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# The National Association for Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies Review (ESR) is the journal of the National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES). ESR is a multi-disciplinary international journal devoted to the study of ethnicity, ethnic groups and their cultures, and inter-group relations. NAES has as its basic purpose the promotion of activities and scholarship in the field of Ethnic Studies. The Association is open to any person or institution and serves as a forum for its members in promoting research, study, and curriculum as well as producing publications of interest in the field. NAES sponsors an annual spring conference.

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**ESR**



# ESR

## Ethnic Studies Review

The Journal of the  
National Association for Ethnic Studies

*Volume 35 Issues 1 and 2*

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**Scarlet-Letter Politics: The Rhetoric of Shame in the Campaign to  
Unseat President Barack Hussein Obama**

**Myra Mendible**  
**Florida Gulf Coast University**

This essay considers the politics of racial shaming as deployed against Barack Obama, arguing that it targeted “black” and “foreign” bodies as threats to the “American” body politic.

**From Modern Rock to Postmodern Hard Rock: Cambodian  
Alternative Music Voices**

**LinDa Saphan**  
**College of Mount Saint Vincent**

Cambodian modernity was driven by the political agenda of the Sihanouk government beginning in the 1950s, and Cambodian rock and roll emerged in the 1960s in step with Sihanouk’s ambitious national modernization project. Urban rockers were primarily upper-class male youths. In the postcolonial era rock and roll was appropriated from abroad and given a unique Cambodian sound, while today’s emerging hard rock music borrows foreign sociocultural references along with the music. Postmodern Cambodia and its diaspora have seen the evolution of a more diverse music subculture of alternative voices of hard rock bands and hip-hop artists, as well as post-bourgeois and post-male singers and songwriters.

Keywords: Modernity, Postmodernity, Cambodian Music, Alternative Voices, Rock, Hard rock

# **Latinos, African Americans and the Coalitional Case for a Federal Jobs Program**

**Alan A. Aja  
Brooklyn College, CUNY**

**William Darity, Jr.  
Duke University**

**Darrick Hamilton  
The New School**

In the late 1970s, amidst growing unemployment in black and Latino communities, the newly-formed Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) supported the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in its call for full employment in the run up to the passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978. Never fully implemented, the act has been *de facto* an unfunded mandate for close to 40 years. Only recently has it been resurrected by a handful of lawmakers, while both discussion and support for a national jobs program has begun to gain steam in the media and the general public. With support from labor market research and other empirical evidence, we propose and outline for a bold policy: a National Investment Employment Corps to provide a permanent job guarantee for all citizens with the purpose of maintaining and expanding the nation's physical and human infrastructure. Given the disproportionate effect of the recent economic downturn and labor market bias on African Americans and Latinos, we argue that a National Investment Employment Corps program would address the employment needs for blacks and Latinos by assuring full-employment and simultaneously ensuring long-term benefits for the nation's well-being.

## **National Fantasies, Exclusion, and the Many Houses on Mango Street**

**Lorna L. Perez  
Buffalo State College**

This article argues that understanding what the house in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* symbolizes is foundational to contextualizing the radical possibilities that Cisneros enacts in her work. Unlike most critics who read "the house" as referencing the title of the text, I argue that the novel is full of houses, notably the house located on Mango Street that narrator Esperanza Cordero longs to escape from, and the house away from Mango Street that she longs to one day have. By reading these two houses through Homi Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" and Gaston Bachelard's notion of "felicitous space", we can



better understand a critique of the house in light of its resonance with the American Dream on the one hand, and a reconfiguration of that symbolism through a feminist intervention on the other.

Keywords: Cisneros, Houses, American Dream, Women, Bachelard, Bhabha

**Free Your Mind: Contemporary Racial Attitudes and  
Post Racial Theory**

**Lakeyta M. Bonnette**  
**Georgia State University**

**Sarah M. Gershon**  
**Georgia State University**

**Precious D. Hall**  
**Truckee Meadows Community College**

The inauguration of the United States first Black President has prompted mass discussions of race relations in America. It is often articulated that America is now in a post-racial society. However, the question still remains: does the election of a Black president demonstrate that America is now a “color-blind” society? To answer this question, we rely on data collected by PEW (2007). Our results suggest that white and African Americans differ significantly in the extent to which they express post-racial attitudes. Specifically, we find that whites more commonly express post-racial attitudes, claiming that racism and discrimination are rare, in opposition to African American views. On the other hand, blacks are more likely to believe that discrimination still occurs. We further find that whites’ post-racial beliefs are significant determinants of their attitudes towards race-related policies, such as affirmative action.

Keywords: Race, Obama, Post-racial, Public Opinion, Racial Attitudes, Racial Politics, African American.

**Ida B. Wells and the Forces of Democratization**

**Jane Duran**  
**University of California at Santa Barbara**

The work of Ida B. Wells is examined not only from the standpoint of her anti-lynching writings, but from a perusal of her diaries and her efforts as a young woman. It is concluded that she exemplifies the best of the notion of a genuine democratic political force.

# **The Geopolitical Context of Chamorro Cultural Preservation in Guam, U.S.A.**

**Maria-Elena D. Diaz**  
**University of Oklahoma**

An unincorporated Pacific Island territory of the United States, Guam has been under American rule since 1898. While proudly “Chamorro,” the descendants of indigenous islanders have been American citizens since 1950. U.S. foreign policy, Americanization of island institutions, immigration flows from Asia and Micronesia, and economic uncertainty present challenges to the perpetuation of Chamorro culture—a syncretic blend of indigenous, Spanish, and American influences that has endured through centuries of foreign domination. As a gateway from the East to the United States and a frequent destination for Micronesian immigrants from the Compacts of Free Association, Guam regularly receives immigrants from Asia and other Micronesian islands. Many immigrants arrive on Guam to fill labor shortages as professionals or construction workers, while others arrive with limited resources and skills that don’t easily transfer across cultures. Adding to this mix, a major U.S. military build-up is underway to transform Guam into a forward base in the Pacific. This article provides a case study of Guam through an overview of historical influences on Chamorro culture, a description of the island’s contemporary multicultural society, and a discussion of current geopolitical and social forces impacting Chamorro culture in the land “where America’s day begins.”

Keywords: Chamorro studies, ethnic studies, cultural preservation, ethnic stratification, indigenous studies, colonialism

## **Ethnicity and Impressions of Personality Using the Five-Factor Model: Stereotyping or Cultural Sensitivity?**

**Andrea Kay Cooper**  
**San Juan College**

**David Chin Evans**  
**University of Washington**

The current research investigates whether communities use ethnicity as a cue when forming personality impressions of others. Past research has shown that dress, smiling, hairstyle, and even facial symmetry of targets produce systematic differences in personality impressions across the domains of the Five Factor model of personality. We investigated whether the stated or apparent ethnicity of groups and individuals also produce stereotypic impressions of personality. This study compared

impressions across members and non-members of the target groups and examined “cue utility” i.e. whether impressions of the groups agreed with aggregated self-impressions by group members. In all, the results clearly suggest that people utilize ethnicity as a cue when forming impressions of the personalities of groups and individuals, and although those impressions are exaggerated consistent with stereotype theory, they confer some utility in interpersonal perceptions across cultures. Stereotypes are a strategy used to interpret the complex social environment in the absence of more specific information. When that information is available, perceptions of others become more refined and accurate.

Keywords: stereotyping, ethnicity, Five Factor model, Native Americans, cultural sensitivity, personality

### **Dirty Jew-Dirty Mexican: Denver’s 1949 Lake Junior High School Gang Battle and Jewish Racial Identity in Colorado**

**Michael Lee**  
**University of Colorado at Boulder**

This article details how Jews and Mexicans in Denver, Colorado came together in 1949 in the wake of a widely publicized interracial gang battle at one of the city’s local middle schools. It documents the response of the local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League and its involvement in a interracial neighborhood council and how Jewish racial identity in Denver was informed by the broader racial geography of the West—a racial geography that was too often shaped by contrast with Mexicans. The article also challenges the notion that Denver was relatively free of anti-Semitism. Indeed, the 1905 lynching of Jacob Wesskind suggests a more nuanced story than the received wisdom about Jews being “at home” in Denver.

Keywords: Jews, Mexicans, anti-Semitism, lynching, Denver, Colorado

### **Black Political Attitudes and Political Rap Music**

**Lakeyta M. Bonnette**  
**Georgia State University**

Many argue that political or message rap no longer exists. Scholars and critics point to rap music as a genre that is completely negative and only diminishes the progress of the Black community by offering and supporting stereotypes of African Americans (Johnson, Jackson and Gatto 1995; Carpentier, Knobloch and Zillman 2003). On the contrary, I

argue that all rap music is not the same and that in fact, there is a subgenre in rap music, political rap, that discusses political issues and candidates exclusively. In this article, I proffer a criterion for identifying political rap music to demonstrate a distinction between the subgenres of rap and the prevalence of political rap within mainstream radio. Finally, I examine the lyrical content of political rap for the assertion of Black Nationalist ideology.

**Keywords:** Rap, Black Nationalism, political rap, Black political attitudes, popular culture, public opinion

## ARTICLES

# SCARLET-LETTER POLITICS: THE RHETORIC OF SHAME IN THE CAMPAIGN TO UNSEAT PRESIDENT BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA

*Myra Mendible*  
*Florida Gulf Coast University*

In his March 2008 speech on race in America, President Obama alluded to the “memories of humiliation” that haunt an older generation of blacks in America. His words invoked a time when routine acts of racial shaming served to keep African American men and women “in their place.” Publicly shamed bodies serve as emblems of what a society rejects; the stigmatization of black bodies was instrumental in maintaining the nation’s racially segregated social order and shaping its political culture. Through shaming practices bodies are criminalized, demonized, cast out or differentiated. In terms of racial history, President Obama’s speech locates this tactic safely in America’s past. Yet both the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns suggest that public shaming remains a politically expedient way to inscribe boundaries of race, ethnicity and other social categories.

This essay considers the politics of shaming deployed during the 2012 Obama-Romney presidential race and during Obama’s tenure. I argue that the nation’s first black president has been the object of a shaming campaign specifically targeting the “black” body and the “foreign” body as potential threats to the “American” body politic. Examining news media and Internet sources, I show how racially-charged shaming rhetoric and imagery exploit long-standing social anxieties and stereotypes. I focus on public shaming gestures and inducements that function as political tactics intended to enforce hierarchies and boundaries between “white America” and its others.

Forging a more united and inclusive society was one of Barack Obama’s defining themes during his first presidential campaign. Following his successful run, pundits and academics alike heralded the advent of a “post-racial” American society. Many claimed that the election of the nation’s first African American president showed that race and other embodied social categories no longer played a significant role in America’s electoral processes. Any mention of lingering systemic inequalities or racial hostilities could now be discounted by the fact that the

son of an American white woman and a Kenyan Muslim had been elected president of the United States. But despite President Obama's own attempts to "transcend" race and broaden his constituency, his first term and subsequent campaign for re-election suggest that many Americans regard the nation's changing demographics and the increasing influence of diverse social groups with ambivalence, suspicion, or outright enmity.

Obama's first term exposed certain fault lines in American society, evoking deep-seated apprehensions about race, immigration, and America's status in a post-9/11 world and fueling a reactionary backlash. Throughout his first term in office, Obama faced grinding opposition, divisiveness, and hostility from "Tea Party" Republicans specifically and the GOP generally—so much so that an analysis by *The Washington Times* showed that in 2011 Congress set a "legislative futility record": they accomplished less than in any other year in history (Dinan, 2012, para. 2). Republican opposition to Obama has been categorical: in a 2011 Gallup poll Obama earned a 12 percent approval rating among Republicans, versus 80 percent among Democrats, making his third year in office the most polarizing on record (Jones, 2012, para. 1). This deep divide—or what political scientists call "asymmetric polarization"—cannot be explained fully by pointing to ideological differences. The results of a recent study by political scientist Keith Poole, which estimated congress and the president's ideological positions by tabulating their "votes" on legislation, suggest that President Obama may be, as a *Washington Post* headline put it, "the most polarizing *moderate* ever" (Cillizza and Blake, 2012, emphasis added). Contrary to the popular perception (shaped no doubt by repeated references to Obama as "radical" or "extremist"), Poole's study found that President Obama is more ideologically moderate than any Democratic president since the end of World War II ("An Update on the Presidential Square Wave," 2013).

The deeply polarized state of the union today is a far cry from the one Obama envisioned during his 2004 Democratic Convention speech when he said, "There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America." Despite the promise implicit in his election and subsequent re-election, the gridlock and disrespect that greeted his presidency and continue during his second term provokes questions about what identity categories are legitimized, included, or disavowed in the discursive construction of a post-Obama American culture. It also calls attention to the lingering impact of race on political attitudes. Critics publicly denounce Obama with a ferocity usually reserved for foreign enemies or tyrants, high level officials often stoking the fires and leading the charge. These public displays have implications for minorities, whose lives are

directly impacted by any reactionary backlash. For example, in a 2012 AP survey 51 percent of Americans expressed explicit anti-black attitudes compared with 48 percent in 2008. Similarly, while 52 percent of non-Hispanic whites expressed anti-Hispanic attitudes in a 2011 AP survey that rose to 57 percent in a more recent study (Ross and Agiesta, 2012). Sonya Ross and Jennifer Agiesta (2012) report that more than half of respondents associated words such as “violent” and “lazy” with African Americans and Latinos. As a result, “many African-Americans have talked openly about perceived antagonism toward them since Obama took office. As evidence, they point to events involving police brutality or cite bumper stickers, cartoons and protest posters that mock the president as a lion or a monkey, or lynch him in effigy” (para. 10). These tactics can help shape public opinion and thus public policy: support for affirmative action or other social programs, for example, fluctuates in accordance with prevailing attitudes towards minority populations (Savani, et al, 2011). Racialized shaming displays intentionally exploit the tension produced by competing impulses in American society, particularly between individualism and community, between a politics of assimilation and one of differentiation. As Caroline Howarth (2006) explains, “Stigmatizing representations, as all representations, are more than ways of seeing or cognitive maps: they filter into, and so construct, the institutionalized practices of differentiation, division and discrimination” (p. 45).

Shaming tactics often “brand” Obama by culling familiar caricatures of African-American men such as the “coon” “Sambo” or “Uncle Tom” to imply that Obama lacks the dignity or status necessary to warrant respect or represent America on the world stage. When President Obama attended the G-20 summit in London, controversy ensued over Obama’s supposed bow before Saudi King Abdullah. A *Washington Times* editorial called it a “shocking display of fealty to a foreign potentate” and a “servile gesture” that ran contrary to American tradition (“Editorial” 2009). One cartoon combined two affronts: the President bows to a foreign leader but also seems to “moon” Uncle Sam—thus suggesting not only his indignity but also his arrogance and disdain for America (Figure #1). Another links this subservience theme with the notion that Obama “apologizes” for America (Figure #2). In 2010, another caricature making the rounds online recycled the Obama-as-subservient theme: it depicts the president as a shoe shine boy polishing Sarah Palin’s shoes.<sup>1</sup> Issues of “Tea Party Comix,” which were circulated and sold online by its creator, Tom Kalb, featured a series of Obama-as-coon car-

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<sup>1</sup> For a look at several “coon” images, their racist roots, and their revival during Obama’s presidency, see <<http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/african/3-coon/5-chickwatermelon/index.html>>

icatures (McMorris-Santoro, 2010). As Lawrence Bobo (2011) points out, “the cultural production of demeaning antiblack images—post-cards featuring watermelons on the White House lawn. . .Obama featured in loincloth and with a bone through his nose in ads denouncing the health care bill, a cartoon showing police officers shooting an out-of-control chimpanzee under the heading ‘They’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill’ [Figure #3]—are ugly reminders of some of the more overtly racialized reactions to the ascendancy of an African American to the presidency of the United States” (p. 32).

FIGURE #1



FIGURE # 2





FIGURE #3



Other images brand Obama as a threat by associating him with negative stereotypes of black men, linking the president to images of the black “gangsta” or thug. One goes so far as to imagine Obama as black rapist; it shows a nude Lady Liberty sitting on the edge of a bed weeping as a smiling Obama says, “Oh stop your whining. You gave all the consent I’ll ever need November 2008” (Figure #4). When asked about her cartoon, conservative blogger Darleen Click denied any racist intent: “This is supposed to be a post-racial era. Then deal with the fact that the President of the United States is the head of a gang that just raped our American principles.”<sup>2</sup> Clearly, there are still blatantly racist images and claims circulating widely even in this presumably more “enlightened” post-Obama era. As Kay Whitlock (2012) points out, “Criminalizing narratives about President Obama reflect not only a politic of contempt, denunciation, and fear-mongering. They also strike – and are intended to strike – a deep, often unconscious, repository of racist hostility in many people; a virulent (though often unacknowledged) racism that is necessary to the further institutionalization of inequality” (para. 8).

<sup>2</sup> The image has since been removed from the site, along with the blogger’s comments. For a discussion of this event and the broader criminalizing narrative applied against Obama see Kay Whitlock’s article, “Criminalizing President Obama.” This essay includes links to various images and their historical correlates. <<http://criticalmassprogress.com/2012/02/15/ci-criminalizing-president-obama/>>

FIGURE #4



Shaming gestures such as these draw on judgments and strictures that a group shares, core rules and expectations which if broken merit social or moral condemnation. Invoking shared values, the group re-enforces its boundaries and internal coherence. As a form of differentiation and disapproval, collective shaming acts help maintain social and moral hierarchies. They structure and regulate group behaviors, constituting and enforcing social identities such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion. David Leverenz argues in *Honor Bound: Race and Shame in America* (2012) that racial shaming in particular “affirms the coherence of a dominant racial group” (p. 8). “For over three hundred years,” Leverenz writes, “shaming after shaming firmed up the pretense that dichotomized skin colors justified white control” (p. 24). He notes that racial shaming tactics typically aim “to reconsolidate white power rather than to make black targets feel ashamed” (p. 9). This is likely because there is no “corrective” or “redemptive” response possible on the part of the target of race-based shaming. If as Leverenz contends racial shaming sees “black” as more basic than “person” (p. 9), the intent is not to “improve” or “reform” the raced other (for how does one “redeem” skin color?) but to empower the shamer. In Leverenz’s view, the “more anxious white people are about their status, the more they need to flaunt their superiority” (p. 25).

The dread of miscegenation or of waning “white power” has a long history in America and is readily tapped for political effect. From Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, published in 1920, to Pat Buchanan’s 2001 book, *The Death of the West*, to the 2009 *Atlantic Magazine* headline proclaiming the “end of white America,” the notion that white U.S.-born citizens are an “oppressed majority” (in Rush Limbaugh’s words) increasingly fuels paranoia. The perceived or actual erosion of white privilege earns considerable media attention and invokes elegiac rants from conservative pundits. Obama’s presidency, combined with the psychological and economic effects of the great recession, add further weight to the belief that whites—particularly white men—are under attack. As David Leonard (2012) notes in an *Ebony* opinion piece, white nationalists seized upon President Obama’s re-election to increase their ranks: “At Stormfront.org, the hub for global racism, readers were met with a new introduction to the website: ‘*The recent Obama victory and the resultant anti-Obama backlash has caused a lot of Whites to visit Stormfront (reader-ship surged up to 600% more than normal). Welcome.*’” (para. 6-7). Sociologist Charles Gallagher (2011) explains that, “We [whites] went from being a privileged group to all of a sudden becoming. . .the new victims. . .You have this perception out there that whites are no longer in control or the majority” (Blake, para. 5-6). In this context, acts of public shaming and humiliation can help assuage bruised egos and reaffirm the group’s higher status and worth. Through shaming gestures, an anxious hierarchy may “restore psychological comfort for the group” (Adshead, 2010, p. 206).

#### AMERICAN (WHITE) PRIDE AND RACIAL SHAMING IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

Most Americans do not identify with the more overt racism expressed by white supremacist organizations or post-election Twitters.<sup>3</sup> Thus the contemporary politics of shaming often requires a more delicate balance: it must stoke latent racial anxiety and “white pride” discourses while not challenging our positive national self-image as a tolerant *E Pluribus Unum* democracy. Thus racial shaming strategies often involve coding and deflection. Going beyond a longstanding duologue of white

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<sup>3</sup> Following the 2012 election, the “n” word and “monkey” were trending high on Twitter, with outraged and angry posts denouncing President Obama and his black and *Latino* supporters. For a sampling of these posts, see J. Lemieux, *Ebony* (November 8, 2012). Online <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/obama-wins-ngger-trends-100#axzz2M7Z5cE2F>. For the results of a data-mapping survey of these posts, see “Mapping racist Tweets in response to President Obama’s re-election,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 12, 2012. Online <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/nov/09/mapping-racist-tweets-president-obama-reelection>

and black, this tactic deploys “patriotic” themes historically aligned with Anglo-American cultural myths and values. These appeals express nostalgia for “traditional American values” and for a time when America ruled the world proudly and “without apology.” It invokes an imagined community united by religious (Judeo-Christian) and economic (capitalist/free market) kinship and energized by a so-called “Protestant work ethic.” Shaming Obama here depends on excluding him from these foundational narratives—portraying him as an outsider who holds no authentic ties to “American” history or values. He is, as Mitt Romney charged during the campaign, someone who “doesn’t believe in American exceptionalism” (“Obama Rebutts Charge,” 2012).

During both presidential campaigns, Obama’s racial difference was often recoded to signify an indeterminate otherness, a threatening “un-Americanness” that calls into question his legal and cultural right to be president of the United States. In this way, shame is attached to the president by imbuing him with the taint of the foreign and arousing suspicions about his “true” identity or intent. In March of 2010, Republican National Committee fundraising plans made this strategy explicit, calling for an aggressive campaign capitalizing on “fear” of President Obama and socialism. These negative associations evoke a potentially threatening Otherness that invites public condemnation. Thus during the 2012 campaign, Romney campaign co-chair and former New Hampshire Gov. John Sununu explained to Fox News that Obama doesn’t understand how the “American system functions” because “he spent his early years in Hawaii smoking something, spent the next set of years in Indonesia” (Volsky, 2012, para. 2). During a conference call the same day, Sununu remarked that he wished that “this president would learn how to be an American.” After President Obama’s lackluster performance in the first presidential debate, Sununu said of the Harvard-educated Obama, “When you’re not that bright you can’t get better prepared.” Later on an MSNBC, Sununu claimed that the debate had revealed Obama’s “incompetence” and referred to the president of the United States as “lazy” (Rothman, 2012).

No one is a member of an exclusive collectivity, and people who are subordinated along one axis of social division may well be dominant along another. But “red letter politics” require reductive categories and associations to clearly differentiate and “brand” the target group. References to welfare or food stamp recipients are often used as code-words for blacks or Latinos, reducing the multiplicity of these identities to fit neatly into a rigid caste system. Once poverty is raced, it is stigmatized, turned into a sign of some moral or character failing inherent in the target group. Black poverty and unemployment rates, extirpated from their complex historical roots, are thus attributable to “their” essential lazy-

ness, criminality, or willingness to “scam” the system. After all, to confront capitalism’s failings is to turn the gaze inward: to invite a sense of collective responsibility and perhaps even stir up the embers of shame. One group “saves face” through a gesture of deferral and disavowal while the other becomes the public face of need, dependency, and lack.

So it is that during both presidential campaigns Obama’s opponents made it a point to distinguish “hard working Americans” (read: whites) from those who lack the “Protestant work ethic” identified with WASP culture in America. Ronald Reagan had famously chided “welfare queens” during his presidency, and Hillary Clinton revived these associations when she ran against Obama: “I have a much broader base to build a winning coalition on,” she told a *USA Today* reporter. Clinton then cited Sen. Obama’s weak “support among working, hard-working Americans, white Americans” (Kiely and Lawrence, 2008). When Representative Joe Wilson from South Carolina shouted “You lie!” at President Obama during his 2009 healthcare address before Congress, he was reacting to the false notion that Obama aimed to provide illegal immigrants with government healthcare subsidies. Leverenz (2012) aptly notes that in “antebellum South Carolina, Wilson’s accusation would have provoked a duel, since it was a flagrant shaming” (p. 173). But for those who defended Wilson’s disrespectful outburst, the issue seemed to boil down to the same equation: Obama was going to force “us” to provide handouts for “them” (losers, moochers, and illegals).

In his 2008 speech on race, “A More Perfect Union,” Obama pointed to the “lack of economic opportunity among black men, and the shame and frustration that came from not being able to provide for one’s family” (Obama, 2008, para. 32). Throughout his presidency, however, he has been criticized for not directly addressing black unemployment rates—almost twice that of whites. Maintaining a “post-race” stance, Obama has responded to critics by saying that “it’s a mistake to start thinking in terms of particular ethnic segments of the United States rather than to think that we are all in this together and we are all going to get out of this together” (Jackson, 2009). The President’s attempts to propose “color blind” economic policies during the great recession have not stopped opponents from culling the myth of black entitlement. Here scarlet-letter politics associate blacks and minorities with Romney’s 47 percent “who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it” (Corn, 2012, para. 2). One Romney campaign ad falsely accused Obama of gutting welfare reforms, claiming that “Under Obama’s plan, you wouldn’t have to work. . . . They just send you a welfare check” (Edsall, 2012). After Obama’s re-election, Romney told

donors that Obama had been re-elected because of the “gifts” that he offered African American and Latino voters (Daniel, 2012).

During the 2012 presidential campaign, Newt Gingrich echoed his 1994 Contract with America, which targeted federal food stamp entitlement programs for elimination. At a Fox News-*Wall Street Journal* sponsored debate in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, he referred to President Obama as “the best food stamp president in history,” culling associations between the black president and entitlement programs. Relying on racist stereotypes that attribute blacks’ economic status to laziness or lack of willpower, Gingrich asserted the difference between “them” (Obama and the 95 percent of blacks who supported him in the first election) and “us” (a majority white Republican audience, and by extension, “real” i.e. “hard working” Americans): “We believe in work. We believe people should learn to work and that we’re opposed to dependency” (2012, Green, para. 1). Despite the fact that most recipients of federal food aid are children, elderly, and severely disabled persons and that only 22 percent of all food stamp recipients are black, Gingrich was able to exploit assumptions and familiar stereotypes for effect—eliciting a standing ovation in the process.

Criticism of the President often involves an amorphous “Othering” process: references to Obama’s “questionable” birth certificate raise doubts about whether he was “really” born in America; allusions to his “Kenyon father” the “Luo tribesman” arouse suspicions about Obama’s “Africanness”; use of the word “socialist” in conjunction with any policy Obama proposes, regardless of how “centrist” or moderate or capitalist, spooks middle-class Americans into opposing what might benefit them economically; and opportune uttering of his middle name, Hussein, works to denote Muslim or Middle Eastern affiliations with all that entails in post-9/11 America. Thus distortion and misinformation persist, circulated via popular conservative media outlets, talk radio, internet blogs, and even prominent political leaders. Not surprisingly, a Harris poll conducted in March of 2010 showed that 67 percent of Republicans (and 77 percent of Tea Party supporters) believe Obama is a socialist, another 45 percent that he is the “domestic enemy that the Constitution speaks of” and 45 percent that he was not born in the United States and is therefore ineligible for the presidency (For example, Figure #5 assumes that Obama was born in a village in Kenya). Twenty-four percent surveyed believe he may be the Anti-Christ (Taylor, 2010). In a television interview on July 23, 2009, Watergate conspirator Gordon Liddy suggested that Obama might be “an illegal alien” (Stelter, para. 14). Such notions persisted throughout Obama’s first term and buttressed legal rationales for “policing” people of color. As Melissa Harris-Perry notes, “As the president was being asked to show his papers to the nation, state

governments in Arizona, Alabama and South Carolina empowered police officers, school officials and merchants to demand proof of citizenship from anyone they deemed suspicious of immigration violations—suspicions that are triggered primarily by racial, ethnic and linguistic profiling” (para. 6).

FIGURE #5



This need to position Obama as somehow “outside” the parameters of what is legitimately “American” was first on display during the 2008 presidential campaign, though during that contest Senator John McCain corrected an audience member who referred to Obama as a Muslim. Yet during the 2012 campaign stop in Florida, GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum smiled and nodded as a woman in the audience told him, “I never refer to Obama as President Obama because legally he is not [president]. . . . He is an avowed Muslim and my question is, why isn’t something being done to get him out of government? He has no legal right to be calling himself president” (Aigner-Treworgy, 2012, para. 2). When questioned about his silence in the face of this factually inaccurate claim, Santorum responded, “I don’t feel it’s my obligation every time someone says something I don’t agree with to contradict them.” Further fueling fears of Obama’s otherness, Santorum told audiences at Columbus, Ohio campaign stop: Obama’s agenda is “not about you. It’s not about your

quality of life. It's not about your jobs. It's about. . .Some phony theology. . . not a theology based on the Bible" (Walshe, 2012, para. 2-3).

Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961 and did not even visit Kenya until 1987, but this has not stopped some prominent conservatives from attributing his "difference" to his Kenyan ancestry. James Mann (2010) coined the phrase the "Kenya paranoia" in reference to this phenomenon. But Mann is "not talking here about simply the ideas of Republicans, the right wing or the political fringes. Rather, the Kenya paranoia has been showing up in the politest society, among journalists and even high-ranking diplomats." Mann argues that this "paranoia" about Obama's "difference" is not even restricted to Americans: a British television reporter wanted to interview Mann about Obama's views of the world because, "'He has different roots than all other presidents,' the reporter said. 'He doesn't have ties to Europe'" (para. 6). Mann points to the irony of this assumption that Obama is not "European" enough—despite a white mother with British ancestry. Similarly, former Arkansas governor and twice GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee attributed Obama's "difference" to his "having grown up in Kenya" (an untruth that forced his political action committee spokesman, Hogan Gidley, to explain that "the governor. . . wasn't talking about the president's place of birth — the governor believes the president was born in Hawaii") [Shear, 2011]. We should note the use of the word "believes" rather than "knows," as if Obama's citizenship was simply a matter of belief.

#### MAMMIES, HOOKERS, AND HO'S: MICHELLE'S BODY AND THE POLITICS OF SHAME

Black women's bodies have historically been subjected to the regulatory power of shame. The stigmatization of black femininity prompts a level of self-discipline and surveillance reflected in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) in a passage describing African-American women's attempts to tame their embodied differences: "They hold their behind in for fear of a sway too free; when they wear lipstick, they never cover the full mouth for fear of lips too thick, and they worry, worry, worry about the edges of their hair" (77-78). Michelle's body reflect white America's love/hate relationship with black female beauty: on the one hand, features often identified with black women (full lips, dark skin, muscular physique) are highly desirable, and white women pay handsomely for everything from lip injections to tanning beds to butt implants. On the other, black women have long borne stigmas associated with primitivism, animalistic, and excessive or aberrant sexuality. These competing tensions inform some of the polarized reactions Michelle's body elicits.

Much is written about Barack Obama's physical prowess—his competitive basketball games, daily workout on the treadmill and with free

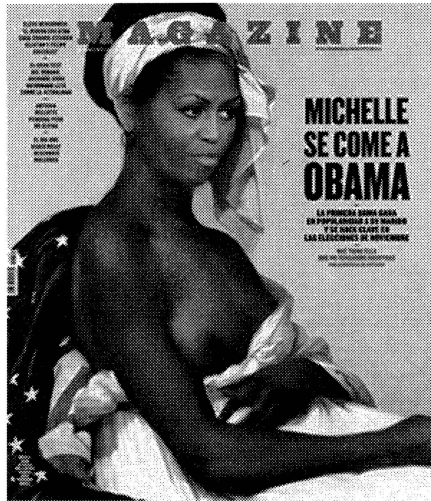


weights. A photo of Barack in bathing shorts at the beach went viral, with bloggers commenting on the president's pectorals and lean physique. As Leola Johnson (2010) remarks, "the light-skinned, hyperfit Obama is frequently sexualized and otherwise physically objectified by his fans. Thus, in the early days of his administration, the most widely circulated magazine and Internet images of Obama, featured in black and white media alike, showed him as a hyperfit sex object; a cool, sunglasses-wearing business man; or a combination of those things" (p. 247).

Michelle shares her husband's commitment to fitness, reportedly doing an hour a day of cardio, weight training and calisthenics. She has also made childhood obesity a priority, raising awareness of this health issue and leading efforts to improve eating habits. Her stature, impressive biceps, and grace, like Barack's lean body, have been the subject of much fascination and praise. Yet Michelle's body is also objectified as shameful, made to sign in for a range of degrading stereotypes of black women. Her "Let's Move!" campaign, White House vegetable garden and efforts to encourage healthy eating habits have been mocked and caricatured by political opponents. Despite the First Lady's enviable intellectual and physical strength or acclaimed fashion sense, her body has consistently been the subject of degrading comments and racialized shaming images.

One image that considerable Internet chatter was the photo-shopped portrait of the First Lady on the cover of a leading Spanish magazine, *Magazine de Fuera de Serie*, which featured the image of the First Lady's face on the body of a bare-breasted female slave (Figure #6). The original painting, *Portrait d'une negresse*, was completed in 1800 by French artist Marie-Guillemine Benoist as a tribute. The magazine's cover story "Michelle Tataranieta De Esclava, Dueña De América" ("Michelle Great Granddaughter of a Slave, Lady of America") heaped praise on Michelle, and the French/English artist who conceived the piece, Karine Percheron-Daniel, has defended the image, arguing that it acknowledges Michelle's slave ancestry to celebrate her current status and empowerment. But as Althea Legal-Miller (2012) writes in *Clutch Magazine*, the "portrait robs Obama of her identity, voice, and intellect, and visually shackles her to a politically passive subject, resigned to an assigned role as slave." Legal-Miller concludes that "These images – largely determined by stereotypes used to legitimize racial and gender oppression–speak to a painful history of exploitation and erotic objectification, which continues to manifest in multiple contexts across the black female diaspora" (2012, para. 5). I cannot help but wonder if any major magazine would have dared depict a topless Nancy Reagan, Barbara or Laura Bush on their cover.

FIGURE #6



More ubiquitous are the Internet jokes and emails that target Michelle's backside. In mainstream United States culture, big butts have historically been associated with "low" status or "vulgar" sexuality. The buttocks are a symbolic site in the body, with female buttocks in particular functioning as metaphors for traits that a society values or rejects. Their meanings vary between cultures and among ethnic groups; while a bounteous butt may elicit disgust or disdain in some social circles, it evokes a range of positive associations in others. A woman's failure to reign in an unruly butt connoted her lack of discipline and self-control, and by association, her inferior moral character. Western societies long associated a big butt with "unnatural" sex, excrement, or the excess and physicality identified with non-Western women. Let us not forget that colonized nineteenth century rump belonging to Saartje Baartman, dubbed by her masters and impresarios the "Hottentot Venus." This young African woman's protruding butt served as a sign of all that perplexed, fascinated, and horrified Europeans in the early 1800s about their darker others. Displayed throughout Europe, Saartje's sign value as deviant "other" body persisted even after her death at twenty-five. Doctors dissected and preserved her genitals in glass jars, her large buttocks displayed for curious spectators eager to see bodily evidence of the African woman's propensity to excess.

Ideology often masqueraded as biology, and the body of the black woman in particular signed in for a range of moral and physiological "pathologies." As Sander Gilman (1985) has argued, "When the nineteenth century saw the black female, it saw her in terms of her buttocks, and saw represented by the buttocks all the anomalies of her genitalia" (p. 90). This in turn served to justify their subordination, as the "presence

of exaggerated buttocks” signaled “other, hidden sexual signs, both physical and temperamental, of the black female” (p. 91). By casting the “stigmata of degeneracy” (p. 89) on black female anatomy and sexuality, her “difference” could be read as a sign of her inherent inferiority and “primitive sexual appetite” (p. 85). “Sarah Bartmann’s genitalia and buttocks summarized her essence for the nineteenth-century observer, as indeed they continue to do for twentieth-century observers. . .” (p. 88). The Musée de l’homme in Paris would finally return Bartmann’s remains to South Africa in 2002.

In recent years women of color have challenged dominant beauty myths and embraced their curves—with rap music and celebrity magazines singing the praises of big booty. Voluptuous female buttocks have become a valuable commodity, exploited in advertising campaigns, music videos, and specialty men’s magazines. However, there is a lingering stigma attached to the protruding butt in America’s conservative mainstream, where it can still elicit tropes of race and class. In her article, “First Lady Got Back,” Erin Aubry Kaplan (2008) notes that a protruding butt has been “both vilified and fetishized as the most singular of all black female features, more unsettling than dark skin and full lips, the thing that marked black women as uncouth and not quite ready for civilization. . .” (para. 6). Kaplan celebrates the emergence of Michelle Obama’s “solid, round, black, Class A *boo-ta*” on the nation’s political stage, noting that “As America fretted about [Barack] Obama’s exoticism and he sought to calm the waters with speeches about unity and common experience. . . Here was one clear signifier of blackness that couldn’t be tamed, muted or otherwise made invisible” (para. 5). To Kaplan and other women who do not see their bodies reflected in the images typically gracing magazine covers, Michelle’s butt evokes confidence and even ethnic pride.

But among Obama’s opponents, Michelle’s butt is a political target—a sign of shameful excess, lack of discipline, or low status. Wisconsin Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner made a comment about the First Lady’s “large posterior” while talking to church members at a Christmas bazaar (“US Rep apologizes”). Rush Limbaugh, not exactly a model of physical perfection, has nick-named her “Michelle, My Butt.” Like many other conservative pundits, Limbaugh seems compelled to remark on Michelle’s butt. Chastising John McCain for “kissing Obama’s butt” by crediting him with the death of dictator Muammar Gadhafi, Limbaugh remarked, “Obama doesn’t have a butt. Compared to his wife, he really doesn’t have a butt” (Krepel & Rosenberg, 2012, para. 24). Media Matters reported that “one of Andrew Breitbart’s websites posted a cartoon of an overweight Michelle Obama eating a plate-full of hamburgers and saying: “Shut up and pass the bacon!” (Krepel & Rosenberg, 2012, para.

19). Another popular cartoon imposes the First Lady's face on the body of a woman with exaggerated buttocks. The caption reads, "Michelle Obama Stars in Boogie Pork Fever."

Following suit, an Alabama High School head coach was caught on tape blaming "fat butt Michelle Obama" for the new low-calorie school lunches (Singleton-Rickman, 2013, para. 3). These "fat butt" jokes and images are not restricted to online cartoons or politicians who claim to have "misspoken." Journalist David Kahane (2011) wrote in a *National Review* article: "Michelle would have a real shot of slipping into Queen Kapiolani's muumuu collection and making it her own, especially after a few more meals of short ribs in Vail" (para. 5). One email circulating during the 2012 campaign compares the backsides of two European First Ladies, Carla Bruni Sarkozy (former model and wife of former French president Sarkozy) and Spain's Princess Letizia with Michelle's, contrasting their fashion sense and butt size with a photo shopped image of Michelle's backside where she appears as a kind of "mammie" figure beside the sleek European women.

