

Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship

SLIDESHOW



THE INQUIRY

Mellon Mays
Undergraduate
Fellowship

Slideshow and The Inquiry

The Journals of the Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship and Mellon Mays Fellowship Programs
Dedicated to Undergraduate Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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editor's note

All the articles in this journal are formatted in the Chicago style, even social sciences papers that would normally use APA formatting. This was done for the sake of uniformity (to make the journal as professional looking as possible by giving it one style) and readability (to make the journal easier to read by not abruptly changing styles from article to article, particularly in regards for nonacademic readers, who constitute a significant portion of the journal's audience). We wish to make social science professionals who may read this journal aware of this fact and why this formatting was used. Aside from normal copyediting and uniform formatting, the content of these articles was not changed in any way.

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foreword

One of the most important aspects of the mission of the Center for the Humanities at Washington University is reaching out to undergraduate students. Relatively few humanities centers engage undergraduates, though this is changing, most feeling that their universities provide enough services and activities for them. The centers are largely the province of faculty and graduate students. This is an understandable prejudice, if not quite, at this time, a sustainable one. Undergraduates occupy too large a portion of the population and the reality of a university to either ignore them or dismiss them as a necessary nuisance. Many undergraduates are not particularly serious about their work or academic work in general, often lacking maturity. So, why should a humanities center be bothered with them, when there are others who are more capable and interested in engaging what a humanities center can offer? But there are many more serious undergraduates than we might think. Besides, if what a humanities center has to offer is a crucial form of enrichment to the general public with its colloquia and lectures, to graduate students with its reading groups and faculty seminars, and to faculty with its fellowships, why should undergraduates as a population be exempt from engagement or why shouldn't the center attempt to engage those who could profit from a connection to it? It seems almost a form of prejudice, as if humanities centers should not take undergraduates seriously because undergraduates do not have anything serious to offer and what humanities centers have to offer is too weighty for them. This is nonsense.

But how to engage undergraduates is the question: As our Center offers few courses and has no teaching staff, one way that this Center's advisory board thought we could engage students is through encouraging and supporting independent research for a select number of students who majored in any humanities disciplines. We were interested as well in social science majors who, we thought, might benefit from being around humanities students. We felt that humanities students would benefit as well from being part of a group where they had to grapple with and take seriously the work of their social science peers. In this way, it was felt that the Center might be able to contribute to the spirit of interdisciplinary exchange on the campus among the students, markedly different, though, from what they encountered in the classroom. Faculty did not often find undergraduate students very helpful as research assistants but have often thought that as professors they might be helpful in guiding undergraduates in the students' own research projects.

The Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship Program, named in honor of former WU provost and political

science professor Merle Kling, was inspired by the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, established at Washington University back in the early 1990s and, while open to all students, meant particularly to encourage members of underrepresented minorities to consider pursuing the Ph.D. and becoming university teachers. (The naming of the program may have been in some small measure connected with the fact that I, as director of the program, hold an endowed chair named in honor of Kling, but it was the late Dean of the College James McLeod's idea to identify the program more closely with the academic traditions and personages of Washington University itself, a very sound idea, indeed.) The MKUHF is a two-year program, which accepts a small number of its applicants at the end of their sophomore year. We pair the student with a mentor and guide the student through a long-term research project through the structure of weekly seminars devoted to the discussion and analysis of their research. Kling Fellows are also provided with a summer stipend and support during the academic year to facilitate their research, permitting them even to travel to archives and attend conferences. Finally, Kling Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work, *Slide-show*, the latest volume of which you hold in your hands. (Copies of the earlier volumes may be requested from the Center for the Humanities at cenhum@arts.wustl.edu.)

The seniors of the MKUHF produced the work that is featured here. **Ezelle Sanford III** has written on African Americans and institution building with his exploration of the "Black Hospital," how it differed in concept from the "Negro Hospital," and what providing care to a marginalized, powerless community means. Was the Black Hospital an emblem of empowerment? Did it operate as did the Jewish Hospital or the Catholic Hospital? Or was the Black Hospital a stigma, a sign of inferiority? Ezelle examines these crucial questions in his examination of Lincoln Hospital of Durham, North Carolina. **Stephen Aiken** looks at African American novelist Richard Wright's 1953 novel, *The Outsider*, in the context of how African American intellectuals of the period were interested in both existentialism and Marxism. (Wright had been a Marxist and, after the war, became interested in existentialism. *The Outsider*, a novel Wright's wife hated, was meant to be an explicit existential work or rather a work dramatizing the concepts of existentialism.) This paper is a closely argued explication of how African American intellectuals have engaged with and disengaged from western ideas and paradigms. Finally, **Annie-Rose Fondaw** takes on the ambitious interdisciplinary project of exploring the development of hip-hop in St. Louis and how this music

reflects the intense racial divide of the city. The paper is a sort of urban geography that takes on a bit of the flavor of ethnographic efforts by such well-known scholars as Loic Wacquant and Benita Heiskanen. All three of these essays show such extraordinarily hard work and such incredible promise.

These are independent essays, polished and meant to stand alone, extracted from the students' Honors theses. For undergraduates especially, this effort to produce a free-standing essay, meant to be read by non-specialists, culled from a larger work can be daunting. But if they are to consider becoming college professors and high-level researchers, they must come to understand this exercise as a necessary and useful skill. Redacting, editing, revising, recasting, reshaping, re-contextualizing are all writing and thinking skills that college professors who publish must have in order to get the most mileage out of their research. Professors must master many different forms of presentation of their work, and this is one of the goals of the Merle Kling Honors Fellowship Program: to teach undergraduate students how this is done.

Make no mistake; while the students themselves are in charge of producing this publication, it is no amateur indulgence. These essays have been vetted by their mentors, corrected by a professional copy editor, and tested over many months in the crucible of the seminar. There is no guarantee that a student's work will be published in the journal. If the work is found to be substandard and if the student fails to meet the deadlines of the various stages of production, the work is not published. The students are tough on each other. This effort means a great deal to them, and they want very much to be taken seriously as contributors of merit to their fields. Moreover, the cost for producing this journal is about the same as it would be for a professional academic journal of the same size. We want the students themselves, the university, and the larger community to know that we at the Center take this work seriously as we take any good scholarly work by our colleagues seriously.

I hope you enjoy reading this journal. If you have any comments about what you have read, we would love to hear from you.

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Violence In Ideology: The Meeting of Existentialism and Communism in Richard Wright's *The Outsider*

Stephen Aiken

Abstract: Richard Wright's *The Outsider* has traditionally been dismissed as Wright's existential novel, as a derivative and dubious foray into the foreign thoughts of Jean-Paul Sartre and the other French Existentialists. However, Wright encountered existentialism in vastly different circumstances from Sartre and the French Existentialists. Coming from a background as one of the most prominent African American members of the Communist Party of the United States of America, Wright was uniquely suited to articulate the relationships between Western ideologies, such as existentialism and communism, and minority groups. In this article, I argue that Richard Wright mobilizes existentialism and communism in order to explicate this relationship, and to reveal the ways in which these ideologies act to re-inscribe violence within Western culture.

Introduction

Published in 1953, *The Outsider* ranks as one of Richard Wright's most ambitious novels. The tragic tale of Cross Damon, an African American man who is mistakenly declared dead after a train crash, *The Outsider* describes its protagonist's failed attempt to forge a new identity, free from all the roles and responsibilities which once limited his future. Interwoven with this search for freedom are theoretical discussions of two of the most prominent political and philosophical projects of the 1950s, communism and existentialism, each of which had much to say about the nature of freedom within Western civilization. This combination of theories was no accident. As Wright would later tell his literary agent, Paul Reynolds, "I was trying to grapple with the big problem—the problem and meaning of Western civilization as a whole and the relation of Negroes and other minority groups to it. Out of this searching grew *The Outsider*."¹ *The Outsider* was to be a novel in which Wright took on the ambitious task of analyzing the relationship between Western civilization and the minority groups, such as African Americans, who lived within it. This novel's inclusion of communism and existentialism, two projects that sought to explain Western civilization while simultaneously emerging from within it, offered an ideal lens through which this analysis could proceed.

Curiously, however, criticism of *The Outsider* has rarely centered on Wright's analysis of Western civilization, or on his analysis of the relationship between Western civilization and minority groups such as African Americans.² Indeed, numerous critics have failed to see *The Outsider* as a novel with theoretical implications of its own and, noting its overt interest in existentialism, have derided Wright for creating a derivative and ill-digested regurgitation of Sartrean existentialism. In this essay, I attempt to re-center discussion of *The Outsider* on Wright's concern with Western civilization, and the special relationship between Western civilization and African Americans. In Section 1, I examine Wright's engagement with communism and existentialism in order to establish his competence as a critic of the two theories. In Section 2, I examine the ways in which this engagement with communism and existentialism led critics to minimize his original theoretical concerns. I argue that this minimization required a reading of his text that reduced it to mere reiteration of Sartrean or Marxist theories. In Section 3, I argue that these reductive readings render invisible and inexplicable those moments in which intersubjectivity is imagined non-violently, and thus compromise their interpretations of *The Outsider*. Finally, in Section 4, I offer a reading of *The Outsider* that attempts to take these moments of non-violent intersubjectivity into account. Ultimately, I argue that *The Outsider* cannot simply be reduced to either Sartrean or Marxist theories.

Instead, it uses these two theories to illustrate the inability of Western ideologies to critique Western culture with uncompromising force.

The Education of Richard Wright

Richard Wright's intimate engagement with communism and existentialism was a prolonged and public affair and, although this engagement rendered Wright capable of theorizing about the two theories, it also tied Wright to them in the minds of critics. Wright's association with the Communist Party of the United States of America, hereafter referred to as the CPUSA, began in 1933 when Wright became a member of the Party-associated John Reed Club.³ His election to leadership of the John Reed Club mere months afterward necessitated that Wright become a member of the CPUSA. It was here that Wright's more formal education in communism began.

During his time with the CPUSA, Wright would be exposed to the works of numerous prominent communists. Thus, by 1940, Wright had read multiple works by Karl Marx including *Das Kapital*, as well as Friedrich Engels's *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, Joseph Stalin's *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, and a very significant number of works by Vladimir Lenin.⁴ And in his work with the CPUSA and its affiliated magazines, Wright would become familiar with many of the articles written about the relationship between the CPUSA and African Americans. Eventually, many more of these articles would be authored by Wright.

Wright's falling out with the CPUSA was, then, a public and painful process that culminated in 1946, when Wright left the CPUSA for the Parisian cafes of Jean-Paul Sartre and the French Existentialists. This was not a sudden move. Wright's exposure to existentialist writers had occurred all throughout his time with the CPUSA, and sometimes as a result of his association with the CPUSA. It was this exposure that left Wright so well prepared for his first meeting with Sartre and the French Existentialists.

Wright had encountered the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and G. W. F. Hegel, two writers who had been claimed as forerunners of both communism and existentialism, in the early 1930s, likely in connection to his studies of Marx, and Wright's interest in the two writers would continue even after he had left the CPUSA. During this time, Wright also came across another writer whose works helped orient him towards existentialism, namely, Fyodor Dostoevsky, of whose *Notes from Underground* critic Walter Kaufmann has written "I can see no reason for calling Dostoevsky an existentialist, but I do think that Part One of *Notes from Underground* is the best overture for existentialism ever written."⁵ While Wright would also come across other existentialist thinkers such as Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger,

these early influences and especially the influence of Dostoevsky were instrumental in orchestrating Wright's turn to existentialism.⁶

By the spring of 1945, then, when Jean-Paul Sartre made his first visit to the United States, Wright was already well versed in the essential tenets of existentialism, and existentialism was well on its way to becoming a bohemian cultural icon. Magazines such as *Time* and *Life* examined Jean-Paul Sartre's bohemian lifestyle; the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* reported on the supposed pessimism of Sartre's new philosophy; and *Partisan Review* released numerous articles featuring Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. Wright's initial exposure to Sartreanism was likely through these early publications.⁷ But he would also receive a much more comprehensive education when Dorothy Norman invited him to learn about existentialism from Hannah Arendt and Paul Tillich in 1946.⁸ Over the next few months, Wright would return to Dorothy Norman's house two times to meet with Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

Due to this extensive education in the literature of existentialism and communism, Wright was well suited to engage with their theoretical foundations even before *The Outsider* was written. Not only had Wright studied the works of Sartre and Marx, but also he had studied a wide range of authors who informed Sartre and Marx, as well as authors who offered alternatives to the two. Evidence of Wright's ability to think theoretically about these topics can be seen in the relationship between Wright and the French Existentialists. This relationship was not a one-way flow of ideas and information. Even as Wright was educated in French Existentialism, he became Sartre's model for the idea of committed literature, influenced Sartre and Beauvoir on the subject of race relations, and contributed to Beauvoir's thoughts on the subject of oppression.⁹ Wright was not interested in mere regurgitation of any ideology, a fact that he would make clear in the forward to *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, arguing that

[t]he Negro's fundamental loyalty is, therefore, to himself. His situation makes this inevitable. [...] The Negro, even when embracing communism or Western Democracy, is not supporting ideologies: he is seeking to use instruments (instruments owned and controlled by men of other races) for his own ends. He stands outside of those instruments and ideologies; he has to do so, for he is not allowed to blend with them in a natural, organic, and healthy manner.¹⁰

As Wright suggests, communism and existentialism were tools that he had a responsibility to reappropriate, not truths to regurgitate. And his studies in communism and existentialism left him suited for this reappropriation.

But, while Wright's studies were useful in this re-

gard, they were also important to his image in the media. Wright's position within the CPUSA had been prominent, and the perceived defection of a well-known member of the CPUSA to the French Existentialists was an equally public event. Wright's public persona had become associated with communism and existentialism and, for critics who underestimated Wright's interest in independently theorizing them, Wright's understanding of the two projects could often be reduced to that of the most prominent communists and existentialists, thinkers such as Karl Marx and Jean-Paul Sartre.

The Concerns of Critics

Despite Wright's qualifications to theorize independently about communism and existentialism, numerous critics of *The Outsider* have noted no differences between Richard Wright's thoughts on the two projects and the thoughts of either Jean-Paul Sartre or Karl Marx. Indeed, to many of his contemporaries, Wright's use of communism and existentialism in *The Outsider* was merely an uncritical application of Sartrean and Marxist theories to the lives of African Americans, an application that many critics believed to be a matter for concern. Overtly, these critical concerns represented doubts about the usefulness of either a French tradition born in the aftermath of WWII or a Soviet-serving form of socialism as a means of interpreting the much-removed experiences of African Americans. However, such concerns also represented an implicit challenge to the universal relevance claimed by both projects, as well as to the projects themselves.¹¹ I argue that *The Outsider* has served as a site on which the universalism of existentialism and communism can be attacked and defended, that defenses against these attacks have often downplayed the ways in which *The Outsider* deviates from Sartreanism and Marxism, and that this has resulted in oversimplification of Richard Wright's engagement with the two theories.

While both communism and existentialism have claimed that their ideas were universally relevant, critical concerns with the roles of these European traditions in African American literature emerged early in discussions of Wright's *The Outsider*. Reviewers described existentialism as a theory incapable of interpreting the experiences of African Americans, and criticized those authors who tried for their supposed alienation from the African American mainstream.¹² Similarly, reviewers described African American engagements with communism as unsuitable, and criticized communism for marginalizing the concerns of the African American mainstream.¹³ Such concerns emerged from both within and without the African American community and, in the case of existentialism, these concerns became so widespread that numerous readings of African Americans as existentialists now begin with either a disclaimer or a defense of the universalism of existenti-

alism. Indeed, it is important to note that such defenses are not at all a rarity. Instead, strong countertrends have formed, arguing for the influence and importance of existentialism and communism to the experiences of African Americans.¹⁴ Loosely sketched here is just one role which *The Outsider* has assumed, that of battleground on which the universalism of existentialism and communism could be contested.

In taking on this role as a battleground, *The Outsider* has become subject to some of the distortions related to this debate. One illustrative example of these distortions concerns a defense, common in readings of African American experiences as existential, that imagines existentialism as existing in both strong and weak forms.¹⁵ The stronger case is the European existentialism written most famously in the milieu of post-World War II France, the existentialism influenced by Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, and authored by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, Karl Jaspers, and Albert Camus. In the weaker case, an existential sense is identified within non-European cultures, civilizations, or castes, which preexisted exposure to the works of the aforementioned stronger case but became overt only under its influence. Considered in this weaker sense, the existential becomes a much broader category, and it becomes much easier to claim, and defend the claim, that existentialism is universal.

However, the classification of texts as members of this weaker case and, indeed, the very existence of this weaker case is itself questionable.¹⁶ Defined too broadly, the term "existential" ceases to be a useful term for categorization and instead runs the risk of either oversimplifying and overreaching through a denial or minimizing the differences.¹⁷ In other words, classification of these authors as existential can necessitate more than an identification of similarities between the weaker case and the stronger case. It can also necessitate a minimization of their differences, an underestimation of the ways in which the weaker case deviates from the stronger case, that is to say a minimization of the ways in which the non-European tradition deviates from the European tradition.¹⁸ Thus, these debates about the universal nature of communism and existentialism involved, in some cases, downplaying the differences between the thought of African American theorists and the thought of European intellectual traditions in ways that could reduce these African American theorists to mere adherents to European intellectual traditions.

It is important to note that these reductive readings were not conducted in a vacuum, but within the highly charged political climate of the Cold War Red Scare. Initial reviewers of *The Outsider* often had strongly vested interests in either attacking or defending existentialism and communism. *The Outsider* received reviews from CPUSA-associated writers in magazines such as *Masses and Mainstream*, as

well as from newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. Both the *Tribune* and the *Afro-American* had noted their suspicions about the relationship between African Americans and the CPUSA on multiple occasions.¹⁹ Meanwhile, numerous New York reviewers had turned against existentialism, partly as a result of its association with communism.²⁰ And these affiliations would continue to be important to scholarship about the period. As William J. Maxwell notes in the introduction to *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars*:

Manipulation, disillusionment, and betrayal are spotlight [...] through the discourses that sustained the second American red scare, ignited in the wake of World War II. The prevalence of tragic plot points in postwar scholarship on black literature and the Old Left partially reflects the long intellectual reach of Cold War anti-Communism.²¹

The importance of politics to this scholarship is highlighted by the contrast between the criticism of Wright's contemporaries under the duress of Cold War politics, and the recent revisionism of William Maxwell, Mark Naison, and Mark Solomon, who seek a more mutual and nuanced view of the relationship among the Comintern, the CPUSA, and African Americans, free from the "cold war-derived verdict on blacks and Reds."²² Similarly, recent literature on existentialism in Wright's *The Outsider* has offered a more nuanced revision of Wright's use of existentialism. Jeffrey Atteberry notes that

[w]hen it was initially published in 1953, *The Outsider* was widely read as reflecting Wright's critical turn from communism to existentialism. A few decades later, however, once critics began to examine closely Wright's engagement with existentialism, the ambivalence of that relationship began to emerge, and *The Outsider* increasingly seemed to be a somewhat implicit critique of existentialism as well.²³

In both cases, beyond the climate of the Red Scare, the turn has been towards a more nuanced view of existentialism and communism, and their role in *The Outsider*.

