You will be given an alias of your choosing, or one that I give you at the time of the interview. You will then be asked to participate in a one-on-one non-formal interview with the student researcher which will take approximately 60-120 minutes over Zoom at the agreed upon scheduled time. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription on one device and accuracy on another device. Both devices will be password protected, and the audio files will be stored behind password protected file managers. Both devices will only be accessible to the student and principal researchers, and the student researcher will be the only one with knowledge of the passwords. You can obtain your recording at any time. No further questions will be asked until the Informed Consent has been gone over by the student researcher and participant together and signed by both parties in agreement.

## III. Risks:

Due to the nature of this study and the questions being asked, there is a possibility of emotional or psychological discomfort. These risks will be mitigated by providing psychological resources to you which can be found on this document, and your participation can be withdrawn at any time without penalty. You can also skip questions without penalty. If you experience any psychological discomfort, dial 988 for the national dialing code that routes crisis calls and texts to the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline network.

## IV. Benefits:

Though this study may not benefit you personally, it will provide much needed data around the experiences of people who convert to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality. We hope to



understand why people do so and what changes did they see in themselves on this journey. Regardless, reflecting on this journey may provide some intrinsic motivation or pride.

V. Compensation:

You will receive a \$30 Visa gift card by mail for participating in this study.

VI. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be forced to participate. Should you decide to no longer participate at any time for any reason or lack thereof you will still be compensated fully and not penalized. You will not be forced to answer questions. You may skip questions that are asked by the research and not be penalized and still receive full compensation. You may also ask that a response not be used in the research study if you wish.

VII. Confidentiality:

The data and information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent of the law. The researchers will have access to the information, and information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (Georgia State University Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). An alias will be used rather than your legal name on all study records. The data collected will be kept on two password protected devices within two password protected data file managers. The devices will only be in the possession of the student researcher. The passwords will only be known by the student researcher. None of the information gathered will be stored in a cloud or automatic storage device. Only the principal and student researcher will have access to written or personal information provided by you. After the audio data has been transcribed with the aliases, the audio data will be permanently deleted unless you, the participant, wish to have a copy. If you

want a copy, it will be shared through Dropbox. You, the participant, understand that Dropbox cannot promise that your data is completely secured and protected. At the conclusion of this study, all data that was gathered from the participants will be permanently deleted. The transcription data will be password protected on one cellular device that is possessed only by the student researcher. No identifying information will be provided in this study's presentation or publishing.

VIII. Contact Persons:

Student principal investigator: Samori-Alao Adeyemi

- Email: [sadeyemi3@student.gsu.edu](mailto:sadeyemi3@student.gsu.edu)
- Phone: 601-697-2938

Principal investigator: Akinyele Umoja

- Email: [aadaku@gsu.edu](mailto:aadaku@gsu.edu)
- Phone: 678-697-3725

Contact the student researcher if you have any questions about the study. Contact the principal investigator if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu) if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

IX. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

A copy will be provided for your records.

If you are willing to participate in this study and be audio recorded sign, date, & print below.

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Print above this line

Date

---

Sign above this line Date

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Principal or Student Researcher Date

## Appendix B-Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

1. How did you become a practitioner/believer of an Abrahamic faith/worldview?
  - a. Is your immediate family apart of \_\_\_\_\_ faith/system?
  - b. What was it like growing up in \_\_\_\_\_ system/faith?
2. What made you decide to convert to an Afrikan Spiritual System/worldview?
  - a. What was the experience of conversion like considering the teachings of Abrahamic faiths?
  - b. What did your immediate family think?
  - c. (If immediate family doesn't know) Why haven't you told them?
3. Did conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview change your relationship with or view of nature?
  - a. How/how not?
  - b. Are there specific tenets or teachings that you can mention to explain this change?
4. Did conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview change your relationship with or view of the broader Afrikan/Black community?
  - a. How/how not?
  - b. Are there specific tenets or teachings that you can mention to explain this change?
5. Did conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview affect your Black consciousness (what it means to be Black)?
  - a. How/how not?
  - b. Are there specific tenets or teachings that you can mention to explain this change?

6. Did conversion from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview change how you viewed yourself as a person?
  - a. How/how not?
  - b. Are there specific tenets or teachings that you can mention to explain this change?
7. What are some ideologies that you no longer have because of converting from an Abrahamic faith/worldview to an Afrikan Spiritual System or gaining an Afrikan worldview?
8. What are some values that you attribute to converting from an Abrahamic faith/worldview to an Afrikan Spiritual System or to gaining an Afrikan worldview?
9. Do you think re-connecting with Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/ways of being can help oppressed Afrikan people?
  - a. If so, in what ways, and are there specific tenets or teachings in Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality that you can mention?
10. What is a question you wish I had asked?

## Appendix C-Recruitment Form

### Human Subjects Protocol Recruitment Form

Hey, my name is Samori-Alao Adeyemi though Samori is fine. I am a graduate student at Georgia State University in the Department of Africana Studies. I would love for you to participate in my study that is titled: “Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind: Narrative Explorations into the Oppressed Afrikan Consciousness.”

The purpose of this study is to explore how the consciousness of an oppressed Afrikan person is changed after converting from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview, and to showcase how returning to the source can teach us new ways of being that oppressed Afrikan people can use in the present to create a better future.

Though this study may not benefit you personally, it will provide much needed data around the experiences of people who convert to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality. We hope to understand why people do so and what changes did they see in themselves on this journey. Regardless, reflecting on this journey may provide some intrinsic motivation or pride.

#### **To participate:**

- You must be a descendent of enslaved Afrikans brought to the United States
- Currently live in the United States
- Once been a practitioner or believer of an Abrahamic belief system/worldview (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Catholicism)
- Converted from an Abrahamic belief system/worldview to an Indigenous Afrikan Spirituality/worldview (*Ìṣẹ̀ṣe*, Hoodoo, Vodou, Vodun, etc.)

**If you are interested:**

- Email me at [sadeyemi3@student.gsu.edu](mailto:sadeyemi3@student.gsu.edu)
- Call or text at 601-697-2938
- Please include a way to contact you and the best times along with an email address

**Appendix D-Screening Form****Screening Form**

1. Are you a descendent of Afrikan people who were brought to the United States and enslaved?
2. Do you currently live in the United States?
3. Were you once a follower/believer/proponent of an Abrahamic belief system (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Catholicism)?
4. Did you eventually convert from an Abrahamic belief system to an Indigenous Afrikan Spiritual system (*Ìṣẹ̀ṣe*, Hoodoo, Vodou, Vodun, etc.) and/or Indigenous Afrikan worldview?