All of these negative associations are at play in an image circulating on the Internet that not only exaggerates Michelle's backside but makes it her defining feature. In this photo shopped image Michelle Obama is reduced to a sign of vulgar excess, her body posed in a way meant to evoke disgust in the viewer. As William Ian Miller argues in *The Anatomy of Disgust*, the anus "is the essence of lowness, of untouchability" in Western culture (1997, p. 100). More than any other orifice, it has "the lowest-status place on the body, rendered disgusting by feces and buffaloish and comical by gas" (Miller, 1997, p. 100). The body of the First Lady appears poised to commit a shameful transgression that invokes both of these social taboos: defecating and farting in public. This dual affront to social propriety and hygiene strips Michelle of dignity, turning her into a figure that can evoke only contempt, opprobrium, or disdainful laughter. Her imagined shamelessness (depicted through the "mooning" gesture and punctuated by the facial expression) seems intended to taunt the viewer, and by extension, the American citizenry. Another image (Figure #8) making the rounds via emails and Internet postings during the 2012 campaign turns the First Lady into a street-walker: in it Michelle Obama is soliciting "clients" on the side of the road, holding her skirt up to expose her genitals to passing cars. The caption reads: "How Michelle and Barack Obama first met." Again, the photo draws on familiar caricatures of black female sexuality as deviant, excessive, or criminal—a contemporary Jezebel in the White House.

FIGURE #8



Public shaming tactics have always been part of America's political culture, and caricatures of opponents invariably involve exaggerated physical features. As Charles Press explains in his book, *The Political Cartoon*, "The cartoon is really an exaggeration to get at an underlying truth, which it conveys through a message, demonstrating a mood around the social or political situation that inspired the cartoon." But while these images always exaggerate traits or features, they rely for their meaning and effect on pre-existing perceptions and assumptions about the individual or group targeted. The shaming tactics I've identified here all draw on familiar racial stereotypes for their effect by culling a history of racial associations that have stigmatized and differentiated African Americans. The political effect of these tactics depends on the extent to which the viewer is "in" on the pun, joke, or trope in play. Thus shaming techniques such as these can also backfire. Many conservatives reject these tactics and refuse to be "in" on the joke, and Americans did give Obama a second term. A January 2013 Public Policy Poll shows that Democrats' approval rating (-12 at 38/50) is a net 48 points better than their Republican counterparts (-60 at 15/75) [Public Policy Polling, Republicans in Congress have only a 25% approval rating even with the GOP base. Given this reversal of fortune, it may well be that shame is finally coming home to roost.

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# FROM MODERN ROCK TO POSTMODERN HARD ROCK: CAMBODIAN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC VOICES

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Music is the most abstract of all art forms. It is also a flexible art form subject to many influences and appropriation of different artists, genres, and cultures. Yet when it comes to Cambodian music—especially contemporary genres—one theme predominates for the audience: authentic music. Some commentators remark that contemporary Cambodian music consists merely of appropriation of foreign music, in contrast to the prewar musicians who performed an authentic musical repertoire. But as Butt argues, by definition music has no borders and is pluralistic in sound: “Music ceases to be that hermetically-sealed object existing apart from our everyday concerns, and becomes instead a line, an infinitely-expanding polyphony of cultural practice” (Butt 2006, 11). We will not linger on defining the concept of authenticity or even attempt to attach it to any form of nationalism. Music that Cambodian artists have crafted and are still crafting reflects pluralistic practices extending beyond national territories.

In Cambodia, the performing arts, particularly music, are important forms of sociocultural discourse. In the ethnomusicological tradition of Cambodia, there are many accounts of the people’s joy, despair, and heroic action glorified by storytellers and expressed through traditional performance genres. Musical performance in Cambodia serves not only to accompany religious rituals and convey cultural messages, but also to convey the political message of each regime and each generation’s self-expression.

Before rock and roll came to Cambodia, there was already a strong musical presence and lively popular music scene. Popular music emerged from the Mohori ensemble because this is the only ensemble that does not have a religious function or serve to accompany another art form (Sam Ang-Sam, interview, 2009). Popular music was created specifically for entertainment by mixing the traditional music of the Mohori with new melodies and rhythms. Already a popular musical form, Mohori expanded its repertoire and genres to reach a wider and younger audience in the city and countryside alike. Rural people called the new form “jazz” or “stepping music” after the prominence of drums (Keo 2004, 96).

These modern rhythms were popular in dancehalls and restaurants, where it was possible to dance to traditional songs with dances such as the Roam Vong, Roam Kbach, Roam Saravann, and later the Madison.

Modernity in Cambodia was an affair of the state: musicians embraced Sihanouk's plan for modernizing the country, while today's songs reflect a pluralistic postmodern society and the diverse voices of globalized performers. This paper will compare modern and postmodern music and musical appropriation in the contemporary Cambodian alternative music scene. An overview of the popular, rock, and hip-hop music of Cambodian communities is beyond the scope of this article. I aim instead to shed some light on musical appropriation before the Khmer Rouge regime and today's alternative voices by using the lens of modernity and postmodernity as analytical tools to understand music voices. I will not judge the quality or authenticity of specific music, but will draw parallels between early rock and roll and today's hip-hop musical influences.

#### ONE VOICE OF MODERNITY

When Norodom Sihanouk gained independence for the country in 1953, the whole population was ready to enter the modern world by breaking its link with the colonial past. Cambodia embarked on a modernization process dominated by technological progress and a new national identity. Charles Jencks's definition of modernism traces back to Roman times and stresses the importance of the present time as a sense of progress: "The term ["modernism"] has carried a progressive impulse ever since, both technical and moral" (Jencks 2009, 20). Buildings sprouted all over Phnom Penh, symbolizing the new aesthetic age.

The modernization movement was not the work of a single individual as stated by architect Vann Molyvann in an interview (2004). American poet T. S. Eliot expressed this in his analysis of the modern poetry movement: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (1982, 37). However, modernization in Cambodia was first and foremost a top-down program of the state searching to appropriate modern designs, genres, styles, and plans to inject into the Cambodian landscape. Without the royal figure of Norodom Sihanouk, pre-Khmer Rouge development would have been quite different. He embraced modernization through agricultural and technological development and was himself the embodiment of the modern Khmer man.

Sihanouk's enthusiasm convinced the Cambodian people to embrace change. By promoting popular culture, Sihanouk gave legitimacy to artists, increasing their esteem in the eyes of the population. Unlike the French rulers, Sihanouk encouraged modern artistic practices. He truly

loved Cambodia's traditional cultural heritage but also sought to open its doors to new modern genres.

Cambodian musical appropriation of the pre-Khmer Rouge era was intertwined with Sihanouk's political agenda. Music served the government by strengthening national unity and spreading modernity among the population. Early Cambodian rock and roll needs to be understood in this political and historical frame of reference. As Grossberg (2000) notes, "Rock and Roll is a cultural event that emerged at a particular moment into a particular context" (112). The emerging rock and roll played an important role in the political project of the newly independent country and its population seeking to become modern citizens. Cambodians were modern citizens as defined by Marshall Berman (1998), as embracing their present and feeling comfortable and at home in this new era of progress.

#### SIHANOUK: THE MODERN MAN

Sihanouk came from a family who loved music and took pride in their musical skills, providing him with a strong musical background. His father was a competent musician and his mother listened to modern French singers like Tino Rossi, Edith Piaf, and Charles Trenet. Once he took power, Sihanouk became an enthusiastic patron of the arts, but he was also an artist in his own right. He was a multitalented musician—he played the saxophone, piano, and other instruments—as well as a composer, singer, filmmaker, poet, actor, and interior designer.

Sihanouk understood the important role that music played for his people and he used that understanding to his political advantage. A modern band performed before and after each of political speeches. The Royal Military Orchestra accompanied him in all his travels about the country, ensuring a large crowd at every public event he attended and promoting his image as a popular leader. Sihanouk asked each ministry to have its own musical band—the ultimate sign of patronage and support for popular music. These bands performed all types of popular music, ensuring financial stability and social position for the performers. Sihanouk selected the most prominent talents to perform with his personal orchestra, including Ros Serey Sothea, Sin Sisamouth, and Sos Mat. With the rock group Baksei Chamkrung Band a new musical trend, the electric guitar band influenced by Cliff Richards, was discovered and Sihanouk immediately invited the band to perform for him. Prominent female singers Mao Sareth, Chhuon Malay, and Sieng Di worked with the Royal Military Orchestra. They were the very first generation of female singers to perform both traditional and modern music and to produce vinyl records. They sang songs about the provinces and cities they

visited, with titles like “Divine City of Medicine” (Kep City), “Summit of Bokor Mountain,” and “Beautiful Mondulkiri Province.”

Sihanouk’s song ‘Phnom Koulen,’ most likely written in the 1950s, extols the Phnom Koulen mountain range in northwestern Cambodia:

Beyond the lush green jungle lands,  
 Beyond the sloping valley,  
 Stands the golden mountain

Majestic symbol  
 Of a time flown by,  
 Proud and haughty watcher  
 That judges from on high.  
 Oh! Phnom Koulen  
 Let your old wisdom  
 Guide our young ways  
 Giving strength  
 To meet future days.

Mountain,  
 Guard thy country, guard its rich earth,  
 Guard the place of thy birth.

([http://norodomsihanouk.info/document/doc\\_2197.html](http://norodomsihanouk.info/document/doc_2197.html))

This song embodies Sihanouk’s vision of Cambodian culture as an old civilization rich in traditional art forms yet seeking broader horizons for new endeavors. It celebrates the cultural heritage while encouraging the audience to embrace new foreign influences in the Cambodian landscape. This song reassured the old guard of their value but spoke to youth about the possibilities ahead of them. Similar to his political neutrality during the regional Cold War, Sihanouk attempts in this song to bridge the generation gap between old and young.

The love songs written early in his career as a composer reflect the country’s emerging enthusiasm for joining Sihanouk’s social and political modernization project. The political agenda of these songs is easily discernable. Sihanouk used these recorded songs broadcast on the *radio* as a means of reaching out to the Cambodian people to encourage them to celebrate his goal of establishing a modern country under his leadership.

The pre-Khmer rouge era was idealized as the “Golden Era” and Phnom Penh as the “Pearl of Southeast Asia.” Sihanouk was able to build prosperity, maintain stability, and avoid war through a policy of neutrality during the Cold War precipitated by the support of Cambodian and North Vietnamese communists by the Soviet Union and China. But these benefits were achieved through Sihanouk’s authoritarianism and came at a cost: there was no political freedom of expression, and mem-

bers of the Communist Party were executed as traitors who undermined the peace and political stability of the country. For Cambodians who supported democracy and free speech, the moniker “Golden Era” did not reflect the political reality of the time.

Sihanouk’s modernization program provided a social context for musicians to thrive, creating new sounds and experimenting in new musical territory. Having the head of the government supporting and playing modern music himself gave it social value among the population. Without Norodom Sihanouk’s love for music, there certainly would not have been such a thriving scene then.

As expected, the new songs celebrated the nation’s modernization. There were no songs protesting political or social conditions as in Western popular music of the same era. The rock and roll bands that played at Sihanouk’s speeches were there to bolster his political image as a popular and charismatic leader, while his own songs celebrated the country’s beauty or supported his agenda in international relations.

#### THE ROCKER: URBAN BOURGEOIS YOUTH

Despite the many changing political regimes in Cambodia in a short period of time following independence, there were still only two social classes in the country: the urban dweller and the villager, with two distinct life styles and means of accessing modernity and music. Traditional music seemed to follow that division: one style practiced at the royal palace, and the other in the villages. Rural Cambodians accessed music mainly through the national radio, while urban dwellers had more options, such as records from foreign countries. With the emerging popular culture, a third social category became relevant to shaping and promoting the new musical form: the urban bourgeoisie. While many musicians were from the provinces, Phnom Penh became the hub for a subculture of innovative musical genres. In the capital city, expanded career opportunities opened up in the music industry working for recording companies, performing in clubs, and playing for big-band orchestras in ministries and private bands. Unlike folk musicians in the villages, the new urban musicians performed a wide repertoire from traditional folk songs to rock and roll tunes.

As with Sihanouk’s authoritarian political regime, the popular music scene was shaped from the top down, by the urban bourgeoisie. The first generation of popular singers from the 1950s to the early 1960s came from various social backgrounds—Ros Serey Sothea was a farm girl while Sin Sisamouth came from a middle-class provincial family—but all were professionally trained. The rockers came from the upper-middle to the elite class. They had no professional training but had a

passion for music and the financial means to acquire needed instruments and equipment.

Peter Manual reminds us that “modernity has often been identified with the Enlightenment and Euro-American bourgeois culture” (1995, 228). Cambodian modernity followed the Euro-American path of being led by the bourgeoisie. The emergence of rock and roll began with the urban elite, who were able to send their children abroad for studies or leisure travel and could afford cultural materials such as magazines and records, as well as musical instruments, microphones, amplifiers, and so on to form music bands. Mol Kagmol from the band Baksei Chamkrung recounted that a guitar and a microphone cost the same as two motorcycles at that time (interview, 2009).

In the 1950s and 1960s very few Cambodians could afford a record player or even records. Panabou, located near the Central Market, opened in the early 1960s and was the first record store in Phnom Penh. Later many more stores offered electric guitars, such as Magasin D’Etat, which also had a concert hall. Music fans could order any records from their catalog or that they found on top-hit lists in magazines—but only the bourgeoisie class could afford to do so. Some musicians needed to save carefully to buy the latest hit songs, while others had friends or family who could bring records back directly from France or neighboring countries.

Musicians performed at nightclubs, restaurant bars, private parties, and universities—all frequented by urban bourgeoisie youth. For most Cambodians, the radio was their only means of listening to the latest songs. However, the national radio was bound by rules and conventions: foreign-language songs were banned except for special programs broadcast through international cooperation. The richest families could afford to hire a band for a birthday party or embassy celebrations.

Traditionally a career in music was handed down through families from one generation to the next. Later, singers sought opportunities for social mobility through their skills, for example by participating in singing contests. For them, the music industry meant a career and an income, as depicted in the Cambodian film *Pheakdey*, produced in 1973 by Ivon Hem and starring Vichara Dany, in which a young girl is offered a record deal in the city and gains financial stability and recognition.

With the birth of true rock and roll, music took on new purposes for leisure and self-expression. The new musicians and singers came from the middle- and upper-class families of Phnom Penh. The Mol brothers, Kagmol and Kagmach, who started the first guitar band in the 1960s, Baksei Chamkrung, came from one of the wealthiest family in Phnom Penh. Prince Sisowath Panara Sirivudh played with the band Apsara and



while prince Norodom Sirivudh, half brother of Norodom Sihanouk, supported musicians materially.

Without the urban bourgeoisie youth of Phnom Penh possessing the desire, wealth, and leisure time to create music, there would have been no opportunity for modern popular music, and even less rock and roll, to flourish. Urban youth sought a new musical genre to identify with and to express themselves in this era of modernization and opening of the country to the rest of the world. The Mol brothers, for example, were not professional musicians; they performed for free and would not accept money for their services. Their parents tolerated their “hobby” as long as it did not interfere with their studies. Thus popular music was a class interest. Only the elite had access to the new music and they became agents of change, spreading musical influences and establishing patterns and networks of cultural exchange between Southeast Asia (and Sri Lanka) and Europe.

#### THE MODERN MALE VOICE

Modernity was originally a male concern, as Marshall Berman shows in his analysis of modernity in Goethe’s *Faust* (1998), and Cambodia was no exception. While modern Cambodian music emerged from the urban class, the voice of music was mainly male and the music industry was dominated by men. Songwriters of the time were exclusively male, among them Pov Sipor, Mer Bun, Sin Sisamouth, Kung Van Choeun, Has Salon, Voy Ho, Malapi, Ouk Sinareth, and Samneang Rithy. Even when the singers were women and sang about women, the composer was always male. There was a clear gender-based division of labor in the music industry, and female performers singers did not write lyrics or music.

Singer Sieng Di recalled in an interview (2009) that the male singer and song writer Sin Sisamouth wrote a love song for her to sing called “Pruos te Srolan” (Because of Love). The song expressed Sieng Di’s husband’s devotion to her, but as seen through the eyes of the male composer. As a woman there was no precedent for her to tell her own love story by composing the song herself. Sin Chann Chaya, Sin Sisamouth’s son, said that his father took time each day to listen to people’s life stories and wrote songs based on them. Thus postcolonial-era popular and rock and roll music had a decidedly male flavor. The famous song by Oum Dora, “Stop Loving Me,” sung by Ros Serey Sothea, is an example of a melodramatic song about forsaken love that made the hit parade with its obvious Latin rhythm influence. Sothea was accompanied by an acoustic guitar played in a flamenco style. In this song she asks her lover to stop loving her since they can’t get along and have no freedom. The

musical repertoire sung by female singers of the time reflects a male perception of love and despair.

Some women were hired as lead singers for swing-style big bands such as the Ministry of Information and the Military band. Singers Ros Serey Sothea, Pen Ron, and Huy Meas worked for the National Radio while Sieng Di had a contract with the SKD Brewery band. These bands played a traditional repertoire mixed with jazz and Western popular music influences. Rock and roll bands such as Baksei, Bayon, Apsara, Drakkar, Garuda, Amara, and Sakira were all male. Unlike other neighboring countries such as Indonesia that had all-girl bands like Dara Pusita, Cambodia had no all-girl band playing popular or rock and roll music.

In the pre-Khmer Rouge era, rock and roll and hard rock were subculture phenomena, heard only by university students, urban residents, and people who had connections to embassies. Today the music of artists whose recordings—if they even recorded—survived the Khmer Rouge regime is no longer considered subculture, but popular music and part of the Cambodian collective memory.

Early rock and roll musicians were inspired by Western popular artists from France and later from the United States and Britain, such as the Beatles and Cliff Richards. Their music was not merely an imitation of the Western sources—they produced an original modern Khmer sound that later proved to be accessible to Western audiences. The Mol brothers' Baksei Chamkrung, with three guitarists, a drummer, and a lead singer, was the first band to combine different elements of Western rock. The band's style was influenced by the British movie *The Young Ones* (1961) starring Cliff Richards and the Shadows along with the Ventures. They played everything from rock and roll to Latin styles like rumba and bolero, adding their own original style to the Western genres. "What we did with Baksei Chamkrung was, we added the bass line, the power chord, and the solo part. And that breaks away from traditional Khmer music," Mol Kagmach reported in an interview (2010).

After Baksei, rock bands sprouted all over Phnom Penh in the early 1970s, most notably Apsara, Bayon, Amara, Gadura, Sakira, and Drakkar. Apsara with its lead singer Panara Sirivudh, took its inspiration mainly from Anglo-Saxon songs, with obvious influences from Little Richard, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Beach Boys. The band kept the melodies and translated the songs into Khmer. Other bands also did Apsara cover versions of Western songs. Bayon, founded by Hong brothers Samley, Sambath, and Samloth, covered many genres from the Kinks and the Platters to French rocker Johnny Hallyday. In the early 1970s their repertoire expanded to the Bee Gees and Santana. Performing at nightclubs, weddings, and parties, they sang songs in the original English, which they learned phonetically from album covers and radio

broadcasts from the U.S. Navy's 7th fleet stationed in the South China Sea. Samley Hong stated that his greatest successes were his interpretations of Johnny Hallyday ("Souvenirs, Souvenirs") and Elvis Presley ("Blue Suede Shoes" and "Love Me Tender"). After Bayon, the band Drakkar brought a whole new sound to the 1970s with percussion, including bongos, added to the guitars and Santana as their main influence.

#### TODAY'S POSTMODERN VOICES

The term "postmodernity" points to its predecessor, modernity, but postmodernity is the outcome not only of modernity, but according to Giddens (1991) of globalization. Harvey (1990) suggested that the world had entered a new era since the 1970s with the development of new technologies that shifted societies from modern to postmodern. Jencks (2009) highlights a major difference between modernism and postmodernism: "Post-Modernism is a social style of the arts and Modernism an elite style" (24). In the postmodern era, the Internet and social media have intensified the spread of cultural influences around the globe and increased consumption and production of music across a broader spectrum of people. The Cambodian music scene is no longer reserved only for a bourgeois urban elite but can now be accessed by working-class and marginal people, making room for more diverse and alternative voices heard through songs they write themselves. Contemporary Cambodian music encompasses an eclectic variety of musical genres and influences from many cultures.

The boundary between modernism and postmodernism in Western countries is quite blurred. It is clearer in Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge regime created a sharper divide between the two. In the West, the Punk movement developed as a protest against the apathy of rock and roll, as noted by Grossberg (2000): "Punk emerged at, and responded to, a particular moment in the history of rock and roll. It is, after all, not coincidental that in 1976 the first baby boomers were turning thirty. Punk attacked rock and roll for having grown old and fat, for having lost that which puts it in touch with its audience and outside of the hegemonic reality" (117). In Cambodia, there was no opposition to the previous musical styles due to the disruption of culture by the Khmer Rouge and lack of awareness of the Cambodian rock scene of the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, the Cambodian subculture music scene today has little connection with the past.

#### ALTERNATIVE FEMALE VOICES

Contemporary Cambodian musical voices are marked by pluralism. Women singers are composing their own songs, factory workers are singing about their hardship and working conditions, and political singers

and protest songs are now part of the musical landscape. The first Cambodian all-girl band, the Messenger Band, was founded in 2005 by seven garment-factory workers. Their Facebook webpage describes them as a folk group with a social message: “As a grassroots advocacy group, their mission is to compose and perform original songs that reflect the current problems and situation face[d] by the working class and impoverished people of Cambodia.”

In the 1970s, Yol Aularaing and Meas Samon were the only singers and songwriters who were making social commentary through their songs. The former used irony to comment on Cambodia’s bourgeois conformist society and the latter used humor to draw attention to social conventions around relationships. But in the pre–Khmer Rouge era political and protest singers in the Western sense were unknown until the Messenger Band began giving a voice to the voiceless in Cambodian society, especially to other factory workers as well as sex workers. Their moving song “Land and Life” depicts the impact of forced evictions of people from their ancestral lands to make way for development. These are very brave women to tackle such an inflammatory political issue in a country where women have been jailed for protesting against forced evictions. Under Norodom Sihanouk’s leadership there was little of freedom of speech. Compared to the 1960s and 1970s, with today’s mass media, political protest messages can be sent around the world quickly, easily, and cheaply. The Messenger Band offers an alternative view of social reality that was previously unheard of on the popular music scene.

Postmodern music presents alternative voices not only in its musical genres, but also in its radically changed image and role of women. Sam Rocker, lead singer and songwriter for the alternative rock band No Forever, exemplifies this new freedom with her androgynous look. Both her appearance and her role as lead singer for an otherwise all-male hardcore band are beyond all conventional expectations of what a proper Cambodian young woman should be. In a music scene that is still very male dominated, she offers to her female audience an alternative femininity that frees them from social expectations around gendered fashion styles. She acknowledged her role and influence in an interview: “When I was young I did many bad things. . . . Now I write songs for people who were like me, and I want them to know that it is possible to stop destroying yourself and take your life in a more positive direction” (Thompson, n.d.)

Other women are following the same path, such as hip-hop singer Bochan Huy, Laura Mam, and Chhom Nimol from Dengue Fever, who is now cowriting songs with Zac Holtzman. The Messenger Band members write their own lyrics as well.

Cambodian American hip-hop artist Bochan Huy undertook the challenge of revisiting the famous “I’m Sixteen,” a modern rock song written by Voy Ho and sung by Ros Serey Sothea. The song has a definite Western rock influence, and its message is clearly about embracing the present and shying away from traditional themes, topics, and sounds. It was covered by many local Cambodians, and later it taken up by Dengue Fever with no alteration of lyrics or rhythm. Bochan Huy gave “I’m Sixteen” a postmodern twist in her original version, adding verses and changing the story about a young girl celebrating her sixteenth birthday to tell the story of the Cambodian diaspora’s struggle for survival. Bochan’s hip-hop interpretation changed the tone and the message from an innocent coming-of-age celebration to a feminist message of empowerment.

Bochan explains that in her recreated version of the familiar song, the lyrics play a crucial role, giving voice to her own experience as a female performer in a traditional society: “Ros Serey Sothea sings of a young woman coming of age and of her desires to explore and experience both the bitterness and sweetness of life freely. In the background, the men are singing and asking: ‘Can I love you, Can I love you?’ I interpreted the song to be one that empowers women greatly as she sings this in the face of a patriarchal society and in times where pre-arranged marriages were very common and expected” (personal correspondence, Feb. 27, 2014).

Bochan brings empowerment to her own music by being in control of her topics and lyrics as the songwriter. Increasingly, female singers today no longer require male songwriters to express their feelings and experiences. Like Bochan, many women musicians in the diaspora render a highly personal account of their life experience and stories in their songs. As Manuel (1995) explains, “The migrant’s search for a sense of identity, like that of modernizing societies in general, is not necessarily a postmodern process, but one which synthesizes traditional and contemporary subjectivities in an often profoundly emotional manner” (235).

Why have hip-hop and rap been embraced in Cambodia and among the Cambodian subculture abroad, rather than other genres, like country and western? Cambodian youth in Cambodia and in the diaspora communities feel a discontinuity with the past. They are experiencing economic disparity, social marginalization, and alienation from their history—commonalities with the African American urban counterculture that gave rise to hip-hop and rap. The social message was at the heart of the birth of rap music.

## POSTMODERN ROCK BANDS

Today hard rock is growing rapidly in Cambodia. The alternative music scene is emerging among the youth culture in Phnom Penh, just as occurred with modern music in the 1960s, but this time musical voices are no longer confined to urban male bourgeois youth. The hard rock scene has a platform for new groups to perform at the Show Box in Phnom Penh, launched in 2012, which offers an alternative to not only Cambodian culture but also to the popular and dominant music scene, taking its major influence from K pop. A year before the Show Box opened, the deathcore group Sliten6ix came together to offer a different voice to the youth culture. The five members, all Cambodians, draw their influences from bands like Slipknot, Slayer, Suicide Silence, and Chelsea Grin. Sliten6ix's appropriation is mainly on the abstract level of musicality: the sound and their added cultural references are what matters. As Grossberg (2000) notes about rock and roll, "As many a rock and roll fan has commented, the power of the music lies not in what it says but what it does, in how it makes one move and feel" (112). This clearly applies to the heavy metal music scene emerging in Cambodia. In Sliten6ix's YouTube videos, it is difficult to distinguish the lyrics at all; only a few curse words can be heard. It is not the lyrics that are important, but how the audience receives their performance. In the videos the band as well as the audience are "headbanging" along with the music.

The year 2011 saw another alternative punk rock band formed: the ANTI-fate, who define themselves as pop punk and easy core. They can be seen as a continuation of the three-guitar tradition that Baksei Chamkrong started in the 1960s. They do cover versions of English songs by bands like Simple Plan (a Quebec rock group), Green Day (including their hit song "American Idiot"), Bowling For Soup, Blink 182 (unrelated to the Irish pop rock band Blink), the activist band Anti Flag, and Sum 41 (another Canadian rock group).

The most postmodern band from Cambodia would certainly be No Forever. Founded in 2012, it calls itself the first post-hardcore and metal band in Cambodia. Postmodernism is commonly defined as postmale, posturban, and postbourgeois, but here is a band that applies the prefix "post" to a musical genre. They do cover versions of groups like Asking Alexandria, Sleeping With Siren, Bring Me The Horizon, A Day to Remember, and the Prophecy.

As of this writing Cambodian hard rock bands are in an early stage of development, in which headbangers' sociocultural references, from clothing styles to cursing and dance movements, are imported from the West. Rogers (2006) describes four types of appropriation: cultural exchange (where reciprocal exchange occurs between cultures of equal power), cultural dominance (the imposition of dominate culture upon a

subordinate one), cultural exploitation (the appropriation of a subordinate culture by a dominant one without any form of reciprocity), and transculturation (cultural elements crafted from multiples sources) (477). The Cambodian hard rock scene today is very much under the cultural dominance of Western hard rock, although Bochan demonstrates hybridity of both cultures intertwined in her version of “I’m Sixteen.” Like Native American hip-hop described by Rogers, Cambodian American musicians embody transcultural hybrid music by localizing multiple cultural traditions.

#### YOUTH CULTURE PAST AND PRESENT

The Cambodian music scene before the Khmer Rouge era was a small, close-knit community whose audience was also limited to a small group of urban youth. Rock and hard rock were then a subculture rather than mainstream genres. The subculture continues today for hip-hop, heavy metal, and hard rock music among the youth culture in Cambodia and abroad as mass media and affordable technologies now provide easy access to all kind of musical genres.

There is a parallel between today’s youth subculture hard rockers and rock and rollers of the 1960s and 1970s: the resistance they encountered from the mainstream culture. Early Cambodian rock and roll was viewed quite negatively by the older generation of the time, just as hip hop, hard rock, and punk are viewed today. Part of the reason for the negative reaction was the new dance called the Twist that was associated with rock and roll. Singer Chum Kem went to Rome to study ceramics and on his return he brought back Chubby Checker’s recording of “The Twist.” In 1962 he planted the first seed of rock and roll in Cambodia with “Kampuchea Twist,” a Khmer version of the American song. Supported by Sihanouk, Chum Kem was the first singer with a Western sound with Khmer lyrics to be broadcast on the radio. This inspired other musicians to seek new musical styles. But the new dance created quite a controversy, with elders proclaiming it should be forbidden.

Ly and Muan, in their book *Cultures of Independence* (2001), recount a debate among high school students at the Lycée Descartes and the adult reaction to the Twist. Some students defended the Twist as an art form and sport. Here is an example of the many letters about the Twist controversy that were published in school newspapers:

What hasn’t been said about the twist? Its negative impact on dancers’ muscular system has been criticized. After be-bop, the boogie-woogie, rock and roll, and the Canasta, now it’s the Twist. . . . We don’t laugh ourselves silly, we dance ourselves silly. It’s intoxicating.

We imitate the “original” sin. But the Twist looks more like the egotistical satisfaction of lonely people than the original sin. The couple twists separately on the dance floor without even touching each other. Is this some kind of tribute to solitary pleasure? At a time when speed is taking over human life, rhythm is also brought into step and conditioned by the syncopated tempo.

But the Twist is already passé. We’re already talking about the “Swim.” . . . Whether we twist or we crawl, humanity moves on. Hopefully they won’t make us dance on a volcano or walk on our heads. Who knows, since gravity has been mastered? (Ly and Muan 2001, 210; my translation from French)

An article in the *Phnom Penh Post* (December 18, 2013) by Rom Molyka described how today’s urban youth are striving to develop a rock scene. Veasna, lead guitarist for of the heavy metal band Sliten6ix, reported feeling misunderstood by the dominant culture: “People think that we are monsters—even the musicians and the listeners. They said why do you play this kind of music? It is useless. It doesn’t earn you any money.” A similar experience was shared by pre-Khmer Rouge musicians such as Touch Saly, former singer with the band Sonexim, founded in 1964 by the National Import and Export Company. Saly recounted in an interview that his parents and others told him he was wasting his youth on music and looked like a zombie with his long hair.

Globalization is usually associated with American imperialism, which weakens national and cultural identities. Chadha and Kavoori (2000) and Morley and Robins (1995) thought this approach to be overly simplistic even though it seems to be validated in developing countries, as seen in the rise of foreign programming on television and radio. The pre-Khmer Rouge rock scene looked westward for its influences and musical appropriation, in parallel with the national politic of modernization of the country. The Western cultural reference has changed since the mid 1990s with the rising popularity of Korean pop culture. The Cambodian entrance into postmodernity encompassed two phases. First, the center of reference for cultural identity shifted from the West to Asia. Next, a flow of musical exchange, influences, and appropriation developed among local Cambodians and in the diasporic communities. Through Korean pop music, East and Southeast Asia are turning regionally toward a new identity of shared Asianness.

The Cambodian American diaspora and the new tech-savvy youth are rediscovering their Khmer identity that was disrupted by the Khmer Rouge era and subsequently forgotten. Their music is marked by innova-



tive hybridization. Modern artists creatively mixed genres like rock and roll, jazz, Afro-Cuban, and hard rock with a traditional Mohori music style, while postmodern artists combine rap, soul, rock and roll, techno, punk, and hardcore to create unique musical trends.

### CONCLUSION

Cambodian American hip-hop artists are the postmodern artists of today, growing out of their lack of identification with either Cambodia or the United States, as Peter Manuel (1995) states: “Images of the parental homeland may lack experiential referents in the migrants’ own lives, while at the same time, migrants may feel alienated from the dominant culture and media discourse of their new homeland” (235). Cambodian Americans, like other migrants, have needed to redefine their social identity and musical tastes within their new home country and in relation to their motherland.

In this era of postmodern collage and global information, music spreads around the world unimpeded, with no need for local interpretation. Regardless of their location, people can now obtain music directly from the original source through social media and internet downloads. A postmodern world has emerged and is recreating its own identity through a fundamental process of cultural appropriation.

As Jencks (2009) writes, “If pure Camembert cheese is modern, then the mixed Cambozola is post-modern and the recent cross breed Camelbert is very pm [postmodern]” (15). Ros Serey Sothea’s original song “I’m Sixteen” is the Camembert and Bochan’s version is the postmodern mixed breed: postmale, posturban, and postelite. Ros Serey Sothea’s song was an early example of appropriation of the Western rock sound combined with local composition. A diasporic Cambodian American brought the song back to America and added another layer of appropriation with her social and political message. And so the circle of musical appropriation and dissemination continues.

The term “appropriation” often has a negative connotation of taking without right, even theft. But appropriation is a necessary and desirable process for cultural advancement. Taking ownership of new cultural identities to create new hybrid forms is integral to all music, creating a universal experience of music that transcends borders.

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# LATINOS, AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE COALITIONAL CASE FOR A FEDERAL JOBS PROGRAM

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In May 1978, amidst a period marked by high inflation and economic decline, the United States Commission on Civil Rights released a report evaluating the adequacy of the Department of Labor's unemployment data on the Hispanic population. Previously, statistical data on the 11.3 million United States Hispanics had been scarce, making it difficult for advocacy groups and policymakers to understand the social and economic reality of the nation's fastest growing ethnic group. Thus, pursuant to Public Law 94-311 – which demanded improved collection and analysis of Hispanic unemployment data – the commission began to more fully document the sobering economic reality Latino leaders and organizations were arguing required an adequate policy prescription.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, the agency estimated that for most of the 1970s, the average Latino unemployment rate hovered around 10 percent, having reached a high of 12.2 percent in 1975.<sup>2</sup> Among Hispanic sub-groups, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans on average had higher unemployment rates throughout the decade than Cubans, the third largest Latino group. But by 1977, the differences generally were of marginal significance; at that point all three groups had rates that hovered around 10 percent. Other related indicators, the Commission noted, showed that only 40 percent of Latinos twenty-five years old or older had completed high school, median income stood at \$10,200 (two-thirds of the median income of non-Latino whites at the time), and one quarter of Latino families lived below the poverty level.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See US Commission report, 1978, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Improving Hispanic Unemployment Data: The Department of Labor's Continuing Obligation," May 1978, US Commission on Civil Rights.

<sup>3</sup> US Commission on Civil Rights, 1978, also see Bureau of Census data (1977).

Meanwhile, the decade-old Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), concerned over consistently high unemployment rates in the African American community, already had been leading the way in addressing the spiraling economy's disproportionate impact on historically marginalized groups. Inspired by an earlier (1972) report by members of the National Economic Association (NEA) (then the Caucus of Black Economists) which called for sustained full employment as a fundamental human right (Darity, Jr. 2010), one of the CBC's founding members (and representative of a predominantly low-income, black and Latino California district), Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins, joined long-time ally of organized labor Senator Hubert Humphrey (MN) to write the *Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act*, popularly known as the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978.<sup>4</sup> After months of negotiations, a coalition of labor unions, clergy, advocacy groups, along with support from the CBC and the newly formed Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), helped to better position the act on the legislative agenda. Subsequently, it was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Carter on October 27, 1978.

Based on the tradition of Keynesian economics, the act empowered the government to spend proactively in the private sector to increase consumer demand, with the primary goal of achieving full employment. The act required all federal programs and policies to work toward achieving a 3 percent adult and 4 percent overall jobless rate within five years and inflation rates of 3 percent by 1983 and eliminating unemployment in its entirety by 1988 (Schantz, 1979). But over time, the overriding political concern with inflation became the primary bi-partisan focus, while the struggle against unemployment evaporated as a priority (Ginsburg, 2011). This evaporation rendered invisible a lesser-known and most crucial provision of the act: that if the private sector failed to respond adequately in reducing unemployment, the public sector (read: federal government) would be responsible for the direct creation of those missing jobs.

Today, more than thirty-five years later, the United States supposedly lies at the edge of the "Great Recession," triggered largely by the post-2006 mortgage-lending crisis. Despite claims of a modest economic recovery, mass long-term unemployment remains high for the skilled and unskilled alike, with a disproportionate impact on African Americans and Latinos. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (November, 2014), while the overall United States unemployment rate stood most recently at

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, while the unemployment rate hovered between 12 and 14 percent during the mid 1970s, by 1978 rates widened between blacks and whites dramatically, with a "black and other race" unemployment rate 2.4 times higher than the rate for whites. (Bureau of the Census 1979)

5.8 percent, the black and Latino unemployment remained significantly higher, estimated at 11.9 percent and 6.6 percent respectively (compared to the relatively lower 4.9 percent figure for whites). But this does not provide the entire picture. The labor force participation rate (the percent of both employed and unemployed sixteen and older in the labor force) has declined dramatically since the “Great Recession,” especially for people of working ages 25-54 years old. In November of 2014, the labor force participation rate was calculated at 62.8 percent, a marked decline from the general average of 66 percent during 2007 and a figure only marginally higher than the previous low of 62.7 percent during February of 1978, economic realities that served as impetus for the passing of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act in the first place.<sup>5</sup>

To underscore our point further, these figures should also be viewed alongside the before-and-after impact of the Great Recession on specific metropolitan areas, which display dramatically higher unemployment rates for blacks and Latinos compared against their groups’ respective national averages. According to two separate studies published by the Economic Policy Institute (2010), thirty-one metro areas recorded unemployment rates reaching 20 percent for blacks in cities like Detroit, Milwaukee, Las Vegas and Minneapolis, while a study of thirty-eight cities yielded similarly high rates for Hispanics in cities including Providence, Hartford and Fresno. These figures, the EPI aptly notes, rival the peak national unemployment rate during the Great Depression of the 1930s (Austin, 2011).

However, we must note that these disparities are not simply the effect of the “Great Recession,” nor are they recent statistical patterns. Indeed, the overall unemployment rate for African-Americans historically has been roughly double that of whites and for Latinos roughly 1.5 times greater than the white rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). Despite these disparities, and the irony that black and Latino unemployment rates are nearly at the same levels when the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978 was passed, only recently has discussion resumed over a basic right to employment in Washington, D.C.

For close to forty years, the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978 has existed, *de facto*, as an unfunded mandate. In 2011, United States Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) introduced a bill (HR-1000) entitled the *Humphrey-Hawkins 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act* to provide the financing and structure to fulfill the full employment goal of the original legislation. Calling it a “21st century New Deal,” in which the federal government “plays a major role in

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<sup>5</sup> See Tables and excel documents provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, available at: <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS11300000> (December 10, 2014).

getting Americans back to work,” Conyers’ bill invokes the spirit and intent of the 1978 legislation by creating two complementary trust funds, one that funds states and localities for specific job-creating activities, the other directed toward job training programs for unskilled workers (Conyers, Jr., 2011).