Wright's well-known association with existentialism and communism made *The Outsider* especially vulnerable to the climate of the Red Scare, as well as to this reductive method of reading. While thematically similar novels, such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, were also read reductively,²⁴ their authors could at least deny their affiliation with existentialism and communism, while affirming their interest in the two theories, as Ellison would later do.²⁵ Wright, however, could not deny his association with either existentialism or communism. His association with the two theories had been public and prominent, and it was this prominence that rendered *The Outsider* particularly vulner-

able to reductive readings. Even before reading Wright's novel, critics would already have connected it to thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Marx, due to Wright's affiliation with their respective ideologies. From there, it was a short leap to a reductive reading of *The Outsider* as an essentially Sartrean or Marxist novel.

The Flaws in Reductive Readings

Reductive readings, such as those conducted by many early reviewers of *The Outsider*, often leave textual incidents that a theory cannot account for or articulate when a reader is thinking through a set of experiences unexplored. The act of reduction, and the minimization of differences which it requires, necessitates that these differences become inarticulable and, consequently, they are often ignored. In reductive readings of Richard Wright's *The Outsider*, these uncanny moments arise in those sets of experiences that can be articulated by neither Sartrean nor Marxist theories. In order to understand the ways in which the frameworks of Sartreanism and Marxism render these experiences inarticulable, it is necessary to examine the two theories' treatment of intersubjective experiences.

While issues of intersubjectivity are not foregrounded in the work of Marx, as they are in the work of Sartre, Sartre himself noted the similarities between the two theorists' understanding of intersubjectivity. And, for both authors, an understanding of intersubjectivity was dependent on an analysis of human existence. In his description of existence in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre identifies two types of existence: Being-In-Itself and Being-For-Itself. Being-In-Itself refers to non-conscious entities, whose essence is inherent in their existence. Meanwhile, Being-For-Itself refers to conscious entities, such as humankind, whose essence is not an inherent element of their existence, but is instead constituted by each choice made after the Being-For-Itself has come into existence.²⁶ For Sartre, this entails the acceptance of a radical notion of freedom. As Sartre would state in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, "Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing—as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism."²⁷ However, as Sartre later notes, this notion of individual freedom is tremendously troubling since it requires that subjectivities be forged by actions within an intersubjective world. It creates a state in which individuals must clash over the state of the intersubjective world in their attempts to forge their subjectivity, and in which attempt individuals must assert their subjectivity over the subjectivity of others. Thus, while Sartre sees existence as a state of freedom, this state is itself troublesome, since it allows no mode in which nonviolent forms of intersubjectivity can occur.²⁸

Marx's early writings contained a focus on subjectivity similar to that of Sartre and, as in Sartre's writings, subjectivity is viewed as something that must be created through actions in the intersubjective world.²⁹ However, for Marx, the creation of subjectivity is accomplished through a specific type of action in the intersubjective world, labor. Capitalism, in alienating the proletariat from its labor, thus also alienated the proletariat from its subjective existence in the intersubjective world, creating a situation in which there was "no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.'"³⁰ Capital became the nexus through which the intersubjective world was created. And, in this situation, those without capital are denied the opportunity to negotiate over the creation of the intersubjective world, while those with capital are forced to compete over the opportunity to create the intersubjective world, or engage in a violent revolution. Like Sartreanism, Marxism leaves little room for nonviolent models of intersubjectivity.

Models such as Sartreanism and Marxism, which cannot account for moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity, must, then, render these moments inarticulable. And, in the context of readings of *The Outsider*, a novel concerned with the relationship between Western civilization and minorities, such excesses are magnified. Like subjectivities, cultures negotiate over the intersubjective world. And if these two models cannot account for moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity between individuals, neither can they account for moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity between mainstream Western culture and the more marginalized cultures of minorities. Thus, as James Haile suggests, this Sartrean dictate necessitates that the marginalized be seen only in opposition to the mainstream, and therefore as an ontologically derivative group, a necessity shown clearly in Lewis R. Gordon's use of Sartreanism to define a black existentialism whose central concerns are the questions "What does it mean to be a problem?" and "How does it feel to be a problem?" As Haile suggests, in treating blackness and black folk as problematic, black experience is reduced to those situations in which blackness is problematic to whiteness, so that blackness can be seen only through an oppositional dichotomy of black and white, victim and victimizer, and marginalized or mainstream, without accounting for moments in which black folk are among their own, nor for oppositional moments of dialogue and dialectic between and within mainstream and marginalized cultures.

Marxism, in turn, reads marginalized and mainstream cultures as mere manifestations of their underlying class conflicts, reducing all aspects of intersubjectivity to the struggle of the proletariat in a practical and philosophical sense. Jeffrey Atteberry notes that the particular struggles of marginalized groups were sometimes understood as manifestations of the universal struggles of the proletariat,

noting that the Comintern's 1922 acceptance of the "Theses on the Negro Question" recognized the need to support black movements, while limiting the black movements which would be supported to those which "aim[ed] either to undermine or weaken capitalism and imperialism or to prevent their further expansion."³¹ Practically, Atteberry argues, this represented a recognition that particular struggles required particular tactics, while simultaneously maintaining the idea that these struggles were manifestations of the universal struggle of the proletariat, and could thus be subsumed under the overall strategies required for this more universal struggle. Philosophically, this is consistent with Marxism, in that Marxist theory does not recognize the possibility of moments of nonviolent dialogue and dialectic between the mainstream and the marginalized within a capitalist system. The revolution of the proletariat is a precondition for moments of dialogue and dialectic, and there is no allowance for them within a capitalist system. Like Sartreanism, Marxism renders these moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity inarticulable.

The moments rendered invisible or inarticulable when *The Outsider* is reduced to its interests in Sartrean or Marxist theory are therefore those moments in which intersubjectivity is nonviolent, moments which have often been ignored in readings of *The Outsider*. For instance, Edmund Fuller's 1953 review describes *The Outsider* as a novel in which "the new attitude with which [Wright] has replaced his set of Marxist assumptions appears to be the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre," dismissing the novel as a "pseudo-Dostoyevskyan tale of cold violence."³² Meanwhile, Jack Mason's 1953 review notes that "[s]ince 1946 [Wright has been] living in France where, like many another disillusioned communist intellectual, he has fallen under the spell of nihilism—or existentialism if you prefer," before dismissing the novel for its brutality.³³ While almost all of the *The Outsider*'s reviewers mentioned violence, usually alongside references to the CPUSA or Sartreanism, these reviewers rarely mentioned those moments in which the novel imagined nonviolent forms of intersubjectivity, a neglect that sorely compromised their readings of the novel. Whereas recognition of both moments of violent intersubjectivity and nonviolent intersubjectivity in *The Outsider* would have required an explication of their relationship, no such explication was required without a recognition of both forms of intersubjectivity. Without a recognition of these two forms of intersubjectivity, there was therefore no need to look outside either Sartreanism or Marxism to explain *The Outsider*.

Reading the Excesses of the Text

Reading *The Outsider* in relation to these moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity, then, also necessitates a more complicated reading of the novel's moments of violent inter-

subjectivity, a reading which seeks to explain *The Outsider* without reducing Wright's interests to either Sartreanism or Marxism. In this section, I examine Wright's use of intersubjectivity within *The Outsider*, as well as the ways in which Wright relates intersubjectivity to existentialism and communism. I argue that *The Outsider* uses existentialism and communism to illustrate the inability of Western ideologies to forcefully critique Western culture.

As the novel begins, Cross Damon roams the streets of Chicago with his coworkers. In this scene, Damon's discontent and disconnectedness are evident. Damon is, as Robert Cole notes in the foreword to the text, the quintessential outsider, whose alienation from himself and society is complete [...]. Damon is racially outside (a black man living outside of a dominant white racist society), spiritually outside (an atheist living outside of Christianized Western society), materially outside (a postal worker who is deeply in debt), and emotionally outside (involved in a marriage-family situation which he abhors).³⁴

As Cole notes, Damon has little reason to invest in either himself or his society. When he is mistakenly declared dead after a train crash, Damon seizes the opportunity to reinvent himself. Damon makes an existential move, and fashions a new identity free from all the roles and responsibilities with which he had been burdened, thereby embracing a radical form of freedom. However, in order to maintain this radical freedom, Damon is forced to sever all of his remaining relationships, and then to lie, and steal, and murder. Eventually, Damon flees Chicago for Harlem, where he seeks the apparent safety of the CPUSA. However, Damon soon becomes embroiled in a series of plots and power struggles within the CPUSA. This final struggle culminates in the death of Damon, as he is slain by a CPUSA bullet.

As numerous critics have noted, Wright imagines a world in which intersubjectivity is incredibly violent. Throughout the text, Damon is unable to enter into nonviolent relationships. The violence of this intersubjectivity can be seen in Cross Damon's relationships with his wife, Gladys, and his mistress, Dot. These relationships are composed of constant struggles, attacks, and retributions, and are described in the language of warfare. Dot is cast as "the enemy," as having "fought" and variously uses "tactics," "strategy," "attacks," "weapons," and "assaults" to control Cross.³⁵ All of these assaults and attacks are intended to blackmail Damon into an unwanted marriage. Meanwhile, in his relationship with Gladys, Damon engages in psychological and physical attacks against his wife in order to force a divorce, while Gladys refuses a divorce in order to hold Damon hostage financially. This too is described in terms of warfare, as their life together is described as a parade of "extortion," "unconditional surrender," "torture," "attacks," "ruthlessness" and

"hostility."³⁶ Yet the violence of this intersubjectivity is not a result of Cross Damon's affiliation with existentialism and communism. Instead, it precedes these affiliations.

However, in spite of these moments in which intersubjectivity is incredibly violent, Wright's novel also allows for moments in which it is nonviolent. Indeed, *The Outsider* begins with a series of comic scenes, as Cross Damon, the titular outsider, and his friends wander through the streets, and bars, of Chicago. These scenes are sites of mirthfulness and mischievousness, wordplay, storytelling, and communal creation. Wright describes one such scene this way:

"What's eating you, Cross?" Pink implored softly.

"We've been your friends for six years. Spill it.

We'll help you—"

"Skip it," Cross said. "Am I complaining? You signed for my last loan and that took care of my Quadruple-A debts. That's enough."

They laughed at how Cross could laugh at himself.

"There're some things a man must do alone," Cross added.

The three men looked silently at Cross. He knew that they liked him, but he felt that they were outside of his life, that there was nothing that they could do that would make any difference. Now more than ever he knew that he was alone and that his problem was one of a relationship of himself to himself.³⁷

Notably, it is Damon who refuses to enter into this moment of nonviolent intersubjectivity. But Damon does not refuse this moment on a whim. Instead, Damon's refusal stems from his sense of alienation. Damon feels alienated from his society, that is, the intersubjective world in which subjectivity is formed, and is therefore alienated from his own subjectivity. And it is important to note that Damon never forecloses the possibility of entering into moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity at some point in time, wondering "[w]ere there not somewhere in this world rebels with whom he could feel at home, men who were outsiders not because they had been born black and poor, but because they had thought their way through the many veils of illusion?"³⁸ The alternative in which Damon imagines this possibility is one in which Damon and others stand outside what Damon calls either the "veils of illusion" or the "veil of myth-worlds," two terms which Damon uses to refer to the illusions of Western civilization.³⁹ Thus, Damon's initial inability to enter into moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity can be traced to the illusions of Western civilization, illusions which ideologies such as existentialism and communism are supposed to oppose.

However, within *The Outsider*, neither existentialism nor communism appears to allow nonviolent modes of intersub-

jectivity. Instead, Wright's use of existentialism and communism, allows him to dramatize their failure, as neither Damon's existentialist attempt at self-creation, nor Damon's affiliation with the CPUSA allows Damon any access to nonviolent modes of intersubjectivity. Instead, Damon finds himself even more isolated than before, as these two modes actually foreclose his access to this mode of being. In order to maintain his own radical freedom, Damon is forced to commit acts that infringe upon other people's freedom. Thus, Damon murders his coworker Joe and abandons his sole confidant, a woman named Jenny, in order to maintain his newfound freedom. Wright describes Damon's thoughts about these deeds:

He cursed softly: That damn fool Joe . . . ! And Jenny did not know how lucky she was. From now on he had to cope with this impulse of his to confide. If circumstances had been just a little different, he would have had to kill Jenny too, or give up the game. He had thought he was free. But was he?⁴⁰

Damon maintains this radical form of freedom, but only by sacrificing the possibility of nonviolent intersubjectivity. Meanwhile, Damon's association with the CPUSA is equally unsuccessful. Here, Damon meets Eva, an artist who works with the CPUSA. And though Eva offers her love to Damon, Damon is forced to deceive her when he participates in a series of power struggles within the CPUSA. This deception results in her suicide. Notably, these are situations in which nonviolent intersubjectivity would have been possible, and was actually offered to Damon. Joe asks Damon to share his story; Jenny asks Damon to travel along as a companion; and Eva freely offers her love and her trust to Damon. However, Damon is unable to accept these offers because they threaten his radical freedom.

The exact manner in which existentialism and communism act to foreclose moments of nonviolent intersubjectivity is identified fairly explicitly within *The Outsider*, as Eli Houston, an investigator, analyzes Cross Damon. Houston states:

"Well, I guess that maybe you couldn't trust each other, hunh? That's the big trouble with gods when they get together. Gods cannot share power; each god must have all the power or he's no god. Logical, hunh? For, what's a god if he has a rival? So damn much jealousy enters, hunh? Look at Hitler and Stalin...Boy, if they could have been reasonable, they could have divided this whole earth up between them."⁴¹

What Houston describes here is a set of subjectivities negotiating over the meaning of the intersubjective world. Importantly, however, Houston describes these subjectivities as entities that must have complete control over the intersubjective world and cannot, therefore, exist without violence. Notably, Houston uses this description to describe

two sets of individuals in particular. The first is members of the CPUSA, for whom all relations within the intersubjective world are determined by the subjectivity with the most capital, or a violently rebellious proletariat. And the second is Cross Damon, for whom it is necessary to clash over the state of the intersubjective world in the process of existentially creating his subjectivity. It is Damon's Sartrean freedom and Marxist associations that resist these movements towards a nonviolent intersubjectivity and thereby reassert the very notion of intersubjectivity, which they are intended to oppose, effectively foreclosing narrative movement into those moments of dialogue and dialectic in which the excesses of the two ideologies could become visible. Wright very clearly describes the two ideologies as reasserting a system of violent intersubjectivity based on the very system of power and oppression they were intended to oppose:

[Power] related man to man in a fearfully organic way. To hold absolute power over others, to define what they should love or fear, to decide if they were to live or die and thereby to ravage the whole of their beings—that was a sensuality which made sexual passion look pale by comparison. It was a noneconomic conception of existence. [...] Of course, this system of sensualization of the concept of power did not prevail alone in the Communist or Fascist worlds; the Communists had merely rationalized it, brought it nakedly and unseemingly into the open. This system of the sensuality of power prevailed, though in different form, in the so called capitalistic bourgeois world; it was everywhere, in religion as well as in government, and in all art that was worthy of the name.⁴²

Wright describes the sensualization of power as an all-pervasive symptom of Western culture, and as a system that both reifies and reproduces violent forms of intersubjectivity. And, as Cross Damon realizes, neither existentialism nor communism is free of this symptom. They too are the offspring of Western culture.

The conclusion of *The Outsider* illustrates this poignantly, as Cross Damon is shot to death by a member of the CPUSA. As Damon is dying, Eli Houston asks him about the meaning of his life, and Damon responds, by stating, "I wish I had some way to give the meaning of my life to others...To make a bridge from man to man...Starting from scratch every time is...is no good. Tell them not to come down this road..."⁴³ Damon explicitly rejects his own actions, instead favoring a model that finally allows for nonviolent forms of intersubjectivity.

Conclusion

Richard Wright's 1953 novel *The Outsider* mobilizes existentialism and communism for a powerful critique of Western culture and the way in which its institutions

reproduce traditional power relations and violent forms of intersubjectivity. Certainly, Wright was not alone in identifying this reproduction of violence in Western culture. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon would describe the role of Western violence in colonialism, arguing that

[t]he existence of an armed struggle shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only. He of whom they have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, as always, the settler has shown him the way he should take if he is to become free. The argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force.⁴⁴

In Fanon's conception, colonialism serves as one such system in which violence is reified and reproduced.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*, concludes in a manner that is similar to the conclusion of Wright's *The Outsider*. Like Cross Damon, Ellison's unnamed narrator explicitly rejects violence. Even as Damon rejects Western culture, Ellison's narrator engages in a symbolic rejection of Western culture, burning all remnants of his time within it and retreating into the underground.⁴⁶ This shared interest, in the reproduction of violence within the West, indicates the importance of these concerns to an understanding of Western culture, as well as the timeliness of Wright's novel. For other novelists too, the relationship between the marginalized cultures and the mainstream cultures of the West called for examination, and *The Outsider* marks a key moment in this examination. Considered as a theoretical work, Wright's novel offers an exploration of the relationship between the marginalized and the mainstream. But it also does so in its role as a historical artifact, as a text over which critics were compelled to articulate their own thoughts on the relationship between mainstream institutions and those who existed on the margins of the West.

1 Quoted in Michel Fabre, *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright* (New York: Morrow, 1973), 66.

2 In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy notes "Wright's intellectual legacy is especially interesting because it has been so routinely misunderstood. The depth of his philosophical interests has been either overlooked or misconceived by the almost exclusively literary enquiries which have dominated analysis of his writing." Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 147.

3 The John Reed Club was a club for writers, artists, and intellectuals. Originally independent, the John Reed Club became officially affiliated with the CPUSA in November 1930.

4 See Michel Fabre, "Wright's First Hundred Books," in *The World of Richard Wright* by Michel Fabre (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985). This essay offers a more extensive, but still incomplete, listing.