While there has been no mention of a federal jobs program by President Obama or his administration, the central premises behind Conyers’ act only recently have begun to gain traction amongst media and policy-makers. In his widely read article recently published in *Rolling Stone* (January 3, 2014), Jesse Myerson argued that given the adverse impact of the Great Recession on “new millennials,” young people should support a set of five economic reforms; the first he listed is a federal job guarantee.

After Myerson’s article drew criticism from political pundits and social media users, the *Huffington Post* commissioned a scientific poll to measure public opinion about a federal job guarantee. The poll found that 47 percent of 1,000 Americans sampled supported a law allowing the government to provide jobs for Americans who could not find work in the private sector, while 41 percent disagreed and 12 percent were unsure. Overall, this suggests modest but general support for a federal jobs guarantee. When broken down by ethnic group, the numbers are more telling. Black support for such a measure polled the highest at 67 percent (14 percent against, 19 percent unsure), Latino support stood at 52 percent (35 percent against, 13 percent unsure) while non-Hispanic white support was slightly weaker with 43 percent in support (45 percent against, 12 percent unsure).

To date, Conyers, a long-time prominent member of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), has received some support for the legislation from members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), several of whom are co-sponsors of his bill. Meanwhile, according to his office, the legislation is beginning to yield interest from Latino civil rights and advocacy groups like the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). This is an important development considering the concerted energies and focus by Hispanic groups on passing comprehensive immigration reform while countering the dangerous culture of austerity economics (spending cuts) in Washington.

Given the aforementioned support by African Americans and Latinos alike, we believe that a permanent, full-employment policy consistent with the ideals of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978 not only would serve as a direct alternative to austerity economics (see Aja, Bustillo, Darity, Jr. and Hamilton, 2013), but also address longstanding patterns of racial and inter-group inequality. In short, a federal job guarantee would remove the threat of unemployment and ensure that the opportu-



nity to work for a livable wage and decent pay is a basic right of citizenship for all Americans (Darity, 2010).<sup>6</sup>

If the National Investment Employment Corps were implemented, pay would range from a minimum of \$23,000 to a maximum of \$80,000, each job also providing benefits (including medical coverage and retirement support), opportunities for advancement, on-the-job training, and professional development.<sup>7</sup> Much like Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Workers Progress Administration (WPA), a national program of job assurance will provide meaningful employment in a variety of "public works" projects. It could potentially serve as the stimulus for the types of innovative, green technologies the president has touted frequently, necessary "green jobs" considering the adverse effects of climate change. States and municipalities could develop inventories of needed jobs for all who are able to work, matching skilled and unskilled laborers alike with full employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

In a recent March 2013 report, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave the country a grade of D+ on its physical infrastructure, only a slight improvement from a grade of a D in 2009.<sup>9</sup> The report indicated that a total investment of \$3.6 trillion is required by 2020, streams of funding necessary in order to deal with the backlog of overdue maintenance across our infrastructure systems. Thus a federal job program would address physical and human infrastructure needs including the building, repair, and maintenance of bridges, dams, roads, parks, museums, mass transit systems, school facilities, health clinics, and child care centers, giving priority to the most urgent projects to aid the most distressed communities.

Under Representative Conyers' bill, a federal jobs program would be funded through a slight tax increase on the top percentile of earners, a type of revenue transfer that citizens increasingly support. In New York City, for example, Mayor Bill DeBlasio was elected in late 2013 on an anti-austerity, populist agenda that called for the expansion of universal

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<sup>6</sup> For previous examples of federal job guarantee programs, see Harvey (2000) and Wray (2008).

<sup>7</sup> This is an updated analysis of the policy proposal as outlined in William Darity, Jr. and Darrick Hamilton (2012). Also see for reference the following news article: [http://business.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2011/11/28/9067808-fed-lent-banks-nearly-8-trillion-during-crisis-report-shows?chromedomain=investigations](http://business.nbcnews.com/_news/2011/11/28/9067808-fed-lent-banks-nearly-8-trillion-during-crisis-report-shows?chromedomain=investigations)

<sup>8</sup> Initial outline of the federal jobs guarantee, framed in the context of growing wealth inequality and labor market discrimination, is described in Darity, Jr. (2010) and Darity, Jr. and Hamilton (2012), also see Aja, Bustillo, Darity, Jr. and Hamilton (2013) for discussion of the program as a necessary alternative to austerity politics.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, the report maintains that bridges in urban areas are decaying more rapidly than those in rural areas, while funding streams are not sufficient enough to maintain and improve them. It also expressed concern for the aviation sectors and the country's dams. See 2013: Report for America's Infrastructure, ASCE, March 2013. Available at: <http://www.infrasturereportcard.org/a/documents/2013-Report-Card.pdf>

child care programs through a modest, minimal tax increase on the wealthiest residents of the state. Similarly – given the Obama-Romney 2012 presidential campaign position difference on allowing the George W. Bush presidential administration tax cuts to expire for those earning above \$250,000 – Obama’s election victory may serve as evidence of a national voter sentiment of this type of revenue transfer. But a permanent, nation-wide NEIC would essentially pay for itself, given that the income paid to the employees of the NIEC would not only restore tax bases at the state and municipal levels, alleviating current budget crises.

Furthermore, we calculate that the cost of a National Investment Employment Corps (NIEC) would be less than the first stimulus package enacted by Congress and vastly less than the \$10-30 trillion awarded by the Federal Reserve to the very same investment banking community that caused the economic crisis in the first place (see Aja, Bustillo, Darity, Jr. and Hamilton, 2013). A back of the envelope calculation indicates that if 15 million persons – the total unemployed at the trough of the Great Recession — were employed at average cost of \$50,000 per annum per person (salaries, benefits, training, materials and equipment), a high estimate of the total expense of the program would be \$750 billion (Darity, Jr. and Hamilton, 2012).<sup>10</sup>

Consider that in 2011 alone, federal antipoverty programs (Medicaid, unemployment insurance, etc.) cost approximately \$746 billion (Wasson 2012). A federal job guarantee would make it possible to reduce drastically current antipoverty expenditures and is, by comparison, far more productive in its deployment of both physical and human capital development. Hence, the net expense of a job guarantee program could also be minimal given the potential of cost savings from other social programs. With the federal government serving as employer of last resort, unemployment compensation along with antipoverty program funding for free and reduced lunch subsidies and food stamps could be reduced since a job guarantee works to eliminate both working and jobless poverty simultaneously.

The NEIC also would be a better source of job creation than the Keynesian-based indirect incentive effects of stimulus measures and tax incentive strategies aimed at encouraging the private sector to provide jobs. After all, a federal job guarantee serves as a direct mechanism for job creation while also triggering a multiplier stimulus effect across a wide panoply of activities that take place in the economy. The private sector would benefit in a myriad of ways, not just by stabilizing consumption demand, but also through vertical linkages of sales of supplies

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<sup>10</sup> This is less than the first \$787 billion stimulus package and also much less than the first round of investment bank bailouts (\$1.3 trillion). See Aja, Bustillo, Darity, Jr. and Hamilton (2014) and Aja, Bustillo, Darity, Jr. and Hamilton (2013).

and materials to the NIEC for public projects. This also could create advantages for black and Latino-owned businesses, while leverage for unions also would be created, since the jobs offered by the NIEC would set an effective minimum floor on the quality of employment.

Furthermore, one might expect that the existence of an NIEC would incentivize profit-seeking employers to demand less costly undocumented workers who would not qualify for a federal job guarantee. While it is likely that employers would tend to pay them less than the floor on wages provided by the job guarantee, over time, we would expect the economy-wide rise in wages associated with the federal job guarantee workers would even bid up wages –at least marginally – for group whose labor market status is more vulnerable, such as undocumented immigrants. Furthermore, since permanent residents are governed under the same labor laws as United States citizens, the same protections of a federal right to work for decent pay granted by a federal job guarantee would be extended to this group as well. This would have additional positive impacts on the economic livelihoods of “mixed-status” Latino households (those who live in arrangements where one household member may hold a legalized status while others are undocumented), given that permanent residents could apply for work under the federal job guarantee.<sup>11</sup>

Other benefits include the potential reduction or elimination of a number of market interventions like minimum wage laws, financial regulation, and associated enforcement expenses. Minimum wage laws no longer would be needed since the minimum salary offered by the NIEC would set the floor on the wage standard. Concerns around strengthening and constantly updating financial regulation to keep up with constantly evolving economically and environmentally harmful private sector products and practices aimed at eluding regulation would be reduced. The presence of a job guarantee would mitigate the adverse effects of fluctuations in speculative investment markets on personal employment and income for the public at large.

To be clear, a federal job guarantee is not meant to act as a temporary program contingent upon emergency conditions. Instead, it will function as a permanent, automatic stabilizer. The number of persons put to work in the NIEC will rise during downturns and fall during upswings. Thus, like the cost of the program, it will expand and contract counter-

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<sup>11</sup> We understand that the coalitional effort to pass comprehensive immigration reform is of utmost urgency and importance, especially for the Latino community, but we believe that there are no substantive policy specific reasons why such efforts and focus are not largely independent of those needed to pass a federal job guarantee. We support a comprehensive immigration reform package that includes pathways to citizenship for undocumented workers currently residing in the United States. Clearly, such reform would disproportionately benefit both Latino and black, albeit to a lesser extent than Latino, workers.

cyclically. In addition, it would produce the structural change in the United States economy away from the generation of low wage jobs and toward more moderate and high wage jobs.

The program would guarantee employment for members of stigmatized populations subject to discriminatory employment exclusion. Devah Pager's audit study in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and in New York City, for example, revealed that among males of comparable age and employment qualification, white applicants received more employment callbacks than their black counterparts. Even more alarming, the study also found that whites with criminal records were slightly more likely to get call backs than black males with no criminal record (Pager 2003). Indeed, even among white males alone, having a criminal record reduced the odds of receiving an employment call back by half. It is notable that one set of these audits took place in Wisconsin, a state that outlaws employer use of criminal records as a criterion for employment in most jobs.

In another example, using personnel data from a large United States retail firm, Guiliano, Levine, and Leonard (2008) undertook an examination of whether the race of the hiring manager affects the racial composition of new hires, finding significant differences between the hiring patterns of non-black managers and black managers, with non-black managers hiring more whites and fewer blacks than black managers. Also, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that among 18-25 year olds, white high school dropouts had an unemployment rate lower than blacks that have completed some college. The evidence suggests that even when blacks are able to avoid incarceration and acquire education they are employed at lower rates than their white formerly incarcerated and lower educated counterparts.

Globally, programs similar to a federal jobs guarantee have proven to be effective. Argentina's *Plan Jefes/as de Hogar Desocupados* program, initiated in 2002, provides a payment of 150 pesos per month to a head of household for a minimum of 4 hours of daily work in community services, small construction, or maintenance services. The program provided jobs to 2 million workers, with indigence rates among participating households falling by nearly 25 percent and the unemployment rate dropping from 21.5 percent in May 2002 to 15.6 percent in May 2003 (Tcherneva and Wray 2005), while the program's multiplier effect conservatively was estimated at 2.57 (Harvey 2007).

In another example, India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which was implemented in 2006, guarantees rural households the legal right to be employed up to 100 days a year. For individuals, the program entitles them to receive wages if no work is made available to them within two weeks of an application. Liu and Deiniger (2010) esti-

mate that the short-term effects of the Indian program on participating households were positive and greater than program costs.

At present, non-white racial and ethnic groups, who chronically are subjected to higher unemployment rates, suffer the most from austerity policies and federal indifference toward full employment policy. To reverse this, we need a renewed inter-group coalition, organized in the spirit of the late 1970s, reminding the President and Democratic members of Congress of the overwhelming support they received from African Americans and Latinos during the two previous elections. A federal job guarantee not only would address long-standing unjust and discriminatory barriers that keep large segments of stigmatized populations out of the labor force, but also would reverse the rising tide of inequality for workers in general by strengthening their labor market bargaining power and eliminating the threat of unemployment for all Americans. Finally, the program would create productive physical and human capital investment jobs that would reverse the trend of a crumbling and depreciating public infrastructure, which would have a long-standing stimulus effect similar to the benefits of the massive public investment undertaken during the Great Depression.

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# NATIONAL FANTASIES, EXCLUSION, AND THE MANY HOUSES ON MANGO STREET

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Thoreau poses a deceptively simply question when he asks, in *Walden*: “What is a house?” Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (1985) revolves around this very question as the narrator, Esperanza Cordero, consistently articulates a profound need to one day own a home of her own. At the heart of Esperanza’s longings are foundational questions about what it means to belong to a place, a question that is heightened by Esperanza’s status as a poor child of immigrant and ethnic parents. Given the specificities of Esperanza’s subject position, the question of what it means to belong to a place, and the symbolic association of houses with belonging, takes on a more complicated meaning, as it speaks directly to the foundational assumptions that underlie the house and its relation to the American imaginary.

At the center of this consideration is the loaded and metaphorically rich association of houses with American identity, and more particularly the story of upward mobility that is most commonly referenced through iconic representations of the post-World War II American Dream. While it may be tempting to read Esperanza’s longing for a house of her own as a gesture towards the immigrant-makes-good narrative that is associated with the American Dream, I will contend that the meaning of the house in this novel is, at best, an ambivalent one. The text is populated with multiple houses—some real and some imagined—that, when taken in conjunction with one another, provide a stark critique of gender, domesticity, and ultimately national inclusion. *The House on Mango Street* does not reaffirm the comforting ethos of the American Dream rather it uses its most profound symbol—the house—to reveal its unstable and violent foundations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I understand the American Dream here as the particular narrative that emerges after the second world war, when suburbanization, for a variety of complex reasons, began to take hold in American culture. This particular narrative places emphasis on rugged individualism and hard work and manifests itself in the iconic suburban home, in many instances the hard-earned reward of soldiers returning from war. I am, however, also interpreting the American Dream as the twentieth century manifestation of a much longer narrative of settlement, home building, and home making and their relationship to the establishment of the American nation state.

The house is one of the most foundational and profound symbols in American literature. As Marilyn Chandler (1991) has pointed out:

Our literature reiterates with remarkable consistency the centrality of the house in American cultural life and imagination. In many of our major novels a house stands at stage center as a unifying symbolic structure that represents and defines the relationships of the central characters to one another, to themselves and to the world and raises a wide range of questions. . . (1)

In attempting to answer what a house is in the context of *The House on Mango Street*, we must interrogate what it means to lay claim to space and place, as doing so requires a radical reconfiguration of who can and cannot “belong” to the nation itself. For a young, poor, non-white, woman to try and demand a space where she belongs outside of patriarchal, racist, and classist culture requires radically rethinking and restructuring what home and belonging mean. Reading the houses on Mango Street critically allows us to begin to envision this difference, as the “real” space of the novel constantly clashes with the imagined space away from it, and the collision reveals the foundational violence of our national narrative.

Overwhelmingly, when critics and scholars have analyzed *The House on Mango Street* they have done so under the premise that there is one primary house in the text. This is a fundamental error; the novel is full of houses, including the house of the title, all of which draw attention to the pervasive sense of loss, loneliness, and marginality that houses themselves are meant to counter. Perhaps one of the great ironies of *The House on Mango Street* is that the novel is not a text about being at home in the world, or belonging to a place; rather it is about the ways that poverty and violence raise specters of belonging, even as they deny the materiality that should attach to such things.

Of all the houses that populate this text, the two most important are the house the title of the text names, the sad, red, house on Mango Street, and the dream house (she calls it a “real” house) to which the protagonist Esperanza Cordero wants to escape. Between these two houses, are the myriad other houses that dot the textual landscape; houses that are marginal, invisible, and filled with teeming and forgotten life. These are houses that are spaces of shame and loss, structured around patriarchal domesticity, and marginalized by racist, classist hegemony. The sad, red, house on Mango Street is the symbolic locus of these haunted, broken houses made visible, and is a profound critique of the way that poverty, ethnicity, and gender merge together, desiccating the lives of the people within them. While the sad, red, house on Mango Street is symbolic of loss, the text also constructs, through Esperanza’s longing, an alternative

space. The “real” house that Esperanza dreams of having—and the house that she must leave Mango Street to achieve—is one that shelters other kinds of possibilities: possibilities of feminist empowerment, possibilities for escape and the promise of belonging. I argue that understanding the sad, red house on Mango Street in light of Homi Bhabha’s notion of the unhomey, and then similarly reading the house Esperanza imagines away from Mango Street in Gaston Bachelard’s terms of felicitous space allows us to understand how the construction of one is occasioned through the lack of the other. In dreaming up the house away from Mango Street, Esperanza engages in a radical politics which reconfigures the grounds of community, domesticity and belonging, though she can only do this by exposing that which remains hidden and obscured by the foundations of the sad, red house, here a derivative symbol of the American Dream.

#### THE UNHOMELY HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

The text opens with the vignette entitled “The House on Mango Street.” The first line signals important themes that will run throughout the text: nomadism, homelessness, and un-belonging: “We didn’t always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina and before that I can’t remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot. . .” (Cisneros 3) The unrelenting relocations immediately establish a profound sense of dislocation that permeates the entirety of the text, as Esperanza consistently articulates a sense of homelessness and lack. The precariousness of her family’s living conditions, and more specifically their multiple relocations before buying the house on Mango Street, suggests instability and vulnerability, a sense that is further underscored by their status as poor and Latino. Home-ownership—that cornerstone of the American narrative—looms large and is a way of solidifying her family’s belonging to a place.

The actuality of the sad, red, house, however, is a terribly inadequate fulfillment of that promise:

But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It’s small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you’d think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don’t own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. There are stairs in our

house, but they're ordinary hallway stairs, and the house has only one bathroom. (Ibid., 4)

The house on Mango Street has no resemblance to the iconographic house of the American Dream; it lacks every significant feature that would signify its status as a representation of the family's belonging to a place and instead is representative of one more step up the scale of poverty and disenfranchisement. The house, with its descriptions of lack—the swollen floors that barely allow entrance, the crumbling bricks, the garage for the car they do not have—marks absence, not presence and, moreover, invokes through its inadequacy the image of the house they do not have, the house of middle-class material comfort. The house on Mango Street reminds both the reader and Esperanza that owning the house is not the same thing as belonging to a place. In fact, owning the house on Mango Street does not create a sense of being at home, it instead creates a sense of being un-homed.

Homi Bhabha (1992), borrowing from Freud describes being un-homed (and the un-homely) in the following way:

To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the “un-homely” be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into the private and the public spheres. . . In a feverish stillness, the intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (141)

The unhomely in this sense is not as simple as a broken down house that fails to meet up to the fantasy that is projected unto it. Rather, the un-homely in reference to Mango Street reveals the way that the house becomes a site of deprivation and exclusion. The materiality of the house—its too tight steps, the windows holding their breath, the ordinary hallway stairs—mark it as other. In this house the family has not succeeded in achieving the American Dream, they have, instead, acquired a derivative version of it that speaks to the intimate invasions of history. More specifically, this house, situated in an impoverished and peripheral neighborhood, populated by poor people of color, and characterized by violence and lack, creates an unhomely answer to the fantasy of national inclusion.

DOMESTICITY, CONFINEMENT, AND THE COMMUNAL GAZE:  
THE MANY HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

Cisneros draws constant attention to the potential violence of home-space by interrogating the very foundations of homeliness—the domestic—as a site of confinement for women. Doreen Massey (1994) has convincingly argued that our conceptions of space and domesticity are tied into patriarchal modes of control. She writes:

One of the most evident aspects of this joint control of spatiality and identity has been in the West related to the culturally specific distinction between public and private. The attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a social control on identity. (179)

In Cisneros's text this social control is determined by cultural and phallogocentric norms that confine women in prison-like homes, wherein identity and self-hood become annihilated by dual registers of disenfranchisement: the women of Mango Street are marginal as women; equally, they are marginal as members of a poor, and all but invisible, "other" community. In interrogating the meaning—and the possibly violent implications of domesticity—Cisneros's text problematizes the everyday notion of the public v. private by demonstrating the ways that public space (the street, the neighborhood) constitute, and at times, invades domestic space. The unhomeliness of the house on Mango Street does not magically end at the front door with the too-tight steps, rather the unhomeliness of the home is, in part, created through navigating the public space of urban, poor, neighborhoods, and the profound implications this has for women.

Cisneros makes this clear by situating the reader's gaze on the landscape and the community that the house on Mango Street is situated within. By making the focus of the text the external world of Mango Street (as opposed to the internal world of the home), Cisneros creates a community narrative that critiques structural systems of poverty, disenfranchisement, and marginality. Though the title of the text implies a focus on domesticity by privileging the house, it is notable and important that Esperanza's storytelling does not center on the home as a site of refuge, but rather upon the house as a readable aspect of a landscape that constitutes it. Contrary to what the title might suggest, the stories that make up *The House on Mango Street* are not the stories of the Cordero family *per se*, nor are they the story of the internal life of the Cordero home. Rather, in making *The House on Mango Street* the narrative of a community and a public identity associated with place, the ground of the narrative shifts away from models of individual American exceptional-

ism, epitomized by the singular house, and focuses instead on the failures of this ideology, as symbolized by the marginalization of the entire community. Monika Kaup (1997) characterizes Cisneros's shift from the internal home into the public street in the following way:

Cisneros . . . expand[s] the focus from a single, isolated house to the street. In so doing she diminishes the status of the individual and reintroduces the communal perspective – bringing us back to Chicano nationalism's concerns with the collective. Through the street, Cisneros reintroduces a collective Latino public space, the urban equivalent of homeland. (390)

For Kaup, the street and the outward gaze create a collective space that functions as a homeland, though even here the sense of the unhomely haunts the space. Esperanza is neither “at home” in her house, nor is she entirely “at home” in the collective space of the street. The street as homeland becomes a fairly precarious position, since it first signifies metaphoric homelessness, and secondly is infused with a sense of (barely) contained danger; the street/public space is as much a site of intimate violations as the house is, as vignettes like “The Family of Little Feet” and “Red Clowns” make clear through their emphasis on sexual violence and danger. The sense of the unhomely registers in terms of both the private (house), and the public (the street), indicating that safety, belonging, and acceptance are, in the best circumstances, only tangentially available to marginalized communities and their access to the national fantasy of the American Dream. In this context, neither the world, nor the home provides a refuge from the stigmas of poverty and violence.

The fact that the house located on Mango Street is only one of many houses is important as it creates a community narrative as opposed to an individual one. Moreover, using the community as the starting point for the narrative moves the text away from discourses of individual success or failure and points instead to the systemic violence of an ideology that at its core seeks to create spaces of safety and acceptance precisely through the exclusion of the poor and people of color. Indeed, as the white flight of the middle of the twentieth century reminds us, urban centers were abandoned in order to establish homogenous economic and racial communities in the American suburbs. While suburbanization is tied intimately in with the symbolic creation of the American Dream, it assumes as one of its foundational premises the necessity of using physical space as a weapon. Much in the same way as the house located on Mango Street creates its own dream image, and that dream image—the fantasized house—in turn conjures its shadow double in the Mango Street house, so too do the suburbs conjure the abandoned inner city, and

the inner city becomes the ghostly double, the hidden reminder, of suburban comfort.

This duality is further seen through the structure of the house itself as a symbolic construct. The unhomeliness of Esperanza's neighborhood is dually constructed as a public and private entity, which themselves constitute and construct one another. The house on Mango Street is both a public entity—a readable aspect of the landscape—even as it is also a private entity that erects a boundary between the internal life of its inhabitants and the public space of the street. Esperanza's charting of her neighborhood, her mapping of space, obliterates these easy boundaries by showing us that which remains hidden inside houses, *and* by equally showing that which remains hidden even in public. By revealing the private—abuse, loss, imprisonment, abandonment, violence—she robs the house of one of its main functions: to protect its inhabitants. In deconstructing the house in this way, Cisneros reveals a darker function of houses in the *barrio*; they contain and confine as opposed to protect or shield, and as a result exposes the unhomeliness lurking in their foundations.

Esperanza makes the domestic the site of public discourse by interrogating the implications of being a woman in a public space. The urban homeland that is available to women, through the auspices of collective cultural experience is hardly, as the stories of the women of Mango Street remind us, a liberating space. As Annie O. Eysturoy (1996) has put it:

A common denominator uniting almost all the different women Esperanza portrays is, not only their entrapment in oppressive sociocultural circumstances, but their internalization of a definition of self that is determined by phallogocentric cultural values. They are thus not only confined within their own house, but also confined by their own minds, by the conditioned limitations of their own self-perceptions. Their lives and actions, dominated by fathers and husbands, are physically and psychologically entrapped within oppressive patriarchal structures, and they can envision themselves only in the seemingly inescapable roles of future wives and mothers. (102)

Esperanza's articulation becomes an act of conjuring that connects her story to the stories of the past, the stories of the voiceless women lost in the anonymity of the domestic and to the transformative power of storytelling itself. The stories of the women of Mango Street serve as cautionary tales for Esperanza, even as the act of telling their stories allows her to articulate a future for herself removed from the phallogocentric standards of feminine possibility.

CHICANA FEMINIST ARCHITECTURE: RENOVATING  
THE AMERICAN DREAM

For many of the women of her community—confined by the patriarchal norms of their culture and crippled by poverty and racism—there is very little room for negotiating identities or spaces of agency. In acknowledging the limits of patriarchal domesticity, where in the best circumstances women are thwarted and in the worst they disappear under a constant barrage of violence, Esperanza articulates a need for a different kind of life. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has described these limits and possibilities as follows:

The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is a *mujer mala*. If a woman does not renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish. If a woman remains a *virgen* until she marries, she is a good woman. For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons. A very few of us. As a working class people our chief activity is to put food in our mouths, a roof over our heads and clothes on our backs. Educating our children is out of reach for most of us. Educated or not, the onus is still on woman to be a wife/mother – only the nun can escape motherhood. Women are made to feel total failures is they don't marry and have children. (39)

Esperanza, the young dreamer and artist, sees women all around her who have not escaped from these roles. As a barely working-class Latina, Esperanza's desire for a home of her own as well as her determination to achieve these things through her books and her papers, signals the rare path that Anzaldúa articulates above. Given the rarity of her choices and the difficulty of achieving them, it is important to turn to the symbolic locus of this desire; the home of her own away from Mango Street.

The creation and projection of the house away from Mango Street arises precisely in response to the unhomeliness of both the Mango Street house and the marginal neighborhoods of Esperanza's childhood. These spaces signify a profound exclusion and lack: the lack of a house she can point to, and a home that she can feel she belongs to, demarcate and delimit the boundaries of her viable participation within the national nar-



rative that is invoked by the American Dream. The symbolic force of the family's purchase of their own home does not assuage this sense of inadequacy and lack of belonging; rather it has the inverse effect of heightening it.

In response to her family's inability to move beyond the material confines of their poverty to provide Esperanza with a "real house", she instead turns to a strategy that is both resilient and empowering: she imagines a real house for herself away from Mango Street. Dream houses, in fact, haunt this text as the specters of the promise that lie just past the confines of the family's material conditions. The first of these houses is the house that her parents promise her they would one day have, and the second is the house that Esperanza herself is committed to occupying. These two dream houses, when contrasted with one another, combine to reveal the limitations of the national narrative—the idea that hard work, self-sacrifice, frugality and self-sufficiency will ultimately earn one a place within the nation, exemplified by home-ownership—as well as the limitations of radical action configured outside the space of patriarchy. While the dream house of Mr. and Mrs. Cordero is brought into stark contrast by the realities of the House on Mango Street, Esperanza's dream house is brought into similar contrast by the limitations of ideology in relation to lived experience.

The house that the Cordero family dreams of occupying—the house they promise Esperanza that the Mango Street house so dismally fails to compare with—is described as follows:

They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always so we wouldn't have to move each year. And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V. And we'd have a basement and at least three washrooms so when we took a bath we wouldn't have to tell everybody. Our house would be white with trees around it, a great big yard and grass growing without a fence. This was the house Papa talked about when he held a lottery ticket and this was the house Mama dreamed up in the stories she told us before we went to bed. (4)

The house that the family dreams up is the iconic suburban home; it promises rootedness and permanence and acts as the symbolic manifestation of acceptance into the space of the nation. For the Corderos, like many immigrant families, the achievement of the home of one's own signals an adherence to those typically "American" characteristics: hard work, self-determination, and self-sufficiency.

The Cordero's longing for the fantasy house and their dream of being able to attain it are seductive fictions. The replacement of the dream house with the Mango Street house marks the limitations of a fantasy which at its core relies on the historic and contemporary disenfranchisement of large groups of people — the poor, people of color, women — to sustain it. It further demonstrates, through the contrast between the sad, red house and its normal hallway stairs with the dream house and its inside stairs, the limitations of upward mobility achieved through hard work and sacrifice.

In response to the failures of the American Dream's model of hard work creating upward mobility, as well as the limitations of the patriarchal house as retreat and safety, Esperanza declares that she has to have a house of her own one day, one that she can point to. She feels the necessity of outrunning the shame of poverty, of marginality, and the drudgery of endless labor for limited gain. She knows she has to create a different alternative for the foundations of her life. She begins with the space of her own dream house:

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house.  
Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and  
my pillows, my pretty purple petunias. My books and  
my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. No-  
body to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up  
after. Only a house quite as snow, a space for myself to  
go, clean as paper before the poem. (Ibid., 108)

The house is, first and foremost, a feminine space that simultaneously restructures and re-constitutes the domestic and the feminine; it is filled with the markers of a quiet and thoughtful domesticity that nurtures creative and intellectual activity and as such is removed from the confines of domestic drudgery that patriarchal values demand. The repetition of "nobody" reinforces the solitude that the space of the dream house affords, echoing the first lines of the vignette. The kind of belonging that Esperanza longs for throughout the book is found by belonging, first and foremost, to herself.

Whereas the house located on Mango Street is characterized by a pervading sense of the unhomey, the House Away from Mango Street is characterized by what Gaston Bachelard (1969) calls "felicitous space":

Indeed, the images I want to examine are the quite simple images of felicitous space. In this orientation, these investigations would deserve to be called topophilia. They seek to determine the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love. For diverse reasons,

and with the differences entailed by poetic shadings, this is eulogized space. Attached to its protective value which can be a positive one, are also imagined values, which soon become dominant. Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect. In the realm of images, the play between the exterior and intimacy is not a balanced one. (xxxv-xxxvi)

In Bachelard's articulation of the house as object of poetic consideration, he points to the way that the lived experience of the house intersects with the imagination. While his consideration of the house certainly focuses on the house as a privileged site, he takes his subject to be one that is shaded both by experiences and imagination. The house, particularly the house of childhood, is not an entirely romanticized entity, insofar as it is an entity that is always brought to mind through memory—hence its status as eulogized space.

While Cisneros and her critics have understood Bachelard's position and treatment of the house through the lens of privilege, it is worth noting that Bachelard himself is undertaking to examine an ontological image and its deep reverberations as a poetic entity, an enterprise which is self-consciously aware of, and in many ways relies upon, the romanticization of space to maintain it.<sup>2</sup> Bachelard is well aware that the house carries its own contradiction within it, that private and public are implicated in one another beyond messy dialectical divisions, and that the house of our dreams oft-times does not correspond to the houses of our memory and imagination.

In some ways, this is the fact that allows for the division between the house located on Mango Street—the house of the unhomely— and the House Away from Mango Street— the house of felicitous space— to implicate, contradict, and collapse into one another. For the protagonist of Cisneros's text, memory and imagination are not sufficient to re-construct the house located on Mango Street into a house of felicitous space where Esperanza can be and be. The jarring reality of the Mango Street house is too real and discordant to allow for this. Instead, Esperanza must create an entirely new house, one that is informed by her subject position

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<sup>2</sup> See Robin Ganz "Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossing and Beyond", as well Martha Satz "Returning to One's House: An interview with Sandra Cisneros" for Cisneros's discussion of Bachelard's influence.

and constructed, to paraphrase Gloria Anzaldúa, with her feminist architecture.

While the solitude and feminine-centric construction of the house away from Mango Street seems, at first glance, to create a space that by its very nature excludes the public and the community, Esperanza's imagined House Away from Mango Street actually establishes a space for the articulation of community outside traditional structures of kinship and belonging, as she imagines the house as a space that can act as a shelter for others who find themselves homeless, either literally or metaphorically. The first example of this is when Esperanza imagines offering Sally a safe space within her house of dreaming:

Sally, do you sometimes wish you didn't have to go home? Do you wish your feet would one day keep walking and take you far away from Mango Street, far away and maybe your feet would stop in front of a house, a nice one with flowers and big windows, and steps for you to climb up two by two upstairs to where a room is waiting for you. And if you opened the little window latch and gave it a shove, the windows would swing open, all the sky would come in. (82- 83)

Sally, in obvious and painful ways, suffers from the same kind of un-homeliness that characterizes Esperanza's longing, and in response to this, Esperanza offers her an imaginative place in the House Away From Mango. By replacing Sally's geography, by literally transporting her from her painful walk to her father's home that she cannot come out of, to the steps of a nice house, Esperanza places her within the context of her own desire to one day just walk away from Mango.

More importantly, though, Esperanza replaces the unhomeliness that marks Sally with an offer of felicitous space, a space that has the potential to save her. As Sally arrives at Esperanza's dream house and is able to climb the stairs two by two, to a room where she can sleep and dream in peace, she is climbing into the space of her own autonomous life. Esperanza's dream house offers a place of acceptance and love and becomes an important, if only visionary, alternative to the male dominated home. The limits of this home, however, are immediately clear, as Sally opts, not for her own house, or even the possible vision of a feminine space dictated by feminine-centric creativity and acceptance, but instead acts according to the only avenue she believes available to her (marriage), frighteningly reaffirming the phallogentric values that Esperanza's burgeoning feminist ethics reject.

Though Esperanza's House Away from Mango Street registers as a communal space, as Sally demonstrates, this communal status depends on the ability or desire of the saved to move beyond the confines of their

own ideological constructs- a requirement that is not always feasible. The very nature of the ideologies that the House Away from Mango is supposed to stand in opposition to is that they are totalizing, absolute, and nearly inescapable. These are limitations that Esperanza cannot understand, as her second articulation of communal space suggests.

The second vignette that suggests that Esperanza views the house away from Mango Street as a communal space is “Bums in the Attic”, a short piece that articulates both the fragmentation that attends to class and upward mobility as well as the limitations of Esperanza’s vision of escape:

People who live on top of hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don’t look down at all except to be content to live on hills. They have nothing to do with last week’s garbage or fear of rats. Night comes. Nothing wakes them but the wind. One day I’ll own my own house, but I won’t forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I’ll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house. Some days, after dinner, guests and I will sit in front of a fire. Floorboards will squeak upstairs. The attic grumbles. Rats? They’ll ask. Bums, I’ll say, and I’ll be happy. (Ibid., 86-87)

The geography of this vignette is important, as Esperanza describes a topography in which some are closer to the heavens and have in their service those who are too bound to the earth. The relevance of this geographical hierarchy is important because it obviously mirrors class constraints and additionally reveals Esperanza’s longing for ascent. She is weary of the promise of moving “up” being tempered by the reality of lateral movement—a slightly better flat, one with running water; a slightly better house that still has plain, old, hallway stairs—a movement up the metaphoric hill measured out in inches, not feet. Esperanza knows it will take more than longing and more than promises to become one of the people on the hill.

In this moment, Esperanza recognizes the truth of conquest and the emptiness of the promise of the American Dream. The idea that hard work alone will give one access to the house on the hill is underscored by all of the people around her who work and nonetheless have little hope of upward mobility. In “Papa who Wakes up Tired in the Dark”, for example, we learn that Esperanza’s father wakes up tired, in the dark, to go to work in the gardens of the house on the hill; he attends to the promise of upward mobility, even as he is situated in its periphery. For those excluded from the discourse of the nation — those who do not occupy the

house on the hill, but attend to it— the American dream is tempered by metaphoric or literal homelessness, rats, and last week's garbage. The working migrant's access to the house on the hill, to the promise of the nation, is limited and confined if one relies simply on the notion of hard work to succeed. Hard work will get you to the edge of the property, clinging to a lottery ticket. Something else is required to occupy the master's house.

While the first half of "Bums in the Attic" points to the limitations of the discourse of the American Dream and reinforces, yet again, the sense of longing, marginality, and homelessness that permeate the text, the last half of the vignette speaks more directly to the vision Esperanza has for the house she intends to own one day. The two descriptions of the dream house, "A House of My Own" and "Bums in the Attic" tell us that while she desires the space of quite dreaming, the Bachelardian house shielding the daydreamer, she also knows who and what she is; she knows where she come from and in her words, "understands what it means to be without a house." As Maria Antonia Oliver-Rotger (2010) has pointed out:

The middle class, feminist, aesthetic implications of Esperanza's words are ineludible, but they have to be considered in relation to her incipient collective social consciousness. Her freedom as a woman and as an artist together with the social reality of those "who live too much on earth" will be the constitutive elements of her aesthetics. . . (290)

As a result, the home she imagines has to encompass contradictory impulses; it needs to be both a space of solitary, creativity, with room enough to dream and dream, even as it also has to be a house that can shelter the marginal members of her own community.

The solution to this seeming contradiction lies in the foundations of Esperanza's burgeoning feminist ethics. In asserting her refusal to share her space with the requisite children and husband, she gives herself room enough to take on another role. By allowing the bums to live in the attic, Esperanza enacts a community-oriented ethic that begins the process of redefining femininity. Seemingly, if Esperanza is not burdened with housekeeping and child rearing, not only will she have time enough to write (to be and be) she will also have the resources to better attend to the marginal members of her community. Her house of writing is not a solitary house, it is a house peopled by the less fortunate. This is an important symbolic moment, as Esperanza seems to acknowledge that education (books and papers) have the radical potential to reshape communities of color, assuming that the tools they provide are not used in isolation. The upward mobility that education affords allows Esperanza

to literally house her community and offer a counterweight to the prevailing sense of homelessness that accompanies poverty and marginalization.

In re-shaping the idea of what a dream house is, and more importantly what it does, Cisneros provides an important renovation to the structure of the American Dream. By thinking of houses not as sites of retreat, or the symbolic locus of heteronormative, phallogentric values, but rather as spaces that have potential to house community, and moreover as spaces that can help create discourse, she carves out a space of belonging that is born of the unhomely. Cisneros brings that which is hidden to light: she exposes what marginality, poverty, violence, racism, and invisibility do to communities; she exposes the potential for the house to act as a prison rather than a refuge; she destabilizes the division between the house and the street, revealing the ways that each construct and constitute one another. More than this though, by using the house as a potential incubator of discourse, she refigures what feminine domestic space can be. *The House on Mango Street* reveals that which remains hidden in the American Dream, and in doing so, it stakes a claim for itself. By giving voice to her community, and by offering to house it in her dream space, Esperanza re-imagines what home can mean, and provides alternative structures for attaining it.

#### CONCLUSION

The *House on Mango Street* is a novel that is full of houses: houses that are sources of shame, houses that alienate and marginalize, houses that act as prisons, and finally imaginative and anticipated houses that act as a counter to these forces. By reading the *House on Mango Street* with an eye towards these many houses, we can begin to see that which remains hidden: the unhomely within the foundation of the national fantasy epitomized by the American Dream and its subsequent suburban fantasy; the marginality and invisibility of impoverished and racially demarcated communities; the potential violence of domestic space; the implication of the public and the private in the creation of spaces. Moreover, only when considering the ways that the multiple houses conjure and connect with one another can we begin to appreciate the radical potential that Esperanza's dream house away from Mango Street provides. She reshapes the house on Mango Street and the House Away from Mango Street by recognizing the home she has been denied and the one she will nonetheless create. By imagining her dwelling in terms of femininity, privacy and community, Esperanza sets up a space outside the traditional confines of family, home, and even nation. If the house is metaphoric of the nation, the nation Esperanza imagines is a performative one in which the marginal and vulnerable are housed and sustained outside traditional kinship or

community networks. With her feminist architecture, Esperanza imagines a radically revised dream that can accommodate difference and ambiguity instead of totalizing or foreclosing on it.

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# FREE YOUR MIND: CONTEMPORARY RACIAL ATTITUDES AND POST RACIAL THEORY

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In November 2008, the United States elected its first African American president. Preceding the election, pundits, academics, and the candidates themselves, debated whether Barack Obama (or any African American for that matter) could potentially become the first Black president of the United States. Central to these arguments was the role of race in politics and society at large. If race remained a significant cleavage in American society (many argued), it seemed unlikely that any member of a racial minority group would be able to win in a majority white America. In the days and weeks following the 2008 presidential election, it was frequently suggested that Obama's success was some indicator that Martin Luther King Jr's "dream" of a society that did not use race as its dominant predictor of character was actualized (see Thernstrom 2008).

Since Obama's election, both scholars and political pundits have engaged in arguments over whether America has in fact moved toward a point where race is no longer the defining cleavage in American society (e.g.; Piston 2010; Steele 2008; Teasley and Ikard 2010; Thernstrom 2008). On the one hand, events such as the election of President Obama as well as that of Michael Steele as chair of the Republican National Committee may very well indicate that Americans place less emphasis on race when voting for their political leaders. However, there still remains evidence to suggest that we are not in a new phase of post-racial politics and a post-racial America. During Obama's first campaign there was an emphasis on his race to designate distinction, deviancy, and fear. For example, the image of Michelle and Barack Obama on the cover of the *New Yorker* displayed, among other things, racism and xenophobia. In this image not only was the fist-bump displayed, (that previously had been denoted as "terrorist" by the McCain-Palin camp), but also a depic-

tion of Michelle Obama donning an afro, an assault rifle and military fatigues while presidential candidate Barack Obama was wearing Islamic attire alluding to his suggested Islamic connections. Also, depicted in the background of this image was a picture of Osama Bin Laden and the burning of the American flag in the fireplace. This insidious image was in fact inherently racist and xenophobic. But images and racist depictions of the Obama's were not the only indication that racism is still prevalent. After Obama's election there were a number of racist incidents. In Snellville, Ga an elementary school boy was told by his classmate that he ". . .hopes Obama gets assassinated" ([www.nbcnews.com](http://www.nbcnews.com))<sup>1</sup>. In the same town, someone trashed a woman's lawn that featured Obama election signs and placed feces in a pizza box on her front door. Similarly, crosses were burned on people's front yards who were Obama supporters, threatening letters were left on the cars of Obama supporters and images of Obama were defaced and threatening messages were visible ([www.nbcnews.com](http://www.nbcnews.com)).<sup>2</sup> Given the confluence of these racially polarizing events, we cannot conclude that we are living in a post-racial or "color blind" society as some suggest.

One indicator that Americans are moving in the direction of post-racialism are the attitudes they adopt. That is to say, the less Americans believe race defines differences among their fellow citizens (in politics, attitudes and behavior) the closer we may become to a society in which race is no longer a defining cleavage. Shifting attitudes on race may have serious political, and policy-making implications. For instance, if Americans no longer believe race matters, they may be less inclined to recognize continuing discrimination or persistent racial inequalities. As a result, support for policies aimed at curbing discrimination and ensuring racial equality may weaken. More positively, a shift towards post-racial attitudes (particularly among white Americans) may improve the prospects of minority candidates seeking public office, thus increasing minority representation. Clearly, the potential implications of a shift towards more post-racial thinking among Americans are significant. As such, identifying and understanding these attitudes is critical.

In this article, we examine the prevalence and predictors of so called "post-racial" attitudes, relying on data collected in 2007 by the Pew Research Center. In our examination, we find significant variation in the presence of post-racial attitudes among respondents based on their race and experiences. Specifically, we find that whites and those respondents with diverse social groups are the most likely to express post-racial attitudes, controlling for other explanations. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/27738018/#.UxDJ-8go7IX>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN PUBLIC OPINION: PREVIOUS LITERATURE  
AND THEORY

The majority of research on racial attitudes in America has examined attitudes related to race and discrimination as well as explicitly and implicitly racial issues/policies among blacks and whites, with the bulk of this research finding significant differences among black and white Americans in this regard (e.g.; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Kinder and Sanders 1996). The existing research may be thought of as falling into three major theoretical camps: “sociopsychological” theories, “social structural” theories and “political” theories of racial attitudes (Harris-Lacewell, 2003).

Included in the “sociopsychological” approach are studies of subtle or ambivalent racism, aversive racism, covert racism, and the more popular approaches of racial resentment or symbolic/modern racism (Devine 1989; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; Kinder and Sears 1981; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Sears, Hetts, Sidanius and Bobo 2000). Symbolic racism, often argued by Kinder and Sears (1981), contends that “anti-Black affect and traditional American values contributes to White resistance toward affirmative action and other government sponsored remedies for racial inequality” (Harris-Lacewell 2003, 225-226). This theoretical camp is often confirmed by observing opinion over time, which demonstrates that overt ‘biological’ racial attitudes, such as beliefs that Blacks are inferior, are no longer supported. Instead, this research typically finds that contemporary whites’ negative stereotypes of blacks’ values and behaviors, combined with their support for core American values of work ethic and self-reliance, leads to a more subtle form of ‘symbolic’ or ‘new’ racism based largely on the perception that blacks violate traditional American values (Sears, Hetts, Sidanius and Bobo 2000).

Symbolic or ‘new’ racism is typically measured relying on several questions tapping attitudes about the prevalence of discrimination, attitudes about the work ethic of blacks and whether they have received undue advantages or government assistance (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears, Henry and Kosterman 2000; Tarman and Sears 2005). The symbolic racism literature has also clearly demonstrated the impact of these orientations on whites’ support for policies which are both explicitly and implicitly related to race (e.g.; welfare and affirmative action), decreasing support for such policies (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000; Tarman and Sears 2005).

The second theoretical approach to studying racial attitudes is the “social structural” approach. This set of theories consists of social dominance theory, group threat, racial threat theory, realistic group conflict theory, social identity theory and implicit stereotyping (Devine 1989; Dovidio et al. 1997; Fazio et al. 1995; Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Tajfel

and Turner 1986). This approach asserts that individuals identify with groups that share their racial and/or ethnic identity. Whites' opposition to racial policies is then believed to be largely due to perceptions of conflict with other racial and ethnic groups, namely blacks (Sears, Hetts, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Sidanius and Pratto (1999) suggest that "group based social hierarchies are reproduced by interaction and reinforcement of inequality by individuals or institutions of the dominant group" (Harris-Lacewell 2003, 226).

Proponents of the social structural approach often situate racial attitudes derived from group interests in historical context, theorizing, for example, that while white racial attitudes might have evolved from the earlier form of 'biological' racism toward a newer form of 'laissez-faire' racism, the desire among whites to maintain a dominant position in society remains the same (Bobo, Kluegel and Smith 1997). As with the symbolic racism literature, scholars examining group threat have found whites' racial attitudes to be strongly linked with their support (or lack thereof) for policies linked to race (Bobo 2000).

The final approach to understanding racial attitudes is the political (sometimes called the "politics-centered") approach which suggests that "disagreements over racial policies are often about political rather than racial attitudes" (Harris-Lacewell 2003, 226). Proponents of this approach assert that political orientations (particularly about the role of government) and not racial attitudes, shape whites' support for racial policies (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997). These scholars do not deny the existence of racial attitudes, however, their research suggests that the role of these attitudes in determining policy preferences is minimal. In other words, it is the policy and not prejudices or racial resentment that causes political disagreements. To support their claims regarding the current role of race in white opposition to various policies, these scholars have found weak relationships between racial attitudes and policy preferences, finding political orientations and values much more powerful predictors of such policy support (e.g.; Sniderman, Crosby and Howell 2000).

Observing all of these theories, we can conclude that understanding racial attitudes is important in political society. Racial attitudes do not only manifest in policy decisions but also election and participation decisions for both African Americans and Caucasian Americans. The study of racial attitudes in American politics continues to play a major role during this era in which an African American has secured the political position of the presidency and at a time in which there are contentious campaign rallies. Furthermore, the variation described in the racial attitudes literature demonstrates how difficult it is to conclude on the "best" measures of racism in American politics. Thus, we focus not on racism

but on the idea of an elimination of racial categorization as a defining factor in political and policy assessment. If what the pundits argue is true, that we are moving towards a post racial society, we should observe a decline in the support of typical racism predictors among all groups.

### POST-RACIALISM

While numerous scholars have written about the possibility of a post-racial society or the presence of post-racial candidates, attitudes, etc., few have offered a clear definition and measurement schema of post-racialism. Conventional research suggests that a post-racial society is one in which defining cleavages do not fall along racial lines (Cho 2009; Edge 2010; Gallagher 2003; Hutchings 2009; Steele 2008). For instance, Cho argues that post-racialism is an ideology that asserts, because of “significant racial progress that has been made, the state need not engage in race-based decision making or adopt race-based remedies, and that civil society should eschew race as a central organizing principle. . .” (Cho, 2009,1589). She also states that there are four central features to post-racialism, “racial progress, race neutral universalism, moral equivalence and distancing move” (Cho, 2009 1600). Other scholars’ discussion of post-racialism mirror many of Cho’s assertions, discussing post-racialism as the belief that race is no longer a significant impediment for blacks seeking employment, higher education, or political office (Metzler 2010). Metzler (2010) asserts, for example, that a white person who has adopted post-racial attitudes is someone who,

. . . situates racism in the past; embraces formal equality; believes that America has done so much for Blacks and yet Blacks never seem to think that it is enough; walks on eggshells around Blacks for fear of saying something offensive; believes in interracial dating so long as it is not their son or daughter who is marrying Black; does not see themselves as racialized but basks in White privilege; believes that Blacks use race as an excuse for failure, that Blacks who are successful are the exception; believes that pretending that race does not matter makes it true; and still harbors and makes decisions based on the powerful marker of race that is imbedded in American racial reality. (Metzler 2010, 402)

Thus, post-racialism requires a belief that racial equality essentially exists and that race will have little impact on black American’s prospects.

While, we have observed many articulations of what post-racialism looks like and how it is articulated, the quantitative evidence on post-racialism is minimal. Vincent Hutchings (2009), one of the few scholars

who have attempted to empirically measure post-racism, primarily by comparing support for racial policies from ANES data collected in 1988 to ANES data collected twenty years later in 2008, finds little evidence of a decline in a racial divide among Americans. He concludes that the post-racial society that many allude to is not evident when observing Black and White Americans' views on policy issues such as affirmative action, governmental aid and fair job treatment (Hutchings 2009).

To add to this limited research on post-racialism, we explore the presence and predictors of post-racial attitudes, focusing primarily on the extent to which Americans (blacks and whites) believe race to be a significant challenge for African Americans (seeking political office, housing, employment, education, etc), and the extent to which they believe differences among whites and blacks have become smaller in recent years.

#### DATA, METHODS, AND MEASURES

To examine the presence and consequences of post-racial attitudes among Americans, we rely on survey data from the Pew Center's 2007 "Racial Attitudes in America" Survey. We rely on this survey not only due to the number of measures tapping attitudes towards race and politics, but due to its oversample of racial and ethnic minorities. The initial sample consisted of 1,500 non-Hispanic whites, 1,000 non-Hispanic blacks and 500 Hispanics.<sup>3</sup> Since this examination is primarily concerned with attitudinal differences among Anglos and African Americans, Hispanics were excluded from the analyses presented here.

#### DEPENDENT VARIABLES

To capture post racial attitudes, we rely on three measures. First, we examine the extent to which Americans believe discrimination remains a problem in the U.S. If Americans believe that race is not a defining cleavage in American society, they may be less likely to expect that racial discrimination occurs with great frequency. To examine attitudes about discrimination, we rely on a scale based on responses to four questions asking respondents how often they thought blacks were discriminated against in employment, housing, education, and while shopping. The responses to these questions are summed to create a post-racial responses scale for all four questions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The "Racial Attitudes in America" survey was collected from September 5-October 6, 2007. The sample was drawn using random digit dialing (to ensure the oversample of African Americans and Hispanics, the survey disproportionately drew from area codes with higher densities of racial and ethnic minorities). The margin of error for Anglos is +/- 3.5, and +/- 4 points for African Americans.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I for a complete discussion of all the measures and coding used.



Our second measure of post-racial attitudes is based on a question asking respondents whether they thought then Senator Obama's race would help him, hurt him or make no difference to voters in the 2008 election. We expect that voters who hold post-racial views will believe that Obama's race would make no difference in the election. As such we created a dichotomous variable based on this question (1=Race will not make a difference, 0=Other). This categorization is based on the sociopsychological studies that argue that Whites believe racial distinctions are no longer relevant and instead values are the basis for advancement and discrimination in this country (Kinder and Sears 1981, 1996).

Finally, we expect that Americans holding post-racial attitudes will be less likely to perceive race based differences among African Americans and Anglos. To capture these attitudes, we rely on a question asking respondents whether they thought that the values of black and white people have become more similar or more different in the past 10 years. We expect that those Americans possessing post-racial attitudes will believe the values of these two groups are more similar. Sniderman and Hagan (1985) argue that whites' believe that racial inequalities are no longer the issue but instead racial attitudes should be observed in reference to an adherence to values such as individualism. These scholars assert that whites are more interested in values that promote egalitarianism. If Whites believe that middle class Blacks possess these same values then they will agree that middle class Blacks are more similar to them than lower class Blacks who may not espouse or embrace the values of individualism and less government intervention.

#### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

We anticipate that a number of respondents' characteristics, including political orientations, identity, experiences, and resources, may shape their post-racial attitudes. First, we examine the impact of Americans' racial identity on their post-racial attitudes. Throughout our analyses, we anticipate that Anglos will more frequently express post-racial attitudes, compared with African Americans. We base this expectation upon previous research, which indicates that whites tend to less frequently perceive race as a significant challenge in society (compared with blacks). As Kinder and Sanders put it:

Whites tend to think that racial discrimination is no longer a problem; that prejudice has withered away; that the real worry these days is reverse discrimination, penalizing innocent whites for the sins of the distant past. Meanwhile, blacks see racial discrimination as ubiquitous; they think of prejudice as a plague; they say that racial discrimination, not affirmative action, is still the

rule in American society.” (Kinder and Sanders, 1996, 287)

Similarly, we anticipate that whites are more likely to believe discrimination and race-based voting are a thing of the past, compared with their African American peers. To test this hypothesis, we include a binary variable for race (1= white, 0=black).

We further anticipate that attitudes towards African Americans and social experiences will influence respondents’ attitudes about the persistence of racism in the United States. First, we anticipate that negative affect towards African Americans may be related to a belief about the role of race in society. Affect towards blacks has been found in the past to shape racial attitudes (Tarman and Sears 2005) and may exert a differential impact on our post-racial attitudes here. On the one hand, respondents who report higher opinions of African Americans may be more aware and/or sympathetic to the challenges African Americans face with regard to discrimination. Conversely, positive affect towards African Americans may result in fewer perceived disparities in white and black values, and a belief that race won’t make a difference for Obama in the 2008 election. Attitudes towards African Americans is measured relying on a question asking respondents about their overall opinion of blacks (0=Very unfavorable, 3=Very favorable).

Social integration may also impact respondents’ willingness to express post-racial attitudes. Again, these experiences may exert a differential impact on post-racial attitudes. Contact with members of other racial and ethnic groups may increase awareness of discrimination, while simultaneously positively impacting the extent to which respondents believe race is not a factor in political decision-making and whites and blacks share similar values.

Based on previous research, we further expect that political orientations will significantly shape post-racial attitudes among respondents. Political ideology and party attachment are frequently included in examinations of racial attitudes and have been found in the past (e.g.; Sears, Henry and Kosterman 2000) to shape racial attitudes among whites. We attempt to capture political orientations, relying on two measures. The analyses include measures of party attachment (1=Republican, 2=Independent, 3=Democrat), and political ideology (1=Very conservative, 2=Conservative, 3=Moderate, 4=Liberal, 5=Very Liberal).

Finally, a number of demographic characteristics often found to influence racial attitudes (e.g.; Hutchings 2009; Tarman and Sears 2005), including age, education (1=College education, 0=No college), income and gender(1=Female, 0=Male), are included in the models. Income captures family income ranging from less than \$10,000 per year through over \$150,000 per year.

## RESULTS

First, we examine the presence of post-racial attitudes among Anglos and African Americans. Table 1 shows the distribution of the three dependent variables and the differences among blacks and whites in their support for these attitudes. First, we can see that the respondents' mean measure on the discrimination scale is 2.28, indicating that, on average, respondents believed blacks were discriminated against 'hardly ever' or 'not too often' in over 2 of the 4 circumstances described (housing, education, employment, shopping). Among our remaining measures of post-racialism, we can see that attitudes about whites and blacks' values becoming more similar are the most prevalent, with 64% of respondents agreeing. In contrast less than 50% of respondents believed Obama's race would not matter to voters if he were the Democratic nominee in 2008.

TABLE 1: GROUP DIFFERENCES IN POST-RACIAL ATTITUDES

	Average score of Discrimination Scale <sup>ab</sup>	Obama's Race Won't Make a Difference (percent agreeing) <sup>ab</sup>	White and Black Values have become more similar (percent agreeing) <sup>a</sup>
<i>Race</i>			
Whites	2.86	84%	56%
Blacks	1.40	61%	36%
<i>Social Integration</i>			
Diversity	2.34	76%	48%
No Diversity	1.91	63%	43%

<sup>a</sup> Differences among blacks and whites are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ).

<sup>b</sup> Differences among respondents with racially diverse friends and those without are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

Differences in groups means calculated using Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. All p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

N = 2540.

Next, we examine racial differences, finding a notable divide among blacks and whites in their expression of post-racial attitudes. On a scale of 0-4 (4=Most post racial response), we see whites' average score is more than twice that of black respondents, demonstrating the significant difference among members of these groups in the extent to which blacks face continual discrimination in their daily lives. Turning to our next measure of post-racialism- a question asking respondents whether they believe Obama's race would make a difference in the 2008 election, we can see that over 50% of white respondents believed Obama's race would be of little consequence in the election, compared with approximately 36% of blacks. Finally, the data indicates a significant

divide among whites and blacks on our final measure of post-racialism—whether white and black values have become more similar over the last 10 years. 70% of whites answered in the affirmative for this question, compared to 55% of blacks. These descriptive statistics further demonstrate the previous arguments that racial attitudes among blacks and whites differ. Furthermore, these results also show whites are asserting more post racial attitudes than blacks.

While these descriptive statistics give us some indicator of the distribution of post-racial attitudes among Whites and Blacks, to examine them controlling for other variables known to influence racial attitudes, we turn now to our multivariate analyses.

### MULTIVARIATE MODELS

We ran three models predicting our measures of post-racial attitudes. Models I and III (examining beliefs about the persistence of discrimination, and about whites' and blacks' values becoming more similar, respectively) rely on ordered logistic regression, while Model II is a logistic regression predicting the likelihood that respondents believe Obama's race will not make a difference to voters during the 2008 election. Across the models, two sets of results are reported. The first column in each model reports the logistic coefficients with the standard errors in parenthesis and the second set of results reports the average change across the dependent variable, given a fixed change in the independent variable from its minimum to its maximum value, holding all other variables constant at their means (Long and Freese 2006).

The results reported throughout models I-III reveal that, controlling for the other variables in the model, Americans' racial identity consistently influences the extent to which they hold post-racial attitudes. Specifically, being white (rather than black) significantly and positively increased respondents' likelihood of believing discrimination was rare, that race would not make a difference in the 2008 presidential election, and that the values of whites and blacks have become more similar. These results indicate a clear division among blacks and whites in the extent to which they believe race to be a defining cleavage in American society, particularly in the extent to which they believe race to be a significant challenge blacks need overcome in seeking political office, education, housing, and employment. Whites further appear more likely to believe that black-white differences in values have declined in recent years. Thus, Whites believe William Wilson's (1978) assertions that class not race is the most significant division within America. If indeed class, not race is the defining cleavage in America, there must still be consideration of the fact that class issues are often tied to racial issues. Blacks today remain at a substantial disadvantage by most standard in-

TABLE 2: MULTIVARIATE MODELS EXAMINING POST-RACIAL ATTITUDES

	Model I: Ordered Logistic Regression: Discrimination is Rare		Model II: Logistic Regression: Obama's Race Won't Make a Difference		Model III: Ordered Logistic Regression: White and Black Values have become more similar	
	Coefficients (S.E.)	Min-Max	Coefficients (S.E.)	Min-Max	Coefficients (S.E.)	Min-Max
White	1.73(.110)**	.162	.786(.124)**	.191	1.16(.136)**	.158
Age	-.002(.002)	.019	.012(.003)**	.251	.001(.003)	.014
Education	-.064(.097)	.006	-.343(.114)**	-.084	.068(.127)	.008
Income	.041(.020)	.032	.032(.024)	.064	.014(.026)	.014
Party Attachment	-.028(.065)**	.055	-.046(.077)	-.023	-.012(.087)	.003
Ideology	-.143(.046)**	.056	-.087(.055)	-.086	.100(.058)	.052
Female	-.143(.090)	.014	.091(.104)	.022	.060(.115)	.008
Social Integration	.375(.132)**	.037	.382(.161)*	.093	.465(.160)**	.066
Black Favorability	-.081(.069)	.024	.034(.082)	.025	.327(.087)**	.141
Constant						
$\chi$	542.19**		103.84**		136.20**	
N	1786		1656		1681	

Note: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01. All p-values are based on two-tailed tests

dicators (Sears et al. 2000). Statistics show that compared with Whites, Blacks suffer disproportionately from unemployment, poverty, inferior educational opportunities, and poor health care (Shaw 1993). All of these are associated with class, but how can we separate class from race, when most class issues disproportionately affect one race over another? The situation of Blacks in America is complex, and there are no easy answers. With these consistent differences, it is no surprise that Blacks consistently perceive more discrimination and less equal opportunity than do Whites (Sears et al., 2000). Even when only considering issues of class, racial concerns still arise. What we may be seeing is that it is simply easier to take explicit racial concerns out of the equation, but due to the connectedness of racial and class issues in America, it becomes more and more difficult to escape cleavages based on race, even when only considering class.

In addition to racial and ethnic identity, social integration exerts a consistent and positive impact on all three measures of post-racialism. Contrary to our expectations, those with more diverse groups of friends less often express concern over discrimination. Initially, we reasoned those with diverse friends would perceive more discrimination from the experiences their friends would describe. However, we cannot conclude this as accurate. We found that views of discrimination do not increase because of an increase in a diverse group of friends. Furthermore, the results indicate that respondents who socialize with a more racially diverse group are more likely to believe that race will not make a difference for Obama in the 2008 election, and that the values of whites and blacks in America have become more similar. To further examine the impact of these social experiences on post-racial attitudes, the differences in the dependent variables among respondents with diverse and non-diverse social groups were examined (results reported in Table 3). Difference of means tests reveal significant variation among these groups in two out of the three variables (discrimination and black/white values).

TABLE 3: POST-RACIAL ATTITUDES BY SOCIAL GROUP DIVERSITY

	Average score of Discrimination Scale <sup>a</sup>	Obama's Race Won't Make a Difference (percent agreeing)	White and Black Values have become more similar (percent agreeing) <sup>a</sup>
Diverse Social Group	2.34	48%	71%
Non-Diverse Social Group	1.91	43%	59%

<sup>a</sup>Differences among respondents with racially diverse friends and those without are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

Differences in groups means calculated using Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. All p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

The results presented in the first three models also indicate that political orientations, namely party attachment and political ideology, impact attitudes about discrimination. Democrats and liberals are less likely to believe that discrimination is not a significant problem in the United States. However, these orientations show no significant impact on our other measures of post-racial attitudes. Several of the control variables also exert a significant impact on post-racial feelings among respondents. Age negatively impacts attitudes about the role of Obama's race in the 2008 election, and favorability towards blacks increases the likelihood that respondents believe that black and white values have become more similar. Finally, education negatively and significantly impacts the likelihood that respondents' believed Obama's race would make a difference in the 2008 election.

#### CONCLUSION

In 2008 it was realized that race relations in this country had improved, but had not moved toward the racial progression that was expected due to the candidacy and election of an African American for the office of President. The hope for this country was that it had moved on to become the racial melting pot in which everyone was seen as being equal and everyone could be afforded the same opportunity if they worked as hard as their racial counterpart.

However, what has been revealed in the research since Obama became president and even during his candidacy is that maybe our racial melting pot is not hot enough. Research reveals that as we move forward in this country and make strides toward racial solidarity, the old adages about race still linger in the hearts and minds of Americans across the country, both white and black.

Currently, there still continues to be marked differences between the opinions of Blacks and Whites. According to Hutchings and Valentino (2004) differences in opinion between Blacks and White are not small. In fact, differences of over 20% exist on policies, including nonracial ones (general government spending on social services, education, and assistance for the poor). Surveys show that Black Americans disagree with white Americans about whether the economic situation has improved for Blacks, whether there are more opportunities now, whether competition for jobs is fairly handled, and whether racism in this country has decreased (Shaw 1993). More recently we have observed a division in political attitudes among whites and Blacks in reference to the involvement of the government in the flooding of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and the views that then Senator Barack Obama's race would not be a factor in his candidacy for president. Similarly, we find that those who have a more diverse group of friends and those whose

social interactions are multicultural are less likely to exhibit racist attitudes toward his or her white or black counterparts. Finally, more whites think that they have more values in common with blacks than blacks believe they have in common with whites. However, values is a broad category so we are unable to draw specific conclusions from this comment other than to state that whites feel they share more similarities with Blacks than in the past.

Current events have demonstrated that racial prejudice and discrimination are not over. And, as the country continues on its path toward the equalization of all races in this country, it cannot afford to continue to think that the traditional ways of thinking about race will get them to the end of the road because ultimately, it will continue to lead to a dead end.

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## APPENDIX 1: VARIABLES &amp; MEASURES

**Dependent Variables:**

- **Discrimination Scale:** “How often do you think blacks are discriminated against when they[ Apply for a job/Try to rent an apartment or find a house to buy/Apply to a college or university/Eat at restaurants and shop in retail stores] – almost always, frequently, not too often, or hardly ever?” (1=Hardly ever or Not too often, 0=frequently or=Almost always)  
\*Responses summed to create a scale in which 4 indicates a post-racial response to all 4 questions.
- **Obama’s Race Won’t Make a Difference:** If Barack is the Democratic Party nominee for president, do you think his being African-American will help him, hurt him, or won’t it make a difference to voters? (1=Won’t make a difference, 0=Race will help or hurt him).
- **White and Black Values (past 10 years):** “Now thinking about people’s VALUES. By values I mean things that people view as important, or their general way of thinking. First, in the last ten years do you think the values held by black people and the values held by white people have become more similar or more different?” (1=More similar, 0=No change, -1=More different).

**Independent Variables:**

- **White:** (1=White, 0=Black)
- **Age:** “What is your age” (years)
- **Education:** “What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?” (1=college graduate, 0= non-college graduate)
- **Income:** “Last year, that is in 2006, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.” (1= Less than \$10,000, 2= 10 to under \$20,000, 3= 20 to under \$30,000, 4= 30 to under \$40,000, 5= 40 to under \$50,000, 6= 50 to under \$75,000, 7= 75 to under \$100,000, 8=100 to under \$150,000, 9 = \$150,000 or more.”)
- **Party Attachment:** “In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?” (1=Republican, 2=Independent, 3=Democrat).
- **Ideology:** “In general, would you describe your political views as (1=Very conservative, 2=Conservative, 3=Moderate, 4=Liberal, 5=Very liberal).
- **Female:** (1=Female, 0=Male)
- **Social Integration:** “Do you yourself know any person [of another race] whom you consider a friend? “ (0= no friends of a different race, 1=friend of a different race)
- **Black Favorability:** “Is your overall opinion of Blacks very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?” (3= very favorable, 2=mostly favorable, 1=mostly unfavorable, 0 = very unfavorable).



# IDA B. WELLS AND THE FORCES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

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The work of Ida B. Wells is receiving increasingly close scrutiny today, since her diaries and other writings have been published, making an overall assessment of her accomplishments easier. We often think of her as someone who wrote extensively on lynching, and the republication of many of her pamphlets a decade or two ago has reminded us of how much courage, fortitude and perseverance it took to be able to author the works in the first place. But an important part of Wells's trajectory is her sheer staying power; she was on the same path, so to speak, from her teenage years, and she often felt the need to maintain a true course when others around her were giving way to temptation. It is easy to say that Wells believed in American democracy as a government for all; more remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that Wells also felt the need to be a tireless activist in the sense of being a community organizer. Indeed, it could be argued that the most rewarding part of Wells's lifework was that done in Chicago that resulted in community halls, lending libraries and cross-cultural effort lasting at least a generation or two. Here, as Wells recounts, for instance, in *Crusade for Justice*, she is bent on doing whatever the situation seems to require at whatever the cost.<sup>1</sup>

Although much of what Wells wrote—and a great deal of what she accomplished—was in the direction of a general amelioration of conditions for the Black population, Wells had a special interest in one issue, and this issue recurs again and again both in her writings and in her work. Wells's general tone might be thought to be somewhat feminist (or “womanist” in today's terminology) but she achieves what she does for the Black population at least in part by striking a courageous note in favor of young Black men wherever she is able.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Wells strikes a grand note for democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, ed. Alfreda Duster, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Wells's body of work is available as a volume in the Schomburg series, *Collected Works of Ida B. Wells*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Some of what she did fulfills, in a sense, the desiderata set forth by David Walker in his *Appeal*.

## I

If the forces at work in America after the Civil War and throughout Reconstruction could be deemed to be such as to have been deleterious to the health of the young Black male, Wells was more than willing to take a stand to do something about the situation. Wells knew that racism was largely responsible for the attempts to pin charges of rape, or other crimes, on Black men in order—in the eyes of whites—to justify lynching, but she also knew that, in the cities, many Black men did not have enough to do. She was particularly concerned about those who might have recently come from the South and gone to the city, where they might become engaged in less than productive behavior.

As was customary with Ida, she took matters directly into her own hands. In *Crusade*, Wells tells about her work with men on the street in Chicago, and her efforts to teach them a better way of life than what she perceived as constant homelessness and drunkenness:

Very shortly we added a men's lodging house upstairs [at the Negro Fellowship League] where men could get a bed for fifteen cents and a place partitioned off for twenty-five cents. It was the first venture of the kind on State Street and very liberally patronized. At the end of our first year we had a registration average of forty or fifty persons a day who came in to read or play checkers or to hunt jobs.<sup>3</sup>

This sort of activity was a regular feature of Wells's work, added to her writing; she knew that voting could not be promoted without better conditions for all. In addition to forming some of her own social sites, including the use of local buildings and organizational structures, Wells was also involved in a noteworthy activity for a woman of color of her time—work with Jane Addams and the other residents of Hull House. That this happened at all is a remarkable testament to the strength of will of all of the parties, and from a philosophical perspective is indicative of the extent to which Deweyan educational thought had begun to take hold in Chicago. (In itself, this does, of course, represent a democratic stripe of social activity.) During this era of nearly complete segregation, a few Chicagoans were willing to meet to try to forge new movements toward at least minimal integration. Addams herself was very much of the mind that genuine pragmatism required new understandings of the roles played by day to day interaction. Addams and Wells together worked at a level that was more than simply a religious or pragmatic understanding—their

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<sup>3</sup> Wells, *Crusade*, p. 306.

goal was to leave a legacy that would allow the poverty-stricken to help themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Wells felt strongly about these issues because what she had seen in the South—and what she reported in her anti-lynching writings—convinced her that Black men were particularly vulnerable to legal charges, and that anything that could be done to better the situation constituted important work. In addition to her special concerns, Wells had an overall prompting about the forces of justice: both her “Southern Horrors” and “Red Record” indicate that the additional problem of the sexual abuse of Black women was seldom addressed. Indeed, it might be said with some justification that what drove Wells was the notion that entire segments of the population were either disenfranchised, or capable of voting but simply not having the requisite social pull to make sure that what transpired at the ballot box resulted in real change.<sup>5</sup>

The impetus behind Wells’s lifelong accomplishments is, in a sense, perhaps more startling than some of the accomplishments themselves. At a time in America when most young women, Black or white, could scarcely think beyond marriage and motherhood as a goal—and “goal” may be an inappropriate word, since these were, at the time, life-defining events—Wells had other plans. Her early diaries, recently published, depict an eighteen-year-old adolescent filled with a sprightly sense of self and determined to do differently.<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, these diaries indicate a desire never to marry (spelled out in full) alongside a desire to try to help her race. Still more remarkably, Wells, at an early age, felt no hesitation in castigating members of her race for their failure to act against what she perceived as the manifest injustices perpetrated by whites, and she was especially stringent in her comments against senior male Blacks in positions of power within the Black community. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that Wells saw democracy as not only the idealized driver of American society but, perhaps more important, as the hoped-for catalyst of Black society—and she was just as hard on her own community in her diaries as she is on the larger community surrounding it.

As Wells matured and traveled throughout the United States and abroad, she has many more opportunities to take action on behalf of the impoverished and to agitate for change. The older, experienced Wells who works with Addams and others in Chicago is simply another version of the young Wells of Memphis—each is determined to try to make the changes that would allow for a fuller participation of Blacks in American

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<sup>4</sup> Jane Addams, “The Public School and the Immigrant Child,” in *The Jane Addams Reader*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, New York: Basic Books, 2002, pp. 235-250.

<sup>5</sup> See various works cited in fn. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ida B. Wells, *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells*, ed. Miriam DeCosta-Willis, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995,

life. That participation does not simply mean voting or the standard activities of citizenship (in Illinois, there were already a few Black legislators). It means meaningful participation in school life, church and home and family. This can only be accomplished through a strengthening of mind and will.

One might inquire as to what it was that gave the special focus to Wells's work—before a certain sequence of events she was simply a strong-minded and unconventional young Black woman. After the sequence, she became an intensely driven activist, and one who knew precisely what she wanted to do, and was willing to do whatever was necessary to accomplish her goals. As Wells writes in *Crusade*, “. . .there came the lynching in Memphis which changed the whole course of my life.”<sup>7</sup> When Wells suffered reprisals for having written not only against lynching, but against the constant blaming of young Black men for sexual crimes, she understood that she needed to take further action. Her newspaper office was burned down; fortunately, she was not in Memphis at the time. In addition to editorializing against lynching, Wells had taken the unusual, courageous and probably foolhardy step of mentioning that many of the alleged sex crimes were probably due to the existence of consensual relationships, at least some of which were initiated by young white women. She must have known that she would pay a heavy price for bringing this topic up in a newspaper, and she did.

The thread that ties together the Wells of the early years with the later Wells is that same thread of courage, lack of concern for opinion, and plain fortitude that shows up in nearly all activists of all stripes. Wells possessed these traits in abundance, and we can do little more than wonder at the interesting mix of intellectual ability, activist skill, and compassion for others that drove much of the effort in Wells's life. But perhaps most noteworthy is her sense that American democracy, during her time, had not fulfilled its promise.

## II

In her diaries, edited by Miriam DeCosta-Willis, Wells is more than eager to share the notion that defying convention, refusing to attend parties and get-togethers (except on the rare occasion), and taking a stand against compulsory marriage and motherhood are all important components of her personal make-up. Even here, in these comparatively unguarded comments that are obviously intended only for her own personal reflection, it is clear that a nascent notion of democracy is at work—Wells is thinking of herself as an American citizen of the nineteenth

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<sup>7</sup> Wells, *Crusade*, p. 47.



century, and part of the statement that she is making is that, as a citizen, she would like to be able to make her own decisions about a number of issues. In fact, we might go so far as to claim that a concept later articulated by Wells with respect to lynching, establishing public spaces for the Black population, and so forth is at work here—Wells not only believes in democracy in the largest possible sense, but also believes that democracy cannot be established or instantiated without effort. In a sense her ideal encompasses a bit of that of the Aristotelian magnanimous personality.

Wells's beginning efforts in her political work are mainly of a piece—seemingly unbound by tradition, and unafraid of adverse commentary. Wells does remarkable things. At a time when many young women of any color would be fearful of undertaking a long trip unaccompanied, Wells takes a train through Colorado and to California (taking notes on the way), and teaches for a brief period in Visalia, California, to the children of the very small Black population there.<sup>8</sup> We are struck by the sheer statistical rarity of her accomplishments, and surprised again that, apparently, she herself does not find them so worthy of comment.

In examining Wells's early life, it is apparent that, in a sense, she used herself as an exemplar of that force of democratization that she espoused. In other words, if democratic procedures ideally enable all to participate—as the Founders had envisioned for at least the propertied white males—Wells was one of the first participants in many ventures to be simultaneously Black and female. Of her, it may truly be said, that Anna Julia Cooper's remark "When and where I enter, the whole race enters with me," applies.<sup>9</sup> What Wells is guessing is that the very acts that she so despises—the lynchings, blaming of Blacks for various crimes, and general acts of disrespect—will fall dramatically if enough Black citizens are enfranchised. So writings such as "Southern Horrors" are wake-up calls to everyone, Black and white alike, that at least one individual has noticed what is going on and is willing to testify to it, while her later works of community organization (which we have mentioned at an earlier point) are the very kinds of hands-on activities that are needed to keep the forces of access to the ballot box moving.

It might be argued that almost anyone could have tried to do what Wells did, but the truth is that very few were courageous enough to make the effort. In other words, trying to create a more open society was so difficult—and time-consuming and frustrating—that Wells was during

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<sup>8</sup> Wells, *Memphis*, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> This phrase, widely cited in a number of places, is the title of Paula Giddings's well-known work on the history of Black women in America. (Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, New York: Morrow, 1983.)

her early years pretty much alone in what she set out to do. What better way to demonstrate, for example, that there should be no barriers to a young Black woman traveling by herself than to set out on such a journey? How better to demonstrate that a young woman need not marry than to forswear marriage for years? (To be fair, Wells did eventually marry.)

As the editor of Wells's Memphis diaries writes, Wells was a complex person who not only found others difficult, but who also struggled to come to terms with what she knew about herself. Reading her work can sometimes be perplexing since her take on what was needed to achieve social justice was unremitting, and her personal writings are often painful and confusing to peruse. DeCosta-Willis notes:

The summer of 1886 is also a time for reflection and deep introspection, a time for confronting, openly and honestly, the complex woman whom she has become. Although Wells writes enthusiastically about "enjoying existence," she often feels lonely and isolated from others. . . . [S]he describes her longing for the "might have been" (the education she did not complete), [and] her feelings of inadequacy. . . .<sup>10</sup>

Wells notices that she seems a great deal more driven than many of those around her, and although she often faults others—she expresses frequent frustration at the acquiescence of many Blacks to their lot—she also finds fault with herself. To give Wells credit, she seems to know that if she is to achieve what she wants, which is a greater measure of justice for the Black population, she must work on herself as well as everyone around her. It is an irony that, in the attempt to try to make America more democratic so that another young Black woman or man can have some of the same opportunities that she has pushed herself to create, she also has to move back, as it were, and ask herself if, in creating these opportunities, she has sometimes gone too far. The relentless pursuit of a goal that characterizes Wells's life leads to these reflections.