- 5 Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: Meridian, 1956), 14.
- 6 Maria Bloshteyn's article "Rage and Revolt" suggests the importance of Dostoevsky to Wright's conception of existentialism. Bloshteyn writes that "[p]arenthetically, a recognition that Wright struggled with the problem of life's apparent lack of purpose long before he moved to Paris in 1946 sheds a different light on his involvement with the French Existentialists and on *The Outsider* itself. When this novel was published in 1953, most reviewers saw it as an indication that Wright had fallen under the spell of the Existentialists and accused him of producing a book that was not an organic part of his oeuvre. It would appear, however, that Wright was attracted by the Existentialists in the first place because they were discussing the ideas that he grappled with in reading Dostoevsky." Maria Bloshteyn, "Rage and Revolt: Dostoevsky and Three African-American Writers," *Comparative Literature Studies* 38, no. 4 (2001): 289-290. A more extensive treatment of Wright's relationship to Dostoevsky is offered in Michael F. Lynch, *Creative Revolt: A Study of Wright, Ellison, and Dostoevsky* (New York: P. Lang, 1990).
- 7 A short list of publications on existentialism in American magazines is listed in George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003).
- 8 Dorothy Norman was a longtime patron of Richard Wright. Hannah Arendt was a philosopher and political theorist, as well as a onetime student of both Heidegger and Jaspers, who was well versed in existentialism. Paul Tillich was a significant, and well-known, Christian existentialist philosopher.
- 9 Wright's contributions to Beauvoir's work are detailed in Margaret A. Simons, *Beauvoir and the Second Sex: Feminism, Race and the Origins of Existentialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). Wright's contributions to the concept of committed literature are detailed in Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).
- 10 Richard Wright, foreword to *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, by George Padmore (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 60.
- 11 Both existentialism and communism make claims of universal relevance. Marx's conception of history assumes that it is universally relevant, and Sartre's existentialism assumes that it is universal to human nature.
- 12 In 1961, critic Jay Saunders Redding opined that "Existentialism is no philosophy to accommodate the reality of Negro life, especially Southern Negro life." See Jay S. Redding, in *Richard Wright: The Critical Reception*, ed. John M. Reilly (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., 1978), 227. Similarly, in his 1952 article "The Deep Pit," Lloyd L. Brown would write that "[Ralph] Ellison is a disciple of the Richard Wright-Chester Himes school and shares with these writers their bitter alienation from the Negro people [...] Cut off from the surging mainstream of Negro life and struggle and creativity, they stagnate in Paris, wander on lonely crusades, or spit out at the world from a hole in the ground." See Lloyd L. Brown, "The Deep Pit," in *The Critical Response to Ralph Ellison*, ed. Robert Butler (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 31.
- 13 See, for instance Jeffery Atteberry, "Entering the Politics of the Outsider: Richard Wright's Critique of Marxism and Existentialism," *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 4 (2005): 873-95, which describes subordination of African American needs to those of the CPUSA. Also, see Daniel W. Aldridge III, "A Militant Liberalism: Anti-Communism and the African American Intelligentsia, 1939-1955," for a discussion on suspicion of the

- CPUSA by the African American mainstream.
- 14 It is important to note that a strong countertrend exists in more recent literature on the relationship between African Americans and the CPUSA. See, for instance, Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), and Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), as well as William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars* (New York: Columbia UP, 1999). This countertrend revises earlier interpretations of the relationship between African Americans and the CPUSA as exploitative, arguing the existence of a more mutually beneficial relationship. Among others, Lewis Gordon has defended the relationship between African Americans and existentialism.
 - 15 Examples of this defense abound. In *Existential America*, George Cotkin writes that “[t]he history of existential thinking in America began before Sartre first uttered the word ‘existential.’ Existential concerns have long colored the American intellectual temper. Dread, despair, death, and dauntlessness helped frame the existential imperatives of figures as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, William James, Edward Hopper, and Walter Lippman” (6). Lewis R. Gordon, describing African American existentialism in *Existentialia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), writes that “[t]he body of literature that constitutes European existentialism is but one continent’s response to a set of problems that date from the moment human beings faced problems of anguish and despair. [...] In my replies to the skeptics, I asked them if slaves did not wonder about freedom; suffer anguish, notice paradoxes of responsibility; have concerns of agency, tremors of broken sociality, or a burning desire for liberation” (18). And, while his interests in existentialism differed significantly from those of the authors under consideration, Paul Tillich makes one of the clearest uses of this defense in *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Existence and the Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) when he writes that the existential represents a “human attitude” and existentialism represents “a philosophical school” (26).
 - 16 Describing broad definitions of existentialism in “Existentialism and the Beats: A Renegotiation,” Erik Ronald Mortenson notes, “This term is, of course, highly contested. The danger here is collapsing a disparate group of thinkers under one simple rubric” (28).
 - 17 One might, for example, question the usefulness of the term “existential” when George Cotkin is able to categorize Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, William James, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison as existential, despite their significant differences in period, place, and philosophy.
 - 18 See Milton J. Bennet, “Becoming Interculturally Competent,” in *Toward Multiculturalism: A Reader in Multicultural Education*, ed. Jaime S. Wurzel (Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource, 2004), for a discussion of minimization of differences as a middle stage in the development of intercultural competence.
 - 19 See Aldridge, “A Militant Liberalism,” for a discussion of the two newspapers.
 - 20 Broad overviews of these New York intellectuals’ complicated reception of existentialism can be found in Ann Fulton, “Apostles of Sartre: Advocates of Early Sartreanism in American Philosophy,” in *Sartre’s Life, Times, and Vision du Monde*, ed. William Leon McBride (New York: Garland, 1997): 133-48, and in George Cotkin, *Existential America*. The two writers suggest that this turn against existentialism was due to an intellectual backlash against the popularity of French Existentialism, as well as disagreements with the French Existentialists over the value of several American writers, as well as a desire to deny the contributions of the French Existentialists to their own thoughts.
 - 21 Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*, 3.
 - 22 Ibid., 4. The Comintern, an abbreviation for the Communist International, was an international organization of communist movements centered in Moscow. One member organization was the CPUSA.
 - 23 Atteberry, “Entering the Politics of the Outsider,” 875.
 - 24 As an example, see Brown, “The Deep Pit.”
 - 25 In an unpublished interview, Ellison explained that while he wrote for the CPUSA affiliated *New Masses* for several years, he “never joined the Communist Party.” In addition, Ellison wrote, “I wasn’t on the make in that sense. I wrote what I felt and wasn’t in awe of functionaries. [...] They never paid me anything. Finally I refused to write without money. [...] I was so surprised when they paid.” Quoted in Lawrence Patrick Jackson, *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius* (New York, Wiley, 2002), 481.
 - 26 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), xxi-xlii.
 - 27 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is A Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet, in *Fifty Readings in Philosophy*, by Donald C. Abel (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008), 3.
 - 28 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 232-303; 433-481.
 - 29 See Marx’s Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right” and “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” For an extended discussion of Marx’s writings on subjectivity, see James Miller, *History and Human Existence: From Marx to Merleau-Ponty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
 - 30 Karl Marx, “Communist Manifesto,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 475.
 - 31 Alan Adler, ed., *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (London: Ink Links, 1980), 331.
 - 32 Edmund Fuller, in *Richard Wright: The Critical Reception*, ed. John M. Reilly (New York: Burt Franklin & Co, 1978), 225.
 - 33 Jack Mason, “Sense of Outrage Dominates Outlook of Negro Novelist,” in *Richard Wright: The Critical Reception*, ed. John M. Reilly (New York: Burt Franklin & Co, 1978), 233.
 - 34 Robert Cole, foreword to *The Outsider*, by Richard Wright (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 1.
 - 35 Richard Wright, *The Outsider* (New York: Harper, 1953), 53-59.
 - 36 Ibid., 62-84.
 - 37 Ibid., 30.
 - 38 Ibid., 51.
 - 39 Ibid., 42.
 - 40 Ibid., 144.
 - 41 Ibid., 497.
 - 42 Ibid., 244-245.
 - 43 Ibid., 510-511.

- 44 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 82-83.
- 45 For a deeper discussion of the similarities between violence in the work of Wright and Fanon, and the reproduction of violence in particular, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- 46 In *Mythic Black Fiction: The Transformation of History* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1989), Jane Campbell reads the novel's conclusion as an explicit rejection of violent forms of intersubjectivity in *Invisible Man*, viewing the narrator's murder of Ras the Destroyer as a rejection of violent forms of protest, and a turn towards the upholding of democratic ideals. In addition, Campbell identifies a rejection of Western culture in the novel, noting that "[t]o Ellison, the Afro-American writer must re-evaluate history through a destruction of the false promises offered by white culture before he or she can invent a mythology" (89).

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Mapping the Sound: St. Louis's Black Geographies and the Frameworks of Hip-Hop

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Abstract: As a cultural form, hip hop attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, as well as strengthen and express community identity through connections with space, place, and urban lifestyles. In this essay, I use rap music produced in East St. Louis, Illinois, and Northern St. Louis, Missouri, as a lens with which to examine the relationship between the area's urban geography and the role of physical space as a means of developing collective identity in these communities. The St. Louis metro area's centuries of racialized geography and political fragmentation intensify the connections to space, race and identity, making the region an interesting case study for exploring the processes through which music emerges as a source of identity affirmation.

In the summer of 1991, DJ Quik went on a national tour. As he travelled through cities such as San Antonio and Denver, his journey took him far from his hometown of Compton, California, and far from hip-hop's well-defined bi-coastal urban territories. A year after the tour, DJ Quik released the track "Jus Lyke Compton," revealing his reaction to hip-hop's hinterlands—in particular the city of St. Louis, Missouri.

Moving on to St. Louis,
where the country is fucked
With gold teeth in they mouth,
but they still know what's up,
Where it's hot as motherfucka,
hot enough to make ya cuss
That's why I kept my ass on the bus
[...]
That's when I started thinking that
this wasn't like home
But then later they had to prove me wrong
Cause later on that night after we did the show
We went back to the after-set
and wouldn't ya know, Yeah
Blood and Crips start scrappin' and shootin'...
In Missouri?
Damn, how could this happen¹

DJ Quik was shocked. The conditions and behaviors that defined Compton additionally represented many other areas

around the country that did not align with the geographic and conceptual boundaries of the genre. Later in the song DJ Quik raps "I don't think they know/ they too crazy for their own good/ They need to stop watchin' that "Colors" and "Boyz in the Hood." DJ Quik calls out St. Louis for behavior he deems inauthentic since it does not occur within the spatial context of Compton or another major hip-hop production site.

DJ Quik's response to St. Louis's urban character hints at the complex relationship between rap narratives and the cultural and geographic landscapes in which they unfold. "Jus Lyke Compton" is unusual in the sense that it reveals the discomfort inherent in challenging these spatial notions, while also situating the performer in a role where he or she questions, rather than asserts, the identity of a particular place. For the rap communities of Southern California, space emerged as a particularly important theme.² The daily experience of West Coast rappers revolved around issues of territory and turf to a much greater degree than that of their East Coast counterparts, emerging as a prominent lyrical and visual theme in the work of artists such as DJ Quik.

Many scholars have delved into the meaning of rap's connections to space and place, notably Tricia Rose, Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University, who cites the "postindustrial city" as the cultural terrain that "provided the context for creative development among hip-hop's earliest developers."³ Professor Murray Forman of Northeastern

University has been forward about the genre's role in larger social dialogues, stating that "rap music is one of the main sources within popular culture of a sustained and in-depth examination of the spatial partitioning of race and the diverse experiences of being young and black in America."⁴ Other writers, such as Houston Baker, Jr., clearly articulate the conflicts inherent in the genre's space-related tensions and its subsequent connections to race: "The black urban beat goes on and on and on in the nineties. The beat continues to provide sometimes stunning territorial confrontations between black expressivity and white law-and-order."⁵

The success of St. Louis area rap artists has become a defining element of the city's image, situating the region as a resonant place for the articulation of black identity and hinging on its parallels to the city's urban environment and subsequent cultural perceptions. In the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, the rise of St. Louis hip-hop and rap culture emphasized the city's urban geography and inter-neighborhood relationships, bringing to light nuanced connections between St. Louis black identity and the spaces in which its cultural expressions unfold. In this paper, I argue that St. Louis hip-hop touches on a deeply rooted historical emphasis on location, identity, and race that has permeated the city's metro area for centuries. The region's status as one of the most politically fractured urban landscapes in the nation contributed greatly to the close relationship between place and identity. With a patchwork of ninety-one independently governed municipalities, neighborhood personalities are rigorously maintained and remain an intrinsic part of social negotiation. As a result of this historical and social focus, St. Louis has a heightened awareness of its urban geography and connections to race. This spatial consciousness aligns with hip-hop's usage of location as a signifier of identity and authenticity— notions which remain central to rap's ideology, and figure prominently in the lyrics and video imagery of St. Louis rap artists. The narratives of authenticity that structure the rap and hip-hop cultural value system therefore align to perfectly underscore St. Louis's history and urban geography, creating a compelling case study for the intersection between music, race, and space.

Cities as Landscape: Why Urban Life Shapes Us

While the social geographies of the urban landscape are forever shifting, the experience of space itself is part of urban life. Cities, in particular, impose structural divisions that shape the social and cultural dynamics of urban life— from zoning laws, to the street grid itself, urban dwellers frame their environment in terms of an ever-narrowing series of divisions. The divisions become a way to understand a city, yet the process of creating cultural meaning for a space goes beyond the simple division of the urban

landscape into parts. Instead, defining a place by the way in which it is inhabited becomes key to understanding it. Spatial meaning is constructed through the daily rhythms of its inhabitants.⁶

The idea that space grounds social practice and serves as an influential part of how people negotiate culture is not a radical concept—it makes sense that the locations where our lives unfold would hold great meaning.⁷ Yet locations are not simply containers for our actions. Spaces and their significance, both physical and cultural, are continually in flux, redefined by a revolving set of circumstances that ebb and flow over time. As Murray Forman notes, "within a critical approach that conceives of contemporary culture as a lived process and the site of ongoing struggle and negotiation, space (and place) can be regarded as constructions that are neither organic, nor fixed for all time."⁸ Essentially, there is no true meaning of place. Location itself does not have influence through its own power.⁹ Instead, the social practices (including cultural and historical dynamics) give power and meaning to a place, while their shifting state binds them to a constant process of re-definition and re-articulation.

Urban locations also function as historical constructs, where decades and decades of cultural and social legacies compound, as the present simultaneously unfolds within that historical context. Unsurprisingly, many conflicts (such as gang "turf wars") are framed as struggles for place where "owning" or having authority over a physical space plays a critical role in the symbolic significance of that location. Michel Foucault, French social theorist and philosopher, notes that "space is where the discourses of power and knowledge are transformed into actual relations of power... architecture and urban planning are crucial in understanding how power operates."¹⁰ French sociologist Henri Lefebvre reiterates this idea, stating that landscape and location "serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control and hence of domination, of power."¹¹ Power and order structure almost every facet of a social system, with space emerging as a central platform for the negotiation of culture and authority. When viewed as a social product, the dynamics of place become ideology, and the relationships and actions occurring within these spaces are understood as politically charged.

With so much significance riding on the intersections between space, identity, and culture, race becomes easily intertwined in these cross-community dialogues. The city itself acts as something of a grid of regions. Within this map, racial processes and racist dynamics shape collective identities. Malcolm Cross and Michael Keith state that one must "conceptualize a notion of urbanism which sees the city as, in part, a series of overlapping locales through

which the different processes and scales of racialization are realized, and the tensions between assumed collective identities and ascribed collective positions of racial subordination, the contradictions of racial discourse, are reconciled.”¹² In other words, the city becomes a type of cognitive map that reflects how race is understood. Physical space, especially in the confines of an urban environment, is imbued with many layers of social, historical, and political significance, making it a highly visible platform on which to negotiate cultural and racial issues. Because of this physical and symbolic prominence, urban geography is deeply entangled with race and identity. Space and place inform how collective group identities are created, while maintaining those ideas through the policing of both metaphorical and geographic boundaries.

In the preface to his 1993 book *Race Matters*, Cornel West describes his attempt to hail a New York taxi at 60th Street and Park Avenue, hoping to make an appointment in East Harlem. Although a prominent intellectual and a smartly dressed, clearly professional gentleman, West watched in mute disbelief as each taxi that passed ignored his attempts to hail a ride: “The tenth taxi,” West notes, “stopped for a kind, well-dressed, smiling female fellow citizen of European descent. As she stepped into the cab, she said, ‘This is really ridiculous, is it not?’”¹³ Since West’s sophisticated bearing and fine clothing resembled that of every other person strolling down Park Avenue, it seems clear that race is the reason for the unfair treatment he received from the taxi drivers. The incident emphasizes the racial stereotyping and bigotry that still permeate much of American life, even though the rest of West’s appearance was not out of context in the wealthy, upscale New York neighborhood.

Murray Forman, hip-hop scholar and Associate Professor at Northeastern University, deconstructs West’s detailed telling of the story, revealing other, more nuanced elements at play in the interplay between race and space.¹⁴ Locations figure centrally in the story, framing the events in a significant way—for example, the fact that West parks his car (which he notes is “a rather elegant one”) in an upscale neighborhood before journeying into Harlem subtly hints that space and place offer slightly more information than just a setting. We can infer through West’s actions that an expensive car on Park Avenue will probably be safe, whereas the same car might be stolen or vandalized if parked somewhere in Harlem. By including specific locations in his narrative, West navigates the cultural and social terrain of these spaces, carefully noting the particular qualities and character of each neighborhood. Similar social constructions of place are present in every city, serving as a framework with which to experience the interplay between the identities we ascribe to space and the identities of those who inhabit them. Though we may not always be aware of

our tendencies to map terrain socially, stories such as West’s demonstrate the ways in which these cognitive processes inform our interaction with place.

Divided Identities: Social Geography and the History of Space in St. Louis

The St. Louis metro area exhibits a particularly heightened awareness of its own social geography, due in part to political fragmentation and the social perceptions of the city’s diverse regions. The question “Where did you go to high school?” is a reflection of this consciousness, acknowledged as a well-known local phenomenon as much a part of St. Louis culture as Imo’s Pizza and the St. Louis Cardinals.¹⁵ Essentially, the question situates the respondent in a particular stratum of the St. Louis community, relying heavily on the inquirer’s command of social geography and ability to reference a landscape of identity symbolism. With 16 counties, two states, 79 neighborhoods, 91 municipalities, and 9 unincorporated census designated places, the region’s divisions have resulted in the formation of place-based identities central to the St. Louis area’s political, economic, and social fabric for well over a century¹⁶. Each community acts as an independent entity with its own governmental structure, agendas, and fiercely maintained character reflecting the highly specific concerns of its population.

In the historical formation of St. Louis’s geography, race emerged as a critical element in the formation of community identities and the perceived urban character of particular spaces. Racial interests reflected both national political climates and the local civic and political confrontations, emerging as a platform to stage unequal treatment while physically delineating between white and black residential spaces. In my discussion of the metro area’s history, I will use two historic St. Louis black communities and cultural centers—the city of East St. Louis, Illinois, and the North St. Louis region. Both East St. Louis and North St. Louis have clear geographic divisions (such as the Mississippi River and Delmar Boulevard) understood as lines which delineate social and racial zones within the city.¹⁷ East St. Louis and North St. Louis have also functioned as prominent sites for the negotiation of St. Louis racial politics and racialized geography, thus showing the regional movements of black communities throughout the twentieth century. Examining the history of these two areas will foreground the intersections of place-based identity and racial consciousness as they unfold within St. Louis’s particular historic and social context.¹⁸

The shaping of racial communities intensified with the onset of industry, initially informing much of St. Louis’s city and county development while bringing many black families to the region. In the 1890s, the city’s favorable riv-

erfront location and abundant raw materials brought entrepreneurs and railroad tycoons to the city, followed by dozens of low-paid workers whose labor supported the blossom of industry.¹⁹ For a century, large Midwestern companies such as Missouri Malleable Iron, Key Boiler, and American Steel operated out of East St. Louis, Illinois (part of the St. Louis metro area), employing thousands of workers—by 1915, 40% of Missouri Malleable Iron Company's unskilled workforce was black.²⁰ The local union, Central Trades and Labor Union of East St. Louis, refused to acknowledge the racism that permeated the work environment, leaving black workers in the lowest wage jobs while white workers generally ascended to better positions.

East St. Louis quickly became a space of escalated racial tensions, and perceptions of its local character were soon warped by prejudice. Other neighborhoods in St. Clair County soon began to resent East St. Louis for consuming more tax dollars than it generated, and claimed that it was the source of all who “wallowed in a mire of lawlessness and unashamed corruption.”²¹ The relationship between white and black workers in East St. Louis grew particularly uneasy, largely due to public officials using black residents of East St. Louis as a scapegoat for the area's rising crime statistics. In 1916, the police chief claimed that blacks were causing a crime wave in East St. Louis, “even though only four crimes involving blacks were reported in the papers two weeks prior,” and many of the charges were undoubtedly falsified.²² A marked increase in black activism in East St. Louis ratcheted up the strain between the Illinois riverside and St. Louis city. Illinois had operated as a free state since 1823, and although many laws remained discriminatory, black communities in East St. Louis developed a sense of black identity and political identity that was forged in the context of the city's developing industrial and urban conditions. Many blacks belonged to social and political clubs such as the Afro-American Protective League (formed in 1895) and actively challenged racist housing conditions, leaving white East St. Louis residents feeling threatened.²³ On July 2nd, 1917, the tension finally erupted in a horrifyingly violent race riot that destroyed much of the East St. Louis black community infrastructure and killed hundreds of black residents.²⁴ This tragedy had a profound influence on the entire St. Louis metro area's black communities and prompted a shift in East St. Louis's demographics. Thousands of workers packed up their families and moved to the Missouri side of the Mississippi, where discriminatory housing practices funneled them into racially homogenous parts of St. Louis, such as The Ville in North St. Louis.²⁵ Some black families left the area entirely. Black activism in East St. Louis continued to gain momentum after the race riot, taking the form of institutions that anchored the black community and affirmed a sense of racial consciousness and

solidarity that remained despite the poverty of later decades.

With the economic collapse of riverfront industry, and the resulting unemployment, the St. Louis region struggled with a mass population exodus that spanned decades.²⁶ This slow demographic metamorphosis, known as White Flight, was motivated by racism and spurred by fear of the city's decline. The decline was thought to stem in part from black families moving into white residential areas and threatening the lifestyles of St. Louis's white middle class. A powerful real estate industry pushed for racial zoning of St. Louis residential areas, succeeding through tactics such as deed-restrictive covenants, segregation of the private housing market, and numerous city-sanctioned ordinances and actions.²⁷ Petitions to the Board of Election Commissioners asked that mixed-race city blocks become “occupied wholly by either white or colored people [...] thereby promoting the general welfare of white and colored people respectively.”²⁸ In 1945, the black Shelley family purchased the house at 4600 Labadie Avenue in North St. Louis, aware that the property was subject to a race restrictive covenant signed in 1911.²⁹ Louis D. Kraemer, the white owner of another home on Labadie Avenue, sued the Shelley family for violating the covenant. The Missouri Circuit Court ruled in favor of the Shelley family, but Kramer appealed, and the case was taken to the Missouri Supreme Court where it was overturned in favor of enforcing the racial covenant. On May 3rd, 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial covenants can not be enforced by state action without violating the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. While this did not outlaw racial covenants, *Shelley v. Kraemer* was a landmark case in the opposition of discriminatory housing practices, and an important event that highlighted the black community's challenging of racism within North St. Louis neighborhoods.

White Flight had been in motion since the early decades of the 1900s, but it gained momentum in the 50s and 60s, when the urban geography and spatial configuration of the St. Louis city shifted more dramatically—white populations that once inhabited the city moved westward to the counties, leaving vacant many parts of the city and its surrounding suburbs.³⁰ The allure lay in larger homes, an easy commute on the new highway system, and an escape from the city's crime, decay, and racial strife. The discriminatory housing practices that had channeled black families into northern St. Louis remained a barrier for those hoping to follow jobs into suburbia. A now visible line emerged in the St. Louis region's geography, separating white and black populations along city and municipal limits.³¹

In the 1950s and 60s, the black community moved to fill in areas deserted by the suburban-bound White Flight. Almost sixty percent of the white population had left the city. With them went their tax dollars. In 1956, the Mis-

souri Highway Commission signed a contract to build Interstate 70, one of the first highways in America, and physically severing the north city area from its riverfront employment base. The construction forced many families to relocate, sometimes into sprawling public housing units with high crime and unpleasant living conditions. The inner circle of northern St. Louis suburbs (Wellston, University City and Normandy) had an influx of black families moving away from the north city's more blighted landscapes and inhabiting safer areas such as Wellston and the outer suburb of Kinloch.³²

Aside from the inherent negativity prompting black migration towards the suburbs, the structuring of racial communities along geographic lines contributed to new understandings of race within black neighborhoods, resulting in the evolution of a new black consciousness that was distinctly suburban. While the social, cultural and political contributions of this new black presence has been widely documented in city spaces, an analysis of its suburban manifestations remained underrepresented. As St. Louis black communities moved away from the decline of the north city, they created several thriving, vibrant cultural centers within northern suburbs. The Ville, a black community before the population shifts of White Flight, was home to Tina Turner, Chuck Berry, and Arthur Ashe.³³ Yet despite its cultural flourishing, many of these North Side black neighborhoods—both in the city and in some of the inner suburbs—were “redlined” by banks that perceived the area an unstable investment.³⁴ Unable to receive home improvement loans and community support, the area's infrastructure and housing decayed even further. In this case, the perception of decline created a self-fulfilling prophecy that resulted in the actual deterioration of many neighborhoods in the North St. Louis area.

The pervasive perception of blight is displayed in Harland Bartholomew's “Comprehensive City Plan.” Bartholomew first arrived in St. Louis in 1916, where he worked for the city's Civic League and published his 1917 report on the city, “The Problems of St. Louis,” during some of the earliest years of population movement. In this document, he highlights many issues still relevant today, including the need for better transportation and restoration of districts where property values had fallen. By the time Bartholomew finished the “Comprehensive City Plan” in 1947, he had decided that much of the northern part of St. Louis city and the surrounding inner suburbs were “obsolete” or “blighted.” Bartholomew states that “the blighted districts should be extensively rehabilitated before they degenerate into obsolete areas. This is both a social need and an economic essential because of high rates of juvenile delinquency, crime, and disease found in areas of poor housing.”³⁵ The 1947 plan required a thorough reshaping of the blighted districts, as well as the clearing of obsolete neighborhoods such as

Soulard, where Bartholomew saw little value in the existing infrastructure. Unless his detailed and extensive plans were carried out, Bartholomew warned that “most housing areas in St. Louis will continue to deteriorate and blighted districts and obsolete areas will reach much greater proportions than at present.” As the majority of these “blighted” and “obsolete” neighborhoods were largely white at the time, Bartholomew's attitude did not stem from a racist agenda. Instead, it demonstrates the way in which the neighborhoods of St. Louis were already perceived to be in a swiftly declining state, adding impetus to the White Flight movement and intensifying the social understanding that these areas were decaying.

By the 1980s and 90s, parts of the St. Louis metro area had all the requisite physical and social features of a ghetto environment while the rhetoric and popular perceptions of the city reflected an exaggerated interest in its deteriorating landscape and impoverished population. East St. Louis's urban landscape was described as an endless stretch of “graffiti-marked walls and vacant lots of a city slum that was beyond the imagination of the most destitute resident of Watts or Newark,” and the residents a motley crew of “winos, pimps, gangsters, ex-cons, and hustlers.”³⁶ Despite the city's attempt to create revenue and jobs (the Casino Queen riverboat gambling center and Metrolink light rail both opened in 1993), East St. Louis looks much the same as it did during the 80s, while its reputation for violence, corruption, and vice may have in fact worsened in recent years.³⁷ Western residential areas in St. Louis voiced concerns over the “spreading” of East St. Louis, and deliberately tried to isolate a city whose residents are already geographically separated by a body of water. The Metrolink (connecting East St. Louis to St. Louis city and the surrounding municipalities) has been a source of much outcry precisely because it enables the residents of East St. Louis unprecedented mobility. A 2008 article published in the *Riverfront Times* and titled “Out of Control Shoplifting, Violent Attacks in the Loop: Is the Metrolink a Vehicle for Crime?” relates increases in violent crime to the opening of new Metrolink stations and demonstrates the intensity of East St. Louis's urban character and spatial significance.³⁸

Parts of North St. Louis, such as the area bordering downtown, are slowly being revitalized, yet many of the suburban neighborhoods remain in decline. In 2002, a Ford automobile plant closed in the northern suburb of Hazelwood, taking with it an estimated \$500 million in worker wages and \$200 million in annual tax revenue.³⁹ The community attempted to entice the company to stay, offering extensive tax breaks and a plan to expand the plant to include a larger enterprise zone that spanned six municipalities and part of unincorporated St. Louis County. Despite the efforts of the Ford Hazelwood Task Force, the company eventually

decided to forgo the proposed expansion plans due to the difficulties of undergoing the seven different city council processes required to obtain building permission. The loss of the Ford Hazelwood plant stands as one example of the largest issues in North St. Louis's development: the inefficient fragmentation of the area's municipalities and its role in sustaining decline.

This extensive reshaping of the St. Louis urban landscape throughout the first half of the twentieth century created something of a cognitive map of the city, reflecting racialized notions of space across the metro area. The number of municipalities in the region correlates location with identity—something that has played a major role in the persistence of this regional political strategy, despite its problems. Mike Jones, senior policy advisor to St. Louis County Executive Charlie A. Dooley, notes that “people still look at [the St. Louis area] as, ‘I’m from Shrewsbury, I’m from Brentwood.’”⁴⁰ Yet having so many competing communities “leaves too many focused on narrow slices of a vast and common challenge, and gives no one a portfolio to speak for the whole region.”⁴¹ Indeed the division also allows for problems in the next town over to seem less pressing. “Right now, we’ve all got on the same uniform, but we’re not on the same team.”⁴² The overarching side effect of the metro area’s fragmentation results not only in economic losses but also in the ways it shapes perceptions of the area. Because of the city and county divide, St. Louis city bears a disproportionate amount of the region’s problems, often appearing more violent and crime-ridden than its reality.⁴³ These perceptions are significant factors in the city’s social reception, creating a mythic reality that eclipses actual conditions. Many areas in St. Louis, despite their reputations, are home to culturally diverse residents and embody a range of urban states, from blighted to healthy. Yet in a digital age where physical space has become more indeterminate, the perception and idea of a space rises to importance over the reality of its condition. For residents in these areas, notions of a space’s character become intimately intertwined with the articulation and affirmation of community identity, and for outsiders, these perceptions emerge primarily to inform cognitive social maps.

Marking Space, Creating Place: How Geography Became Important in Hip-Hop

Hip-hop has been forward about making place-bound affiliations and identity relationships explicit. The lyrical content of rap and hip-hop has centered largely on the socio-spatial construct of the hood and the ghetto since hip-hop’s inception, creating a framework for the artist to position him or herself. Location acts as both a physical and symbolic form of identity that must be constantly rearticu-

lated. Tricia Rose addresses this practice, stating that “rap video themes have repeatedly converged around depiction of the local neighborhood and the local posse [...] nothing is more central than situating the rapper in his or her milieu [...] This usually involves shots of favorite street corners, intersections, playgrounds, parking lots, school yards, roofs, and childhood friends.”⁴⁴ In many ways, “the street” and the physical spaces of the ghetto have created and sustained the practices of hip-hop culture.⁴⁵ “The Message,” released in 1982 by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, showcases the place-bound identity that has been central to hip-hop music since its earliest inceptions.⁴⁶ The song’s lyrics describe many aspects of ghetto space and lifestyles, from interior, private experiences to the “street” conditions of the exterior. In the music video for “The Message,” Melle Mel raps, “Standing on the front stoop, hangin’ out the window/ Watching all the cars go by, roaring as the breezes blow/ Crazy lady livin’ in a bag/ Eating out of garbage pails, used to be a fag-hag” over a video montage of homeless people on the streets of the Bronx.

The richly descriptive lyrics of “The Message” create a gritty image of the ghetto lifestyle. Although the video was shot in the South Bronx, and recognizable to those familiar with the area, the borough itself is never mentioned by name. Hip-hop scholar Murray Forman suggests that ghetto imagery in rap lyrics is “not a picture of a specific place; rather it produces an image-idea of ghetto space that is widely recognizable in the American urban context,” accumulating as “place-images” that “reinforce the foundation upon which socially accepted ‘space-myths’ are constructed.”⁴⁷ Essentially the ghetto is a physical space, but it also functions as a symbolic frame for social practice and identity of black urban youth. This same attention to spatial meaning (both literal and figurative) is echoed in the hip-hop albums following Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, released by such artists as N.W.A and Notorious B.I.G.⁴⁸ Historically, this positioned hip-hop and rap culture as a movement where space held particular importance and figured largely in the meaning of social and artistic practice.

As rap and hip-hop music continued to gain momentum and importance in the American musical landscape, the themes of location and identity began to emerge more prominently in lyrics and artist personas.⁴⁹ Instead of abstracted descriptions of urban or ghetto landscapes (such as those lyrically depicted in “The Message”) artists began including more localized details directly related to certain geographic areas. At this stage, the mid to late 1980s, rap and hip-hop was still very much connected to the different cities, boroughs, and neighborhoods that produced it. These highly localized scenes presented “opportunities for the extension of a more cohesive, city-wide hip-hop scene within deeply competitive contexts based in neighborhood and inter-borough combat among sound-system DJs, break-

dance crews, and graffiti artists.”⁵⁰

Neighborhood, place, and space remained very entangled with rap’s modes of identity throughout the development of the ‘90s style and the branching of hip-hop into more rigidly divided subgenres. The notion of authenticity, which is central to rap ideology, continued to evolve parallel to the emphasis of physical location within lyrics and music videos, soon becoming an integral part of the hip-hop framework.⁵¹ Addressed in a variety of hip-hop media, the concept of linking authenticity with environment became a standard theme. While the general urban scene was associated with a certain “coolness,” greater authenticity became attached to the more extreme inner city conditions of the ghetto. Inhabiting the ghetto and participating in its daily rhythms manifests itself as a way for hip-hop artists to affirm their membership in the broader hip-hop community. In the lyrics to “I Ain’t Mad at Cha,” Tupac Shakur addresses the issue of authenticity as it relates to his own social environment: “So many questions now/and they ask me if I’m still down/I moved up out of the ghetto, so I ain’t real now?”⁵² By living outside of the ghetto environment, Tupac was perceived as no longer participating within that geo-cultural framework, and therefore unable to reflect its reality.

A central element of the ghetto daily practice, violence forms a core element of hip-hop authenticity. Spike Lee’s film *Clockers* (1995) integrates its opening credits into a grisly montage of crime scene photos, bullet holes oozing and open eyes rolled upwards. The film then shifts to its first scene, where young drug dealer Strike and his crew discuss hip-hop artist Chuck D. and his perceived “hardness,” with one teenager noting, “how hard can he be, he ain’t never shot nobody.”⁵³ Linked to notions of authenticity or “hardness,” violence forms a core element of the ghetto experience—an experience made significant by its unfolding within a specific environment. Within rap’s discourses, the ghetto environment remains a preferred space because of its connections to violence and crime—elements that culminate in the creation of a “real” and authentic rap identity. One of the central defenses put forth by both artists is that rap and hip-hop mirror the social and political reality facing black communities—this argument, termed the “just keeping it real claim” by scholar Tricia Rose, furthers “hip-hop’s role as a truth teller, especially the truths about poor black urban life that many people want to shove under the rug.”⁵⁴ Violence does indeed sell albums and capitalize on both real and exaggerated claims of authenticity from rap artists, yet it also speaks to experiences that form a reality for many communities. Location and spatial references emerge as ways to negotiate this pervasive concern with authenticity and place it within a markedly urban context.

By the early ‘90s, Midwestern rappers and hip-hop musicians had begun to secure a foothold in the nation’s musical

psyche, altering the landscape of hip-hop and crafting their own identities rooted in an unmistakably urban setting. St. Louis emerged as a significant player in the Midwestern hip-hop and rap scene, famous not only for the popularity of the artists it produced, but for the intensity of its own spatial forces and their prominent role in the music of St. Louis rap artists. The racially homogenous population of East St. Louis and areas of North St. Louis neighborhoods greatly influenced collectively held notions of identity, and the urban character of these spaces is understood as a powerful presence with defining power. Repeatedly anointed “The Most Dangerous City in America,” St. Louis’s blighted urban landscape and historically pervasive emphasis on social geography and racial tension have united to form an intriguing intersection with hip-hop’s spatial concerns of authenticity. In the past several decades, the area has invented itself as something of a rap and hip-hop hotspot: nationally recognized artists Nelly, Chingy, The St. Lunatics, Huey, B-Money, Jibbs Murphy Lee and J-Kwon have all highlighted their association with the St. Louis area, creating successful careers which hinge on a ghetto-appropriated sense of authenticity.

St. Louis Rap and the Expression of Identity and Space

The intensity and historical persistence of cultural geography in the St. Louis area reflects hip-hop’s attitudes towards space. Rap and hip-hop artists from St. Louis have capitalized on the area’s divided landscape, translating it into an expression of authenticity. In 2000, Nelly released his wildly successful debut album *Country Grammar*, which earned a #1 spot on Billboard’s charts. The music video for the album’s single, “(Hot Shit) Country Grammar” is teeming with both visual and lyrical references to East St. Louis and the St. Louis metro area, making it explicitly clear that Nelly remained very much connected to his home turf. In the video, Nelly and members of the St. Lunatics appear dressed in St. Louis Cardinals and St. Louis Blues Hockey team sports jerseys, while the camera pans across the Mississippi and Nelly performs with the Arch overhead. Interspersed throughout the video are shots of Nelly and the St. Lunatics dancing in the streets of University City, which borders St. Louis city, surrounded by residents from the neighborhood.⁵⁵ The video serves to amplify Nelly’s celebrity while also emphasizing his hometown loyalty and allegiance to his own roots. The shots of University City, where Nelly spent his teenage years, situate Nelly in the framework of his identity as a rapper, visually representing the environment in which his rap narratives unfold.

The majority of Nelly’s lyrics portray the city as a dangerous and volatile place “where the gunplay ring all day,” and surviving requires street savvy, tough talking, and a willing-

ness to engage in violent behavior.⁵⁶ In 2001, Nelly released a single with the St. Lunatics titled “Midwest Swing,” demonstrating more of his characteristic hometown focus, as well as his tendency to reference specific urban spaces.

I'm from the Show-Me State, show me seven
I'll show you eight
Carats in one bling, heavily starched jeans
Representin' St. Louis every time I breathe
In the city I touch down and I bob and weave, ayy.
St. Louis sportin' the Rams, Cards and lil' Arch
[...]
Love homies Vokal coats with matchin' cargos
We racin' down Skinker, see how fast a car go, oh.⁵⁷

Lyrically, Nelly asserts his ghetto credentials through spatially oriented scenarios, name-dropping local places and riffing off of his command of the social geography. He is well aware, for instance, that the Galleria Mall represents an affluent, white tier of St. Louis social life, while other areas, such as Skinker, border the “ghetto” spaces of University City and other North St. Louis areas. While Nelly's songs use urban landscapes as a framework for cultural and social mapping, they also engage in a discourse relating to local practice and the construction of identity within these spaces. What makes the Delmar Loop area, which Nelly repeatedly references in “Country Grammar,” more special than the Cherokee neighborhood, a location similarly oriented towards youth and art? In a sense, these spaces are part of an ongoing process of cultural production and transformation, their significance created through what is considered important to a collective daily reality.