As soon as Wells began to write for publication—and this was at an early point, when she was in her early twenties and had the equivalent of what today would be considered a secondary school education—she started to publish pieces that castigated her fellow citizens of color for their failure to live up to larger expectations and, again, to instantiate a set of democratic practices, even with respect to their own people. In an early article titled "Functions of Leadership," Wells is explicit about what she views as the failures of leaders around her:

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<sup>10</sup> Wells, *Memphis*, p. 72.

I look around among those I know, and read up the histories of those I do not know, and it seems to me the interest ceases after self has been provided for. . . . I would like very much for [the author of a letter to the editor of the Cleveland *Plaindealer*] to tell me what material benefit is a “leader” if he does not, to some extent, devote his time, talent and wealth to the alleviation of the poverty and misery, and elevation of his people?<sup>11</sup>

Once again, Wells took a chance in publishing this material, intended for a Black audience, in a local Black church venue in Memphis, *The Living Way*. One might be tempted to say that Wells gives new meaning to the phrase “democratic voice” when she, as a young woman and a comparatively unknown person in her community, attempts to castigate others who are very much her senior and have much more prestige and power. Although contemporary political philosophy, in a Rawlsian vein, invites us to think of a society in which we do not originally know our place, and then to hypothesize about its requirements, few would imagine themselves as a young woman of color in a society that had only recently abolished slavery. And yet, if one were to hypothesize along these lines, the activity level of someone like Ida would be a goal at which to aim.

### III

It might prove instructive to compare Wells’s work and thought to that of another prominent nineteenth-century Black thinker, Anna Julia Cooper. Although there is no question that Cooper’s work was progressive, it is probably a mistake to think of Cooper as someone who outshines Wells, or who puts Wells in her shadow. Cooper wrote on a number of topics, and is the author of essays such as “What We are Worth,” and “Woman vs. the Indian,” which at least some contemporary authors find radical.<sup>12</sup> But there is a strain in Cooper that is elitist, class-bound, and not always friendly to the poverty-stricken Black woman who, at least toward the end of the century, was most likely to be a sharecropper in the deep South. Cooper frequently writes as if most of her audience (and statistically speaking, this may well have been the case) were upper-middle class Blacks whose main concern was which school their daughter could attend, and whether she could receive an education on a par with that of the better-off young Black men of her time. In the essays to be found in *A Voice From the South*, she uses such

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>12</sup> Vivian May is one of these. See her *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: a Critical Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2007.

phrases as “I ask the men and women. . .that they give the girls a chance!” and “The three R’s, a little music and a good deal of dancing. . .are quite enough generally to render charming any woman. . . .”<sup>13</sup> These comments were made at a time when, as Cooper well knew, most young Black women were not able to go to school at all.

Wells experienced no such influence of class. Because of the fact that Wells came from a background that was itself a poverty-stricken one, Wells had no difficulty identifying with sharecroppers, small-time farmers or laborers. Indeed, Wells had herself experienced interrupted schooling when she cared for her younger brothers and sisters for several years after the death of her parents, and slavery was still in force at the time that Wells was born. An idea of democracy, then, can be instantiated in many ways—or one can attempt to do work toward its instantiation following a variety of paths. Anna Julia Cooper took the unusual route of recommending for young Black women what many of the white suffragists were attempting to recommend for young white women insofar as formal education was concerned; what she had in mind was a curriculum that paralleled that available to young men (to be sure, not many young Black men did themselves have access to such levels of education, although a few did). Wells, however, took a different path. She tried to work with members of the community who, statistically speaking, represented the bulk of the group, and she tried to assist them in obtaining the services, goods, and education that they could reasonably expect to achieve at that time. Ironically, in some circles Cooper’s name presently has greater resonance—but that may well be because we have difficulty understanding what America was like in the nineteenth century. It is Wells’s work, after all, that represents the Deweyan force of democratization.

In addition to her writings on lynching and her work in Chicago, Ida B. Wells also authored some other material that sheds light on the complexity of her thought. In a piece titled “Iola on Discrimination,” she wrote: “Consciously and unconsciously we do as much to widen the breach already existing and to keep prejudice alive as the other race.”<sup>14</sup> What Wells meant was that every time members of the Black population requested special accommodation—even if it was largely to avoid harassment from the white population—they fed into the underlying belief systems, and forwarded ideas that meant, ultimately, further lack of progress. Wells had noticed that this sort of mindset took place in Visalia, where the small Black population itself was at least partly responsible for

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<sup>13</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 72, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Wells, *Memphis*, p. 187.

the separate school, and she saw it under many other sets of circumstances.

Clearly, when comparing Wells to Cooper, or examining Wells's overall work with an eye toward her main goal, one can see that Wells always championed the downtrodden and, indeed, often failed to identify with the small group of better-off Blacks. If democratization as a process means that more and more individuals are eventually enfranchised, Wells was able to retain this as a goal, and she did not lose sight of its importance. At a time when Blacks in the North could vote—and many did—Wells would not have been particularly interested in the questions of education and class posed by Cooper, since it is clear that they had little to do with the reality of life for many Blacks throughout the nation. Thus it is paradoxical that Cooper has been seen by some as more of a champion of her people than Wells, because although both women wrote extensively, much of Cooper's writing does not really address the needs of the vast majority of Blacks. The children of Visalia were in some sense lucky to attend school at all—and that is a fact of which Ida B. Wells would not have been unaware.

In sum, Wells envisaged an America where the changes wrought by the Civil War and the various constitutional amendments that accompanied it genuinely amounted to something, and one of her primary concerns had to do with voting and civil rights for the Black populace. Although Wells was well aware of the Jim Crow laws, such as poll taxes, that prevented Blacks from voting in the South, her concerns had to do with those who could vote in the North, and whether or not they were aware of their rights and were able to exercise them. In this, Wells showed herself to be an ardent Constitutionalist, and, as we have said, a virtuous spirit whose tireless work for others brings to mind many of the characterizations of the ancients about the best sorts of personalities. Insofar as young women were concerned, Wells was very much ahead of her time, because although she was not primarily interested in women's suffrage (perceived as a movement led largely by whites), she was aware of the strains placed on young women by the concerns of marriage and childbearing. Finally, in the spirit of both Addams and Dewey, Wells was community-oriented, and determined to make good on the various pledges that might be thought to spring from any community organization—to help others, render assistance, make stress more tolerable, and so forth. As has been argued here, this determination showed up early in Wells, and can be seen throughout her writings in the newly-published and edited *Memphis Diary*.<sup>15</sup> It is, of course, the case that Wells remains well-known for her strong writings against lynching, and it was the fear

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<sup>15</sup> At times the reader is tempted to take issue with Wells, who seems almost too outspoken for her own good.

of lynching and various physical attacks that kept many Blacks from using the few rights that they did have, meager though they might have been at that time. Ida B. Wells tried to make a decided change in these matters.

#### IV

I have been arguing that Ida B. Wells was a sharp observer of what was constitutive of democracy in her time, and that she took a special effort to try to extend that democracy to the Black population. In addition, I have argued that, more than for most, this tendency to respond to those left out of the various forms of social activity and greatly in need was an intrinsic part of her personality that manifested itself at an early point, as is shown in the diaries she wrote from the age of eighteen on. Finally, and especially pertinent from the standpoint of philosophy, I have argued that Wells's work embodied the spirit of both Addams and Dewey, and that it was an attempt to give Black voice to that spirit.

When we remember the various hands-on tasks accomplished by Jane Addams, and for which she is famous, we can see still another version of that spirit in Ida. Ironically, Ida disliked teaching, probably because she was all too aware of the defects of classroom instruction as pointed out by Dewey in *The School and Society*. We can recall the passages in which Dewey displayed bewilderment at the students sitting in rows of desks; this same feature is most likely what drove Ida out of the classroom. But what she did outside of her teaching activities is what she is most noted for, and her attempts not only to write effectively but to organize the lives of young men in particular, especially in Chicago, were quite remarkable. Those who worked with Addams remember her lack of condescension; Ida B. Wells was another such person.<sup>16</sup> We can guess that commentary made about her work after her life had ended would be similar to rather glowing commentary left about Addams.

Why be concerned about the work of Ida B. Wells today? After all, it could be argued, the goals for which she worked were met years ago, and she is simply too far back in time for her trajectory to speak to us now. Although it is accurate to say that the bulk of what Ida worked for was accomplished in the 1960's—the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, to name two pieces of legislation that are related to her work—it is more the spirit of what Ida did that is relevant. Ida B. Wells was an unstoppable force, and she refused to quit even when she was presented with what would appear to an outside as overwhelming obstacles. Her newspaper office was burned down shortly after she wrote the

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<sup>16</sup> Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Framework*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

editorial that blamed many Black/white relationships on white women, but Wells kept on working, although she moved to the East Coast and then to Chicago. Many of her efforts in Chicago did not at first bear fruit, and her tendency to be a “do-gooder,” particularly where individuals’ daily lives were concerned, led to ridicule and condemnation in many instances. We can only hazard a guess, for example, as to how many young Black men did not want to be saved from the pool hall, and would have preferred to be left to their own devices.

But the beliefs that led to her early writings, such as “Iola on Discrimination,” held in good stead throughout her life, and she never wavered from them. For Wells, the forces of democratization could not be tapped or put into place unless enormous effort was made, and she was willing to make the effort. Time spent away from the pool hall might be spent reading or leafletting—Wells had plans for the young individuals whose lives she hoped to alter. She knew that only a committed and determined citizenry could make a difference at the ballot box, even when voting became the norm. Those democratic ideals are more than useful to us today.





# THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF CHAMORRO CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN GUAM, U.S.A.

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The island of Guam shares with many Pacific islands, and other areas with indigenous people, a history of foreign encroachment, population devastation and renewal as well as political, economic, and cultural transformations in the context of the development of the capitalist global economy in the modern-world system (e.g. Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Sanchez 1988; Kame'eleihiwa 1992; Rogers 1995; Trask 1999; Wallerstein 2004). Guam is about 209 square miles, 33 miles long, and 12 miles at its widest point (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). The nearness of Asia gives this American territory a strong Eastern influence through the people and products that make their way to this small, but geopolitically important location almost eight hours from Hawaii and three hours from the Philippines by air travel. Surviving near annihilation under Spanish rule, brutal Japanese occupation during World War II, and American liberation that further devastated then modernized the island, the Chamorro people (the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the island who also identify as Guamanian)<sup>1</sup> have been largely patriotic to the United States since before the United States Congress passed the Organic Act in 1950, which granted island residents American citizenship. The largest and most southern of the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific Ocean, Guam serves as the commercial and military hub of Micronesia today, one of three cultural regions along with Polynesia and Melanesia that comprise Oceania (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Rogers 1995; Warheit 2010).

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Chamorros lost their majority status in the island, as non-Chamorros residents began to outnumber Chamorros. Moreover, a large diaspora, outnumbering Chamorros in Guam, lives in the United States mainland today (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012b). Under American rule, immigration from Micronesia and Asia has brought together people from many diverse cultures that now make their home in Guam. Some arrive with financial resources, American cultural capital—including English skills and higher education; others arrive with very little, including limited or no English

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clarity, “Guamanian” will be used in this paper to refer to residents of Guam, while “Chamorro” will be used to refer to descendants of the indigenous island people.

skills. In addition to the impact on the local infrastructure and economy, this influx of peoples brings multiple cultural orientations simultaneously into the island community. A major military build-up has begun to accommodate the eventual removal of United States military troops from Okinawa (Conerly 2014). While Chamorros are generally supportive of United States military needs, many are concerned about the ramifications of these activities to the indigenous culture and people (Harden 2010; Warheit 2010; Weaver 2010a,b). Outside of Guam and some United States military families, most Americans continue to be unaware of this homeland of the Chamorro people due to its small size and relative isolation up until World War II. Since then, Guam has become an increasingly important United States military strategic location that provides access to Asia, and is often referred to as “the tip of the spear” (Sanchez 1988; Department of Interior 2014). United States foreign policy, including the current development of Guam as a forward base in the Pacific, greatly impacts island residents and constrains efforts toward Chamorro self-determination and cultural preservation. This article provides a case study of Guam through a broad survey of historical influences on the indigenous Chamorro culture, a description of the island’s contemporary multicultural diversity, and a consideration of some of the current geopolitical and socioeconomic challenges to Chamorro culture in the place “where America’s day begins.”<sup>2</sup>

### HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON CHAMORRO CULTURE IN GUAM<sup>3</sup>

#### *Indigenous Chamorros*

Ancient Chamorros, the indigenous people of Guam, are believed to be descended from seafaring people from Southeast Asia who migrated to the islands perhaps as far back as 1500 B.C. In the pre-European contact era, the local economy was self-sustaining through farming and fishing, and Chamorros lived abundantly off the land and sea. Ancient Chamorros practiced communal systems of land tenure, worshiped the spirits of their ancestors, and revered the natural environment. Ancient Chamorro society was matrilineal, with kinship ties and land ownership traced through women, and afforded women a prominent role in their families and communities. Indigenous women were attributed with protecting the culture, perpetuating the language, and preserving a Chamorro identity through the centuries (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995; Political Status Education Coordinating Commission [PSECC] 1996).

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<sup>2</sup> Refers to Guam’s location as the most western point of the United States, situated on the western side of the International Date Line.

<sup>3</sup> Detailed histories of Guam include: Thompson 1947; Carrano and Sanchez 1964; Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995.

The basic unit of social organization was families or clans. Islanders lived in villages, several of which constituted a district. Each district was administered by a council of village leaders. Within a gendered division of labor, women played a dominant role in the home, and high-ranking women participated in governing district councils. Thus, high-ranking women wielded power and were treated with deference and respect (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995; PSECC 1996).

Central to Chamorro culture during this era was a set of values that constituted *inafa'maolek*, a way of living that continues to inform contemporary Chamorro culture (Sanchez 1988; PSECC 1996; *Pacific Daily News* December 25, 2011). Integral to *inafa'maolek* is the belief that people need to be good to each other to live happily and in harmony. Therefore, showing respect to each other, elders, and leaders is highly valued, along with respect for ancestors and nature. Chamorros are expected to be generous with each other and visitors, and to provide assistance, or *chenchule'*, during celebrations and times of crises (Sanchez 1988). To be greedy is considered to be *tai mahmah'lao*, or without shame, and indicates a poor upbringing (PSECC 1996). *Kostumbren Chamorro* (Chamorro cultural practices) permitted Chamorros in the Mariana Islands to live in relative harmony. The occasional clan or village conflict that led to violence ended after the loss of just a few fighters (Carrano and Sanchez 1965).

### *Spanish Influence*

More than 200 years before European landings in the better known Polynesian Islands, such as the Hawaiian Islands, Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed in Guam in 1521. The arrival of Magellan marked the first European encounter with the Pacific Islands, followed by foreign domination in every island society in Oceania over the next several centuries. Cultural conflict marked encounters between Westerners and Pacific Islanders. For example, as part of *inafa'maolek* and *chenchule'*, Chamorros shared food and possessions freely, and expected the same from visitors. When Chamorros helped themselves to pieces of iron and a row boat from Magellan's ship, perhaps perceived as reciprocity by the islanders who provided abundantly for the sickly crew upon their arrival, an angry Magellan burned many huts and killed several men. Afterwards, Magellan named the Mariana Islands, *Islas de los Ladrones*, Islands of Thieves (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995).

Guam endured over 300 years of Spanish rule from 1565 to 1898 (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Rogers 1995). As the largest of the Mariana Islands chain, Guam was the center of Spanish colonization in the Pacific. More than a century would pass after laying claim to Guam before

Spanish administrators began to actively colonize the island (Sanchez 1988). Lying along the trade route between Mexico and the Philippines, the island initially was a source of provisions for occasional Spanish traders, and then later European whalers and other ships passing through the Pacific Ocean (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Rogers 1995). Occasionally, Carolinians, another Micronesian people, also visited Guam's shores for trade, as they did in the pre-contact era. Nonetheless, these were rare events and Guam remained relatively isolated under Spanish rule.

Early Spanish and other European visitors to the island provided accounts of early Chamorros. The portrayal of the indigenous people varied, depending on the observers and the type of relationship they entered into with Chamorros. Some witnesses described them as sociable, proud, clever, loving, hardworking, playful, and peaceful, with strong physiques and a pleasing appearance (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Thompson in Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995). They were observed to raise their children gently—even scolding with loving words, to care for sick family members and neighbors, and to communally build and repair homes. Chamorros enjoyed gathering in their villages for celebrations and feasts, and welcomed those from other villages. Other traders, who believed themselves stuck with the short end of a deal, described them as deceitful. When angered, Chamorros could become vengeful and willing to fight.

The Spanish influence on the Chamorro people was pervasive. The indigenous people learned the Spanish language and incorporated Spanish foods and customs into the Chamorro culture. Another major influence was the introduction of Roman Catholicism (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995; PSECC 1996). In the age of European exploration, missionaries frequently traveled to unknown lands to convert people to Christianity. In Guam, Jesuit priests, under the leadership of Padre San Vitores, started the first permanent mission in 1668. As efforts increased to convert Chamorros to Christianity and to change more of their customs, Chamorros rebelled. After several decades of fighting to remove the Spanish from Guam, and even longer exposure to Western diseases, Chamorros, especially the men, were nearly annihilated by the end of the seventeenth century. A people of over 50,000 earlier in the century had been reduced to less than 4,000 by 1700 (Carrano and Sanchez 1965; Sanchez 1988).

The Catholic Church gained a prominent role in the religious and cultural practices of Chamorros, providing opportunities for education, language preservation, social cohesion, and the perpetuation of core Chamorro values; an influence which continues today (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995). Although limiting the pastoral participation of women,

the Church promoted family and culture, including the Chamorro language, which may explain its continued influence. Despite not being able to serve as priests, women played prominent leadership roles in church organizations and activities.

During the Spanish era, island women were credited with the preservation of the Chamorro culture and language. High levels of intermarriage with Spaniards, Filipinos, and Mexicans after the Chamorro-Spanish wars allowed the Chamorro population to increase overtime and preserve a Chamorro identity—a central component of cultural preservation. Changes to Chamorro culture continued, such as replacing the matrilineal system with the practice of male primogeniture inheritance and assigning children the last names of their fathers. Nonetheless, women remained the primary influence in the home, where the Chamorro language continued to be spoken. Guam's relative isolation from the rest of the world slowed island development, and likely facilitated the preservation of Chamorro culture in the midst of the turbulent transformation to Catholicism and adaptation to Spanish rule. Once the Spanish won the religious battle, Chamorros were generally free to go about their lives of raising their families and tending to their farms (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995).

### *American Influence*

At the end of the Spanish-American War in the late nineteenth century, the possession of Guam was peacefully passed to the United States in the Treaty of Paris of 1898. This meant another culture shock to islanders. United States Naval administrations implemented the Americanization and modernization of the island. English replaced Spanish as the language for official business and education, and improvements were made in healthcare, sanitation, education, and criminal justice (Carrano and Sanchez 1965). Since Guam was not an open port, foreign influence was limited (Rogers 1995). The early years of American rule were a time of cultural adaptation and relative isolation from the larger world community.

Guam's isolation ended with the onset of World War II. Japanese forces in the Pacific invaded Guam on December 8, 1941, and a brutal Japanese occupation ensued for almost three years. In addition to forcing the Japanese language and mandatory labor on the island's residents, the Japanese military established a savage police force whose abusive practices inflicted mental and physical harm, including the wanton murder of islanders, especially near the end of the occupation (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995). A devastating invasion by American forces on July 21, 1944, removed the Japanese military and led to the eventual end of the war in the Pacific region. To support the end of the war, the United States Na-

val Administration on Guam built up the island infrastructure and initiated a new era in Guam.

Major changes occurred in a short time period. The post-war modern age brought in aviation and regular mail service to the island, and the agrarian sustenance economy transformed into a wage economy almost overnight, with office jobs becoming more available and desirable. In island politics, Guam's residents elected thirty-six members to the First Guam Congress in 1946, including Rose T. Aguigui, a Merizo Elementary School teacher (Sanchez 1988). Two years later, she was joined by Mariana L.G. Lujan, another educator, in the Second Guam Congress. By 1950, after several petitions, Guamanians were granted American citizenship, and limited self-governance under the administration of the United States Department of the Interior. The long-standing requirement for a security clearance to travel to Guam was lifted in 1962 by Executive Order in the Kennedy Administration, which opened the island to visitors and business investors. Responding to the repeated requests of Chamorro leaders, the United States permitted the first locally elected governor in 1970; however the island government continued to exercise limited power (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995).

The United States federal government and Japanese tourism and business investors boosted the island economy throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Business activity increased through the entrepreneurial activities of Chamorros, Americans, and Japanese. This fueled an explosion in growth and development, peaking in the late 1980s, followed by a worldwide recession in the early 1990s, and recurring fiscal problems into the new century influenced in part by global and American economic conditions. These dynamics transformed island life in one generation from predominantly rural villages with a strong bartering system into a cash-oriented and debt-burdened society with a strong island culture (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995).

### *Politics and Cultural Preservation*

Chamorros have continually requested an improvement in their political relationship with the United States throughout American rule, desiring increased self-governance and an equal role in determining the future of the island (Sanchez 1988; Rogers 1995). In 1960, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People (Resolution 1514 [XV]) that stated that all people and all nations have the equal right to self-determination. Guam is one of sixteen non self-governing territories remaining on the United Nations list, and thus remains a colony, subject to the wishes of the United States (Tolentino 2009b). Consequently, there is a sense among many Chamorros that Guamanians are second-class

American citizens, since they don't have an equal voice in the American polity compared to state governments or even compared to other Micronesian islands (Warheit 2010; Harden 2011).

During the era of liberation movements in the United States in the 1970s, Chamorro rights activists expressed their concern about the oppression of Chamorro culture and loss of political power and land (Rogers 1995; Tolentino 2009a). In the 1980s, activists succeeded in bringing the question of Guam's political status to the attention of Chamorro residents. Starting in 1988, island leaders submitted the Guam Commonwealth Act to Congress multiple times, and ended up being denied each time. Ironically, an earlier 1975 United States federal inter-agency task force report recommended this political status for the island, which the Department of Interior kept hidden from island leaders (Willens and Balandorf 2008). However, several issues, such as control of the land, immigration, and military expansion, blocked progress in negotiations on commonwealth status, as did federal concerns over allowing only Chamorros to vote on the island's political status (Quimby 2009). For Chamorros, this was an obvious affront to their right to self-determination, as articulated by the 1960 United Nations resolution on decolonization, in order to protect United States military interests in the region. Federal authority in Guam's political aspirations is a clear indicator of the island's continued colonial status.

Control of land is another contentious issue that continually resurfaces in politics, especially since the federal government controls almost a third of the land (Warheit 2010; Weaver 2010a,b). Moreover, as a United States territory whose value is in national defense, the military can claim additional land in the interests of national security through eminent domain. Today, this is one of many concerns as the residents of Guam, and Chamorros in particular, undergo a United States military build-up. Contemporary geopolitics suggests that the needs of the United States military will continue to dictate the outcome of land disputes, and dominate the outcome of any renegotiation in political status.

Chamorros recognize that in addition to land, language provides a strong foundation for cultural preservation (Perez 2005). Yet, English replaced Chamorro as the main language in the majority of island homes by 1970 (Rogers 1995). Taking steps to counteract the decline of Chamorro language usage, the Government of Guam (GovGuam) made both English and Chamorro the official languages of the island in 1972. Further, a Chamorro language and cultural studies program was introduced into the public education system in the 1970s, championed by Dr. Katherine B. Aguon, Guam's first Chamorro woman to earn a Ph.D. and serve as director of education and vice-speaker of the Guam Legislature (Sanchez 1988; "GovGuam News" 2007). Yet only 43 percent of

Chamorros, five years of age and older indicate in the 2010 Census that they speak Chamorro in the home (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a). Consequently, recent legislation requires the extension of public school education in Chamorro studies through the tenth grade by the 2014-2015 academic year (Public Law 31-45, Substitute Bill 95-31).

#### CONTEMPORARY MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY

From the pre-World War II period to the end of the twentieth century, Guam's population grew exponentially. The Chamorro population increased over 300 percent, from about 20,000 to over 65,000 (Chamorros alone and more than one race). In the same period, the total Guam population grew seven-fold from over 22,000 to almost 155,000 people. Consequently, by 1980 Chamorros no longer represented the majority of island residents, but continued to be the largest ethno-racial group. The breakdown of the population by Chamorros and non-Chamorros from 1940-2010 is provided in the following table.

TABLE 1. POPULATION DISTRIBUTIONS FOR GUAM FROM 1940-2010

	Chamorros (alone or in combo)	Total Population
1940	20,177 (91%)	22,290
1960	34,762 (52%)	67,044
1970*	47,598 (56%)	84,996
1980	47,845 (45%)	105,979
1990	57,648 (43%)	133,154
2000**	65,243 (42%)	154,805
2010***	69,098 (43%)	159,358

Source: Table 2: Population of Guam, 1940-1990 (Rogers 1995:273).

\* From Sanchez 1988:369. \*\* From Table DP-01 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics for Guam (Guam Department of Commerce 2002). Total represents 57,297 Chamorro alone and 7,946 Chamorro and other combinations. \*\*\* From Table GU8: Ethnic Origin or Race (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a). Total represents 59,381 Chamorros alone and 9,717 Chamorros and other combinations.

Asian immigrants, predominantly from the Philippines but also from Korea, China, and Japan, added to the island population throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Many arrived with families to pursue economic opportunities. Part of the growth in population was also due to the signing of the Compacts of Free Association between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshalls, and the Republic of Palau in 1986. The Compacts permitted residents of these island-nations free entry to Guam, and many immigrated with their families from these economically depressed island communities (Rogers 1995).



While Chamorros continue to have a significant island presence, the tremendous changes throughout the twentieth century have led to the development of a multicultural, ethnically diverse society. Among those who reported membership in a single group in the 2010 United States Census, the largest ethno-racial groups in the island population, in decreasing order, are Chamorros (59,381), Filipinos (41,944), and Whites (11,312) (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a). Other Pacific Islanders, predominantly Micronesians from Chuuk (11,230), Palau (2,563), and Pohnpei (2,248), collectively constitute a larger number than Whites; while other Asians—predominantly Koreans (3,437), Chinese (2,368), and Japanese (2,368)—are just slightly smaller in number. The following table shows the population distributions by major racial and ethnic groups.

TABLE 2: POPULATION DISTRIBUTIONS FOR MAJOR ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS, GUAM 2010

	Chamorros	Filipinos	Whites	Other Pacific Islanders	Other Asians
Total	59,381 (69,098 alone and in combo)	41,944	11,321	19,201	9,437
% of total population	37 (43)	26	7	12	6

Sources: Table GU8 Ethnic Origin or Race (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a).

Note: Total population is 159,358

One indicator of relative ethno-racial harmony in the island is the number of residents who identify as having more than one race. In the 2010 Census, 9 percent of Guamanians identify as having more than one race, compared to the national rate of just 3 percent (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a). Among this subpopulation, 65 percent identify as Chamorro and some other race, and over half identify as Asian and some other race; among Chamorros, the rate is 14 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). A final measure of the island's multiculturalism is language usage in the home. Among those five years of age and older, the majority of all ethno-racial groups, with the exception of Whites and Chamorros (45 percent), speak a language other than English in the home. Thus, Guam's ethno-racial diversity exists in a social context of multiculturalism, where Chamorro and American cultures are the predominant influences and Chamorros remain the largest ethno-racial group.

## CHALLENGES FACING CHAMORROS

In the twenty-first century, Chamorros face several challenges that are likely to influence the Chamorro way of life. These include continuing economic instability, the ramifications from immigration due to the Compacts of Free Association, and the United States military build-up. How these challenges are addressed may be critical for Chamorro cultural preservation.

*Economic Instability*

Many forces influence the economy of Guam, including macro factors—such as globalization, the strength of the American economy, and American foreign policy—and local factors, especially fiscal management practices and commitment to education quality. While island leaders have little control over macro factors, like the global recession of 2008 (International Monetary Fund 2009), there are issues that island leaders can address to reduce government debt and booster Guam's economy.

As a United States trust territory and strategic military location, Guam's economy has benefitted from infusions of federal monies and projects to maintain a level of military readiness. With most government revenue the result of federal aid and tourism industries (Rogers 1995; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009), GovGuam has been the largest employer of the civilian population in the modern era. Although the proportion of government has slightly declined in recent decades: In 1980, GovGuam employed 27 percent (9,056) of the civilian workforce (Rogers 1995); in the 2010 Census, this ratio dropped to 24 percent (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a).

In addition to employing a significant proportion of the island population, GovGuam has frequently been accused of living beyond its means. Many island residents have called for an end to chronic government overspending and increased efficiency in the management of resources (e.g. Limtiaco 2011a; *Pacific Daily News* July 26, 2011, January 29, 2014). For example, although the current administration claims to have fixed an over \$300 million deficit, budget problems were addressed with bond-borrowing, which becomes a burden for future generations (*Pacific Daily News* 2014a). In the meantime, island residents complain about critical shortages in the provision of public services, such as education, healthcare, and public safety, while payments to vendors and even government agencies are often delayed (Daleno 2014; *Pacific Daily News* 2014a,b). Despite these financial challenges, politicians recently passed pay raises for GovGuam employees during an election year; a political tactic used successfully by another administration in the 1980s (*Pacific Daily News* 2014b).

*Ethno-racial stratification in a dual labor market*

In addition to being perceived as a political bribe — a consequence of across-the-board raises— is an increase in inequality in an already bifurcated economy. The dual labor market divides Guam’s workers into the haves and have-nots, with primary sector workers earning good salaries with benefits, and workers in the secondary sector making low wages and struggling to make ends meet. Comparing socioeconomic outcomes across ethno-racial groups reveals an ethno-racial hierarchy of income and educational attainment. On average, Chamorros, Whites, and Filipinos experience higher levels of socioeconomic attainment, while Micronesians have the lowest levels. In the 2010 U.S. Census Guam Cross-Tabulations, the median household income in Guam is \$48,274. This increases to \$49,327 for Filipinos, \$50,362 for Chamorros alone, \$62,389 for Whites. All other major ethnoracial groups are below the median, and in decreasing order include other Asians (\$46,250), Koreans (\$34,955), other Pacific Islanders (\$32,994), and Chuukese (\$21,427).

Human capital models of income attainment generally apply to island patterns of socioeconomic integration: Higher education and English skills are correlated with higher income. Among those 18 years of age and older in the 2010 U.S. Census, 79 percent of Guamanians have high school degrees and 18 percent have a bachelor’s degree. Whites have the highest rate of educational attainment: 97 percent have a high school degree and 34 percent have a bachelor’s degree. Among Filipinos, 82 percent are high school graduates and 25 percent have a bachelor’s degree, while 75 percent of Chamorros are high school graduates and 11 percent have a bachelor’s degree. For Koreans and other Asians the comparable rates for a high school degree are 84 percent and 80 percent, respectively, and 20 percent and 25 percent for a bachelor’s degree. While the educational attainment rates for other Pacific Islanders drops to 69 percent for a high school degree and 5 percent for a bachelor’s degree, only 54 percent of Chuukese have a high school degree, and 2 percent have a bachelor’s degree.

The higher than average educational and income attainment rate of Whites is likely due to migration from the continental United States to pursue professional opportunities in the island economy. In addition, Whites constitute 6 percent of the GovGuam workforce and 18 percent of the local federal workforce, both of which provide on average higher pay than private sector jobs (Daleno 2014a). Although Chamorros have education rates lower than Whites, Filipinos, Koreans, and other Asians, they have the second highest household income levels, right behind Whites. Their higher household income levels are likely due to the higher proportion of Chamorros in GovGuam jobs (64 percent of

GovGuam employees) and federal jobs (42 percent of federal employees). Filipinos, with their above average income and educational attainment rates are also well-represented in government jobs, with 21 percent of GovGuam positions and 21 percent of federal jobs. Among Asians, many likely arrive to the island to fill shortages in professional positions, and with more financial resources than most Pacific Islander immigrants. For both Asians and other Pacific Islanders, limited English skills likely lower household incomes.

Ironically, Chamorros are also well-represented among those at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy. In the 2010 U.S. Census, the poverty rate for all individuals in Guam is 23 percent, and for Chamorros alone is 24 percent. The only ethnoracial groups with higher poverty rates are other Pacific islanders at 41 percent and Chuukese at 63 percent. Whites have the lowest poverty rate (8 percent), followed by other Asians (12 percent), Filipinos (14 percent), and Koreans (20 percent). Among those sixteen years of age and older, the island unemployment rate for those seeking work in the civilian labor force is 8 percent in the 2010 Census. Among Chamorros, the unemployment rate is 10 percent, while 23 percent of Chuukese and 13 percent of other Pacific Islanders are also unemployed at rates higher than the island average. Ethno-racial groups with unemployment rates below the island average include Filipinos and Whites at 5 percent, Koreans at 4 percent, and other Asians at 3 percent. In part, the higher than average poverty and unemployment rates for Chamorros may be due to slightly below average levels of educational attainment and a higher reservation wage, the lowest wage a worker would be willing to accept for a particular job. Some Chamorros may prefer to live off the land than work in the secondary sector, and many can rely on extensive family networks to help alleviate some of the most difficult consequences of poverty and unemployment. Nonetheless, clearly not all Guamanians are economically well-off, with some sub-populations experiencing comparatively high rates of poverty and unemployment. This creates a situation whereby some island residents may desire economic growth, whatever the cost, which can pose a challenge to cultural preservation.

### *Opportunities for Economic Development*

Into the foreseeable future, the largest sources of revenue for the island economy may continue to be federal expenditures and tourism. Federal assistance to the island is likely to continue at high levels, especially in light of the current United States military build-up. Tourism, predominantly from Japan, continues to be promoted with the goal of increasing annual visitors from 1.3 million to 2 million annually in the next six years (Daleno 2014b). While this contributes to the economy,

most new jobs will be in the low-paying service sector. Beyond this, political leaders are also promoting the island as a good place for investors to many of its neighbors in Asia (Thompson 2011).

Entrepreneurship is a viable option that could be more fully exploited. Ideally, GovGuam's economic stimulus efforts will also include increasing support for small business development programs, with the provision of financial resources and expertise to island residents who can then pursue local business niches, and perhaps even participate in the global market. The potential for increased local entrepreneurship and exports can be supported by the University of Guam and Guam Community College, who play key roles in providing educational instruction to prepare students to be successful in the workforce.

Economic growth and diversification are important to economic health, and players in the today's global economy are well-educated. Continuing commitment to higher education and partnerships with the private sector will provide opportunities for Guam's residents to obtain the skills and knowledge to pursue economic opportunities in the private sector. In order for residents to be prepared to take advantage of economic opportunities, the island community must insist that quality public education—from pre-school through postsecondary education—is available to all capable residents. Education budgets cannot be allowed to become victims of budget deficits.

### *Impact from Compacts of Free Association*

In the midst of economic challenges in Guam, immigration from Micronesia and Asia is likely to continue, since Guam is the core economy in Micronesia and a gateway to the United States from Asia. The Compacts of Free Association (CFA) signed in 1986 between the United States and other Micronesian nation-states—the Republic of the Marshall Islands (FAS), the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—fuels immigration to Guam. The number of Micronesian immigrants nearly doubled between 2003 and 2008, from 9,831 to 18,305 (Lintiaco 2011b). In the 2010 Census, other Micronesians are 10 percent of the local population, and make up one-fourth of the foreign-born population on Guam (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a.).

Some come to Guam to pursue an education, and all hope to improve their lives. However, islanders often arrive with little human or financial capital, or transferable skills. Over 70 percent of Micronesians report speaking a language other than English at home (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012a). Consequently, growth in this population has increased the burden on already strained public services, including education, health care, public safety and social services (Sobeck 2013).

Although Guam is the most common destination for Micronesian immigrants (Bureau of Statistics and Plans 2012b), federal impact reimbursement for costs from Micronesian immigration has been a fraction of reported expenses. From 2004-2012, the Governor of Guam reported \$559 million in expenses on services for compact immigrants. Only a fraction of the costs through 2011, about \$119 million of \$441 million, has been paid (Sobek 2013). During Congressional discussions of the Compact agreements, concerns about their impact on receiving islands were raised. Consequently, reimbursement at higher rates may be forthcoming as the national economy improves. Some of these infrastructure issues may also be addressed through the military build-up, as local leaders work to mitigate negative or unintended consequences from an increased military presence.

Shortchanging island residents can influence community relations with Micronesian immigrants if these Pacific Islanders are perceived as a burden or a threat, and are marginalized instead of socially integrated in productive ways (Aguirre and Turner 2007). Relatively harmonious ethno-racial relations can shift into ethno-racial conflict in the competition over scarce resources in times of economic uncertainty and relatively high levels of immigration (Olzak 1992). When subpopulations are treated as social outsiders, this contributes to a myriad of social dysfunctions, including ethno-racial conflict, which affect the entire island community (Allport 1979[1954]).

### *United States Military Build-up*

The Obama Administration's has stated the importance of the Pacific in American foreign policy and its commitment to the Guam military build-up (Feller 2011; *Pacific Daily News* 2011b; Thompson 2012). This will inject cash into the local economy, increase the island population, and present additional challenges to the people of Guam and the preservation of the Chamorro culture (Harden 2010; Warheit 2010; Weaver 2010a,b). Although the initial agreement between the United States and Japan to transfer troops out of Okinawa was scheduled to be completed in 2014, the build-up has proceeded more slowly due to a recovering United States economy and local concerns about the build-up's impact on the island community (Daleno 2014c). Now scheduled to be completed by 2018, the military build-up on Guam will bring about 5,000 Marines and their families, and tens of thousands of workers to the island during infrastructure development (Harden 2010; Weaver 2010a,b; Conerly 2014; Daleno 2014c). Population pressures from an influx of people may create social problems if the growth is not properly and sensitively managed (Harden 2010). Even beyond the social dysfunctions

that may emerge from a population surge, there are other concerns associated with an increased military presence.

Chief among these concerns include the potential for an increase in crime from a larger military population, especially those of a domestic or sexual nature, but also an increase in property crime from increasing levels of inequality and higher rates of poverty (Lutz and Cristobal 2007; Kirk 2008; Lutz 2010). There are also environmental and health impacts from military activities to consider (Kirk 2008; Lutz 2010; Women for Genuine Security 2010); including the likelihood that Guam becomes a more attractive military target in the case of warfare. Further, imagined or real threats to Chamorro culture from a larger military presence could easily translate into ethno-racial conflicts without attention to the needs and concerns of island residents (Lutz and Cristobal 2007; Women for Genuine Security 2010). Federal, military, and local leaders need to be intentional in creating harmonious relations between military families, personnel, and island residents.

Other considerations include an increasing strain on the island's already overburdened infrastructure. These include the costs of improving the delivery of electricity and water, and the disposal of wastes for a much larger population; as well as the capacity to provide education, healthcare, and public safety with declining budget shortages and increasing government debt (Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 2008; Pincus 2009; Lutz 2010). An increase in the general cost of living, as well as in land prices and housing, will likely be additional outcomes of military expansion (Lutz 2010). On the other hand, an infusion of money through military projects, jobs to support the build-up (although most will be temporary), and the settling in of military families up through 2018 are likely to create opportunities for local residents and funds for government coffers, as some local leaders assert. It is also likely that most of the permanent jobs created by this expansion will be in the lower-paying service sector, which would increase income inequality in the dual labor market of the island, and local elites will benefit the most from military expansion (Lutz 2010). The slowdown may provide island leaders with an opportunity to more thoroughly consider all the likely consequences of becoming a forward base in United States foreign policy and respond accordingly.

#### CHAMORRO CULTURE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Despite these multiple challenges, Chamorros have created an infrastructure to promote cultural preservation through island institutions, commitment of resources, and cultural participation. Local institutions play a major role in preserving Chamorro culture in the face of pervasive American influence and high levels of multiculturalism. For example, as

in the past, the Catholic Church continues to play an important role in cultural preservation, with 85 percent of islanders identified as Roman Catholics (Central Intelligence Agency 1999). The island's year-round village fiestas in honor of patron saints are a good example of how Chamorro cultural values of bringing people together and being good to each other are preserved through the Catholic Church ([guampedia.com/fiestas/](http://guampedia.com/fiestas/)).

Cultural participation and commitment of resources to maintaining a Chamorro culture are critical to cultural preservation. Within GovGuam is a Department of Chamorro Affairs, whose mission is the preservation, development and promotion of the Chamorro Heritage of Guam ([dca.guam.gov](http://dca.guam.gov)). Some of the divisions of this department include The Chamorro Village, a gathering place for local entrepreneurs and products, including food, crafts, and entertainment representing the Chamorro and other cultures—as well as the Guam Museum, Guam Public Library, and the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities.

To make information about Guam and Chamorro culture available to island residents and the larger global community, grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Guam Preservation Trust, the Bank of Guam, the United States Department of the Interior, Gannett Foundation, Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency and other sources led to the creation of the Guampedia Foundation, Inc., in 2009. The foundation provides an on-line source of information about Guam and Chamorro culture, with over a thousand entries from scholars and community leaders ([guampedia.com/](http://guampedia.com/)).

In addition, the island hosts many festivals and other events to spotlight Chamorro culture, as well as other Asia-Pacific cultures. For example, there is the annual *Gupot Fanha'aniyan Pulan Chamoru*, also known as the Chamorro Lunar Festival, which showcases Chamorro cultural traditions related to farming and fishing by the cycles of the moon (Aoki 2014). Many of the indigenous peoples of Oceania also come together to support indigenous cultural preservation efforts. An example of this is the Festival of the Pacific Arts, which Guam will be hosting in 2017. This multicultural event, with rotating host locations throughout the region, is offered every four years to support the preservation of traditional Pacific cultures (Pacific News Center 2011).

Further, in United States communities where large numbers of Chamorros settle, such as Hawaii, California, Washington, and Texas, Pacific Islanders hold fiestas and festivals to celebrate Chamorro holidays and share island traditions. The Internet, and sites like Facebook, along with the ease of telecommunication, also makes it possible for the Chamorro diaspora to maintain connections to Guam. These social



structures within Guam, in the region, and in the continental United States support cultural preservation.

The Chamorro culture has survived through history because of the adaptability of the people during times of transformation initiated by foreign powers. To accommodate change, Chamorros have integrated elements of other cultures, while adhering to core indigenous values. All Guamanians can play a role in perpetuating *inafa'maolek* in Guam's institutions and families and contributing to the Chamorro way of life. Through intentional efforts to teach and preserve their culture through programs and participation, Chamorros may safeguard their unique cultural identity in the continuing age of American hegemony. This case study of Chamorro cultural transformation and current challenges to cultural preservation contributes to limited research in Chamorro studies and on Pacific Islander Americans. It also informs extant research in indigenous cultural preservation, ethnic studies, ethnic stratification, and contemporary colonialism.

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# ETHNICITY AND IMPRESSIONS OF PERSONALITY USING THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL: STEREOTYPING OR CULTURAL SENSITIVITY?

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This research begins to answer the question: why do we, as humans, consistently draw conclusions about others based on generalized information? If we move away from the assumption that all stereotypes are inaccurate and harmful, then we can begin to understand this behavior. Lee et al. (2013) suggest that people stereotype others and generalize information to all the members of a specific group when there is an absence of “relevant individuating information” (pg. 478). In other words, people make conclusions based on the evidence that is available. Lee et al. describe these generalizations as weak and provide evidence that people reject these stereotypes when better evidence is available. We view this as a refinement of conclusions, rather than weak or inaccurate. Human beings are able to gather the best possible information and evaluate it. When more accurate information is available, then we are able to refine our conclusions. There is little evidence to suggest that people cling to stereotypes without thought or evaluation, and in fact, we readily reject generalizations when more information is available (Lee et al., 2013).

Neuberg and Sng (2013) describe a framework for understanding stereotyping behavior and contribute additional support showing that stereotypes can be utilized as a way to gather useful information about others. The authors approach the discussion with an evolutionary perspective, specifically Life History Theory, and argue that the complexity of our social systems necessitates making generalizations in order to protect one’s self or find a mate. Not only is the ability to draw conclusions about those around us important to navigate the social world, but it may actually provide fitness benefits. Those who are also able to refine generalizations when more information is available will be even more successful navigating our complex social systems.

Social scientists have for some time sensed the need to shift their conception of stereotypes from the perspective of prejudice theory, which focuses on negative predispositions and discrimination toward out-groups, to the perspective of interpersonal perception theory, which focuses on the mutual impressions formed by members of distinct human groups. The 1995 publication of *Stereotype Accuracy*, an edited volume by Lee, Jussim, and McCauley arising from a conference of the American Psychological Association Science Directorate, serves as well as any other as a signpost for this shift. This volume argued that many of the features that might distinguish stereotypes from group impressions are either logically untenable (e.g. that they are all-or-none beliefs, illogically resistant to contradictions, and factually wrong for reasons of hearsay) or have received little empirical support (e.g. that they lead people to ignore individual differences, stem from negative attitudes, and imply genetic essentialism). Perhaps more importantly, the volume pointed out that two key features of stereotypes as group impressions remain virtually unmeasured: their specific content and their degree of accuracy or falsehood. More recently several researchers have continued investigating the utility of stereotyping behavior and call for researchers to look beyond the traditional view of stereotypes (Koenig & Early, 2014; Jussim, 2005, 2012; Jussim et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2013).

Given the abundant research on stereotypes in recent years, why is there so little data about what people think of various racial and ethnic groups and whether they are right? Many scholars (Ottati & Lee, 1995; Stangor & Schaller, 1996; Zebrowitz, 1996) have noted that even basic research on what personality traits are ascribed to racial groups, which is the focus of the present paper, has progressed little since the 1933 Princeton studies by Katz & Braly. Scholarly work has instead focused on the formation, maintenance, and activation of stereotypes as cognitive representations, thus more often measuring reaction times, error rates, and variability rather than semantic content or trait-level beliefs. As Ottati and Lee (1995, p. 32) remarked, and others agree (Ryan & Bogar, 2001; Zebrowitz, 1996), “recent research has focused almost exclusively on the cognitive process of stereotyping. This focus on process, which is by no means without value, has failed to address the question of whether stereotypes possess accurate content in real-world contexts.”

Perhaps more fundamentally, because this field began in the socio-political context of WWII and the Civil Rights era, “stereotypes” originally referred to absurd propaganda images and Jim Crow portrayals (Lippman, 1965; Fixico, 2011). As such, any serious consideration of their accuracy was antithetical almost by definition and continues to be at odds with the human rights advocacy that motivates much of the scholarly interest in this area. The term “stereotype accuracy” is as uninviting

for many researchers today as “communist liberty” would have been in the 1950s or “segregationist equality” in the 1960s. Lee, McCauley, & Jussim (1995) report one incident in which a reviewer of one of their stereotype accuracy manuscripts asked them “What should we be doing? Articles with titles like ‘Are Blacks really lazy?’ and ‘Are Jews really cheap?’?” (p. 310). Cronbach called for more research on the influence of stereotypes on impression accuracy in 1955 and Lee et al. repeated the call in *Stereotype Accuracy* in 1995. Perhaps to understand why there is still too little data on key questions in this area, we need look no further than the title of their volume.

But by approaching stereotypes as group impressions consistent with interpersonal perception theory (Brunswick, 1956; Cronbach, 1955; Funder, 1999; Kenny, 1994, 2004), and unburdening it of the presumption of prejudice as Lee et al. (1995, 2009, 2013) recommend, a better alignment is achieved with the current global context of group beliefs in a way that does not impede much needed research. Many theorists have long rejected the view that stereotypes are fixed, negative, all-or-none “pictures in the head” (Lippman, 1965) but are instead probabilistic expectations that people hold about the characteristics of groups, which may be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; McCauley & Stitt, 1978; Jussim 2009). People may utilize visible cues about others’ race and ethnicity to form impressions about their personalities (Brunswick, 1956) in the same way they utilize dress, smiling, hairstyle (Zebrowitz & Collins, 1994) and facial symmetry (Noor & Evans, 2003).

Specifically, this study provides insight into whether impressions based on ethnicity help or hinder the ability to form impressions that agree with the self-views of the target groups or members, and does group membership have “cue validity?” Cue validity, also called “agreement,” may only be determined by comparing beliefs against some criterion, that is, some data about the stereotyped target group. How is this accomplished? First, we must first shift from studying stereotypes of “races” (e.g. Native Americans) to stereotypes of “ethnic groups,” (e.g. Native American people on a particular college campus). It is necessary to define the stereotyped target group in a way that represents a real population, rather than an abstract concept, from which a generalizable criterion sample may be drawn. Ethnicity is tightly connected to particular cultural traits that identify a group of people. While biological differences between populations do exist, these differences do not support the existence of distinct racial groups based on any suite of genetic traits and hold little potential for understanding each other. Cultural traits are better able to help us understand each other, so ethnicity is an important cue to

utilize when forming impressions. Knowing someone's skin color, however, provides little insight into a person's behavior or personality.

Second, we must choose our criterion variable. Since we are studying personality impressions, the options include self-impressions, peer-ratings, or behavioral personality indicators. Since peer-ratings may themselves be influenced by stereotypes, and behavioral personality indicators are not perfectly established and impractical to gather, we focused on self-impressions. Thus we are not testing the "accuracy" of the stereotypes, but whether "people see others as they see themselves," a nontrivial aspect of intergroup dynamics. If ethnic group impressions show high cue validity, using them may be a form of cultural sensitivity; if however they show low cue validity, using them may lead to stereotypic inaccuracy.

In this article, the term *impression* will be used (with modifiers) rather than the term stereotype, but in all cases refers to impressions of personality on the Five Factor domains (see Kenny, 1994). A *self-impression* is a perceiver's impression of his or her own personality, and an *other-impression* is a perceiver's impression of another individual's personality. A *group-impression* is a perceiver's impression of an entire group of people, abstract or real, and may be either an *in-group-impression* if the perceiver is a member of the group or an *out-group-impression* if the perceiver is not a member of the group. All of the above may be aggregated across theoretically significant groups of perceivers. To this point, *aggregated self-impressions* of, for example, German or Japanese citizens (Allport, 1954) are quite distinct from *in-group-impressions* given by German or Japanese citizens, as the former impressions are of individuals (selves) and the latter are of groups (in-groups). Comparing these various impressions provides one means of assessing their accuracy, but we will return to that point later.

## INTRODUCTION

Among an interacting population, we hypothesize that impressions on the Five Factor domains will vary systematically depending on the stated ethnic group membership (H1).

TABLE 1: FIVE FACTOR CHARACTERISTICS DEFINITIONS

Neuroticism	Tendency to experience psychological distress like anxiety or depression
Extraversion	Active, sociability, experience of positive emotions, excitement seeking
Open	Open to new experiences, artistic, behaviorally flexible
Agreeable	Trusting, sympathetic, cooperative
Conscientiousness	Well-organized, structured, compulsive



We also hypothesize that group-impressions will be similar to aggregated self-impressions, but group-impressions will be exaggerated across all domains (H2). Lastly, we expect that In-group impressions will agree more with aggregated self-impressions than will Out-group impressions (H3).

#### PARTICIPANTS

Students attending a northern New Mexico College participated in the research. The population mainly consists of White, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino residents. The College has a high percentage of Native American students, many of whom are Diné (Navajo) given the close proximity of the Navajo Nation. This population presented a unique research location and provided insight into ethnic impressions in a community that interacts daily. The sample included 477 participants (18 or older) representing the ethnic make-up of the college (Table 2). White and Native American groups are in the majority while Hispanic/Latino groups remain the minority in the study sample and the population. The sample included 351 (74%) women and 126 (26%) men.

TABLE 2: ETHNIC GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

	White/European American	Native American	Hispanic/Latino
Study Sample	44%	36%	14%
College Demographics	56%	23%	13%

Studying ethnicity ultimately allows us to understand people better as individuals rather than products of perceptions formed by others, yet systematic analysis requires asking research participants to put themselves in a distinct ethnic category (i.e. White, Native American, Hispanic/Latino). We know that these categories do not fully represent the diversity among all people. To ask someone to identify herself as Native American does not take into account her particular subculture. For example, Navajo culture differs substantially from Puebloan cultures. However, given the requirements of statistical analysis, ethnicity categories must be created. We did ask respondents to identify their ethnicity as they define it, which produced interesting qualitative data. Many respondents used the same terms used in data analysis, but many of the responses tended to be more specific or far more general than our created categories. For instance, some identified their ethnicity as “Diné,” “Seminole/Navajo,” and “Anglo Southwestern American.” More general responses included, “human,” “mix of everything,” and “American.” Perhaps outside the scope of this paper and not usable in analysis, their

answers are no less important in understanding how individuals identify themselves.

## METHODS

Participants were asked to complete a twenty-one item survey from the Big Five Inventory (BFI-K Form S; John 2005) on a five point scale that was used to calculate their Five-Factor personality traits or self-impression as well as a group-impression of a randomly selected ethnic group. Participants were only presented with one ethnic group to reduce possible bias caused by comparisons between groups.

The survey specifically asked participants to think of groups at the college, providing data about the interactions between real people and ethnic groups rather than in the abstract. Five Factor personality profiles were created for self-impressions of individuals and for impressions of White, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino ethnic groups.

## RESULTS

Self-impressions were broken down by ethnic group, focusing on the numerically largest groups in the population: White/European American, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino groups on campus. The self-impression curves resemble the norming curve across all ethnicities. Using a Bonferroni corrected critical value of  $p=.002$  (unless otherwise noted), an initial investigation revealed that people assume significantly different self-impressions of personality across ethnicities ( $F(8,1772) = 2.576, p = .009$ ).

ANOVAs (with a Bonferroni corrected critical value of  $p=.002$ ) were then calculated across specific ethnic group combinations and personality domains. Self-impressions of personality were similar across ethnicity for Openness and Neuroticism. A between subjects ANOVA revealed significant differences between Hispanic/Latino and Native American students in Extraversion ( $F=14.121; p=.00$ ). Agreeableness was nearly significant between White and Native American respondents ( $F=5.209; p=.02$ ). Lastly, Hispanic/Latino and Native American participants varied significantly in Conscientiousness ( $F=5.624; p=.01$ ) See Fig. 1c and Table 3.

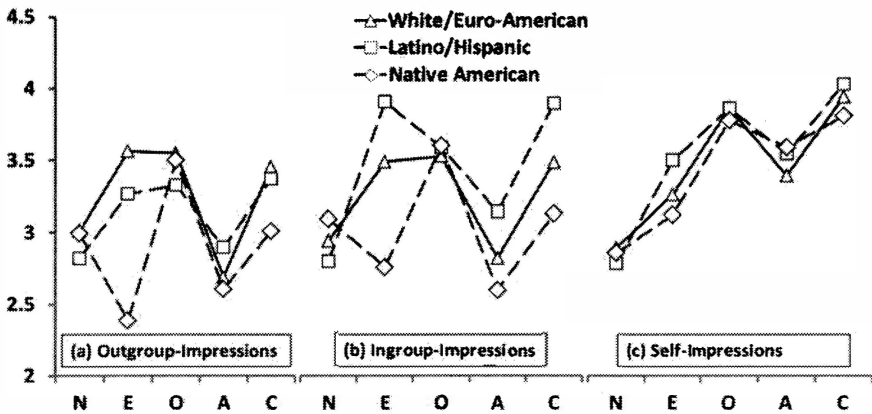
TABLE 3: MEANS AND STANDARD ERRORS (SE)

Domain	Target Label	Outgroup-Imprissions (Figs. 1a & 2a-c)			Ingroup-Imprissions (Figs. 1b & 2a-c)			Self-Imprissions (Figs. 1c & 2a-c)		
		N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE
Neuroticism	White/Euro-American	59	3.013	0.077	52	2.942	0.104	208	2.894	0.061
	Latino/Hispanic	109	2.823	0.057	19	2.803	0.171	69	2.786	0.106
	Native American	130	2.992	0.052	76	3.092	0.086	169	2.857	0.067
Extraversion	White/Euro-American	59	3.564	0.088	52	3.490	0.100	208	3.262	0.054
	Latino/Hispanic	109	3.268	0.065	19	3.908	0.165	69	3.500	0.094
	Native American	130	2.388	0.059	76	2.760	0.082	169	3.123	0.060
Openness	White/Euro-American	59	3.549	0.078	52	3.527	0.099	208	3.864	0.042
	Latino/Hispanic	109	3.328	0.058	19	3.589	0.165	69	3.861	0.074
	Native American	130	3.500	0.053	76	3.600	0.082	169	3.775	0.047
Agreeableness	White/Euro-American	59	2.691	0.097	52	2.822	0.110	208	3.392	0.058
	Latino/Hispanic	109	2.897	0.071	19	3.145	0.182	69	3.543	0.100
	Native American	130	2.608	0.065	76	2.599	0.091	169	3.590	0.064
Conscientiousness	White/Euro-American	59	3.453	0.101	52	3.486	0.097	208	3.941	0.047
	Latino/Hispanic	109	3.374	0.074	19	3.895	0.161	69	4.029	0.081
	Native American	130	3.008	0.068	76	3.128	0.080	169	3.808	0.052

## GROUP IMPRESSIONS

The impressions formed of entire ethnic groups also vary significantly, showing that different ethnic groups are perceived to have different personalities (ANOVA:  $F(8,1756) = 21.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Viewing combinations of ethnic groups and personality traits show no significant differences in any of the personality domains between White and Hispanic/Latino group impressions. Native American and Hispanic/Latino participants difference significantly across domains (Neuroticism: ANOVA  $F=7.584$ ,  $p=.00$ ; Extraversion:  $F=104.927$ ,  $p=.00$ ; Openness:  $F=5.147$ ,  $p=.02$ ; Agreeableness:  $F=12.154$ ,  $p=.00$ ; Conscientiousness:  $F=22.989$ ,  $p=.00$ ). White and Native American group impressions differ significantly only in Conscientiousness (ANOVA  $F=19.186$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and Extraversion (ANOVA  $F=147.630$ ,  $p=.00$ ). See Fig. 1a, 1b, and Table 3.

FIGURE 1. (A) OUTGROUP-, (B) INGROUP-, AND (C) AGGREGATED SELF-IMPRESSIONS OF WHITE/EURO-AMERICAN, LATINO/HISPANIC, AND NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE AT SAN JUAN COLLEGE.



## SELF/GROUP IMPRESSION COMPARISON

Native Americans have significantly lower means for Conscientiousness ( $p=.00$ ) and Extraversion ( $p=.00$ ) in both the self-impression and the group-impression of Native Americans. This suggests some agreement between how Native Americans see themselves and how others see Native Americans as a group. Similarly, White and Hispanic/Latino respondents were rated as higher in Conscientiousness and Extraversion. Group-impressions of Conscientiousness and Extraversion are notably lower than self-ratings, but are both in a similar direction.

Ratings of Agreeableness showed considerable disagreement between self-impressions and impressions formed by others. Self-impressions across all ethnicities show high Agreeableness, yet all groups rate

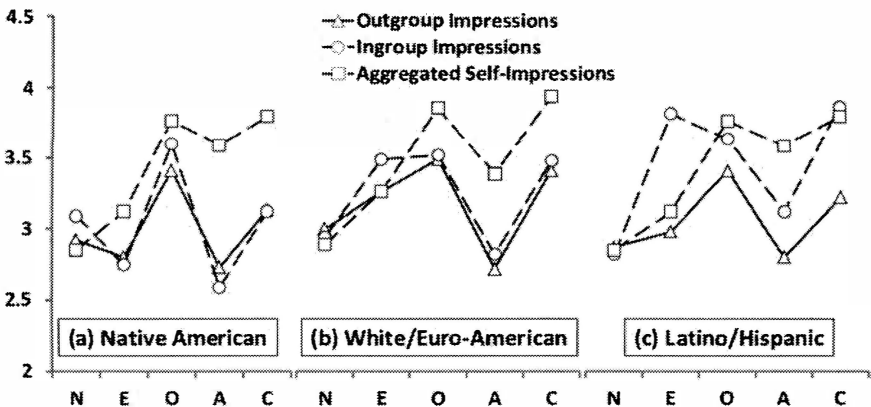
other groups as low in Agreeableness. More generally, self-impressions are much higher than the impressions formed of ethnic groups across all domains. Despite this difference, the general trend of significant differences across personality traits is similar in the aggregated self- and group-impressions.

### IN-GROUP/OUT-GROUP IMPRESSIONS

Given the study design, individuals of a particular ethnicity were periodically asked to form an impression of their own ethnic group. This created an In-group impression. Out-group impressions were formed by those of a different ethnicity than their own. Impressions of the In-group are expected to agree more with self-impressions. The initial analysis of the interaction between ethnicity, in/out group, and personality domain showed no significant differences (ANOVA:  $F(8,1756)=1.468$ ,  $p=.164$ ).

Despite no initial findings, the sample was analyzed by each ethnic group. 52 White participants provided personality impressions of Whites as a group, while 110 Hispanic/Latino and Native American participants provided the Out-group impressions for White students. The In-group and Out-group impressions were quite similar and show no significant differences (ANOVA:  $F(4,436) = .399$ ,  $p = .810$ ). See Figure 2b and Table 3.

FIGURE 2. OUTGROUP-, INGROUP-, AND AGGREGATED SELF-IMPRESSIONS OF (A) NATIVE AMERICAN (B) WHITE/EURO-AMERICAN, AND (C) LATINO/HISPANIC PEOPLE AT SAN JUAN COLLEGE.



Seventy-six Native American respondents provided personality impressions of Native American students, and 243 Hispanic/Latino and White students rated Native American students as the Out-group. Similar to the White results, In-group and Out-group impressions of Native American

students are very similar and show no significant differences in value or pattern (ANOVA:  $F(4,816)=1.993$ ,  $p = .094$ ) See Figure 2a and Table 3.

Nineteen Hispanic/Latino participants provided In-group impressions, and 263 participants provided Out-group impressions of Hispanic/Latino students. The curves contrast with the trends seen among White and Native American students and indicate disagreement across all domains (ANOVA:  $F(4,504) = 3.046$ ,  $p = .017$ ). Specifically, In and Out group impressions of Hispanic/Latinos revealed significant differences in Conscientiousness (ANOVA:  $F(1,408) = 10.768$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and Extraversion (ANOVA:  $F(1,425) = 15.589$ ,  $p=.000$ ) (See Fig. 2c and Table 3)

### CONCLUSION

In this population, aggregated self-impressions show agreement with the impressions that others hold in traits, Conscientiousness and Extraversion. Disagreement exists in Agreeableness between self-impressions and the impressions of others. Lastly, in-group and out-group ratings showed similar patterns (although not significant) for the two majority groups (White and Native American students) while showed a dissimilar pattern for the minority group (Hispanic/Latino students). These results indicate that cultural characteristics of Native Americans and Whites in this population are conveyed in a manner that allows cross-cultural understanding. Hispanic/Latino students do not appear to be seen as they see themselves in this population. The low sample size must be noted, which can make interpretation more difficult.

This research expands the study of stereotyping by establishing that people use ethnicity as a cue to understand others and that the use of ethnicity sometimes demonstrates cultural sensitivity rather than stereotypes based on inaccurate perceptions. The present study also explores stereotyping behavior in a population with a large Native American population. As Donald L. Fixico acknowledges, many people do not have much knowledge of Native American groups and he calls for more research and exposure (2013). He proposes exactly what our study demonstrates, namely that once interacting populations have enough contact with each other, they are likely to be understood by each other.

### DISCUSSION

Our data suggest that individuals do utilize stereotypes and create exemplars of an entire culture as a way of navigating a complex social world. These exemplars serve to help predict social interactions with people whom we do not know. Cultural exemplars will hold varying degrees of accuracy but are created in the human mind as a strategy to help categorize and organize interpersonal interactions.

We might consider the use of ethnicity as a cue to personality reflective of real, observable cultural differences. Cultural differences certainly exist and many conflicts between groups of people are based on cultural misunderstandings. If ethnicity is a cultural construct, as we know it is, and then it follows that ethnicity is a good clue to use when trying to understand and interact with the people around us. This research presents evidence that the use of ethnicity to form impressions of others is based on cultural awareness and sensitivity rather than misunderstanding and bias. Impressions of others seem to be moving beyond inaccurate prejudice to a more useful form of cultural awareness. Of course, impressions of an entire group of people based on only a few characteristics, ethnicity or otherwise, will be generalized and fail to capture individuals completely. We argue that ethnicity can be used as a valid predictor of personality if we are aware of each other and our varying cultures.

Our results could also indicate that societal roles do exist in terms of minority and majority group status. Minority groups are bound to be less understood than majority groups due to the presence of bias but also because majority culture will be prevalent in all realms of society drowning out much of minority culture. Our results indicate that minority and majority groups can achieve a level of understanding and cultural awareness. Hispanic/Latino groups, the numerical minority in this population, seem to be misunderstood and reveal that personality impressions can be misleading and inaccurate when understanding is lacking.

#### LIMITATIONS

All data is self-reported and given the sensitivity of discussions of ethnicity, respondents may be inclined to answer less truthfully. Observational and other forms of data would supplement this study and should be considered for future research in this area. The data also aggregate individuals based on ethnicity and do not allow for subcultural or individual differences. Future research should also include dyadic encounters between individuals to further understand how we use ethnicity to understand others on all levels of analyses. We hope this research spurs more research using the Five Factor model of personality.

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# DIRTY JEW-DIRTY MEXICAN: DENVER'S 1949 LAKE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GANG BATTLE AND JEWISH RACIAL IDENTITY IN COLORADO

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On the morning of Saturday, October 1, 1949 Denver's Jewish and Mexican-American parents woke up, ate breakfast, and read in their newspapers that dozens of their children had been engaged in a race-based gang battle just the day before. Though historians have largely ignored this event, the Jewish response to it, especially through the local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and its involvement in an interracial neighborhood council, demonstrated how Jewish racial identity was in part informed by the curious racial geography of the West—a racial geography that was too often shaped by contrast with Mexicans.<sup>1</sup> This episode as well as a few notable instances of anti-Semitism, including the 1905 lynching of Jacob Weisskind, suggest a more nuanced story than the received wisdom about Jews being “at home” in Denver.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, some historians who have written on Jews in the West

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<sup>1</sup> This event was briefly mentioned by lawyer and historian Tom I. Romero in “Our Selma is Here: The Political and Legal Struggle for Educational Equality in Denver, Colorado, and Multiracial Conundrums in American Jurisprudence,” *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* (Fall/Winter 2004), 78. However, Romero was primarily interested in the Chicano perspective, and did not view the incident from the perspective of Jews' racial identity. Whenever practicable or to make a broader historical point, I do not alter the terms by which historical actors in the sources refer to themselves or to other ethnic groups. This also shows an evolution in how ethnic groups perceive themselves and others. However, for material outside of quotes, and for the sake of continuity and clarity, I refer to Jewish Americans mainly as “Jews”; those of Mexican heritage living in the United States as “Mexicans,” “Chicanos,” or “Mexican Americans”; and Gentile whites as “Anglos.”

<sup>2</sup> The quoted phrase is from Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). For optimistic accounts of Jews in Denver and Colorado that portray a confident Jewish population see Jeanne Abrams, *Dr. Charles Spivak: A Jewish Immigrant and the American Tuberculosis Movement* (University Press of Colorado, 2009); Allen duPont Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1960); and Ida Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim* (Denver: Sage Books, 1957; reprint, Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000). Page citations are to the reprint edition. To be fair, however, Uchill does have a nine-page chapter in her over three hundred page book that does at least describe anti-Semitism in Denver. But it is antiquarian in nature and a detour in a larger narrative of progress, success and eventual acceptance. Moreover, Uchill asserts that social anti-Semitism was of no concern to most Jews in the city and totally omits the racial strife between Jews and Mexicans on the West Side of Denver.

have argued that one of the primary reasons why the region was different from the East was because anti-Semitism was relatively absent and subdued.<sup>3</sup> Although this might hold true for some western cities, this was not the case in Denver, where it was present and at times extremely overt. Furthermore, anti-Semitism, coupled with a pronounced anti-Mexican sentiment among the broader Anglo community, proved important in the formation of Jewish racial identity.

More broadly, however, such a case study is worthy of careful scholarly consideration precisely because it does focus on Jewish-Mexican interaction, rather than Jewish-black interaction. Without a doubt, the literature regarding Jewish-black interaction is rich, with many decades of fruitful and careful scholarship behind it.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the study of Jewish-Mexican interaction in the West, and on a more general level, Jewish-Latino interactions in the United States, has received comparatively little attention from professional historians. In fact, the only notable exception to this trend has been George J. Sánchez's optimistic treatment of the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles during the Cold War. In this article length study titled, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews': Creating Multiculturalism on the Eastside During the 1950s," Sánchez examined the social and political collaboration between a small group of Jews and Mexican Americans, and the positive impact that relationship had on "civil rights" and "radical multiculturalism" in the neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it has only been in recent years that trailblazing historians like Ellen Eisenberg have begun to write book length studies on the often complex and contradictory relationships between Jews and other racial groups in the West.<sup>6</sup> More to the point,

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<sup>3</sup> John Livingston, "Introduction," in *Jews of the American West*, eds. John Livingston and Moses Rischin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 21; Jeanne Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>4</sup> See Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post Holocaust America* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Jack Saltzman and Cornel West, eds., *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> George J. Sánchez, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews': Creating Multiculturalism on the Eastside During the 1950s," *American Quarterly* 56: 3 (September 2004), 634. Studies diverging from the black-Jewish paradigm and focusing on a multiethnic approach to the West include Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America: Californians Coloring Outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Shana Bernstein, "Building Bridges at Home in a Time of Global Conflict: Interracial Cooperation and the Fight for Civil Rights in Los Angeles, 1933-1954," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice? Western Jews and Japanese Removal During WWII* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

however, the story of Jewish-Mexican interaction is significant and worthy of study because it is a story that can only be best told and understood in the context of the American West; simply put, place does matter, especially when it comes to American Jewish history.

#### THE GEOGRAPHY OF ETHNICITY ON DENVER'S WEST SIDE

Following Colfax Avenue due west toward the majestic Rocky Mountains, Denver's Jewish West Side once stretched from the banks of the South Platte River to Jefferson County's border. For decades, synagogues, Jewish agencies, and businesses were common in this section of the city and catered to a population that was predominantly eastern European in heritage. In fact, by the early 1950s—the height of Jewish cultural influence in this area—institutions like the Hebrew Educational Alliance, Beth Israel Home and Hospital, the Jewish Consumptives Relief Society (later renamed the American Medical Center), and the Goldman Community Center stood as unquestionable proof of just how Jewish this part of Denver had become.

The nucleus of this community was established in the late nineteenth century from the remnants of a failed agricultural colony in Cotopaxi, Colorado. Fleeing pogroms, boycotts and the draconian dictates of Czar Alexander III, over two million Jews left the Russian Empire for a better life somewhere else. Most of these refugees found their way to the eastern shores of the United States. However, urban centers like New York City soon became breeding grounds for diseases that included tuberculosis—otherwise known as the “white plague.” Due to this and other reasons, Jewish relief agencies like the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) endeavored to resettle a number of these Russian Jews in less crowded and seemingly more healthful parts of the country. One of these alternatives was the small mining town of Cotopaxi.<sup>7</sup>

Situated in a valley near the banks of the Arkansas River, Cotopaxi was an excellent location for mining, but not for agriculture; in fact, poor soils, freezing temperatures and flooding characterized the nature of the region. Unaware of this at the time, and deceived by smooth-talking promoters, officials at the HIAS rejected fertile alternatives such as Oregon and California, and instead chose to settle Russian Jews at Cotopaxi. According to historian Allen duPont Breck, twenty Russian families were sent by rail to the colony in 1882. Upon arrival to the settlement, they were shocked to see dilapidated housing and a hostile environment not conducive to productive farming. More importantly, however, the men and women who were brought over to work this land were more accustomed to richer soils and in some cases had no experience in the practice

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<sup>7</sup> Breck, *Centennial History*, 80; Uchill, *Pioneers*, 173-174.

of agriculture. After a particularly tough winter in 1882, some of the colonists began to abandon the colony for Denver, and by June of 1884, the Jewish agricultural experiment near the Arkansas River had officially ended. Nevertheless, from this failure emerged the seeds of Jewish settlement in the West Side of Denver along Colfax Avenue.<sup>8</sup>

In the decades that followed, coreligionists from Russia, Romania, Poland, Lithuania and Hungary augmented the Cotopaxians who had resettled around Denver's main street, Colfax Avenue. These additional waves of settlement added to the vibrancy and complexity of the community and pushed Jewish settlement further west along the Colfax corridor. But Jews were not the only group building a community on the West Side, for closer to the core of the city lay an ethnic enclave that was slowly taking shape and would eventually come to dominate the makeup of the area into the late twentieth century and beyond.

During the 1920s and 1930s, growing numbers of Mexicans, mainly out of economic necessity, migrated from the coalfields of the south and the beet fields of the north to Denver. The late 1920s heralded the end of the halcyon days when coal was king in Colorado. Mine operators in southern Colorado towns like Walsenburg were hiring fewer men due to the increasing use of petroleum as a way to heat homes up and down the Front Range. Moreover, the ensuing Great Depression of the 1930s forced hardworking farm workers to abandon the beet field colonies of Weld and Larimer counties and look elsewhere for work. Some of these individuals eventually settled in the Auraria, Baker, and Lincoln sections of West Denver, and by the 1960s and early 1970s supplanted the older Jewish population further west. The permanent Mexican-American population for all of Denver exceeded 12,000 by 1940, an impressive increase from 2,500 in the early 1920s. More importantly, however, the West Denver population of Mexican Americans for Baker, Auraria, and Lincoln was nearly 10,000 by 1970. To put this in some perspective, the entire Jewish population for Colorado was estimated to be a little over 19,000 in 1958.<sup>9</sup>

Without question, the heart of the Mexican-American West Side was Auraria. One of the oldest sections of the city, Auraria was first home to Irish and German immigrants. Indeed, flourmills and breweries with their accompanying smells and sounds were common in this area. In

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<sup>8</sup> Breck, *Centennial History*, 74-80, Uchill, *Pioneers*, 173-174.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Gould, *The Life and Times of Richard Castro* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 2007), 65-66; Carl Abbot, Stephen J. Leonard, and Thomas J. Noel, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 4th ed. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 357; George Rivera, Jr., Aileen F. Lucero, and Richard Castro, "Internal Colonialism in Colorado: The Westside Coalition and Barrio Control," in *La Gente: Hispano History and Life in Colorado*, ed. Vincent C. Debaca (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1998), 206; Breck, *Centennial History*, 321.

1866, for example, a German immigrant by the name of Moritz Sigi founded the Colorado Brewery. By the turn of the century, John Good had purchased the brewery and renamed it after the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Tivoli would remain an important landmark in the neighborhood for decades to come, wetting the whistles of many Westsiders.<sup>10</sup>

Although breweries were important to the character of the neighborhood, so were its churches. In 1887, the Germans built St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church and School. That same year, the Irish, not to be outdone by the Germans, constructed St. Leo's Catholic Church. During this early period, there was even a small Orthodox congregation, Shearith Israel, which catered to Jewish businessmen working in the downtown area.<sup>11</sup>

By the first two decades of the twentieth century, these immigrants and their children began to move out of Auraria, renting their homes to a small but increasing stream of working-class Hispanics from Mexico, New Mexico, and the northern and southern regions of Colorado. In 1922, this population began to hold services in Spanish in the basement of St. Leo's Catholic Church. However, as it grew larger, this arrangement became untenable. Acutely aware of this a well-to-do Irish Catholic family, the Mullens, donated land and money to help found a new parish in the area. On March 21, 1926, St. Cajetan's Catholic Church officially opened. Built in the Spanish Colonial style, it soon became the center of Mexican-American life on the West Side, providing a school, clinic, and credit union. Moreover, mutual aid societies such as the *Sociedad Mutualista Mexico* and the *Sociedad Protectora Hispana Americana* began to form.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1940s, Mexican Americans began to settle in other parts of Denver closer in proximity to Jewish neighborhoods along the West Colfax corridor. West Side public schools such as Lake Junior High School, which had once enjoyed overwhelming Jewish majorities throughout the 1920s and 1930s, now had to deal with a growing Mexican-American population. With this demographic shift came ethnic tension and outbreaks of violence in the streets and schools of the West Side.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jodi Michelle Summers, "Auraria: From Neighborhood to Campus" (Masters's thesis, University of Colorado, Denver, 2003), 32-39.

<sup>11</sup> Summers, "Auraria," 32-39; Jeanne Abrams, *Jewish Denver, 1859-1940* (Charleston: Arcadia Press, 2007), 69.

<sup>12</sup> Summers, "Auraria," 32-39; Abbot, Leonard, and Noel, *Colorado*, 357.

<sup>13</sup> Abbot, Leonard and Noel, *Colorado*, 357; Michael J. Zelinger, *West Side Story Re-lived* (Denver: J. Wandell Press, 1987), 158.