Rapper Corey Black does not explicitly use location names in his single “And You Say St. Louis,” yet still paints a richly descriptive scene of the abstract ghetto space. Black's lyrics emphasize the city's ghetto landscape and lifestyle through connections to ghetto imagery (“I'm seein' handcuffs,” “bullets in the street”), all while positioning these visuals as impetus for social change (“It's been a long time comin' but it's time for St. Louis to stand up”). The music video is a montage of iconic St. Louis landmarks (the Pevely factory, Scott Joplin House and Goodfellow Boulevard in North St. Louis) as well as scenes of decaying buildings and rundown streets.⁵⁸ Black uses both lyrical and visual imagery in order to communicate his own personal sense of locale, as well as delineate between the different dimensions and characteristics of the St. Louis landscape. This is demonstrated by the fact that Black's video contains shots of both historic, preserved areas (such as the cobblestone streets of Laclede's Landing) and rundown, vacant buildings in North St. Louis. The lyrics that accompany these scenes clarify Corey Black's attitudes towards each landscape, making his intentions in referencing these spaces explicit.

Hip-hop group Stank similarly engages with the symbolic capital of landscape through lyrics and music video imagery. Yet unlike Corey Black, Stank remains rooted in a more conventional hip-hop framework of meaning, continually referencing the emphases of 80s West Coast gangsta rap, particularly an interest in conveying authenticity through motifs of violence and spatial reference.

Spread ya somethin' Sunday,
we comin' back Monday,
Better have that money or
we result to that gun play
Tuesday the hit goes out, you won't see Wednesday
'cause when them killers catch ya its over
comprende? Thursday your body get found chopped
up in Edgemount,
Face on the front page news,
hey look what the Feds found
[...]
For those who never knew it,
lemme show you how I do it
Here to welcome y'all to East Stank Louis
I know ya feel me now
Home of the truest, we was raised in the sewers,
Want to welcome y'all to East Stank Louis⁵⁹

A core theme in Stank's “East Stank Louis,” violence serves as the main subject for much of the video's lyrics and heightens its aura of authenticity (“618/ I know y'all tired of all that watered down shit”). The video concludes with Stank pulling up to his house in a shiny black muscle car while a masked figure waits in the kitchen with a semi-automatic rifle. Stank pauses at the door, seeming to sense the gunman's presence just as the video ends. The video surprisingly refrains from showing Stank's confrontation with the gunman—an opportunity to make the lyrical bravado visual—and instead ends ambiguously. The ending embodies the tension and unpredictable violence that characterizes East St. Louis, reinforcing Stank's depiction of the city as the volatile space where “you take a wrong turn and your death will be announced.”⁶⁰ The ending also asserts Stank's ultimate “belonging” to the world of East St. Louis—it lyrically casts Stank as a significant force in the East St. Louis underworld and demonstrates his full engagement in the cultural structure of the city's crime community. Stank is portrayed as an authentic participant in East St. Louis gangster culture and is therefore subject to its practices.

The landscape's depiction reflects the video's overarching melancholy and themes of decay and death. During the chorus, Stank raps in an abandoned, burnt-out building, shuffling his feet through broken glass and debris.⁶¹ The music video features Stank driving around East St. Louis in his car, passing through the city's decayed, graffiti-splattered downtown. Spliced between these driving sequences

are shots of Stank rapping next to the parked car surrounded by other young men, presumably his posse, all of whom wear Stank t-shirts and various St. Louis Cardinals clothing to accentuate location. The presence of landscape in “East Stank Louis” provides an atmospheric and culturally resonant space in which to locate the black urban youth experience within a threatening territory of danger. This symbolic context highlights Stank’s own masculine bravado through his navigation of these spaces.

In their negotiation of social and physical geography, Corey Black and Stank have starkly different aims. Yet in both videos, environment remains of central importance. Stank participates in several hip-hop video tropes such as driving through the neighborhood in a car and walking the streets with a posse, both of which place emphasis on the artist’s interaction with his geography.⁶² Corey Black uses references to St. Louis’s urban spaces as a way to map out the region’s cultural zones as they relate to historical and contemporary notions of the area’s identity. The inclusion

of historical sites along with lyrical abstractions of the city’s ghetto spaces allows him to define the significance of these environments.

Conclusion

The relationship between cultural representation and urban landscapes can be traced through hip-hop’s evolution. As Murray Forman suggests, we can “approach what might be termed the ‘reality problem’ as a historical facet of hip-hop, deconstructing its spatial meanings and values as an evolved tradition that has undergone transformations at numerous junctures” and now surfaces as an important part of hip-hop’s iconography and rhetoric.⁶³ By equating authenticity with occupation of a physical and social space, the ghetto has become both a fictional representation and a physical place whose boundaries are carefully delineated through cultural practice.

It is fair to say that the ghetto has become a critical

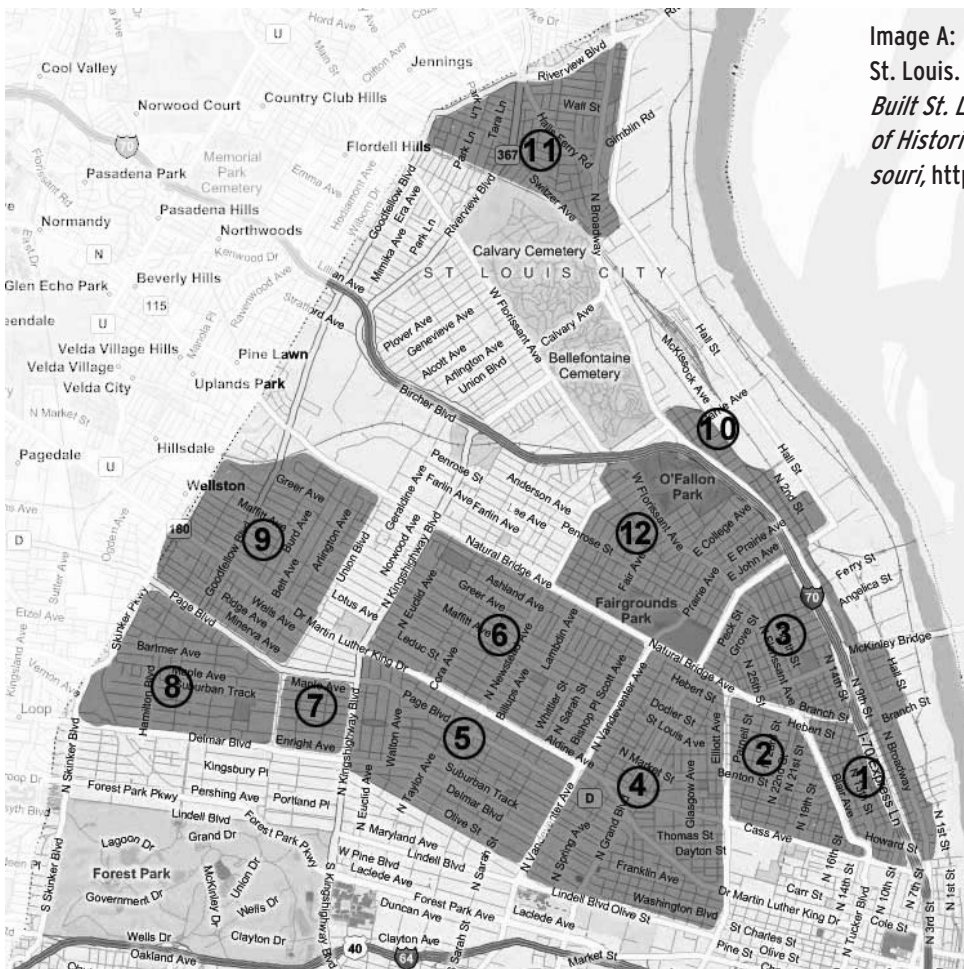


Image A: The North Side neighborhoods of St. Louis. Image courtesy of Robert Powers, *Built St. Louis: Dedicated to the Preservation of Historic Architecture in Saint Louis, Missouri*, <http://www.builtstlouis.net/arch.html>.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Old North St. Louis | 5) Fountain Park / Gaslight Square | 9) MLK West |
| 2) St. Louis Place | 6) The Ville and points west | 10) The Eastern Edge / North Broadway |
| 3) Hyde Park / Bissell Hill | 7) West End | 11) Baden |
| 4) Jeff VanderLou / Mid-City | 8) Cabanne | 12) Fairgrounds / College Hill / O'Fallon |



Image B: Screenshot image of Stank performing inside one of East St. Louis's dilapidated, post-industrial structures. Stank, "East St. Louis," Vista Music Group/Universal Republic, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzqeJCdejNA>.

signifier of authenticity and black identity, but it is equally important to note that multiple messages are at play within hip-hop music, and not every artist or listener identifies with spaces in the same way, nor with the same scales of value. The concept of the ghetto also does not apply equally to all impoverished urban spaces—it is the unique result of a spatial sensibility central to hip-hop culture and the production of meaning within that social world. Over the decades of its development, hip-hop has emerged as a complex cultural system that uses local spaces as expressions of both identity and community. Because of hip-hop's heightened awareness of city geography and its connections to social practice, it expresses the fluctuating experience of urban black youth in a meaningful way.

The St. Louis metro area's divided geography has been central to many hip-hop narratives, all of which are situated in a lived context of black urban reality. These narratives serve to shape how inhabitants imagine their environment and frame their own community identities within the context of a space. The St. Louis region's historical fragmentation has contributed to an intensified consciousness concerning space and its relationship to community character and neighborhood identity, while also prohibiting the social and economic mobility of these places. The metro area's racialized geography remains reflected in both the city's neighborhood demographics and the hip-hop community's lyrical navigation of these places, aligning itself with a hip-hop interest in authenticity. The overall history of the St. Louis region demonstrates the processes through which location accumulates powerful cultural and symbolic value, ultimately determining how its population is understood in the public imagination, as well as how those residents conceive of their own collective identity.

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1. DJ Quick, *Way 2 Fonky* (New York: Profile Records, 1992), CD.
2. Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 245.
3. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 34.
4. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, eds., *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 232.
5. Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Black Studies, Rap and the Academy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 33.
6. Although many people can recognize a fondness or attachment for their home area or neighborhood, the concept of community itself does not always equal the distinct sense of spatial significance as discussed in this paper. Community itself hinges on a complex and nuanced series of relationships that expand beyond the space-related connections.
7. Throughout this paper, I will be using "space" to refer to physical locations, and "place" as a way to discuss the emotional and social elements that characterize a particular locale.
8. Forman, *The Hood Comes First*, 4.
9. J. Nicholas Entrikin, quoted in Forman, *The Hood Comes First*, 5.
10. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22-27.
11. Henri, Lefebvre. *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 26.
12. Stephen N. Haymes, *Race, Culture, and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 26.
13. Cornel West, *Race Matters*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), x.
14. Forman, *The Hood Comes First*.

15. Jessica Block, "Where Did You Go to High School? Study Looks into the St. Louis Question," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 February 2012.
16. St. Louis Municipal League, St. Louis County Government, <http://ww5.stlouisco.com/scripts/communities>.
17. Delmar is widely considered a dividing line not only between impoverished and wealthy areas of the city, but also between its black and white residential zones. See Franz Strasser, "Crossing a St. Louis Street That Divides Communities," *BBC News Magazine*, 13 March 2012.
18. For the purposes of this paper, the term "North St. Louis" will refer to a general region comprised of both municipalities and land within the city borders. See Image A.
19. Charles Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*, Ohio University Press Series on Law, Society and Politics in the Midwest (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 19.
20. *Ibid.*, 56.
21. Anthony Platt, ed., *The Politics of Riot Commissions, 1917-1970: A Collection of Official Reports and Critical Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 62.
22. Elliott M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 7-9.
23. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom*, 52.
24. *Ibid.*, 46-50.
25. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The East St. Louis Massacre: The Greatest Outrage of the Century* (Chicago: The Negro Fellowship Herald Press, 1917) <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/navigate.pl?lincoln.5065>.
26. Lawson Edwards, "The Evolution of Planning in East St. Louis," *Journal of Planning History* 4, no. 4 (November 2005): 356-382.
27. The City of St. Louis Zoning Ordinance (1926) and The St. Louis Real Estate Exchange Covenant (1944) are particularly important examples of influential city acts supporting race-based property division.
28. "Initiative Petition for the Control of Mixed Blocks Occupied by Both White and Colored People," 1915. Box 1, Race Relations Collection, Missouri Historical Society.
29. Louis Henkin, *Shelley v. Kraemer*: Notes for a Revised Opinion, 110.4 U. Penn. L. Rev. 473-505 (February 1962), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3310675>.
30. White residential areas were concentrated in a few tracts of land around Forest Park and the southernmost part of the city.
31. Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
32. *Ibid.*
33. John A. Wright, *The Ville, St. Louis*. Black America Series. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001).
34. Gordon, *Mapping Decline*.
35. Harland Bartholomew, "Comprehensive City Plan," St. Louis, Missouri: Nixon-Jones Printing Co. 1947. Washington University in St. Louis, University Libraries, Department of Special Collections, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Collection, Records Series 02.
36. James Haskins, *Katherine Dunham* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1982), 4-5; Jackie Joyner Kersee and Sonja Steptoe, *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete* (New York: Warner Books, 1997), 15.
37. Robert Goodrich, "East St. Louis Starring in MetroLink," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 27 April 1994.
38. St. Louis merchants and citizens have voiced concern over the Metro Link allowing East St. Louis residents access to areas such as the St. Louis Galleria Mall and the University City Loop. See Chad Garrison, "Out of Control Shoplifting, Violent Attacks in the Loop: Is the Metrolink a Vehicle for Crime?" *Riverfront Times*, 20 August 2008.
39. Laura J. Hopper, "Hazelwood, Missouri is a City at the Crossroads," *Regional Economist*, October 2002.
40. Tim Logan, "The Cost of Fragmentation," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 December 2010.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. The city has been anointed "Most Dangerous City in America" multiple times. *CQ Press, Div. SAGE Publications*, <http://os.cqpress.com/citycrime/2010/citycrime2010-2011.htm>
44. Rose, *Black Noise*.
45. Graffiti and break dancing are examples of an ever-growing number of hip-hop culture's practices.
46. Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five, *The Message* (Englewood, NJ: Sugar Hill Records, 1982), CD.
47. Forman, *The Hood Comes First*, 100.
48. N.W.A released *Straight Outta Compton* in 1989, and Notorious B.I.G. released *Ready to Die* in 1994.
49. Thomas Hatch, *A History of Hip-Hop: The Roots of Rap* (Bloomington: Red Brick Learning, 2006), 39.
50. Forman, *The Hood Comes First*, 109.
51. It is not imperative that rap or hip-hop artists be from the "ghetto" in order to be successful—only that they fairly represent their background within the music they produce. Kanye West and Common have enjoyed great success in this regard.
52. Tupak Shakur, *All Eyez On Me* (Los Angeles: Death Row/Interscope, 2001), CD.
53. *Clockers*, directed by Spike Lee (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1995), Film.
54. Rose, *Black Noise*, 35.
55. "Nelly: Country by Storm," interview with Nelly by *MTV Radio*, 2001, <http://www.mtv.com/bands/archive/n/nelly00/index2.jhtml>.
56. Nelly, "St. Louie," in *Country Grammar*, Fo'Reel Records (New York: Universal Records, 2000), CD.
57. St. Lunatics, "Midwest Swing," in *Free City* (New York: Universal Records, 2001), CD.
58. Corey Black, "And You Say St. Louis," Self-produced track, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fKAJrfglSE.
59. Stank, "East St. Louis," Vista Music Group/ Universal Republic, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzqeJCdejNA>
60. *Ibid.*
61. See Image B.

62. A classic example of this type of spatial navigation can be seen in N.W.A.'s "Straight Outta Compton" music video (1988).
63. Forman, *The Hood Comes First*, 94.

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Re-thinking the “Black Hospital”: Race, Community, and Healing in the Jim Crow and Contemporary Eras

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***Abstract:** Black Hospitals are often defined as facilities established by Black physicians or entrepreneurs for the use of Black communities. This paper seeks to disaggregate the “Black Hospital” identity by dispelling historical myths that emanated from both Black and White communities that Black Hospitals were inferior and exclusive facilities. Lincoln Hospital of Durham, North Carolina, is used as a historical case study to begin re-thinking popular conceptions of “Black Hospitals.” Furthermore, this paper places Black Hospitals within a broader context of other community-based hospital facilities. Finally, this paper identifies inconsistencies within the academic literature defining “Black Hospitals.” This study argues that Black Hospitals should be considered within the context of other community-based institutions to understand the value of community in the healing process.*

Introduction



Figure 1: Portrait of Mary Duke Biddle located in the Lincoln Hospital waiting room. Source: *Durham's Lincoln Hospital* by P. Preston Reynolds, p. 46.

Patients and visitors alike who entered the Lincoln Hospital¹ waiting room were immediately greeted by the smiling countenance of Mary Duke Biddle, a local White philanthropist who dedicated both time and financial support to the facility.² Citizens of Durham, North Carolina, came to identify Lincoln as the “Negro Hospital”—a facility that served primarily Black patients who were almost always, but not exclusively,

impoverished. The dissonant juxtaposition of the Biddle portrait's prime location in what was seen as an exclusive “Negro Hospital” suggests that she was an integral figure in the success of Lincoln; however, the significance of her numerous contributions are not acknowledged with the identification of Lincoln as a “Negro Hospital.” The term “Negro Hospital” is itself racially exclusive and does not speak to the diversity of lived experiences of such institutions. As Mary Duke Biddle so clearly demonstrated, “Negro Hospitals” were not just for Negroes; while the majority of patients, physicians, administrators and staff members were Black, others were also present. To call a hospital “Negro” only provided a myopic, racialized view of the rich cultural diversity of this and similar institutions. I argue in this paper that rather than identifying such institutions based upon race, one should instead place them in a much larger class of institutions that have targeted specific marginalized communities. Understanding the similarities among historical community-based healing institutions will allow us to better understand the role of community in contemporary healthcare.

The application of the term “Black Hospital”³ to healing facilities that treated primarily Black communities raises several issues that will be discussed in this paper. “Black Hospital” invokes an image of Black self-reliance but also racial exclusivity. Such institutions, therefore, were perceived to be inferior, consistent with the perception of Blacks in the Jim Crow Era. This perception of inferiority led to Black Hospitals' ultimate demise in the 1970s. Yet in the arena of contemporary scholarship, “Black Hospital” eludes a consistent definition, making it difficult for historians to define exactly what institutions they study.

Scholars attempt to define and categorize various subgroups of “Black Hospitals,” yet these vary by expert, creating a lack of consensus on the subject of interest. Finally, Black Hospitals are often not seen as analogues to other community-based healing institutions.

In this paper, I hope to discover exactly what it means to be a “Black Hospital” and enumerate the consequences, both positive and negative, of such an identity. It is my goal to challenge the application of the term “Black” or “Negro Hospital” to healthcare institutions serving African American patients as it is insufficiently descriptive of such institutions. Not only does the term exclude the lived realities of non-Black patients, physicians, and staff at these facilities, but also it creates a false distinction from other hospital facilities dedicated to the needs of other marginalized communities. Black Hospitals, in other words, were never “all Black” as this identifier indicates. This re-thinking of the “Black Hospital,” particularly in the context of other community-based facilities, will work to catalyze a scholarly dialogue exploring the similarities and differences among these institutions. This new scholarly dialogue will inevitably lead to a better understanding of the importance of community institutions in the process of patient healing.

Development of American and Black Medical Infrastructures

The American hospital is a fairly modern invention, rising to its dominant position in the contemporary healthcare system in the early 1920s.⁴ The concept of housing the sick and destitute, however, is not new. Alms houses sponsored by churches and fraternal organizations served as precursors to the modern facility.⁵ Moreover, it was not uncommon for large southern plantations to have stand-alone structures to house and treat sick slaves.⁶ With the development of the germ theory,⁷ and the advancement of scientific technology in the late 19th century, hospitals began to modernize and develop into standardized institutions found globally.⁸ A cultural shift took place in the early decades of the 20th century, in that the hospital was no longer seen as a place for those who have no family, the sick, and the destitute as had been the practice prior to the 1900s, but rather, a place necessary for the treatment of illness.⁹ The home was once viewed as the optimal place for the provision of healthcare, especially for the wealthy; however, after this cultural shift in healthcare, hospitals became the predominant locus of health services for rich and poor alike.

Plessy v. Ferguson, the landmark 1896 Supreme Court decision, established the constitutionality of separate-but-equal public accommodations based upon racial classifications. This case legalized the marginalization of African American and other racial and ethnic minorities in American society. Jim Crow, as this system of oppression would

later be named, subjected non-White citizens to inferior treatment, exclusion from White dominated society, and inadequate facilities, particularly in the realm of healthcare. To avoid treatment as second-class citizens, Black communities created parallel institutions such as schools, professional, social and religious organizations to adequately address all of the needs of the community. This “cultural armor,” as defined by Cornel West, insulated the Black people from Jim Crowism while offering a place for the community to embody Booker T. Washington’s “self-help” ideology.¹⁰

From the 1920s onward, a burgeoning “Negro Hospital Renaissance” established numerous healthcare facilities targeted for Negroes. The National Medical Association (NMA) and the National Hospital Association (NHA)¹¹ were both proponents of a parallel medical establishment that would treat Negroes with respect and dignity. In the quote below, Vanessa Northington Gamble makes several key assertions that are critical to understanding how the “Black Hospital” identifier contributes to problematic perceptions of such institutions:

The NHA and NMA viewed first class Black Hospitals as sources of community pride, social uplift and economic opportunity—not as critics charged as examples of Jim Crowism. They pointed to the establishment of other ethnic hospitals as models and noted that they had opened without allegations that they fostered segregation. Spokespersons for the organizations also noted that most Black Hospitals did not practice racial discrimination in patient care, physician training, and staff appointments and that their activities involved White support.¹²

Gamble argues that there was some benefit to identifying healing institutions in Black communities as “Black Hospitals.” They were sources of “community pride, social uplift and economic opportunity.”¹³ Indeed the term suggests that the Black community took ownership of such institutions as a form of racial uplift in accordance with Washingtonian ideology. Many African Americans were proud of these healing institutions. They allowed Black physicians to train and work while also employing members of the community for other necessary jobs.

Black Hospitals were, however, perceived to be exclusive—that is, these institutions were established by and for the exclusive use of African American physicians and patients. Considering the “separate-but-equal” ideology of the day that allowed White health facilities to practice racial discriminatory policies, it is not a far-fetched idea that external viewers perceived Black Hospitals as doing the same. As Gamble argues “most Black Hospitals did not practice racial discrimination in patient care.”¹⁴ In fact,

White physicians were not uncommonly found in the realm of the “Black Hospital.” It was an unfortunate self-fulfilling prophecy that White patients rarely attended such facilities. The identification of these institutions as “Negro Hospitals” indicated to White patients that these were spaces solely for Black patients and by default spaces that they should not inhabit. As will be discussed later, the exclusivity of Black Hospitals was promoted by integration advocates. These institutions were seen as perpetuators of “separate-but-equal,” prohibiting the advancement of the medical civil rights movement. One North Carolina physician even argued “We don’t want a partially integrated hospital. We want a completely, 100 percent integrated hospital or *no hospital at all*” [emphasis added].¹⁵ But there was a demonstrated need for facilities that were not willing to treat Negroes as second-class citizens. In 1946 North Carolina and Virginia had roughly four times as many hospital beds for White patients as there were for non-White patients.¹⁶

“Black Hospitals” were also perceived to be inferior healing institutions, particularly when compared to their White counterparts. Blacks and Whites were cautious when dealing with Black doctors. They were believed to be improperly trained and therefore less able than their White colleagues to adequately provide medical services to patients. These assumptions were based partially on fact. Aspiring Black physicians were not admitted to medical schools, not accepted to many internship and residency programs, barred from attaining hospital privileges, and were even denied access to the American Medical Association, the premier professional medical organization in the country.¹⁷ In effect, the barring of Black medical men from the White medical establishment impeded their access to sufficient education and training opportunities. These physicians, who would later treat the Black community, had inequitable access to specialty residency programs, which limited Black patients’ access to specialty acute care. Black medical schools, therefore, became critical to adequately train doctors from African American communities who were dedicated to addressing the health needs of the population. With the provision of training, internship, and residency opportunities Black Hospitals were a part of a much larger infrastructure created not only to address the inadequate provision of and access to health services for Black patients, but also to address the growing professional and economic concerns of Black physicians and other medical professionals.

Assertions that Black Hospitals were inherently inferior were made not only by White observers but also by individuals within the Black medical profession itself. One 1930 National Medical Association study observed that Black Hospitals “miss[ed] the mark because of untrained and ignorant management, lack of professional cooperation, petty

jealousies...poor equipment, lack of wholesome atmosphere within and without and...inadequate skill to do the job.”¹⁸ Recognizing the complex and vicious cycle of Black distrust of Black institutions, W.E.B. Du Bois posited, “I have become curiously convinced that until American Negroes believe in their own power and ability they are going to be helpless before the White world.”¹⁹ Du Bois recognized that the mere perception of Negro facilities as inferior made them so. Integrationists’ fears about the inferiority of Black Hospitals suggested that they were not confident in their own or their Black colleagues’ abilities to provide superior health services to Black communities.

It is important to note that the substandard condition of many Black Hospitals throughout the country founded in the “Negro Hospital Renaissance” was not inferior simply because of the lack of skilled management. Stigmatization of Negroes in the Jim Crow era subjected their institutions to the same stigmatization. Because of this, White hospitals were disproportionately funded over Black Hospitals, allowing White hospitals the opportunity to better keep up facilities and stay abreast of scientific innovation.

Gamble’s final key assertion is that other ethnic and religious health facilities served as models upon which the Black medical infrastructure was built.²⁰ “Black” or “Negro” Hospitals were not the only facilities dedicated to serving a specific population or identity group. Before the development of the modern hospital, health care facilities were integral parts of their communities. As Charles Rosenberg describes in his book *The Care of Strangers* (1995), before the modernization of the hospital facility in the early 20th century hospitals were places for the inherently marginalized.²¹ Hospitals were spaces of further marginalization for the socially ostracized—separating perceived undesirable, sick, poor, and destitute patients from “normal” well-to-do citizens. While early hospitals served as sites of marginalization for already stigmatized citizens, facilities designed for specific populations offered a sense of comfort and familiarity. In some ways, this aspect of familiarity mirrored the home care of well-to-do patients who in the late 19th century remained beyond the wards of the developing hospital.²²

Churches and other religious institutions were very much involved in dispensing healthcare, especially for those who were seen as socially undesirable. Religious institutions founded the predecessors of the modern hospital facility—alms houses, and charity wards—based upon Christian ideals of benevolence and help for one’s neighbor. With the rise of secular institutions and the changing patient demography of the American hospital of the early 20th century, religious institutions realized the importance of having their own healing facilities. Catholics and Jews were at the forefront of this movement to establish religion-affiliated

hospital facilities. In 1885, for example, there were already over 150 Catholic Hospitals established throughout the US.²³ These facilities ensured that medical practices did not infringe upon the religious beliefs of patients.

The influx of immigrants in the United States in the early 20th century was not reflected in the changing patient demography of the modernizing hospital. In fact, patients' racial and ethnic makeup remained relatively homogenous.²⁴ In a time of severe oppression, German, Irish, and other minority ethnic groups established healing institutions that respected their cultural identities and protected them from discriminatory sentiments of society.

Community-specific healing facilities were beneficial to these marginalized communities in that their needs were understood by health providers who understood the patients of those communities, creating a dynamic of trust integral to the holistic treatment of the patient. Unlike Black Hospitals, however, these facilities were not perceived to be exclusive. While these institutions catered to these specific populations, more often than not non-Catholic patients, for example, understood that they could attend a Catholic hospital if necessary. The rigid and structured system of legal segregation did not extend to religious institutions, or other ethnic minorities besides Negroes. This in turn led to the negative perception of "Negro Hospitals" as being racially exclusive to non-Black patients when in reality they were not.

The multiplicity of specialized healthcare institutions indicates that the needs of certain minority populations were not being addressed in hospital facilities. These community hospitals prioritized the needs of their communities. Black Hospitals were, therefore, a smaller subsection of what I would term "community-based healing institutions," which were a necessity in an era of overt discrimination. These facilities were important; not only did they stimulate the economic growth of their respective communities by providing much needed employment opportunities and contributing to local economies, but also they facilitated the healing process in an environment familiar to the patient.

Gamble's analysis of the historical context of Black Hospitals, in *Making a Place for Ourselves* (1995), asserts that Black Hospitals were unfairly targeted by Black integration advocates due to the image suggested by the use of the term "Black Hospital"—a place exclusive only to the care of African Americans. While this is not the main crux of her argument, Gamble's analysis demonstrates that the term was a persistent problem that began to split the Black health infrastructure into three factions. Some activists advocated for Black Hospitals as an answer to the overwhelming "separate-but-equal" healthcare system that consistently marginalized and subjugated Negro patients. These facilities were a place for patients to be treated with dignity and

respect by people who were familiar with their racial and cultural background. Some members of the Black medical community opted to remain neutral, understanding that the issue of separate versus integrated hospital facilities would become a deeply political and emotionally charged debate that would create great divides in the Black medical community. Still others were active proponents of hospital integration, often to the detriment of Black Hospitals.

Beginning in the 1950s, "Negro" or "Black Hospital" soon became a pejorative term used by integration activists to describe the "deficient" healthcare facilities allocated to Black patients. While this may have been true for several Black health facilities around the country, it was also true for other non-Black Hospitals. Moreover, as Gamble notes in her analysis above, there were numerous bastions of Black health in the form of first-rate hospitals that were comparable to the best White institutions.²⁵ But hospitals that were established by Black physicians to address the needs of Black patients were seen as perpetuators of separate-but-equal Jim Crow policies, particularly in the American South. These hospitals were therefore targeted by Black proponents of hospital integration, including Dr. W. Montague Cobb,²⁶ who re-identified the Black medical establishment as the "Negro Medical Ghetto."²⁷

Cobb's re-interpretation of the Black medical infrastructure, which had come into being solely to fulfill the dearth of adequate and attainable medical services for a disenfranchised population, as a "Negro medical ghetto" could be analyzed in two very different ways. Superficially, Cobb's use of "ghetto" alludes to the perception of urban spaces populated predominately by impoverished Blacks, where facilities and other amenities are often substandard. In fact, in a closer reading of Cobb's comments, "Negro Medical Ghetto" invokes images of pre-World War II Nazi Germany, where Jews and other non-Aryan minorities were marginalized. They were, however, also subjected to improper medical treatment. Some were even used as "clinical material" for experiments to further the knowledge of Nazi science. Re-identifying the Black medical establishment as a "Ghetto," albeit extreme, draws upon the history of the strained relationship between Jews and medicine which mirrors in many ways the troubled history of Blacks and medical experimentation.²⁸ While this point of analysis indicates that "Black Hospitals" were substandard in Cobb's perception, it also highlights the importance of having community-specific institutions to ensure that a population's needs are met.²⁹

While Black Hospitals provided respectful and dignified medical services for the marginalized Negro population, civil rights leaders recognized that the parallel medical institution was incongruous to the larger White medical establishment. Physicians and other activists catalyzed the

medical civil rights movement, a subsection of the much larger movement for racial equality in the 1960's.³⁰ Black Hospitals as “perpetuators of Jim Crowism” were targeted for closure. *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital* (1963) set the precedent which integrated patient care and began the inevitable chain of events which led to the demise of Black Hospitals.³¹

Lincoln Hospital: A Case Study



Figure 2: Photograph of the 1925 Lincoln Hospital facility, located in Durham, North Carolina. Source: *Durham's Lincoln Hospital* by P. Preston Reynolds, p. 25.

The Lincoln Hospital of Durham, North Carolina, was a product of a national Black Hospital movement, the “Negro Hospital Renaissance” and served its surrounding community for over seventy years. Lincoln was a training ground for many African American physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals; however, the facility stood for so much more. The hospital was a pillar of Durham’s Hayti³² Community and was a physical manifestation of racial pride and social uplift.

Founded in 1901 by Drs. Aaron Moore, Stanford Warren and Mr. John Merrick, Lincoln Hospital was dedicated to serving the needs of Durham’s Black community without regard for patients’ ethnic background or ability to pay. Originally Washington Duke, of the wealthy tobacco baron Duke family, conceived an idea to dedicate a statue to commemorate slaves on the campus of Trinity College, now Duke University. Dr. Moore, however, convinced Duke to re-appropriate his \$30,000 investment to build a hospital facility, a “monument to slaves” which would continue to give back to Durham’s Black community.³³ For his financial contribution, a marble plaque was placed at the entrance of the original hospital facility bearing the following inscription:

Memoriam
Lincoln 1901 Hospital
With grateful appreciation and loving remembrance of the facility and faithfulness of the

Negro Slaves to the Mothers and Daughters of the Confederacy during the Civil War, this institution was founded by one of the Fathers and Sons: B. N. Duke, J. B. Duke, [and] W. Duke—not one act of disloyalty was recorded against them.³⁴

Lincoln was the second oldest Negro Hospital established in North Carolina, and the third oldest in the South.³⁵ The first Lincoln Hospital was a small, 30-bed facility constructed similarly to a house.³⁶ Unfortunately, the first building was ravaged by fire in 1922. Lincoln re-opened in 1925 in a new building that became one of the most modern facilities available to Blacks in the South.³⁷

Hundreds gathered from the local community for the dedication of the new, state-of-the-art hospital facility as it had already established itself as an integral part of Durham’s Hayti community. Soon afterward in the 1930s, the hospital received a “Class A” rating from the American College of Physicians, at a time when many other Black health facilities were struggling to stay afloat amid increasing standardization and modernization of health facilities.³⁸ Lincoln’s “Class A” rating set it apart as a leader in the health services field, making it more attractive to Negro patients.

Lincoln was, no doubt, a source of pride for Durham’s Black community. Located in the very heart of the self-sufficient Hayti community, Lincoln was accessible by all. Margaret Kennedy Goodwin, radiological technician

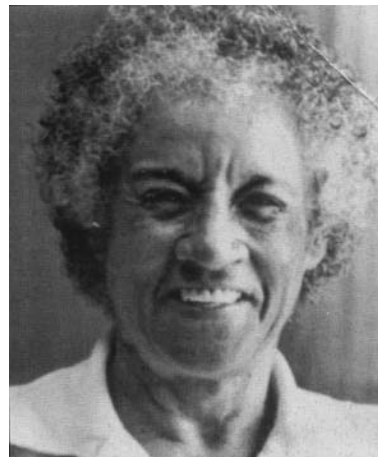


Figure 3: Photograph of Margaret Kennedy Goodwin, Radiological Technician and well-known figure at Lincoln. Source: *Durham's Lincoln Hospital* by P. Preston Reynolds, p. 127.

and long-time director of the technician training program at Lincoln, remembered, “Walking down the street from [her] house to the hospital posed no problem for [her]. It’s just the way you learned to live.”³⁹ Lincoln’s location in the center of Hayti made it easy for both employees and patients to access the facility; moreover, the neighborhood was safe enough for Goodwin to make her way to the hospital on foot anytime she was needed. Many of those who worked in the hospital lived in the very community that supported it. This understandably contributed to the quality of care given to patients, as healthcare professionals were not treating strangers—they were treating their neigh-

bors, and fellow church members—people they knew. For these health professionals, care for the sick was the prevailing motivation for quality treatment. Goodwin, an allied health professional, acknowledged her aims as a member of Lincoln's staff:

My chief goal in life when I went up there [Lincoln] was to see a patient come in sick and go out healthy. I have sat by the bed[s] of patients and dared them to die all night long. And I've had people come up to me since I've retired, and, in the grocery store, in church, in places and say, 'You don't remember me lady, but I was your patient and you are the only reason I'm alive now, 'cause you kept daring me, you kept saying, 'You cannot die on me, you cannot die on me, come on now, come on, we're going to make it.'⁴⁰

Goodwin's statement acknowledged the commitment and dedication of all of Lincoln's staff to ensure the well-being of their patients. Moreover, she spoke of health as it transcended the bounds of Lincoln's physical structure. Her patients were not anonymous, but members of *her* community who remembered her, even if she did not remember them. All the staff of Lincoln was invested in its success, making it one of the most prominent Black Hospitals in the South.

The hospital maintained a reciprocal relationship with the surrounding Black community. On an economic level, the hospital provided much needed jobs, which in turn stimulated economic growth. One did not have to be a physician or a nurse to help improve the health of Durham's citizens. Kitchen staff, orderlies, janitors, maids, laundry workers, and pharmacy technicians were all part of a cadre of personnel dedicated to the well-being of patients.⁴¹ Community involvement was not just an institutional formality—students of the hospital's various training programs were also encouraged to participate in local affairs. Nursing students were required to volunteer, and many chose to help with Lincoln's weekly public health radio broadcast.⁴²

Perhaps one of Lincoln's largest contributions to the local community was a low-rent housing complex. The project was initiated upon the receipt of "ten acres of land...to sponsor 150 units of low-rent housing for families displaced by Urban Renewal" in 1963.⁴³ Understanding that health extends beyond the scope of the hospital, Lincoln's board of trustees stated, "[We] have taken the position that good housing is a vital part of the health program of every community and on this basis we have agreed to act as a sponsor."⁴⁴ Unfortunately two mysterious fires occurring 11 days apart significantly delayed the completion of the project.⁴⁵ Because of Lincoln's unflinching commitment to the surrounding community, neighbors provided assistance whenever necessary. Churches were crucial to the hospital's sustenance, providing donated funds, sheets, robes and other necessary items for the comfort of patients.⁴⁶

Moreover, missionaries visited the facility on a regular basis to provide spiritual comfort to those who requested it. One missionary from a prominent local Baptist church remarked, "My visits to the hospital have been many...with the exception of 12 days out of town, I have been there almost daily."⁴⁷ Local businesses too, gave to the hospital that kept their workers well. Many donated gifts for babies born in the hospital, and on May 12th of every year shops showed appreciation for the hospital with window displays in celebration of National Hospital Day.⁴⁸



Figure 4: Business on Fayetteville Street, the "Black Wall Street" in Hayti, Durham's Premier Black neighborhood, showing appreciation for Lincoln Hospital on National Hospital Day. Source: *Durham's Lincoln Hospital* by P. Preston Reynolds, p. 105.