CONTRASTS: JEWS, MEXICANS, RACIAL IDENTITY, AND THE FORMATION  
OF THE LAKE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL HUMAN RELATIONS  
COUNCIL

On Friday, September 30, 1949, three Denver Police Department squad cars sped toward West Sixteenth Avenue and Newton Street, near Lake Junior High School. A “gang battle,” reportedly between thirty “Spanish-American” and “Jewish” students had broken out with an estimated crowd of three hundred spectators watching the melee. Before the police arrived, however, a quick thinking housewife with a garden hose had broken it up—literally dowsing the flames of racial discontent. No one was hurt, but it made for an eye-catching story in the *Rocky Mountain News*.<sup>14</sup>

Fights between Jews and Mexican Americans were familiar sites along the West Side. However, the key difference this time was the scale and reaction that this particular one engendered from within Denver’s Jewish and Mexican-American communities. Most likely born of the *News*’s September 30 article, questions began to be raised, especially by the local Jewish press, as to how things had gotten so out of hand and what could be done about it. For example, the *Intermountain Jewish News* reported that in the wake of the schoolyard fight “complete Jewish cooperation” and “inter-racial friendship” was being sought in order to identify and remedy the underlying cause of the situation. The Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith (ADL), a well-respected Jewish advocacy and intergroup relations organization, even intervened in order to make sense of the circumstances. And while the Jewish community was attempting to comprehend what had occurred near Lake, Mexican-American families living in the area were beginning their own initial exploration into what exactly went wrong and what could be done about it.<sup>15</sup>

The first meeting held by Lake’s Mexican-American residents took place on October 3. Sponsored by the Rude Community Center, it assembled teachers, students, and community leaders from the Spanish speaking population to discuss the incident. People with names like Del Toro, Guzman, Rodriguez, Borrego, Ulibarri, Mendez, and Maes sat in the au-

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<sup>14</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, October 1, 1949, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Although no other instance of violence between Jews and Mexican Americans on the West Side of Denver received the press coverage that the “gang fight” at Lake did, reports from Lake Junior High School officials and the Anti-Defamation League suggest that they were common enough. Moreover, the unidentified woman in the October 1, 1949 article in the *Rocky Mountain News* stated, “The trouble . . . [between Jewish and Mexican-American] students has been going on for a long time,” suggesting a pattern. For examples of additional conflicts between Jews and Mexican Americans on the West Side see Nathan Perlmutter to L.E. Sidman, October 4, 1949, box 2, Commission on Community Relations, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection (hereafter cited as CCR) and Principal’s Report and Recommendations to the Lake Human Relations Council, March 2, 1950, box 2, CCR; *Intermountain Jewish News*, October 6, 1949, 1.



dience. No Jews attended. The stated purpose of the meeting was as follows: to make sure the assembled community leaders knew all the “facts” of the incident; that the incident was strictly a school issue; and to determine whether or not there was systemic ill-will between Jews and Mexican Americans in the West Side neighborhood “and, if so, it is the job of the persons concerned . . . to plan jointly for and to work on such activities as will eradicate undesirable attitudes between [the] groups.”<sup>16</sup>

With regard to the first purpose, Tom Borrego, a Mexican-American teacher at Lake, informed those in attendance that on the day before the fight a Jewish boy was getting a drink of water when he was snapped with a rubber band. The boy allegedly snapped back by calling a Mexican-American boy near him a “dirty Mexican.” Borrego reasoned that this might have been a cause of the September 30 incident. Furthermore, by the time the fight was about to occur, older brothers, probably from nearby North High School, came to help settle the score between the two middle schoolers. Finally, Chicano students who were at the meeting confirmed that no weapons had been used, and that there was not a crowd of hundreds watching the fist fight as the *News* had reported.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, participants at the gathering fumed with anger at how Denver’s oldest newspaper had portrayed the incident to the greater Denver community. For example, why did the *News* even have to reveal the ethnicities of the two groups? Moreover, the paper reported that “Spanish-American boys” were “chasing Jewish boys,” making Mexican Americans appear to be hoodlums in the eyes of other Denverites.<sup>18</sup>

Statements such as these suggest that this was an occasion when the vulnerable social condition of the Mexican-American community came into play. Discrimination against Mexican Americans was widespread in Colorado, affecting every sector of life, including health care, recreation, schooling, law enforcement, and employment. Furthermore, it was not until the 1950s that Mexican-American organizations such as the GI Forum, the League of Latin American Citizens, the Colorado Latin American Conference, and the Latin American Education Foundation, began to draw much needed attention to these serious social inequities. Perhaps more tellingly, however, Mexican Americans living in Colorado and the rest of the country would have to wait until 1975 for the United States

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<sup>16</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning “Lake Junior High Incident” reported in *Rocky Mountain News*, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>17</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning “Lake Junior High Incident” reported in *Rocky Mountain News*, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>18</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning “Lake Junior High Incident” reported in *Rocky Mountain News*, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR. More than just “chasing” Jewish boys, the *News* portrayed a situation where Jewish students were “running home from school” in panic.

Congress to extend the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to them and other Latinos.<sup>19</sup>

As discussion in the meeting moved away from concerns about the *News's* portrayal of the fight, the issue of day-to-day interactions with Jews arose. Everyone unanimously agreed that the tension between the two groups had been building for some time. For example, a rumor had been circulating among Mexican-American students at Lake that one of their own had left the neighborhood and "joined the 'Jewish religion' and the other boys did not like him for that and intended to get him for his 'High Hattedness' [snobbishness]." In addition, Mrs. Fernandez, the current president of the Parent-Teacher Association for Lake (PTA), remarked: "Many Spanish-American parents felt that the Jewish children think Lake belongs to them." And Mrs. Guzman, a former Lake PTA president, expressed that Jews initially made Mexican Americans feel unwelcome and uncomfortable when they went to PTA meetings. On the other hand, Guzman was more evenhanded when she articulated that there was undoubtedly prejudice on both sides and that there needed to be more self-examination between the two groups. The next issue for debate was the presence of law enforcement in the neighborhood.<sup>20</sup>

For many Mexican Americans at the meeting, Jews were to blame for the police patrols in the area. In turn, this amplified Mexican-American feelings of uneasiness and mistrust toward Jews. Were Mexican Americans being accused of something? Were the squad cars present because the Jewish community had the economic and political pull to get them assigned there, acting as bodyguards to "protect Jewish children from Spanish-American children[?]" This anxiety filled language appears to point toward something more deep-seated, specifically, an acute class-divide within the West Side community itself.<sup>21</sup>

Jews in the area were upwardly mobile, owned their own businesses and homes, participated in significant numbers in the professions, and had an active civic life. Mexican Americans, on the other hand, were solidly working class, in many cases economically disadvantaged, and politically disenfranchised. This, perhaps, helps to explain the feeling among Mexican Americans that Jews were snobs who preyed on economically vulnerable Chicanos. Reminiscing about life in Auraria, Russel DeLeon, a Mexican American, recounted that a Jew owned "the corner store, and he had high prices on his stuff." DeLeon's sentiment is

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<sup>19</sup> Abbot, Leonard, and Noel, *Colorado*, 358; F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press of the University of Houston, 1996), 282.

<sup>20</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning "Lake Junior High Incident" reported in Rocky Mountain News, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>21</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning "Lake Junior High Incident" reported in Rocky Mountain News, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR.

indicative of a middleman minority dynamic, where, according to sociologists Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and Jonathan H. Turner, the “clients of middleman minorities, especially those in the lower social classes . . . tend to exhibit hostility toward the petite bourgeoisie, who are viewed as mercenary and exploitive.” Consequently, it did not matter whether Jews were in truth economically exploitive of Mexican Americans; what mattered was that Mexican Americans firmly believed that Jews were, which greatly intensified racial tension on the West Side.<sup>22</sup>

At the conclusion of the meeting, the group recommended that local churches and organizations combat prejudicial attitudes toward Jews during sermons and social activities, and that all parents make a better effort at being involved in the lives of their children. It is likely that these recommendations fell flat, however, for they excluded the Jewish community from the dialogue and lacked any apparent follow through. On the other hand, this proved to be a crucial moment of self-introspection for the Mexican-American community on the West Side. It started to come to terms with the unsettling reality that there was a serious problem between Jews and Mexican Americans in the area. Meanwhile, the Jewish community and one of its preeminent intergroup agencies, the ADL, was busy investigating and documenting what had supposedly happened near Lake and what lay at the root of it.<sup>23</sup>

On the morning of October 1, the same day that the *News* broke the story of the September 30 disorder near Lake, the ADL dispatched Nathan Perlmutter, a representative of the organization to investigate. Over the course of two days, Perlmutter interviewed five eyewitnesses to the fight and compiled a detailed report based upon his findings. More than just a dry recounting of the September 30 melee, this report provides a rare, but admittedly limited glimpse into the attitudes of Denver’s Jews toward Mexican Americans. More importantly, however, it suggests that Jews living on the West Side were adopting a regional definition of whiteness.<sup>24</sup>

In his influential study, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, historian Eric L. Goldstein found that geography played an important role in how Jews constructed their racial identities. Moreover, it was “how Jews *negotiated* their place in a complex racial world” that mattered more than the cumbersome question of how Jews

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<sup>22</sup> Magdalena Gallegos, *Auraria Remembered: An Oral History by Former Residents of Denver’s Westside neighbor Compiled by the Community College of Denver Staff and Honors Program Students* (Denver: Community College of Denver, 1991), 13; Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and Jonathan H. Turner, *American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007), 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Report of Meeting Held Concerning “Lake Junior High Incident” reported in *Rocky Mountain News*, October 3, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>24</sup> Nathan Perlmutter to L.E. Sidman, October 4, 1949, box 2 CCR; Uchil, *Pioneers*, 318.

became white, which was unsuccessfully answered by anthropologist Karen Brodtkin. Indeed, Ellen Eisenberg, building on Goldstein's astute observation of "a complex racial world," demonstrated that Jews living in California, Oregon and Washington State "reflected the peculiarities of a western ethnic landscape in which . . . [they] were part of an 'Anglo' world that was defined, in part, by contrast with Japanese Americans, the region's most conspicuous non-white group."<sup>25</sup>

In a similar way, the racial peculiarities of the Rocky Mountain West most likely meant that some Jews were laying claim to an Anglo identity by contrasting themselves with Mexican Americans—one of the region's most loathed and obvious ethn racial groups. Moreover, in a state like Colorado, which had a recent history of anti-Mexican sentiment, this may have been one of the best ways for Jews to assert membership in the broader pan-ethnic white community and distance themselves from Mexicans. Indeed, during the Great Depression, Governor Edwin Johnson declared martial law along the border with New Mexico and deployed the Colorado National Guard there to keep Mexicans out of the state. In similar acts of illegality and xenophobia, he demanded the expulsion of Mexican beet workers and deported Mexican-American citizens from Colorado Springs. Statewide, relief agencies and county commissioners routinely lamented seeing Spanish surnamed individuals on their roles. In Colorado's schools children of Mexican heritage dealt with racially inflected taunts from Anglo children, ranging from "dirty Mexican" to "greaser." And as one previously demonstrated, Jewish school children were not above using identical racial epithets against Mexican-American classmates. Thus, whenever Jews in Denver engaged in discriminatory acts against Mexican Americans, they were likely laying claim to a decidedly white identity.<sup>26</sup>

However, affirming such an identity held special significance in a city like Denver where there was a history of anti-Semitism. In fact, even well established pioneer Jewish families were not immune from the phenomenon. Amy Salomon, for example, remembered her classmates heaving rocks at her and calling her a Christ killer.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in 1903, a popular Unitarian minister in the city declared, "It's the Jewish race, not the Jewish church that is disliked. If free intermarriage with us [Anglos]

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<sup>25</sup> Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5, 52-55; Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 165-167, 140.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen J. Leonard and Thomas J. Noel, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado), 194.

should be adopted the race hatred would vanish in three generations.”<sup>28</sup> Although disturbing, these were not the worst forms of anti-Semitism that the Mile-High City had to offer.

On Christmas day in 1905—the very same year hundreds of Jews were being massacred in the Russian Empire—a Gentile mob successfully lynched Jacob Weisskind and severely injured Mendel Slotkin.<sup>29</sup> According to the *Aspen Democrat*, “The only excuse for the attack is that the two Jews were working, loading a car with scrap iron instead of resting in observance of the Christmas holiday.”<sup>30</sup> Philip Lynd and Philip Keiser, two Germans, orchestrated the rampage. The mob beat Weisskind and Slotkin with stones, bricks and iron, slashing their faces and breaking their bones; in fact, they “crushed” Weisskind’s skull. While doing this, Lynd and Keiser reportedly yelled out that they were “aveng[ing] the blood of Christ by shedding the blood of . . . Christkillers.”<sup>31</sup> The story made national news two days later when the *Los Angeles Times* remarked that the situation in Denver “seemed just like Russia.”<sup>32</sup> Slotkin recovered from his wounds, but Weisskind died from complications stemming from his head injury on February 14.<sup>33</sup> The *Jewish Outlook*, Denver’s only Jewish weekly at the time, later reported on the trial and conviction of Lynd and Keiser, contrasting in black and white the impassioned pleas of the prosecutor, Greely Whitford, for a verdict of murder in the first degree with the jury’s shocking verdicts of voluntary and involuntary manslaughter.<sup>34</sup> The sentences, four to six years for Lynd and seven months fourteen days for Keiser, were “altogether too light for the grave crime.”<sup>35</sup> A third ringleader, an Irishman by

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<sup>28</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, December 4, 1903, 8. This statement is typical of Progressive era eugenics-based anti-Semitism that advocated Jews’ racial distinctiveness and inferiority. See Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85-111.

<sup>29</sup> According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in order for a lynching to have occurred the following criteria must be met: “There must be evidence that someone was killed; the killing must have occurred illegally; three or more persons must have taken part in the killing; and the killers must have been serving justice or tradition. Cited at Project HAL: Historical American Lynching Data Collection Project, [people.uncw.edu/hinese/HAL/HAL%20Web%20Page.htm](http://people.uncw.edu/hinese/HAL/HAL%20Web%20Page.htm). The best-known instance of a Jew being lynched in American history is that of Leo Frank. Frank, a northern Jew and pencil factory manager, was accused of murdering a teenaged employee, Mary Phagan, in 1913. After his death sentence was commuted by the Governor of Georgia, Frank was dragged from his prison cell and hung. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

<sup>30</sup> *Aspen Democrat*, December 27, 1905, 1

<sup>31</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, May 4, 1906, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1905, 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, February 16, 1906, 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, May 4, 1906, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, May 18, 1906, 6.

the name of Sonny Bohanna, jumped bail shortly after the lynching.<sup>36</sup> In 1907, two more Russian Jews, Michael Weisblye and Tevyah Bokser, were “brutally murdered” on West Colfax. Their assailants, Harold McKnaw and Wilbur F. Gilmer received similarly light sentences.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to these laughable punishments for murder, a Jewish youth by the name of Nathan Goldstein was sentenced to five to ten years in the state penitentiary for petty larceny in 1909. To add insult to injury, the presiding judge claimed that he was being lenient on Goldstein, who was also suffering from a severe case of tuberculosis.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1920s, Denver’s Jews had more reason to feel insecure with the ascendancy of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1925 the mayor of Denver, the state governor, and one U.S. senator were known to be Klansmen. Keenly aware of who wielded power in the Mile-High City, most Jews remained studiously silent in an effort to not incur the wrath of the blatantly anti-Semitic organization. However, this silence did not stop the Klan from boycotting Jewish businesses and parading through the Jewish West Side as they were on their way to burn a cross on Table Mountain above the city of Golden.<sup>39</sup> More tellingly, however, Denver’s most prominent and respected Reform rabbi, William S. Friedman, urged all of his congregants at Temple Emanuel—the city’s largest and oldest synagogue—not to bring attention to themselves while the Klan ruled the city.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Friedman opposed a plan by local attorney Charles Ginsberg to take out an advertisement in the *Denver Post* condemning the Klan’s corruption of the judiciary.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, there was good reason to remain silent and inconspicuous when it came to the Invisible Empire. Indeed, William W. Clawson had cold bloodedly murdered Joseph Zuckerman and been acquitted by a jury of his peers. Reporting on the verdict in 1920, the *Denver Jewish News* declared that it was a “miscarriage of justice.” In the same article, attorney Joseph F. Jaffa remarked: “The season for the ruthless mauling and slaying of Jewish horse and cattle traders and peddlers seems to be an open one in Denver. At least as far back as I can recall it has never been closed.”<sup>42</sup> More than four decades after the trial, however, Ginsberg disclosed that

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<sup>36</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, May 18, 1906, 6. For additional details on the lynching of Weisskind see *Rocky Mountain News*, December 26, 10; *Aspen Democrat*, January 4, 1906, 1. The *News’s* account of the assault on Weisskind and Slotkin numbered the mob at fifteen to twenty men.

<sup>37</sup> *Jewish Outlook*, February 15, 1907, 1; *Jewish Outlook*, May 10, 1907, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Denver Times*, March 6, 1909, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Ginsberg, interview by James Harlan Davis, tape recording, May 5, 1963, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

<sup>40</sup> Phil Goodstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan: When the KKK Ruled Denver, 1920-1926* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2006), 74-77.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Ginsberg interview.

<sup>42</sup> *Denver Jewish News*, May 5, 1920, 1.

the not guilty verdict was attributable to the hooded nature of the judge, jury, and the defendant.<sup>43</sup>

But in more recent memory, Jews were routinely denied membership in many of the elite men's clubs, including the Denver Club, University Club, and Denver Athletic Club. Furthermore, the *News* explicitly linked Jewish children with Mexican children, conjoining them in print and in the minds of thousands of readers. On the other hand, Jews had achieved a great deal of success in the city as prominent businessmen and civic leaders. For example, Edward Monash, David May, and Leopold Goldman had owned extremely successful department stores; Louis Anfenger had made his fortune in banking; and Wolfe Londoner had even been elected mayor of the Mile-High City in 1889. Despite this economic and political success, however, living in close proximity to Mexican Americans, in addition to a conspicuous history of anti-Semitism in the city, must have engendered anxious feelings in Jews, compelling them to wonder where they actually stood in the racial hierarchy of Denver.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that in Perlmutter's report initial rumors about the fight within the Jewish community were circulated with erroneous and inflammatory details of Mexican-American youths knifing Jewish school children—mimicking an Anglo attitude of Mexicans as violent and sinister. In a similar fashion, interviewees in Perlmutter's report also imagined Mexican-American youths with menacing weapons. For example, the Gamzey children, Allan Boxer, and Mrs. Zellinger (the unidentified women in the *News* article who hosed down the combatants) consistently accused Mexican-American students of carrying and using knives, even though no such weapons were actually used or seen during the September 30 melee. In addition to frightening “killing knives,” Perlmutter detailed how Jewish children associated other brutish weapons with overly aggressive Mexican-American youths. “Spanish-American children,” he wrote, “fought with taps on their shoes, chains, boards and buckled belts.” But did this mean, as Perlmutter concluded, that Jewish boys systemically feared their Mexican American peers? If that was the case, then Jewish boys would have most likely avoided physical confrontations with well-armed Mexican-American boys. On the other hand, a

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<sup>43</sup> Charles Ginsberg interview.

<sup>44</sup> Pearl Alperstein, interview by Anna Dean Kepper, tape recording, July 13, 1978, Ira M. Beck Memorial Archives, University of Denver; Sheldon Steinhauser, interview by Michael Lee, digital recording, September 11, 2009; Uchill, *Pioneers*, 94, 144; Breck, *Centennial History*, 120. Londoner, however, was only Jewish by descent. In actuality, he was a member of the Episcopal Church and rarely associated with Denver's Jewish community. Moreover, he was goaded by a local newspaper for his Jewish past during the 1889 election. Finally, Londoner was forced to resign from his office in March 1891 due to acquisitions that the election was fraudulent. See Uchill, *Pioneers*, 146-147.

more likely explanation might be that Jewish boys actively sought out fights with their Mexican-American counterparts in order to assert Jewish, and by extension Anglo dominance over the neighborhood. Had not their fathers achieved similar ends through their businesses and professions, engendering a feeling—although probably unjustified—among Mexican Americans that Jews unfairly overcharged for goods and services in the neighborhood? Moreover, Perlmutter found in a phone interview with Mrs. Zellinger that Jewish boys routinely objected to suggestions of extra police patrols in the area because it might reflect upon them as “sissies.” Allan Boxer, for example, recounted a fight where his mettle as a budding white Jewish male was tested against no less than “15 or 20” Mexican-American boys who ruffed him up in the presence of two girls he was walking home. With regard to the Lake incident itself, it was a Jewish student, Clifton Katz, who had “passed the rumor around the school that Sam Handler [a Jewish boy] had ‘beat up’ Pete Pedilla [a Mexican-American boy],” igniting the series of events that led to the confrontation near Lake. However, this important detail was relayed to Perlmutter with a qualification—that Katz had been ordered by Pedilla to spread the rumor in the first place. So how can this inconsistency be properly reconciled?<sup>45</sup>

It appears that Perlmutter gathered this important piece of information from Saul Gayton, a Mexican-American boy who was friends with Jews in the neighborhood. Gayton characterized himself in the interview as being “on the side of the Jewish boys.” Moreover, Gayton went to great lengths to articulate to Perlmutter the moral depravity of his own Mexican-American peers by stating that they “drink intoxicants whereas the Jewish friends of his do not.” Furthermore, the Jewish boys, according to Gayton, grouped together for protection, not necessarily to attack Mexican-American students. Simply put, Gayton most likely fabricated the detail about Pedilla ordering Katz to spread the gossip in order to shift responsibility onto the Mexican-American participants and away from his Jewish friends, thereby absolving them of any blame. It worked, for Perlmutter underlined this detail in his report and recommended that the League use Gayton “in any school program decided upon by the ADL and the school authorities.” Unsurprisingly, Gayton “impressed” Perlmutter as “an unusually fine young man”; however, this was not because of Gayton’s apparent honesty or decorum, but because he recapitulated a curiously Anglo attitude of defective Mexican morality that was familiar to Perlmutter and other ADL officials. This is by no means a

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<sup>45</sup> Nathan Perlmutter to L.E. Sidman, October 4, 1949, box 2, CCR; Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 81-82; Arnolde De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 87.



suggestion that Gayton wanted to be white, but that his attitudes toward other Mexican Americans closely resembled those of the Jews with whom he associated and called friends. On the other hand, understanding Gayton's mentality is beyond the scope of this study, and speaks more to the state of Mexican-American identity in the postwar period more than anything else. Moreover, Perlmutter might have found Gayton "unusual" simply because he expressed sympathetic attitudes toward Jews.<sup>46</sup>

Although Perlmutter was veiled in his attitudes toward Mexican Americans, other ADL officials in Denver were not. For example, in a confidential letter to his personal files J. Peter Brunswick remarked:

As a reaction to the treatment and position of the Jewish child, [better socioeconomic status] the Spanish American child manifests an aggression complex, which is the result of his subconscious feeling of inferiority. . . . It is obvious that the low academic quotient is a result of a lack of appreciation of education and school. It may be safely assumed that few of the Spanish-American children are being kept home to study, by their parents, who in most cases, are even less educated than their children.<sup>47</sup>

Historian Arnoldo De León found that Anglos in Texas systematically viewed Mexican culture as "backward," "primitive," and "firmly against innovation." Moreover, De León continued, Anglos habitually identified "Mexican sections of urban areas with vice, licentiousness, and moral degradation." But most importantly, as one alluded to earlier, there was a long-standing Anglo tradition in the West of perceiving Mexicans as cruel and naturally inclined to violence. For example, stories of Mexican atrocities against whites in the Lone Star State were common, usually stirring up passionate feelings of revenge among white populations. Furthermore, Sarah Deutsch found that the exact same stereotypes pervaded in Colorado. "Visions of lawless and irresponsible hordes," she wrote, "visions unanchored by statistics, floated in the public mind." Therefore, in a broader historical context, Jews' attitudes toward Mexicans in Denver were remarkably similar to their Anglo contemporaries.<sup>48</sup>

Despite this pervasively negative attitude toward Mexicans, Perlmutter and other ADL officials did recognize that there was a severe problem between the two groups and that something had to be done about it; whether Jews were at least partly to blame for the situation was

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<sup>46</sup> Nathan Perlmutter to L.E. Sidman, October 4, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>47</sup> J. Peter Brunswick to Files, October 4, 1949, box 2, CCR.

<sup>48</sup> De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 31, 46, 87-103; Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 151-152.

another story. Regardless, the next step in dealing with the neighborhood's interracial tension and violence went beyond conducting interviews, or even the writing of detailed reports, (which the ADL was quite good at). Indeed, it took the form of an interracial neighborhood council where Jews, Mexican Americans, and Anglos could meet, talk, and "develop better understandings . . . between pupils, teachers, parents and other people in the Lake community."<sup>49</sup>

Established in November of 1949, the Lake Junior High School Human Relations Council (LHRC) was emblematic of a national trend that historian Stuart Svonkin identified as the "intergroup relations movement." This movement developed a set of principles that advocated "improved relations among racial, ethnic, and religious groups"; equal opportunity for all groups"; and "improvement of the quality of life within these groups." Within this multiethnic movement, Svonkin continued, "Jewish organizations played the leading role in defining . . . tactics and objectives." For example, in the aftermath of the 1943 Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles (a severe outbreak of anti-Mexican sentiment), the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles led the way in fostering productive partnerships between ethnic groups in the city. And in other western cities, such as San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland, Jews spearheaded the formation of committees and councils that advocated equality and cooperation. Furthermore, secular Jewish agencies like the ADL and the American Jewish Committee, which had originally been created to combat anti-Semitism, even embraced the principles of the intergroup relations movement by reaching out to African Americans and other groups in order to combat discrimination in housing, education and employment. And for those secular Jewish agencies in particular, the struggle against anti-Semitism was strongly associated with the struggle against all forms of prejudice; in essence, what affected one group affected all groups.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, as Svonkin has observed, the staff members of these Jewish agencies and other intergroup relations organizations also believed that eradicating social conflict benefited the country as a whole. In essence, fostering harmonious intergroup relations during World War II and into the Cold War period meant undermining the enemies of democracy both domestically and internationally. Therefore, although Jews stridently contrasted themselves with Mexican Americans, this did not necessarily preclude a powerful ideological desire, especially among

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<sup>49</sup> Principal's Report and Recommendations to the Lake Human Relations Council, March 2, 1950, box 2, CCR.

<sup>50</sup> Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1,2, 28; Eisenberg, *First to Cry Down*, 154, 155. I established the approximate date of formation for the LHRC by using the three remaining minutes of the organization and the *Intermountain Jewish News*.

members of secular Jewish agencies like the ADL, to establish peace, understanding and “inter-racial friendship” in the community. This meant that an ADL official like Brunswick could privately harbor ill will toward Mexicans, but simultaneously believe that it was his patriotic duty as an American to foster interracial tranquility in the neighborhood. In fact, Brunswick served as the ADL’s representative on the LHRC.<sup>51</sup>

Evidence suggests that the ADL, along with other ethnic and religious advocacy agencies in Denver, played an important role in guiding the LHRC in its program of intergroup relations at Lake. The few surviving minutes from the LHRC and records from the ADL hint at a bifurcated approach to the problems at the school: a sociological study of the area and activities that fostered harmony and understanding between groups. As was indicative of intergroup relations organizations of the period, the LHRC employed “scientific research to analyze and counteract ethnic, religious, and racial bigotry.” In other words, the approach to eradicating prejudice was similar to fighting a virulent disease, such as tuberculosis or polio. For example, the LHRC, in conjunction with its member organizations, which consisted of the ADL, the Mayor’s Human Relations Commission, the Denver Unity Council, the Latin American Education Council, Denver Public Schools (DPS), and the Urban League, developed a comprehensive survey to measure “the basic intercultural problems in the community and to chart the course of action in their solution.” Although the raw data and conclusions from this study are likely lost, a surviving copy of the questionnaire sent out to Lake’s parents provides some idea as to how the LHRC and its members approached the difficulties at Lake. Many of the questions posed by the survey focused on the possible causes of conflict within the community; for example, lack of good parenting, the staff at Lake, socioeconomic disparities, and ethnoreligious misunderstanding. Still other queries asked how those problems could be best addressed. Some of the solutions, for instance, ranged from increased police patrols to more activities that encouraged intergroup understanding. The study’s findings, it is reasonable to conclude, were put to good use by the LHRC and its member organizations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 5; *Intermountain Jewish News*, October 6, 1949, 1; Lake Junior High School Human Relations Council Minutes, March 2, 1950, box 2.

<sup>52</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 4, 30. The Mayor’s Human Relations Committee/Commission was formed by Mayor Quigg Newton in 1947 to study the socioeconomic conditions of Denver’s minorities. The Latin American Education Council, later renamed the Latin American Education Fund, was established in Denver in 1949 to provide grants and loans to Mexican-American youths who were college bound. The Denver branch of the Urban League was established in 1947 for the economic and social improvement of African Americans. See James A. Atkins, *Human Relations in Colorado: A Historical Record* (Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 1968), 159-162, 219, 135-141. Well-to-do African Americans and whites in the city organized the Denver Unity Council in 1944. Like many intergroup agencies

By September 1950, the *Intermountain Jewish News* reported that conditions at Lake had markedly improved since the previous year's violence. DPS made physical improvements to the school, and extra "athletic facilities and equipment are planned." Moreover, representatives from the LHRC told the *Intermountain Jewish News* that teachers at Lake were making efforts at "better understanding" between students by "pointing out the contributions of various racial and religious groups at every opportunity." Bert Levin, a Jewish student at Lake, "opined that assemblies dealing with interracial relations last year 'did a lot of good. As you go thru Lake . . . you make these kids your friends,' referring to boys and girls of other faiths." However, other students at the school, including Connie Martinez and Freyda Blumberg were more reluctant, cautioning that interracial cooperation and understanding should be allowed to grow naturally and not be forced. But forced it was.<sup>53</sup>

In conjunction with DPS, the ADL championed joint observances of Chanukah and Christmas at Lake and other schools within the district. Michael L. Freed, mountain states regional director of the ADL, expressed to Harry Nicholson, Lake's principal, his "gratification over your splendid joint observance I was privileged to witness yesterday. In my opinion it reflected a fine understanding about, and keen sensitivity of, the many complex problems inherent in the subject matter." In fact, throughout the country the ADL and other Jewish organizations were advocating for joint observances of Christmas and Chanukah in order to build harmony and intergroup understanding. In Elizabeth, New Jersey, for example, the *National Jewish Post* reported that a Reform temple, Beth El, had "launched the community's first Hanukah workshop for public school principals and teachers" to learn the history and customs of the Festival of Lights. It is fair to assume that programs such as the ones described above played an important role in easing intergroup tension at Lake and other schools in Denver and across the country. However, of more consequence to this case study was the movement of Jews out of the West Side, which likely brought about a gradual end to the interracial tension and violence between the two groups and to the LHRC.<sup>54</sup>

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of this period, its goal was to fight for the equality of all citizens, regardless of race. See Nina Mjagkiji, *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopdia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 213. Principal's Report and Recommendations to the Lake Human Relations Council, March 2, 1950, box 2, CCR; Lake Junior High School Questionnaire for Parents, May 29, 1950, box 2, CCR.

<sup>53</sup> *Intermountain Jewish News*, September 5, 1950, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Michael L. Freed to Harry Nicholson, December 20, 1951, folder 2, box 11, The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Lodge 171, Ira M. Beck Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver (hereafter cited as ADL); *National Jewish Post*, November 28, 1952, clipping, folder 3, box 11, ADL. For a summation of joint observances in Denver see Christmas-Chanukah Observances: The Denver Experiment,

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Jews on the West Side began to abandon their older homes for the newer, whiter, and more fashionable neighborhood of Hilltop in southeastern Denver. Indeed, by 1964 the West Side's only Jewish community center, the Guldman Center, had been shutdown and a new one established near Hilltop. On the other hand, for those Jews who could not afford to move or chose to stay, they found that they had to adapt in the wake of a rapidly changing West Side. For example, Phil's Grocery, a fixture in the neighborhood since the late 1940s, began to sell Mexican food alongside Jewish food. Moreover, a Spanish language newspaper in Denver honored Phil Rosen, the proprietor of the establishment, for his "fairness and concern for his customers"—a noticeable change from previous accusations of Jewish merchants preying on economically vulnerable Mexicans.<sup>55</sup>

But even though individual Jews and their families were moving out of the West Side, signaling their literal geographic movement into white Denver, this did not mean that secular Jewish agencies like the ADL and the American Jewish Committee were abandoning their intergroup relations principles or forgetting the social and economic plight of Mexican Americans. In fact, the rise of the Chicano Movement in Denver and across the West during the late 1960s and early 1970s meant that those agencies would utilize their resources in an important effort to advocate directly on behalf of Mexican Americans—primarily through the development and implementation of educational programming in secondary school and college curriculums and by founding, financing, and administratively supporting Mexican-American organizations. For example, in the late 1960s the ADL launched "Project Mexican American" in an effort to eradicate cultural insensitivity toward Mexican Americans in western school districts and colleges. And the American Jewish Committee helped found Centro Cultural, a Mexican-American civil rights agency in Denver.<sup>56</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The 1949 gang battle, the ADL's response to it through the LHRC, and a very real history of anti-Semitism, suggest that Denver's Jews were not as at home in their scenic Rocky Mountain setting as previously thought; in fact, evidence suggests that they were "uneasy at home." To be sure, Jews had achieved a great degree of political, professional and

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Draft of Talk given at Temple Men's Club, Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, March 7, 1956, folder 6, Box 11, ADL.

<sup>55</sup> Uchill, *Pioneers*, 317-318; Phil Goodstein, *Exploring Jewish Colorado* (Denver: The Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society, 1992), 58; Zelinger, *West Side Story*, 77.

<sup>56</sup> See file folder 11, Box 18, ADL for a full account of "Project Mexican"; *Intermountain Jewish News*, February 14, 1969, 12.

economic success in Denver, helping to build a remarkable city. However, that outward veneer of success and self-assuredness did not necessarily guarantee that Jews felt inwardly secure about their place in the city. Indeed, that internal insecurity occasionally manifested itself in the form of behavior and language that stridently contrasted Jews with Mexican Americans. Furthermore, exclusion from elite men's clubs, being called Christ killers, stoning at school, instances of murder and outright lynching, all created a painful memory of anti-Semitism within the city's Jewry. Compounding this situation was also the Jewish West Side's proximity to a growing Mexican-American enclave, which only intensified the desire for distancing. Moreover, even ADL officials succumbed to this phenomenon, manufacturing contrasts with Mexican Americans, especially by pointing out perceived psychological deficiencies. This palpable uneasiness, one suggests, only made Jews on the West Side breathe deeper the toxic fumes of anti-Mexican sentiment that existed in Denver, Colorado and the West—all in an effort to shape a racial identity that was more Anglo than Other.<sup>57</sup>

However, intergroup relations principles, combined with an acute crisis and embarrassing press coverage, required Jews to work toward some kind of cooperation with their Mexican-American neighbors, allowing for the organization of an interracial council that was devoted to reestablishing calm on the West Side. Nevertheless, it was those very same principles that permitted Jews like J. Peter Brunswick to inwardly harbor scorn toward Mexican Americans, but outwardly serve on councils with them in the spirit of cooperation. Indeed, cooperating with Mexican Americans during the 1940s and 1950s was primarily in the interest of domestic tranquility and fighting anti-Semitism, not necessarily to better the condition of Mexican Americans in Denver; in fact, if that occurred, then it was a bonus, but not an intended goal. And it would not be until the 1960s and 1970s, when most Jews had left the West Side, that secular Jewish agencies would actually fight against prejudice towards Mexican Americans, particularly in the schools.

Such motivations, however, did not diminish the fact that the ADL and the LHRC had improved conditions at Lake and other schools, chiefly through scientific surveys and joint observances of Christmas and Chanukah. But it is hard to deny that by the late 1950s Jews were beginning their exodus from the West Side, constructing the most powerful barrier of all between themselves and Mexican Americans—that of physical separateness and segregated neighborhoods. What had once only existed in the mind now became an unbridgeable reality.

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<sup>57</sup> The quoted phrase is from Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

Finally, this article has endeavored to go beyond the optimistic and triumphal tone of many historians in western American Jewish history, or American Jewish history for that matter, and inject an element of healthy skepticism—a skepticism of how truly “minimal” or relatively absent “overt” anti-Semitism was in the West; and a skepticism of how really self-assured western Jewish populations actually were. While this article has examined just one instance of Jewish insecurity, it suggests that certain aspects of Jewish life in the West were not that different from the crowded, contested and sometimes violent and cruel urban spaces of the East.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Abrams, *Jewish Women*, 11, 181. Moses Rischin and John Livingston suggest the same in *Jews of the American West*. For interpretations of American Jewish history that examine themes of conflict, ambivalence and anxiety see Tony E. Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Ethnicity 1950-1970* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse State University Press, 2001); Lederhendler, “The New Filiopietism, or Toward a New History of Jewish Immigration to America,” *American Jewish History* 93 (Mar. 2007): 1-20; Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*; and Gil Ribak, “‘They are slitting the Throats of Jewish Children’: The 1906 New York School Riots and Contending Images of Gentiles,” *American Jewish History* 94 (Sept. 2008): 175-196.





# BLACK POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND POLITICAL RAP MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

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In 2005, Chicagoan rap artist Kanye West, one of Hip-Hop's most defiant and politically incorrect rappers, decided to deviate from the teleprompter before him and instead voice his opinion on live television during a fundraiser to raise money for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, and the rebuilding of New Orleans. When it was his turn to speak, West publicly stated "George Bush doesn't like Black people." The shocking comment caught the co-host of the telethon, Michael Myers, and the producers by surprise. After days of watching Black people in New Orleans wade through filthy water, beg to be saved from their flooded homes and be referred to as "refugees" West was simply stating the opinion of many Blacks. From West's and many other Black Americans' perspective the government could not possibly care about the displacement and agony that victims of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans experienced based on its response. West identified former President Bush as the main culprit because he, as the nation's chief executive, represented the head of the American government. While the lack of efficient government response to its citizens shocked the world, many African Americans viewed the Federal Emergency Management Agency's inept response as simply another link in the chain of political exclusion, lack of support and disregard experienced by a marginalized community. Even before West made his statement, the slow response had been framed as a racial and class issue. In homes, barbershops, beauty salons, around water coolers and other gathering spots the sentiment was that if the disaster had occurred in a city where the majority residents affected had been White and middle class, the response would have been completely different.<sup>2</sup>

West was following a tradition of musicians who used their popularity and celebrity status to speak for those whose voices and concerns are often not considered (Iton, 2008). From Scott Joplin to Marvin Gaye to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/09/03/katrina/main814623.shtml>

now, Kanye West, there has been a history of African American celebrities utilizing their notoriety to demand a seat at the political table to advocate against injustice and provide a voice for the voiceless. Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" about the lynching of Blacks or Same Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come" are examples of discussing the government's lack of response to African Americans in a time of need. Thus, Blacks have used both overt and covert measures to resist injustice and demand equality.

It is posited that "Black music may be viewed as a symbolization of the Black experience" (Walker 1975, 2). One can gain an understanding of the various struggles and issues encountered by Blacks throughout their history in America by studying various forms of Black music during different eras. Culture, specifically Black music, historically, has been a resistance mechanism that Blacks utilized to assert their visibility in arenas in which majority players deemed them invisible. Blacks have used culture to disseminate information, increase solidarity, fight against injustice and maintain political and social movements. Culture has allowed those who typically do not have a voice to assert their demands in political and social spheres from which they were systematically ostracized. Music in the Black community has always represented a counter-public for the ideas and attitudes of this community and has been significant to resistance struggles for African Americans (Spence 2011; Ogbar 2007; Levine 2006; Norfleet 2006; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Pough 2004). However, one may question is there a particular Black ideology presented within political rap songs? I argue that yes, Black Nationalism is a dominant ideology presented within rap songs and this can be observed by analyzing political rap lyrics. This article examines the relationship between music and attitudes by observing the Black Nationalist attitudes presented in political rap songs.