To many, Lincoln was more than just a hospital. It was a place of refuge from the cloud of Jim Crowism that residents faced once immediately outside the bounds of the Hayti community. Lincoln was a site of memory for the Black community, as it was the locus of celebrated births, triumphant recovery, entertaining social gatherings and elegiac death. In the words of Goodwin, "Lincoln born, Lincoln bred, and when I'm gone, Lincoln dead."⁴⁹ More than just a space for physical healing, Lincoln as a cultural institution provided comfort and familiarity through times of crisis. Goodwin stated,

Oh, and it was of immeasurable value to me right after my husband died in World War II. I was just stricken. Just, you know, just. I'm 23 years old and suddenly I'm a widow. And if I had not had the church and Lincoln Hospital to sort of hold the pieces together, I don't know where I'd be now. I was devastated.⁵⁰

For Goodwin, like so many others, Lincoln represented a place of refuge, comfort and familiarity, comparable to the Black church. Whether in response to life events, or the overbearing system of separate but equal, Lincoln was a powerful beacon of Black pride which sustained the Hayti community.

From its humble beginnings, Lincoln was dedicated to uplifting the Black community; however, its classification as a “Black Hospital” is one that should be interrogated. Unlike, Watts Hospital, Lincoln’s White analogue, and other White hospitals in the area, Lincoln did not have a specific admittance policy for the patients that it treated. In fact, Lincoln was committed to serving all members of the community, without regard for a patient’s ethnic background or ability to pay. Moreover, the hospital functioned with help and leadership from the White community. The Board of Trustees was predominately Black, consisting of members from “the colored medical society” and representatives from the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company.⁵¹ Representatives of the local White medical association and the Duke family were also granted seats by the charter of the hospital. Members of the Board holding these seats were usually White, creating diversity in the voice of the institution’s leadership.⁵²

Lincoln took a truly integrated approach to medical care while employing White staff physicians and a close partnership with the predominately White Duke Hospital. Lincoln, therefore, was not a “Black Hospital” in the provincial sense of the term.⁵³ It applied a truly racially integrated approach to healthcare while providing targeted healthcare to a community plagued with inequitable healthcare access and a high burden of disease. Unfortunately, social, legal and economic circumstances limited Lincoln’s growth to its full potential to serve the entire Durham community, which resulted in its ultimate demise twelve years after legalized hospital integration.

“Black Hospitals” were identified as physical manifestations of Booker T. Washington’s “self-help” philosophy.⁵⁴ Yet to some, the presence of White philanthropists, and White trustees conflicted with Washington’s racial uplift ideology. Financial support from White donors and important decisions concerning the operation of the hospital by White board members created a conflict of interest. Vanessa Northington Gamble has explored the issue of Black autonomy in light of White philanthropy, and has argued that such financial support, which could not be offered by the Black community, did influence how “Black Hospitals” operated. In the case of Lincoln Hospital, however, there was no record of conflict of interest. In fact, the fully integrated Board of Trustees worked to make Lincoln one of the best healthcare institutions in the country where Black Americans could attend without fear of discrimination.

Lincoln’s model of racially integrated leadership extended beyond the Board of Trustees. The hospital was continually dedicated to training physicians, particularly Black doctors. Approved by the American Medical Association to train interns and residents, Lincoln established training programs not only for physicians, but also for nurses

and radiological and laboratory technicians.⁵⁵ Contrary to expectation, Lincoln also trained White medical doctors. Students at Duke University Medical Center were given the opportunity to rotate through Lincoln Hospital.⁵⁶ These physicians were exposed to the health predicament of the marginalized and underserved Black population. Moreover, the Black interns and residents had the opportunity to benefit from medical resources offered by Duke Medical Center and to train in the university’s hospital.

Moreover, Lincoln’s physician staff was not racially homogenous. While Lincoln, like many other hospitals, was dedicated to serving the needs of Black patients, it also ensured that Black doctors would have a place to train and practice free of racial discriminatory policies. The institution also allowed White doctors on staff. In fact, there were no reverse racial discriminatory policies regarding the hiring of White doctors. Dr. H. Max Schibel was one such physician who was committed to the mission of Lincoln Hospital, and served as the hospital’s chief of surgery from 1941-1973.⁵⁷

The criterion most often used to define a “Black Hospital” is the racial identity of the facility’s patients. Lincoln was an institution centrally located in Hayti, a historically Black community. As such, the hospital’s proximity to the Black community ensured that many of the patients would be Black. Unlike its White counterparts, the hospital did not discriminate in the admission of patients based upon their racial identity.⁵⁸ Lincoln’s doors were open to any potential patient regardless of ethnic background or ability to pay.⁵⁹ In that light, Lincoln treated many impoverished patients which strained the hospital financially.

For many years Lincoln was one of the premier healing institutions for African Americans in the South. Upon its establishment, Lincoln stood as a counterexample to the argument that “Negro Hospitals” were inferior. This, however, did not remain so. Severe financial strain prohibited the hospital from maintaining its state-of-the-art facilities. Watts Hospital, the White analogue of Lincoln, was the larger and better funded of Durham’s two community hospitals for reasons commonplace at the time. In the case of a tax levy, Watts received 60 percent of the revenue, while Lincoln received only 40 percent—even though Lincoln had a higher load of charity patients. According to one study, although Watts was larger and received more financial support from the local government, both facilities treated over 10,000 patients in 1949 with an average daily census of 211 patients per day.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the dual hospital crisis catalyzed by the strain of a dual healthcare system mandated by the axiom of separate but equal required action from the local and federal governments.

Lincoln and Watts both requested money from the federal Hill-Burton⁶¹ fund while also collaborating to solicit

funds via referendum from the Durham County Commission.⁶² These funds were to be used to remodel and modernize their facilities. Although it was rare for Black health facilities to receive this Hill-Burton funding, Lincoln Hospital, along with three other Black Hospitals in North Carolina,⁶³ was a recipient of federal funds to modernize its facilities. The hospital was granted over \$1.4 million to improve its structure and provide an even higher quality of care for Durham's Black community.⁶⁴ Hill-Burton funding came at a crucial time for Lincoln as its ability to secure money was severely limited by its status as a "Negro" institution.

Even as Lincoln and Watts collaborated to ensure that finances were raised to maintain their existence, Lincoln was consistently on the shorter end of the bargain. Not only did it not receive an equal proportion of the funds raised from the tax levy, but Lincoln was also overburdened with the indigent population of Durham County. Since its establishment, Lincoln had maintained that all patients would be treated, regardless of their ethnic background or ability to pay. Unfortunately, in 1959, Duke University Hospital decided that it would no longer treat indigent patients, as the facility was losing money doing so.⁶⁵ It was agreed that Lincoln would take on the economic burden of these patients who could not afford to pay for their health-care services. Soon after the denial of an application for more local funds, Watts hospital followed Duke's example, announcing that "the Administrative office has...given explicit instructions to limit the number of Durham County sponsored and approved indigent patients to keep within the allocated funds."⁶⁶ While Duke and Watts had the luxury to make those decisions, Lincoln remained true to its mission regardless of the economic strain that these new patients posed. The hospital understood that it was the sole source of care for the indigent and therefore understood its moral and ethical obligation to provide care for such populations even in the face of financial decline.

Moreover, when Watts and Duke Hospitals treated indigent patients, they received higher compensation for their care of indigent patients. According to an article in the *Carolina Times*, Durham's newspaper for the African American community, Lincoln received \$22.13 *per diem* for the care of charity patients. Duke Hospital received \$26.74 *per diem*, and Watts received \$27.74 *per diem*.⁶⁷ This inequity in local government financial support resulted in a deficit of over \$41,000 for Lincoln in 1963.⁶⁸ Outrage erupted in the Black community along with the understanding that Lincoln's financial prospects were beginning to look grimmer with the passing of each day. One editorial in the *Carolina Times* noted:

When it is considered that Lincoln's entire patient load consists of Negroes, a large percentage of

whom are victims of employment discrimination, and as a result, are often unable to pay for hospitalization, it is no wonder that it continues to run a deficit...Lincoln Hospital has served Negro citizens of Durham too long to allow it to suffer financial embarrassment because of discrimination.⁶⁹

This editorial demonstrated just how oppressive the Jim Crow system was on Black institutions. Not only was the hospital not funded equitably, in comparison with its White counterparts, but the whole reason why a predominant number of African American patients were also indigent was because of common practices of paying African American workers significantly less than acceptable labor wages. This put Lincoln in a vicious financial cycle resulting in an extreme amount of debt. One headline screamed: "Lincoln Hospital Debt Exceeding \$100,000."⁷⁰

In November of 1966, a bond issue was put to a popular vote in Durham County. The \$15 million plan provided both Watts and Lincoln Hospitals with much needed funds to update their facilities, while Lincoln's leadership would relinquish its autonomy over the hospital and merge staff and board members with Watts. Moreover, certain hospital services, like maternity and pediatrics, would be "integrated and consolidated" at Watts.⁷¹ The measure was defeated by voters by a margin of 2 to 1, accomplished by both the White Citizens Council and the Negro population.⁷² "Strange bedfellows" indeed, these groups opposed the measure for different reasons: the Black population rejected the idea that the bond proposed inequitable distribution of resources, with Watts receiving \$13.8 of \$15 million for building renovations. Moreover, the Black population was not yet ready to relinquish autonomy of a facility that for years had been an integral part of the community. On the other hand, the White Citizens Council "objected to integration and consolidation of...departments at Watts," while also arguing that the bond did not provide nearly enough money for new Watts facilities.⁷³ The infamous 1966 bond issue exemplified the continued heightened racial conflict that existed even after integration. Moreover, it identified a strong sentiment in the Black community to keep Lincoln around after hospital integration policies were initiated. The bond's defeat, however, denied Lincoln funds it desperately needed to continue providing healthcare services.

Lincoln's economic dilemmas contributed to an overall decline in the quality of services provided to its constituents. Until its closing, Lincoln operated in a facility originally constructed in 1926. Although modifications and expansions were made along the way, Lincoln's infrastructure was quickly becoming an anachronism in the rising standards of hospital care. One report on the condition of the hospital acknowledged, "There are problems with lack of air conditioning and humidity controls, limited elevators and

undesirable arrangements of some departments...Functional orientation of many departments is inadequate and the total facility is in need of considerable maintenance.”⁷⁴ The hospital did not even have “a driveway to serve Emergency Department” vehicles.⁷⁵ The facilities that were once state of the art were becoming more inefficient and insufficient every day. The decline in the quality of facilities, however, must be properly situated in the social context of Jim Crow. As mentioned above, an increasing load of indigent charity patients, along with inequitable distribution of tax revenue between Lincoln and Watts Hospitals exacerbated Lincoln’s ability to properly maintain its infrastructure.

Moreover, integration severely strained the quality and quantity of hospital staff. Following the *Simkins* decision, Hubert Eaton, another North Carolina physician, filed *Eaton et al. v. James Walker Memorial Hospital*, challenging the constitutionality of denial of hospital privileges for Black physicians in publicly funded hospitals. Even after the *Simkins* decision, which effectively integrated public hospital facilities, Black physicians continued to be denied access to their patients in formerly segregated hospitals.⁷⁶ Following this decision, Watts hospital opened its doors to Black doctors.⁷⁷ Now that Lincoln was not the only place for Black doctors to practice autonomously, many made the move to become attending physicians at formerly segregated institutions. In her annual Christmas Fund letters soliciting holiday donations for the hospital, Mary Semans⁷⁸ noted,

You possibly read of Lincoln Hospital’s distress period last summer when it had difficulty securing its house staff for the year. This situation is faced by many community hospitals due to the shortage of doctors and the difficulty in establishing teaching programs asked for by these doctors.⁷⁹

Lincoln’s shortage of doctors, complete with all of the aforementioned factors, contributed to a rapid decline in the quality of services the hospital provided to the community. The physicians that were once members of the community they served began taking full advantage of the opportunities created by hospital integration.

African American patients who could afford to do so also began to explore other healthcare options once the hospitals were opened by integration. Lincoln’s outmoded facilities, shortage of physicians, and complete economic duress were enough for many to forego accessing Lincoln’s facilities. The institution that once cared for its surrounding community fell victim not only to integration, but also to amalgamated consequences of the inequality of Jim Crow. An increasing number of charity patients further stressed the hospital’s finances—those who could afford to pay were moving to formerly segregated hospitals. A local government report, which recommended that Lincoln Hospital be replaced by a primary healthcare clinic, suggested that

“Lincoln Hospital has been experiencing declining occupancy levels which we feel is due primarily to existing physical facilities and the fact that Negroes can choose to go elsewhere for medical care.”⁸⁰

The convergence of all of the aforementioned factors led to the closure of Lincoln Hospital in 1976. Lincoln was replaced by Lincoln Community Health Center—a portion of the much larger Durham Hospital Corporation. Lincoln and Watts, the two community hospitals of Durham, combined to form the new Durham Regional Hospital, located 40 minutes by public transportation away from the former Hayti community. Lincoln’s decline and subsequent closure stands as a testament to how negatively Black Hospitals were perceived both inside and outside of the Black community. While Lincoln represented a concerted effort to provide comprehensive healthcare services to the Durham Black community, the oppressive Jim Crow system along with the perception of Lincoln as a Black Hospital led to the hospital’s closure.

The Definitional Dilemma

“Black Hospital,” as a categorical term, is inherently problematic. The adjective of this phrase, “Black,” references an elusive entity other than the physical color of the “hospital,” resulting in the modern dilemma of “Black Hospital” scholars to define exactly what institutions they study. First, “Black” as an identity for African-descended American citizens is relatively new. Hospitals and their precursors were not identified as being for “Black people,” but rather for “Negroes,” the accepted term of the time period.⁸¹ Therefore historically, hospitals serving primarily people of African descent did not self-identify as “Black Hospitals” but rather as “Negro Hospitals.”

Secondly, contemporary scholars studying this subject disagree on the nuanced characteristics shared by “Black Hospitals” for the purposes of their research. In *Black Hospitals in America: History, Contributions and Demise*, Nathaniel Wesley identifies three types of Black Hospitals: “Traditional Black Hospitals,” which were established to serve a traditional African American population; “Transformed Hospitals,” which were founded to serve White patients, but shifting patient demographics resulted in a contemporary majority of African American patients; and lastly, “Transitional Hospitals,” which originally served White patients, but were given or sold to Black communities secondhand to establish autonomous hospital facilities.⁸²

While Wesley successfully separates the facilities in question based upon their physical infrastructure and patient demography, Vanessa Northington Gamble takes a different approach to defining the “Black Hospital.” She describes three discrete forms of Black Hospitals: Segregated, Black Controlled, and Demographically Determined.⁸³

According to Gamble, “Segregated” facilities were established by Whites for the exclusive care of African Americans, while “Black Controlled” hospitals were founded by African Americans for the care of all patients, and were not exclusively for Black patients. Finally the racial demography of “Demographically Determined” facilities depended solely on the racial makeup of the communities surrounding the facility, and in some cases transitioned from being facilities for White patients to facilities serving primarily a Black population. Gamble’s definition and sub-categorization of Black Hospitals overlap with Wesley’s. She, however, applies the issue of autonomy and control to delineate differences among “Black Hospitals.”

It is important to understand the diversity of “Black Hospitals” in terms of their history and autonomy; the term is often used to refer to a specific type of “Black Hospital.” For instance, it could be argued that Dr. W. Montague Cobb’s re-identification of the Black Hospital as a “Negro Medical Ghetto” was targeting facilities that were not entirely autonomous or in Gamble’s words “Black Controlled.” Furthermore in the literature describing the history of Black Hospitals, the term is most often used to describe “Black-Controlled” facilities, not those provided for Black usage by the much larger White separated hospital facilities.

Gamble’s argument, however, can be extended. She posits that Black Hospitals were modeled after other community-based healthcare facilities. Black Hospitals not only were modeled after other religious and ethnic hospitals but were in reality another name for a community-based hospital—that is, a Black Hospital is a specific subset of the larger category of community-based healing institutions.

Patient demography, physical infrastructure, autonomy, and control are all pertinent issues to consider when defining “Black Hospitals.” Regardless of how one defines such institutions, the enterprising nature of African Americans in establishing healing facilities, along with the ever-growing need to treat the marginalized Black population pre-1954, was not novel to the history of community-based hospital facilities.

While scholars recognize that there existed numerous facilities that targeted specific communities, there has yet to be a comprehensive work analyzing and comparing the historical and cultural significance of these institutions. Scholarly texts choose one entity as a main focus with very few cursory references to other community-based healing institutions. The similarities among community hospitals, once recognized, will illustrate that particular populations have specific cultural and health needs. Moreover these institutions were more than just physical spaces for healing to their respective communities. They were symbols of cultural pride and sites of memories. It is important to revisit the history of specialized community-based institutions in

the face of a modernizing, privatizing healthcare system that views the needs of varied patients as interchangeable. Understanding these types of institutions could perhaps lead us to a more in-depth understanding of the health disparities that still exist today.

Conclusion

The portrait of Mary Duke Biddle no longer graces the wall of the once-Lincoln Hospital waiting room. Instead it hangs on the wall of a conference room in the basement of Lincoln Community Health Center. Due to severe financial restraints, Lincoln Hospital closed its doors to the Durham community in 1976. In its place stood Lincoln Community Health Center, which opened immediately after the closure of the Hospital. Biddle’s portrait is only one of an entire gallery of portraits recalling individuals who played important roles in the rise of Lincoln’s prominence. This conference room pays homage to these powerful individuals, both Black and White. Unlike their previous post, however, this gallery of portraits is relegated to the private arena visible only to those entering the rarely used room.

Black Hospitals, like Lincoln, were important entities in the communities they served, particularly in an era of mandated legal segregation. Categorizing such facilities only as “Black Hospitals,” however, excludes important aspects of their realities. Because “Black Hospitals” were identified as such, they were seen as inferior, and exclusive. Black Hospitals were not, however, the only facilities dedicated to treating members of various communities. As detailed above, Catholics, Jews, Germans, and Irish all had healing institutions that specialized in treating patients in those communities. As long as scholars continue to identify “Black Hospitals” as such, they neglect to understand their similarity to other community institutions.

Notions of community have begun to permeate the public health literature especially in regard to racial health disparities. Ideals of community-based participatory research, and community primary health centers (as in the case of Lincoln Community Health Center) and initiatives are all parts of a massive effort to begin to address and ameliorate racial health disparities. Nevertheless there is little effort to recognize the historical importance of community hospitals and their contributions to their communities. While there has been much work done to bring primary preventative health care to at-risk communities, public health literature has made few attempts to understand the history and symbolic nature of hospitals. Much more work needs to be done comparing various historical community healing institutions. Such institutions offered valuable innovations to their communities that, once rediscovered, will be extremely beneficial for addressing the healthcare needs of marginalized populations today.