#### RAP MUSIC

The oral tradition has been used regularly in the Black community as a means to articulate feelings and attitudes of members of the Black community. Out of this oral tradition arose one of the most influential music genres, rap music. It is widely concluded that rap music began with the Last Poets and the poetry of Gil Scott-Heron in the early 1970's (Allen 1996; Ards 2004; Henderson 1996). The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron incorporated unique styles in which they recited poetry over musical beats. While this style can be described as one of the foundations of modern rap many will trace the style of rap back further to the oral tradition of African griots and Black leaders (Kitwana 2002). Additionally, in rap there is a direct connection with the oral rhetoric of prominent Black leaders, demonstrating its commitment to the oral tradition.

Rap is defined as “a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music” and “a Black cultural expression that prioritizes Black voices from the margins of urban America” (Rose 1994, 2). Similarly, Lusane (2004) defines rap as “. . .the voice of the alienated, frustrated and rebellious Black youth who recognize their vulnerability and marginality in post-industrial America” (351). It is asserted that “members of the Hip-Hop movement started their disruption by making music and creating spaces for themselves when everything around them suggested exclusion” (Pough 2004, 287). Therefore, rap music was one avenue for marginalized African Americans to voice their discontent and present issues relevant to their segment of the population. Rap was largely a type of party music where the main emphasis was on the creativity of the disc-jockey (Rose, 1994). However, rap began to change and “no longer was it simply ‘party’ music but had taken on the character of a . . . political movement that embraced themes of Black Nationalism” (Southern 1997, 600).

From its beginnings in New York, rap has been a vehicle for the young and disenfranchised. Early on it provided dispatches from America’s crumbling inner cities ravaged by crack cocaine, violence and apathy from elected officials. It has evolved into a multi-billion dollar industry, whose stars accumulate wealth its pioneers could only have imagined. Rap is used to sell everything from Hillshire Farms meat to sneakers and cars (Ogbar 2007). Yet in 2013, the political and economic circumstances which gave rise to this music genre persist.

Political rap, a subgenre of the larger rap genre, follows the model of uniting African Americans through music by discussing issues relevant to the Black community and providing information about injustices the community members face. Rap in general is influential. Michael Dawson (1999) states, “. . . rap has become an integral part of a grapevine that is constantly critiquing the state of American race relations” (322). Similarly, the music of the Hip-Hop generation is critical for knowledge, awareness, mobilization and action. Rap has a future as a political agent. In fact, Gwendolyn Pough (2004) contends that “. . .rap’s ability to move the crowd has the possibility to do more than make them dance; it could very well be used to spark political activism” (194). However, it has been debated how much of an impact music has on the political attitudes of a listener (Henry 1990).

For example, Lester Spence (2011) argues that rap does impact Black political attitudes but not always in the direction proponents of Hip-Hop suggest. Spence argues that there is a relationship between rap consumption and support of Black Nationalist tenets as well as a heightened criticism of the American legal system. He also concludes that those who consume rap are more xenophobic (Spence 2011). Similarly,

Cathy Cohen (2010) finds in her research that exposure to rap music also impacts the political attitudes of youth. Specifically, those who are exposed to rap assert more alienation from the political system but many youth do not think that rap music should be more political (Cohen 2010). These analyses are excellent and represent initial examinations of the influence of rap on political attitudes; however, this research does lack a crucial element that will allow political scientists, politicians and music artists to make a more concrete decision about how much rap music has an influence on political attitudes and that is the differentiation of sub-genres of rap music. One cannot discuss rap as if it is a homogenous genre espousing one set of views and attitudes. Like the Black community, there are variations within Hip-Hop that demand separate analysis of its influence on political attitudes. Rap, depending upon the song produced and the lyrics created, can have various effects on the political attitudes and behaviors of the Black community.

#### MUSIC AS RESISTANCE

Culture is often used to resist dominant ideologies and oppressive situations (Davis 1989; Martinez 1997; Mitchell and Feagin 1995; Zillman et al. 1995). Culture was and continues to be a resistance mechanism utilized by Blacks in America since slavery. Researchers have argued that as they toiled, "through songs slaves could comment on their problems. . .they could voice their despair and hopes and assert their humanity in an environment that constantly denied their humanness" (Southern 1997, 156). Enslaved Africans instituted a system of hidden transcripts through culture including music to resist (Southern 1997; Neal 1999).

Music continued its strong relationship between African American suffering, oppression and fight for political inclusion during the Civil Rights era. Black music became more popular among mainstream American audiences because of its political emphasis on the future. Many artists used their songs to give commentary on the issues of the day. For instance, in "Mississippi Goddamn!" singer Nina Simone vented her outrage about the deaths of four little girls in a Birmingham church and other violent acts committed against Blacks in the South (Neal 1999). Music not only provided information and attitudes but it also encouraged dedication, loyalty and persistence during the difficult, contentious times of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) (Morris 1984) Accounts of the CRM detail the use of music to motivate marchers and reinforce non-violent responses, raise consciousness, provide comfort during times of incarceration, murder and violence and to express emotions during times of pain, suffering, sadness, joy and celebration (Morris 1984; Garofalo 1992). Following the CRM, artists continued to write

and produce political and socially conscious songs which took a stance against poverty in America, war, cultural pride, determination and segregation as exemplified with Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On," and "Inner City Blues" and Curtis Mayfield's "Keep on Pushing" and "We People Who are Darker than Blue" (Neal 1999). Songs such as James Brown's "Say it Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud" not only served as background music for the Black Power movement within the Black community, but also increased racial solidarity and consciousness among African Americans (Walker 1975).

#### BRING THE PAIN: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES WITHIN HIP-HOP

There are numerous examples in the Hip-Hop community of using rap music to identify and discuss discrimination, poverty, racism, police brutality and other social ills. One song to do this has often been labeled the first political rap song, "The Message," by rap group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (Neal 2004). This song described the reality for many living in urban communities. In this song the artists describe aspects of their lives in urban communities. They comment on the effects of living in harsh impoverished neighborhoods and the impact these conditions have on a person's emotional and mental well-being (Southern 1997). Similar to the previous Bebop era, rap music emerged as a response to the injustices felt in urban communities, primarily in the north.<sup>3</sup>

Using rap to detail the reality of life for many urban Black Americans was necessary as the images propagated in mainstream media only presented a "prototypical" Black character eliminating a diversity of experiences, thoughts and behaviors of urban youth (Neal 2004). Rap has literally brought a voice to a segment of the community that was often alienated and dismissed. Rap allows urban youth to detail their stories and lives from their perspective instead of seeing distorted images of themselves in media, by politicians and through other leaders (Allen 1996; Norfleet 2006; Pough 2004; Rose 1994).

Rap brings alternate images and relevant issues for people of color to the attention of larger society. However, these images may not have been received by mainstream America during the time because of the marginalization of this segment of the community. Hancock (2004) explains this form of silence by asserting that "members of marginal groups, even when granted the power of speech, find their voices deval-

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<sup>3</sup> In Cathy Cohen's *Boundaries of Blackness* (1999) she details the concept of marginalization. Stating that marginal groups are "those who exist politically, socially or economically outside of dominant norms and institutions" (Cohen 1999, 37). It can be argued that this marginalization became more evident because of the increased geographical marginalization as a result of the increased poverty in America.

ued or disrespected, increasing their isolation and alienation from the public sphere” (4). The form of devaluation Hancock describes is prevalent in rap music as observed by the numerous discussions to censor rap as well as deem it as an illogical, turbulent, nihilistic musical form (Carpentier, Knobloch & Zillman 2003; Johnson, Jackson & Gatto 1995; Johnson, Trawalter & Dovidio 2000; Rubin, West & Mitchell 2001). Observing that music has played an important role in delivering information in the Black community, as a form of resistance throughout American history and as force to raise consciousness, it can be speculated how music affects the Black community politically.

#### KNOWING POLITICAL RAP WHEN YOU SEE IT

Rap covers a broad spectrum of musical styles. Some rap forms may transcend two or more genres. For instance, some rappers may produce songs that are both political and “gangster” such as artists Niggas With Attitude (NWA), who elaborate on social issues in one track and in the following track, have a song that objectifies women or presents nihilistic attitudes. Political rap is only a component of the larger rap music genre. Identifying a subgenre is essential for the understanding of the impact of media art forms on political attitude acceptance.

Describing political music, some have grouped political songs with socially relevant songs and labeled them message songs.<sup>4</sup> Another method is to simply refer to artists who have made some political songs and group the artists into a political category (Allen 1996; Decker 1993; Perry 2004; Rose 1994). I, on the other hand, do not categorize artists. It is my belief that musicians change and grow and they cannot be confined to any specific label. Therefore, an artist such as Trick Daddy who began his career rapping with Luke,<sup>5</sup> and classifies himself as a “thug<sup>6</sup>” also creates political songs such as “America” and “Thug Holiday.”<sup>7</sup> For this reason my basis of examination are the songs and not the artists. Using the songs will allow for inclusion of political rap songs from artists who are not known for producing political rap music. This categorization gives rappers flexibility while still allowing recognition for political participation through their voice. Similarly, Mark Anthony Neal (2006) describes political songs as songs “. . .that contained distinct po-

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Walker (1976) states in his dissertation on Black music and society that message songs are “songs which symbolized solidarity by relating in a specific way” to one or more solidarity dimensions (p. 7).

<sup>5</sup> Luke is a popular artist who was often criticized because of his lewd language but he is widely known for his creation of bass music. This type of music emphasizes sexual contact with underlining bass beats that are often used as party songs in the south.

<sup>6</sup> This classification is indicated by his album titles, *Book of Thugs* and *Thug Holiday*.

<sup>7</sup> This song is political because it makes reference to politics and also discusses a social problem thereby satisfying two criteria of the definition.

litical commentary. . .” (624). Nevertheless, I argue that political rap is more complicated than simply containing a political reference or commentary. I assert that the inclusion of political references is essential to identifying political songs, but these political references must be accompanied by other criteria in order to be considered a political rap song.

While a lot of scholars discuss the existence and importance of political music, conscious or “message” rap has not been defined by any scholar. Case in point, Ernest Allen Jr., (1996) posits that political rap does exist and it has a direct connection to two important nationalist sects, The Nation of Gods and Earths and the Nation of Islam.<sup>8</sup> He also suggests as does Errol Henderson (1996) that message or nationalist rap has contributed to greater political and racial consciousness. However, neither of these authors define political rap although both of them give examples of rappers they consider present political lyrics. Decker comes the closest to an actual definition of political rap when he divides rap into two subgenres, Afrocentric Nationalism and what he calls, a sixties-inspired Nationalism.<sup>9</sup> However, this categorization is limited only to rappers who espouse a Black Nationalist ideology or Black Nationalist themes. Is it possible for rap artists to present political attitudes other than those typically associated with Black Nationalism? If so, how should those songs be categorized? Are they no longer political? I offer a different criterion for identifying and classifying political rap songs.

My criterion for identifying political rap was developed initially by using those artists who were referenced as political or message rappers. Next, I have taken into consideration the varied vague categorizations presented in the literature and the specific definition asserted by Neal and the Centre for Political Song that suggests a political song must have a political reference. Finally, I use a previous categorization that was used to identify message music of the civil rights and the Black Power era by Robert Walker. Walker used three main criteria to identify message songs, which includes 1) songs with implicit or explicit ethnic symbols

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<sup>8</sup> Allen asserts that there are three categories for political rap, “. . . (1) the Islamic nationalist orientation of rappers such as Pete Rock and C.L. Smooth. . . (2) the cultural-political nationalism of Public Enemy. . . and (3) specific, message-oriented expressions embedded in the more earthy gangsta rap. . .”(Allen 1996, 162).

<sup>9</sup> Afrocentric Nationalism is more culturally based using Africa, specifically Egypt, as the foundation for Black culture. Decker asserts that Afrocentric Nationalist songs are songs that emphasize African culture with emphasis on specific countries the most popular being Egypt (Decker 1993). In contrast, the sixties-inspired Nationalism focuses more on political and social power. In these songs the artists supports and present rhetoric that was popular during the 60s and early 70s. These groups present Black power attitudes and ideas. He asserts that these types of nationalisms are separated by whether the ideas were extensions of 1960s nationalist rhetoric or whether one agrees that Egypt is the original site of Black culture. He separates these genres by differentiating between time (1960s) and space (Egypt) (Decker 1993).

2) references “social class problems. . .” and 3) those that refer “to groups other than ethnic or social class. . .” (Walker 1975, 39).

My categorization of political rap is similar to Walker’s classification of message songs while I make an original contribution to the discussions of “message” songs by including rap as a genre of interest and emphasizing political references compared to sociological references. While messages are asserted in many political rap songs, a song is only political if it displays an implicit or explicit political reference in the lyrics in addition to satisfying one of two of the other criteria. This prioritization of political references also distinguishes my definition from other attempts to categorize rap as message rap. Therefore, political rap is rap music that must include the first criteria as well as contain either the second or third criteria below:

*The Criterion: Knowing Political Rap When you Encounter It*

1. Display political references in the lyrics, such as directly referencing a political leader, political office/institution, political activity, political events or political position.
2. Make reference to a social problem or issue and discuss it in the lyrics, therefore raising awareness about specific issues or disparities nationally or globally by discussing those issues in lyrics.
3. Advocate a solution to injustices or problems in society either through violent or non-violent means.

The song by popular rap artist Nas, “I Want to Talk to You,” if examined based on my criteria, is political rap song. We can observe how it fits the categorization and label of political rap song by observing the chorus and a couple of additional lines from the song. In the chorus Nas raps,

I wanna talk to the mayor, the governor, the  
motherfucking president  
I wanna talk to the FBI, and the CIA, and the  
motherfucking congressman<sup>10</sup>

Here Nas references the mayor, the governor, the president and other political organizations and positions. This song satisfies the first condition by displaying political references. These political references are explicit references. All political references may not be explicit. Sometimes the political references will be implicit using coded language

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<sup>10</sup> Lyrics found from [www.ohhla.com](http://www.ohhla.com)



or a “hidden transcript,” a popular element of Black vernacular, such as references to the system, the man, or other coded words (Scott, 1990; Gates & McKay, 1997). When coded words are present the decoding is left to the listener to interpret the meaning of the sequence of words and the context in which they are used. Thus, when words are coded it may require more interpretation. Having satisfied the first criteria in order for this song to receive the label of a political rap song at least one of the other criteria must be met. This song goes on to satisfy the second criteria in the second verse where Nas rhymes:

Mr. Mayor imagine if this was your backyard  
 Mr. Governor imagine if it was your kids that starved  
 Imagine your kids gotta sling crack to survive

In this verse Nas comments on the social condition of poverty in America and what he feels is one of the options of survival for many young Black Americans, namely participating in the illegal drug market by asking politicians how they would feel and react if their children were subjected to that reality of life. With these three lines Nas has satisfied the second category of this criterion by making a reference to poverty, a social condition and discussing it in the lyrics. However, Nas’ song is rare because it also satisfies the third condition with the following verse:

I wanna talk to the man understand  
 Understand this motherfucking G-pack in my hand

In this verse Nas is conveying that he will use weapons or any means to make sure he is heard by those political leaders or have access to them. Simply attempting to talk to those in higher positions about the situations of many African Americans is an example of presenting some solution to the injustice he sees in society. However, he is also advocating a call to arms in efforts to be heard by the various political institutions and politicians.

This political rap categorization is not a catch all criteria. Some songs that may be classified as message songs are not political. Understanding that there are differences in subgenres of rap and that rap music exposure impacts attitudes, it is essential to classify different subgenres of rap music in order to examine what affects the different subgenres have on various attitudes. For instance, we know that gangsta rap leads to more violent and nihilistic behavior and attitudes but how does political rap impact political attitudes (Johnson et al 1995)? What political messages are presented in political rap songs? Being able to identify political rap songs will help us in understanding which Black political ideologies are asserted within political rap songs, a specific subgenre of the rap genre. Having established a criteria to identify political rap, I next turn to the political ideology that is the most prominent within rap

music, Black Nationalism (Allen 1996; Henderson 1996; Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2004 and Spence 2012).

### BLACK NATIONALISM

Black Nationalism is a very old ideology that has survived through generational shifts, staying mostly intact through existing and past refinements and definitions. Some facets of Black Nationalism are a belief in self reliance, self determination, and community control (Brown & Shaw 2002; Davis & Brown 2002; Henderson 1996; Hill-Collins 2006). Black Nationalism as an ideology comprises a set of beliefs that articulate the need for the cultural, political, and economic independence of African Americans (Karenga 2002). Black Nationalism can be defined as “a body of social thought, attitudes and actions ranging from the simplest expressions of [Black] ethnocentrism and racial solidarity to the comprehensive and sophisticated ideologies of Pan-Negroism or Pan Africanism” (Bracey, Meier & Rudwick 1970, xxvi). As Dawson (1994) explained “the core concepts behind Black nationalism have historically been the development of independent political strategies, Black and African culture, economic independence, and an African American land base” (188). Davis and Brown (2002) contend that “nationalism is a system of thought that contains two components: a sense of political solidarity, consciousness of identity, or a common purpose; and a desire and striving for political self-determination” (240). Similarly Hill-Collins (2006) asserts that nationalism requires the ideas of self-reliance, self-determination and self-definition. Its highly racialized agenda makes it one of the dominant ideologies in Black political thought (Walton 1985; Dawson 2001).

Why Black Nationalism? First, because as Alexander-Floyd (2007) and others state, Black Nationalism is “the dominant ideology in contemporary Black Politics,” hence it should also be an ideology represented in the smaller rap community (3). Second, being a Black Nationalist makes one more aware of and engaged in issues that affect the Black community. The newly acquired interest that results from Black Nationalist attitudes makes the supporters of these attitudes concerned about political and social issues in their communities which affect political behavior and participation. Finally, according to Lusane (2004) “the dominant ideological trend of the rappers is Black Nationalism” (355). Consequently, many rappers adhere to Black Nationalist ideology that is advanced through the teachings of the Nation of Gods and Earths (NOG&E), popularly known as the Five Percenters (Miyakawa 2005; Norfleet 2006). In fact, it has been asserted that the Five Percenters deliberately used rap as a means of disseminating their culture, ideas and beliefs (Perry 2004). With many of the artists abiding by Black Nationalist ideology plus the

continuous references in rap music to Black Nationalist ideology, it is reasonable to expect that Black Nationalism will be a supported and accepted ideology to those who listen to rap and particularly the subgenre of political rap.

A lot of Black Nationalist sentiments that are presented in rap songs may not be as blatant as direct references to Black Nationalist leaders, or “. . .repetitive soundbites from Malcolm X. . .or Louis Farrakhan strewn together” (Allen 1996, 161). Sometimes the allusions are to Black Nationalist attitudes such as self reliance, self determination, and racial solidarity which include identifying injustices to African Americans. It is easier to identify Black Nationalist references in rap songs that specifically identify Black Nationalist leaders. For instance, in his song “Thug Holiday”, Trick Daddy references Black Nationalist leaders Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. He states,

And, I read your books know all the remixes to the  
bible  
What about a verse for the thugs, a cure for drugs and  
survival  
Let's add some chapters name them Martin, Malcolm  
and Farrakhan

Similarly, the rap group Wu-Tang Clan also presented Black Nationalist attitudes by directly mentioning Black Nationalist leaders. This song that features popular blaxplantation musical artist Isaac Hayes, “I Can’t go to Sleep,” opens by discussing police brutality, racial profiling and interactions with the criminal justice system because of drugs in their community, specifically crack cocaine and the possible government involvement with crack being in the Black community. The second verse deals with political assassinations and exportation of individuals known to be proponents of Black’s civil rights. Based on the lyrics by rapper RZA (pronounced rizzah), the listener is informed about politically related assassinations.

These lyrics make specific references to three Black Nationalist leaders, Clarence the 13th X, Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey. The song describes the fate of these nationalist leaders as well as other leaders who were involved in the progression of race relations in the United States.<sup>11</sup> In this verse the listener is prompted to recall famous Black leaders. The first leader referenced is Clarence 13th X, who is known as the founder of the religious sect, the Nation of Gods and Earths (NG&E) and was

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<sup>11</sup> The reference to the father in the above verse is referencing Clarence the 13th X who is known as the father of the Nation of gods and earths or the five percenters. Clarence the 13th X received his name when he was a member of the Nation of Islam. He subsequently left the NOI and started Five Percent using many of the teachings from the NOI plus adding some of his own ideas (Miyakawa 2005).

shot seven times and killed (Miyakawa 2005). The second leader referenced is Malcolm X (El Hajj MalikEl- Shabazz), former leader and spokesperson of the Nation of Islam who was assassinated in the Audubon Ballroom in 1965 in front of his wife and four children. Next RZA mentions Martin Luther King Jr, leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and promoter of non-violent resistance for the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in the United States. King was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis Tennessee in 1968 surrounded by Black leaders Jesse Jackson and Ralph Abernathy. RZA then references another Black Nationalist leader, Jamaica native and the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the shipping line the Black Star Line, Marcus Garvey. Unlike the other victims in this verse, Marcus Garvey was not killed but instead was indicted of alleged mail fraud, imprisoned and ultimately deported back to Jamaica. Garvey was known as the creator of the Black liberation flag (red, black and green colors) and as having millions of followers internationally. RZA continues on by discussing assassinations of other leaders including John F. Kennedy and Medgar Evers. Thus, what RZA does in this verse is promotes a remembrance and education of these leaders, their untimely deaths and deportation and possible governmental involvement, which promotes a distrust of government, especially in aspects of dealing with African Americans fight for universal freedom and inclusion. Directly identifying nationalist leaders in lyrics can work to prime listeners for nationalist views through the invocation of Black Nationalist leaders.

Contrarily, not all songs blatantly identify Black Nationalist leaders. Some songs reference Black Nationalist attitudes such as racial consciousness as expressed in Too \$hort's song "The Ghetto." In this song Too \$hort expresses:

So much game in a Too \$hort rap  
 Blacks can't be White and Whites can't be Black  
 Why you wanna act like someone else?  
 All you gotta do is just be yourself  
 We're all the same color underneath  
 Short Dog's in the house you 'd better listen to me  
 Never be ashamed of what you are  
 Proud to be Black stand tall at heart  
 Even though some people give you no respect  
 Be intelligent, when you put em in check  
 Cause when you're ignorant, you get treated that way

In this verse the rapper expresses his racial pride, which is a prominent trait of cultural Black Nationalist sentiment, as well as discusses the relationships he feels exist between Blacks and Whites. He details that while he is prideful he may not receive adequate respect from other racial

groups. These sentiments demonstrate the internalized marginalization and hostility felt by many African Americans which promotes racial consciousness and group cohesiveness. But racial pride is not the only Black Nationalist attitude you can find in political rap songs. Sometimes the allusions are to Black Nationalist attitudes such as self reliance, self determination, racial consciousness and racial solidarity as expressed in New York rapper Nas's song, "Black Zombies:"

In this song, Nas invokes the Black Nationalist attitude of self-reliance. Nas advocates Black-owned businesses, banks, and land as remedy for dependence on American [white] political, social and economic systems. In other words, owning, investing and controlling businesses, the economy and land, according to Nas, will help end the control, oppression, and "zombie"-like state of African Americans in America. Throughout this song he discusses various ways he believes African Americans are "zombies," those without the ability to reason and control their own desires, thoughts and actions. While Nas primarily prescribes self-reliance and self-determination, he also summons racial consciousness and solidarity.

More recent and popular political rap songs have also supported and presented Black Nationalist attitudes in its lyrics. For instance, rapper Jadakiss' 2004 political song "Why" was featured on *The O'Reilly Factor*, a right-leaning news show hosted by conservative commentator, Bill O'Reilly on Fox News. O'Reilly, a vocal critic of rap music, featured the song because he believed that it was an "atrocious" and offered a biased view of the Republican administration (Heim 2004). Jadakiss' song, a top 20 single on the Hip-Hop charts, posed many titillating political questions about past president George W Bush, the Republican administration, the 2000 national election, and the events of September 11, 2001 (Heim 2004). After controversy erupted over the original version, a remix featuring rappers, Styles P, Common and Nas was released. While the initial song had focused on the events of 9-11, the remix touched on themes as diverse as partisanship and race, the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush, the war on terror, Barack Obama, Malcolm X, and the education system. More importantly for my purpose here, the remix presented aspects of Black Nationalist ideology. For instance, Styles P, member of the rap group The L.O.X. with Jadakiss, questions,

Why vote Republican if you Black. . . .

In this lyric, Styles P questioned the logic of voting for the Republican Party if you are Black, because of the belief that the Republican Party does not advance issues relevant to African Americans and Michael Dawson's linked fate theory which argues that African Americans lack of support or allegiance to parties that do not align with issues relevant to the Black community (full employment, welfare reform inclu-

sive of a guaranteed income, comprehensive health care and minority business set asides) regardless of individual class differences (Williams 2003; Dawson 2004; Walton and Smith 2010)<sup>12</sup>. In fact, the Republican Party has been known to advance implicit racial messages advocating against African American participation (Mendelberg 2001). But Styles P was not the only rapper in the remix to assert Black Nationalist sentiments in his verse. The recently invited Chicago rapper to the White House's poetry event, Common, took it a step further and advocated for an administration change.

Why is Bush acting like he trying to get Osama  
Why don't we impeach him and elect Obama

Common appeals to Black Nationalist attitudes by suggesting the election of then Senator Barack Obama to the office of President of the United States, and is thus supporting a Black candidate as a means of inclusion and empowerment within the political system, an aspect of Black Nationalist sentiments of voting for Black candidates. Common could have proposed another solution to the problem with the Bush administration but instead he chose to appeal to Black sentiments and the belief that electing a Black official had the potential to eliminate problems and gain concessions. Finally, Nas is more obvious with his Black Nationalist appeals by making a direct reference to Black Nationalist leader Malcolm X in his verse suggesting that Blacks should continue Malcolm X's mission. Hip-Hop is therefore inextricably connected to Black Nationalist paradigms and philosophies, specifically political rap.

### CONCLUSION

It is suggested that the “. . .search for Black ideology must begin with the oral tradition” and this article examines one aspect of the oral tradition, rap music, specifically political rap and its relationship with Black Nationalist ideology (Henry 1990, 7). Rap music can frame an idea or viewpoint, set an agenda on a political issue as well as prime certain ideas or make them more accessible. With Hip-Hop music being situated as a popular music source; its influence on the attitude formation of individuals is important.

In research, political scientists rarely include rap as a media outlet that provides political information and impacts a person's political attitudes. This article has made the case for the consideration of rap as a

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<sup>12</sup> Some would argue that because of economic attainment some Blacks should align with the Republican party because of their emphasis on tax cuts for members of the upper class. But Dawson concludes that even when economic situations change African Americans align with political parties that discuss more issues relevant to them.

relevant and powerful factor in the formation of political ideology. Rap music can frame an idea or viewpoint, set an agenda on a political issue as well as prime certain ideas or make them more accessible. Powell (1991) asserts that “. . . in addition to entertainment, rap music provides a significant form of informal education for adolescents . . . that extends far beyond the confines of the classroom and into their peer group circles” (p. 245). This article provides vital information and examples of the relationships between rap music and Black Nationalism. What Harris-Lacewell (2004) contends is correct, there are various avenues through which African Americans receive political information that assist in the formation of political attitudes and rap music happens to be one of them.

Why haven't we observed this before? One of the possibilities why the socialization potential of rap music has not been examined within political science is because politically laced rap is not as popular as mainstream rap and therefore is not as prominent in mainstream society. Another possibility is the actions and attitudes that stem from political rap have been attributed to other political sources. However, this is not a reason to discount the influence of the subgenre. Understanding marginalized communities must include examination of marginalized cultural forms within the community. While many aspects of rap are still seen as deviant there is an understanding that this cultural art form is also important to behavior and attitudes. With the significant impact Hip-Hop has not only on American culture, but other cultures, the study of the relationship between Hip-Hop culture, rap music, political behavior and political ideology is not only necessary in the United States but will become more relevant on an international level as Hip-Hop gains popularity.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**LOUIS G. MENDOZA.** *Conversations Across Our America: Talking about Immigration and the Latinoization of the United States.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012). x, 299 pp., \$24.95 cloth.

Louis G. Mendoza's book, *Conversations Across Our America: Talking about Immigration and the Latinoization of the United States*, incorporates thirty-three conversations with forty-two Latinas/os of various nationalities in order to better understand the Latino influence in the United States. To collect this data, Mendoza rode a bicycle approximately 8,500 miles through thirty states from July to December 2007. He draws upon Ethnic Studies tradition as he was driven to conduct research that is relevant to his community. Mendoza draws upon the oral histories and lived experience of his participants to demonstrate the diverse nature of Latinas/os throughout the country. He presents what Pérez-Huber (2009) defines as *testimonios* – “a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future” (p. 644).

In the introductory chapter, Mendoza presents his pathway to this study and his desire for challenging the narrow framing of Latina/o immigration by the media, which commonly shapes public perception. Each remaining chapter engages a primary theme that emerged from his interviews. Chapters grapple with how Latinas/os navigate notions of “home” and politics of belonging in their new geography. Testimonies reveal that participants have been witnesses to change across generations as well as agents of change in the pursuit of social justice. To do this, Latinas/os rely upon cultivating a sense of reciprocity and equity in order to bridge differences with majority populations. In addition, chapters expose the anti-immigrant sentiment that Latina/o communities face and the strategies they employ to assert their civil and human rights in the face of such barriers. Participant narratives also demonstrate the internal migration that takes place within the United States and the increasingly complex dynamics occurring along the U.S.-Mexico border region.

The emphasis on the work of community leaders and activists for social change positions this text as a potential guidebook of a national network of immigrant rights activists. Readers could use this text to identify a contact prior to traveling to any of the regions featured and/or to organize collective action across regional boundaries. Mendoza describes the unique nature of his participants' work as he writes,

They were driven by their everyday life circumstances and experiences – as workers, immigrants, children of immigrants, and descendants of Mexican settlers who arrived before the establishment of the U.S., and students – across generations and geography to acquire the needed knowledge base and the organizing and speaking skills to be effective activists and advocates. In this way, they are quintessential practitioners of cultural citizenship who seek to advance community well-being by advocating for social and institutional reforms through formal and informal means (p. 5).

*Conversations Across Our America* would be strengthened by an elaboration of the themes identified by Mendoza. While he presents a brief background at the start of each thematic chapter, the reader is left with the task of identifying the thematic pattern across participants' narratives. Further, there are no concluding thoughts offered by Mendoza at the end of each chapter. As a result, the rich narratives presented by the study's participants are lacking analysis. While Mendoza organized the pieces thematically, the connections across narratives are difficult to decipher. Had he proffered an analysis of the narratives, readers could better identify further social forces that shape the lives of the study participants, such as assimilation, residential segregation, gentrification, police brutality, social class differences, and youth empowerment, to name a few. Analyzing these narratives would be possible by comparing the experiences of participants to each other's and/or to those in existing literature on the immigrant experience across generations (Jimenez 2010; Ochoa 2004; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Vasquez 2011). Engagement with existing literature would also allow the reader to situate this project within a larger context of scholarly efforts to understand immigration and the Latina/o experience in the United States.

In his conclusion, Mendoza identifies the important role of local leadership in determining a community's reputation as inclusive or exclusive and states, ". . . communities that strive to be inclusive by respecting and embracing diversity have adopted a moral and ethical framework that views others as whole human beings with distinct histories, values, and qualities that complement their own and enrich their lives – not threaten it" (p. 278). Mendoza could use these important insights to develop and offer policy recommendations, which would strengthen his concluding chapter. This text would be appropriate for courses in Ethnic Studies, Sociology, Politics, and others that explore the Latina/o experience, im/migration and demography, and race relations in the United States. It would be beneficial for both undergraduate and graduate students to read in order to better grasp the shifting

demographics of the United States and the unique experience of Latinas/os.

*Reviewed by: Brianne Dávila  
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**MARK RIFKIN. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). 440 pp., \$99 (cloth), \$35 (paper).**

Mark Rifkin's second monograph, *When Did Indians Become Straight*, is an intellectually rigorous and theoretically dense work that explores the relationship between Indigenous political formations and heteronormativity by presenting a literary history of sexuality that spans the last two centuries. Rifkin argues that the settler state's investment in, and enforcement of, heterosexuality as the basic organizing structure of society is a response to the fact that "Indigeneity puts the state in crisis by raising fundamental questions about the legitimacy of its (continued) existence" (37). As a result, Indigenous geopolitical alliances that exceed liberal state logics of what counts as "proper governance" are interpellated as "aberrant or anomalous modes of (failed) domesticity" in an political economy of privatization, where heterosexual coupling is portrayed as a natural expression of "the family" (37). Rifkin demonstrates that "heteroconjugality" is the condition of possibility for political

intelligibility within United States institutions for Native people. On the one hand, United States discourses of sexuality, work to selectively recognize Native social forms that align with liberal settler frameworks, and on the other they mark Indigenous difference as a threat to the national order. Therefore Indigenous political subjectivity, defined by affective networks of kinship relations, not only falls outside the scope of settler political reality, but it actively challenges the state's continued legitimacy by insisting on the preexistence of polities external to the state.

Rifkin also interrogates the ways in which Native social formations have been divorced from their inherent implications for Indigenous sovereignty and co-opted as queer alternatives to those opposed to heterosexual hegemony. Using the popularity of Two Spirit identity as an example, Rifkin illustrates how contemporary queers uphold Native sociopolitical formations as a "resource" to help non-Natives to articulate a more inclusive vision of society. In doing so, they position kinship networks (and Native peoples) as fitting comfortably within the political landscape of the United States, rather than engaging with Native nations as discrete polities or recognizing the havoc wreaked on those same networks by United States policy.

Throughout the book, Rifkin develops a queer methodology that depends on a critical redeployment of sovereignty and kinship – one that not only acknowledges how both terms can mark the interpellation of Native people into the heteronormative structures of the settler state, but also how they can also be used to stretch the terms of United States legal discourse to account for collective geopolitical alliances exterior to the state.

The book consists of three chronologically organized sets of paired chapters, the first of which examines novels written in the 1820s, in order to illustrate the imposition of heterosexual logics of inherited racial "blood" that superseded preexisting geopolitical kinship dynamics. The second set of chapters looks at how Native writers contested attempts by the General Allotment Act and the Indian Reorganization Act to "detrribalize" Native people by imposing heteronuclearity and rendering Native governance consistent with settler ideologies. Rifkin's analysis suggests that while these authors insisted on the validity and coherence of kinship networks as political formations, they fell prey to what he calls the "bribe of straightness" – seeking legitimacy from the state by disavowing aspects of Native social formations that did not align with the heteroconjugal norm. The fourth and fifth chapters use contemporary texts to depict the appropriation of depoliticized versions of Indigenous kinship forms by non-Native queers in ways that obscure the ongoing presence of Native peoples and the connection between sociocultural formations and struggles for Native self-determination. Conversely, this final section



also addresses the modern queer Native critique that links Native homophobia to the intrusions of US imperial policy, and insists on the coherence of longstanding clan networks as form of peoplehood.

While Rifkin's work is a significant accomplishment in its own right, it also serves as a valuable addition to the developing body of work that combines Queer Studies and Native Studies. Recent works by Jennifer Denetdale, Quo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen, and Andrea Smith also link the operation of heteronormativity to settler colonialism and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty. In *When Did Indians Become Straight*, Rifkin critiques Queer Theory for its unacknowledged investment in settler colonialism, pointing out that queer challenges to heteroconjugality as the determining factor for the organization of resource distribution still position the settler state as the appropriate distributor of resources. Instead he advocates for a queer critique of heteronormativity that contests, rather than presumes, the existence of the nation state, and centers Indigenous peoples. While it could be argued that the book's considerable length limits its utility in the undergraduate classroom, its analytical depth and expansive scope certainly justify the extra pages. Overall, *When Did Indians Become Straight* represents a major intellectual feat and an important contribution to the fields of Native, Queer, and Literary Studies.

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**H. SAMY ALIM AND GENEVA SMITHERMAN. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). 205 pp., \$25 (paper).**

In his introduction to *Articulate While Black* Michael Eric Dyson frames Barack Obama as the Orator-in-Chief and the authors would certainly agree with that assessment. Alim and Smitherman argue that in order to have an open and honest discussion about race in the United States, we must look at its linguistic dimensions; we need to *language* race, to view the racial politics of the United States through the lens of language (xviii). This book seeks to untangle *how* we talk about race and what assumptions are being made based on a speaker's use of language.

Chapter one delves into Obama's ability to styleshift or move in and out of linguistic styles – between varieties of the same language" (5). By analyzing Obama's linguistic styles during a visit to Ben's Chili Bowl, Ray's Hell Burger, campaign rallies, and his famous race speech, Alim and Smitherman highlight the ways in which the president moves be-

tween formal English and what the authors call Black Language. It was this ability which helped frame Obama as “someone who could speak directly and comfortably with folks across regions, generations, socio-economic divisions, racial and ethnic groups, and political and religious views” (5). Alim and Smitherman use the same styleshifting throughout their text: one paragraph may be heavy with academic jargon while the next paragraph uses language that would be prevalent in a conversation between two friends sitting on a stoop engaging in a Jay-Z vs. Nas debate. Chapter two engages in a meta-analysis of Obama’s language or “the talk about the way Barack Obama talks.” The authors look at how the word articulate was used to describe Obama, how he was framed as “exceptional” or even magical in the words of Rush Limbaugh, and how these narratives highlight the existence of enlightened exceptionalism. Alim and Smitherman use chapter three to discuss the “A More Perfect Union,” or “The Race Speech” as it is commonly known, and the authors do an excellent job of tracing the rhetorical and political work this speech had to perform during the 2008 election.

Though excerpts from Reverend Jeremiah Wright were played ad nauseam during the ‘08 presidential campaign, Alim and Smitherman take the opportunity to provide background information on Reverend Wright and place Wright’s remarks within the liberation theology and the Biblical jeremiadic traditions. Chapter four discusses and is literally entitled “The Fist Bump Heard ‘Round the World.” The authors trace the history of The Pound and try to understand how white mainstream America could have such a profound misunderstanding of a long-standing method of communication within black communities. The chapter looks at other methods of intra-racial communication such as snappin, i.e. playing the dozens, as well as use of what the authors call the two most popular and controversial words in Black Language: *muthafucka* and *nigga*. Alim and Smitherman discuss in what context these methods of communication are used as well as when and where they become controversial. As the authors point out, the Pound and other methods of “Black Communication *become* controversial only in a society that deprecates Blackness. If people continually deny this racially discriminatory context, mutual respect will prove to be elusive as a *muthafucka*” (125 – emphasis in original).

The final two chapters use Obama as a jumping off point to discuss larger issues in black language and culture. Chapter five delves into hip hop culture and while there is a discussion of Obama’s relationship to rap and hip hop, it deals primarily with divergent political views within the hip hop communities. The authors conduct an in-depth analysis of Young Jeezy and Nas’s track “My President” as well as the accompanying music video and differing reactions to the song. The final chapter in

the book is a scholarly love letter to African American English/Black Language. The authors highlight the grammatical complexity and stylistic flexibility of Black Language and argue that “rather than interpreting Black language behavior through the lens of Black inferiority, ignorance, or violence, these creative language practices should be utilized for educational purposes” (177). The sociolinguistic analysis in this chapter was eye-opening given the negative connotations mainstream media has associated with Black language.

Overall Alim and Smitherman provide a detailed, scholarly, yet easy to follow analysis of our racial linguistic traditions, landmines, and practices. In the introduction the authors state that they goal so to help push and problematize how we think and talk about race. They have certainly succeeded.

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