Acknowledgments

This work would not have been possible were it not for the help of several very special people. First, I would like to thank Professors Rafia Zafar and Reginald Hildebrand for their time, help, and advice during my academic years and summer respectively. I would like to thank the Merle Kling University Honors Fellowship and the Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice program of UNC Chapel Hill for providing the opportunities for me to engage in undergraduate academic research. Original research would not be possible without the help of archivists like Ms. Holly Smith of UNC and Andre Vann of NC Central University. I would like to thank the archivists at Duke University for their aid in my research on Lincoln Hospital. Finally, I would like to thank all of the individuals who have in some way supported me in my academic endeavors, proving the old axiom true that it really does take a village to raise a child.

- 1 (1901-1976). Located in Durham, North Carolina, Lincoln Hospital was one of the most prominent "Black Hospitals" in the country.
- 2 P. Preston Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*, Black America Series (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2001).
- 3 Both "Negro" and "Black" hospitals refer to health facilities that served primarily the Black population. Throughout this paper both terms will be used to describe these facilities, "Negro Hospital" being the most appropriate identifier for the historical components of this paper and "Black Hospital" being more appropriate for the more contemporary components of this paper.
- 4 Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Herbert M. Morais, *The History of the Afro-American in Medicine*, rev. ed. (Cornwells Heights, PA: Publishers Agency, 1978).
- 7 Developed in the late 19th century, the germ theory of disease posits that microorganisms are the cause of disease. The invention of the microscope helped to validate this claim, making it a fundamental entity in the foundation of modern medicine and epidemiology.
- 8 Rosenberg, *Care of Strangers*.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
- 11 The NMA (National Medical Association) was the Black professional organization for physicians, as Black health providers were not accepted in the ranks of the American Medical Association. The National Hospital Association (NHA) was a Black regulatory body that ensured that all hospitals that treated Black patients were up to standard.
- 12 Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 56.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Thomas J. Ward, "An Incurable Skin Condition: Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South," Ph.D. diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1999.
- 16 I must note that the White population of these two states (2,665,750) was more than double the non-White population of these two states (1,009,250). However the number of hospital beds allocated for Whites (6,702) far exceeded those allocated for non-Whites (1,808). This statistic for beds allocated for non-White patients includes those located in Negro-established facilities and segregated, White-established facilities. Clearly the number of hospital beds for Negroes was disproportionate to its population necessitating the establishment of Negro-targeted facilities. See: Mitchell F. Rice and Woodrow Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration*, Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 79.
- 17 For a popular representation of the experiences of Black physicians in the early half of the 20th century see the film *No Way Out* (1950).
- 18 Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*, 172.
- 19 W.E.B. Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" *Journal of Negro Education* 21 (July 1935): 333.
- 20 Gamble, *Making a Place*, 56.
- 21 Rosenberg, *Care of Strangers*.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid, 111.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 See, for instance, Freedmen's Hospital of Howard University, Homer G. Phillips Hospital of St. Louis, Harlem Hospital of New York, Lincoln Hospital of Durham, North Carolina, Cook County and Provident Hospitals of Chicago. For more information see: Vanessa Northington Gamble, *The Black Community Hospital: Contemporary Dilemmas in Historical Perspective* (New York: Garland Pub., 1989).
- 26 Dr. W. Montague Cobb was a pivotal figure in the medical integration movement. Cobb, member of the NAACP and the National Medical Association, was also the chief editor of the *Journal of the National Medical Association*. This post gave him significant power in influencing the NMA's stance concerning Black Hospitals.
- 27 W. M. Cobb, "Integration in Medicine: A National Need," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 49, no. 1 (1957): 1-7.
- 28 Such historical episodes leading to Black mistrust include the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study beginning in the 1930's where Black men from Macon County, Alabama, were recruited to observe the natural progression of Syphilis in the Negro. These men were withheld from therapeutic treatment once penicillin was identified as a cure for the disease. For more on the involvement of Black populations in scientific and medical experimentation see: Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2006).
- 29 Cobb was also known to accuse entrepreneur-physicians who began their own Black Hospitals as being self-interested for economic gain. For more information see: Thomas J. Ward, *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University

- of Arkansas Press, 2003); and Hugh Pearson, *Under the Knife: How a Wealthy Negro Surgeon Wielded Power in the Jim Crow South* (New York: Free Press, 2000).
- 30 Gamble, *Making a Place*, 56.
 - 31 P. Preston Reynolds, "Hospitals and Civil Rights, 1945-1963: The Case of *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital*," *Ann Intern Med* 126, no. 11 (1997): 898-906.
 - 32 Hayti was one of the most influential self-sufficient Black communities in the United States in the early 20th century. Known as the "Black Wall Street," Hayti was home to numerous Black-owned businesses including the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (one of the most successful Black-owned businesses of the time). Moreover, Hayti was home to most of Durham, North Carolina's Black population, including the wealthy elite.
 - 33 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 34 "Lincoln Hospital: A Monument to Slaves," William Jesse Kennedy, file 213, William Jesse Kennedy Jr. Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.
 - 35 Lincoln Hospital Construction and Needs Document, 25 January 1950, file 351, George Watts Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 36 Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*.
 - 37 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 38 Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*.
 - 39 Margaret Kennedy Goodwin, Angela Hornsby-Gutting Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Documenting the American South (Project), UNC Library, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Kennedy Goodwin, September 26, 1997.
 - 40 Ibid.
 - 41 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 42 Ibid.
 - 43 "Hospital Plans 150 Units: Cost to Be .75 Million," *Carolina Times*, 23 February 1963.
 - 44 Ibid.
 - 45 Fred Wardlaw, "Mystery Blaze in Lincoln Area Hits Structure," *Durham Morning Herald*, 8 July 1966.
 - 46 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 47 Untitled Missionary Report, 1952, file 156, White Rock Baptist Church Records, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 48 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 49 Ibid., 127.
 - 50 Goodwin, Southern Oral History Program.
 - 51 A prominent Black-owned business in Durham, North Carolina, the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company rose to become the largest and richest Black-owned business in the United States.
 - 52 North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co. to William Jesse Kennedy, Correspondence enclosure, 3 November 1936, William Jesse Kennedy Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 53 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 54 Gamble, *Making a Place*.
 - 55 Ibid; Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 56 George B. Brothers, "Charles D. Watts M.D.: A Legacy of Service in North Carolina," *AME Church Review*, April-June 2001: 61-68.
 - 57 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 58 C. D. Watts and F. W. Scott, "Lincoln Hospital of Durham, North Carolina: A Short History," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 57, no. 2 (1965): 177-83.
 - 59 Reynolds, *Durham's Lincoln Hospital*.
 - 60 Lincoln Hospital Comparative Hospital Services (1925-1949), 15 January 1950, file 352, George Watts Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 61 The 1946 Hospital Construction Act (also known as the Hill-Burton Act for its two sponsoring senators) allocated matching funds for hospitals to re-model or even rebuild their facilities. Within this bill there was a clause that prohibited receiving funds for separate-but-equal facilities; however, southern senators lobbied to have a loophole placed within the bill to ensure that southern states would be excluded from the separate-but-equal clause. This meant that hospitals located in the South were able to maintain racially segregated facilities while still receiving federal funds to modernize their buildings.
 - 62 Watts Hospital Staff Memorandum, file 351, George Watts Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 63 These Hill-Burton funded Black facilities included Jubilee Hospital of Henderson, NC; L. Richardson Memorial Hospital of Greensboro, NC (and later one of the sites for the *Simkins* case); and St. Agnes hospital of Raleigh, NC. For more information see Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*.
 - 64 Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*.
 - 65 "Lincoln Hospital Needs," September 1961, file 220, William Jesse Kennedy Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 66 "Memorandum" to all Watts Hospital Staff, file 351, George Watts Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 - 67 "Seeks More for Charity Cases: Lincoln Hospital Facing Crisis over Lack of Operating Funds," *Carolina Times* 40, no. 6 (Feb 9, 1963).
 - 68 Ibid.
 - 69 "Lincoln Hospital's Plight the Result of Discrimination," *Carolina Times* 40, no. 6 (Feb 9, 1963).
 - 70 Ann Kruger, "Lincoln Hospital Debt Exceeds \$100,000: Officials See Hope of Funds," *Durham Sun Times*, October 31, 1967.
 - 71 Bob Jackson, "Durham County Rejects Hospital Bonds," *Durham Morning Herald*, November 9, 1966.
 - 72 Ibid.
 - 73 Ibid.
 - 74 "Study of Durham County Health Facility Needs," file 214, William Jesse Kennedy Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

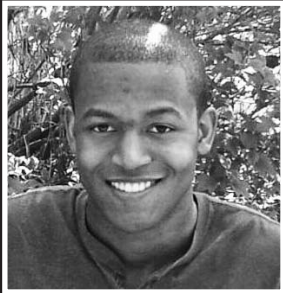
- 75 "Lincoln Hospital Construction Program Fact Sheet," 15 February 1950, file 352, George Watts Hill Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 76 Gamble, *Making a Place*.
- 77 Paul Fogleman, "Watts Medical Staff Okays Negro Doctors," *Durham Morning Herald*, November 6, 1963.
- 78 Mary Semens, descendent of the Duke family, was a member of the Lincoln Hospital Board of Trustees. Every Christmas, she solicited support from prominent members of the local community for donations to help support the hospital.
- 79 Mary Semens to Kennedy Family, Correspondence, 1 December 1963, file 212, William Jesse Kennedy Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 The period of the rise of the Black Hospital occurred from the "Negro Hospital Renaissance" in the 1920s to hospital integration in 1964.
- 82 Nathaniel Wesley, *Black Hospitals in America: History, Contributions and Demise: A Comprehensive Review of the History, Contributions and Demise of the More Than 500 Black Hospitals of the 20th Century* (Tallahassee, FL: NRW Associates Publications, 2010).
- 83 Gamble, *Making a Place*.

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Biographies for the Authors of *Slideshow*



Stephen Aiken, a senior majoring in English Literature and Computer Science, became interested in the role of race in philosophy in his freshman year, after a course that traced the concept of alienation through the work of Nietzsche, Marx, and Du Bois. He continues to be interested in the intermixture of literary and philosophical content, the relationship between race and philosophy, and the development of Africana existential thought. Next year, Stephen plans on working as a software developer at Clearent LLC, a credit card processing company in St. Louis. He would like to thank his mentor, William J. Maxwell, as well as his fellow members of the Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship, for their support and patience, without which this project would not have been possible.

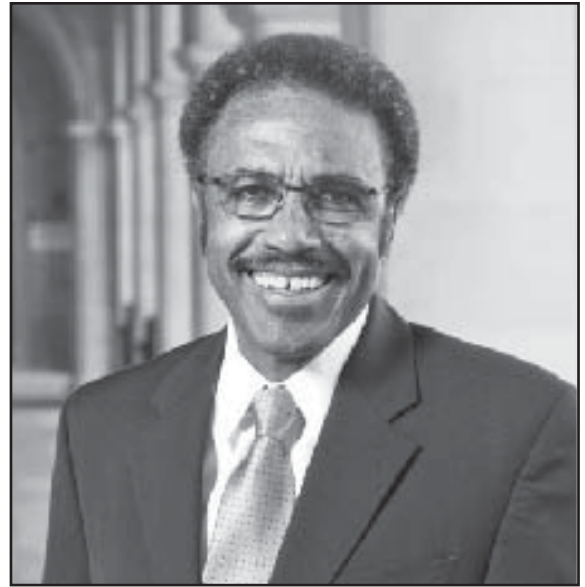


Annie-Rose Fondaw, a long time resident of St. Louis and an avid participant in its musical culture, has enjoyed exploring the city's history and communities through her Kling project. She plans to attend graduate school in the future, pursuing a PhD in either art history or anthropology.



Ezelle Sanford III is a senior at Washington University in St. Louis, where he studies Anthropology and Public Health. His research interests include the role of black medical professionals in movements for social equality, the institution of the black hospital, medical activism, and the intersection of social and biological factors that influence racial health disparities. As a Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellow, he is pursuing these interests while producing a work for publication. As an activist in his own right, he has worked with the Charlotte Coalition for Social Justice as a community youth organizer and as a researcher studying disparities in access to mental health services in his hometown of Charlotte, NC. He won the John B. Ervin Scholarship, which recruits passionate, diverse and intellectually capable students to Washington University. Recently, he traveled to South Africa with the School for International Training, studying community health and social policy. His studies abroad culminated in a paper entitled "Health is Our Terrain of Struggle: Physicians' Fight for Medical Equality in the Anti-Apartheid Movement of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."

The Inquiry



Dean James E. McLeod (1944-2011), Vice Chancellor for Students and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, played a major role in bringing The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program to Washington University in 1993.

foreword

This issue of the *Inquiry* is dedicated to the legacy of the late Dean James McLeod (1944-2011). Since he joined the University in 1974 as an assistant professor of German, no individual has played a more significant role in shaping the undergraduate experience and defining the culture of Arts & Sciences than the much beloved Dean McLeod, Vice Chancellor for Students and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Washington University. The opportunities he imagined and enabled so that undergraduates could pursue their intellectual interests and engage in innovative learning experiences both inside and outside of the classroom are too numerous to quantify. His creations have become important features of our campus traditions and programs. The number of students, staff, administrators, and faculty whose lives he touched—not only directly through supervision or mentorship but also indirectly as we witnessed him gently and kindly navigate university structures, politics, and people to fashion and fulfill a shared and common good—is truly beyond imagination. Dean McLeod was a visionary, a mentor, a role model, and a gift.

Dean McLeod believed that college should be more than educational—it should be transformative, he advised me early in my career. What makes Washington University a leading institution, according to McLeod, is the philosophy that these transformative experiences should not be determined by a student's economic ability, social networks, and family background. Rather, a great institution of higher learning has the responsibility to create an environment in which *every* student can pursue his or her desire for intel-

lectual discovery, exploration, and conversation. In that process of discovery the role of faculty and administrators is not to direct, but to facilitate and foster. As demonstrated during McLeod's memorial services, by the over 3,000 "likes" and many tributes shared on the "McLeod Remembrance" Facebook page, through the articles run in the student and city-wide publications, and in the endless informal conversations on campus and around town, everyone who interacted with McLeod, whether briefly or intimately, has a story about how he touched that person's life. Everyone who had the privilege of knowing him, including the five graduating Mellon Fellows whose work is contained in this journal, carries with him or her a tender memory of the wise man who made so many educational dreams possible.

In 1993, Dean McLeod helped bring the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program to Washington University. The program exemplifies his vision of providing an intellectual and collegial space for engaged undergraduates, and particularly students who might not otherwise have such an opportunity, to explore what it means to participate in scholarly fellowship and independent research. Today, 18 years later, Washington University is proud to be one of 42 universities across the country and in South Africa participating in The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's international MMUF program. Established in 1988, the MMUF program is considered the "centerpiece" of the Mellon Foundation's long-term commitment to address the shortage of minority faculty.¹ The fundamental objectives of the Foundation's MMUF pro-

gram “are to reduce, over time, the serious underrepresentation on faculties of individuals from minority groups, as well as to address the consequences of these racial disparities for the educational system itself and for the larger society that it serves.”² The program achieves these goals by supporting the development of research and academic skills of not only undergraduate students from underrepresented minority groups but also “students who may not come from underrepresented minority groups but have demonstrated a commitment to the goals of MMUF.”³ The ultimate goal of the program is to shape the environment and broaden the discussion on university campuses in such a way that it includes critical conversations about social justice and intellectual engagement.

In 2003, the Mellon Foundation changed the name to the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program to honor and connect the mission of the program to the educational achievements and social justice vision of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays (1894-1984). A noted African American educator, articulate critic of segregation, minister, former president of Morehouse College, and former president of the Atlanta Board of Education, Dr. Mays was also a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Both Mays and King exemplify the character, integrity, and purposes of the program’s mission and goals. Dr. Mays possessed a clear and determined vision for American society, a vision forged as he struggled against the inequalities and oppression faced by black citizens in the U.S. Like Dean McLeod’s, Mays’s particular experiences with injustice and vision for equality were shaped by his being an African American man. But his vision for a “just society” was universal, extending to everyone—*every family* deserves a good home; good health care is a necessity *for all*; poverty should be abolished *for everyone* and so on. Therefore, it is entirely fitting that the program, dedicated to remedying “the serious shortage of faculty of color in higher education,” bears the name of Dr. Mays as a tribute to his commitment to equity and justice, and that this issue of the *Inquiry* is dedicated to Dean McLeod.

The MMUF program at Washington University is dedicated to continuing the legacies of both Dean James E. McLeod and Dr. Benjamin E. Mays. Each year up to five juniors are admitted into the program. Working on their own independent research projects with advice and guidance from expert faculty mentors, the Fellows form an intellectual community in a special seminar that they attend during their two years in the program. Like sister MMUF programs, our program at Washington University is involved in identifying, nurturing, and preparing a pipeline of gifted scholars who will pursue doctoral programs and eventually become “scholars of the highest distinction” and mentors in the academy. In its 18-year history, our MMUF

program has graduated 110 Fellows of whom 38 have or are currently enrolled in PhD programs. And a remarkable 10 of our alumni are in tenure or tenure-track faculty positions. This year’s five graduating MMUF seniors will join a prestigious network Mellon Mays alumni. As of September 2011 the national MMUF program has had over 3,733 undergraduate Fellows; over 405 have earned PhDs with an additional 645 currently in PhD programs. Washington University’s MMUF program attributes much of our success in greatly enriching the pool of promising junior scholars to join the ranks of academia to Dean McLeod.

As the Faculty Facilitator of the weekly seminar, I have had the honor of working with the graduating MMUF students for the past two years. I cherish working with the Fellows not only because they are talented, motivated, and intellectually independent but also because they embody the spirit of Dr. Mays and of Dean McLeod. I briefly introduce you to the seniors’ research projects, as represented by the articles in this volume. The articles by Parsa Bastani and Liz Jordan make important contributions to the historical and critical analyses of how state-engineered social projects interact with debates about individual respectability and progress in their respective research locations. In his article on gendered politics of nation-building in early 1900s Egypt, **Parsa Bastani** argues that the female prostitute became a public platform through which elite Egyptian men negotiated and constructed a vision of morality for the newly independent nation. Using archival documents, newspaper articles, and medical journals that he collected in Egypt, Parsa examines how public health programs to control venereal diseases served to regulate the sexuality of females—categorizing women as either “good” middle-class wives or “diseased” lower-class prostitutes—while simultaneously ignoring men’s role in the transmission of venereal diseases between the two groups. **Liz Jordan’s** interest in the historical construction and manipulation of race led her to the archives in the Creek Nation in Oklahoma. Her research revealed the intriguing case of Sarah Rector, born in 1902 to freed slaves of African descent. Under the Dawes Land Allocation Act of 1887, Sarah was allocated an agriculturally inferior piece of land that was later found to sit on one of the region’s largest oil reserves. The allocation transformed this poor young girl of African descent into a millionaire of situationally-shifting racial identity. Comparing depictions of the nouveau riche girl in African American newspapers with descriptions of her in predominately white media sources, Liz argues that Rector’s case demonstrates the intertwining of policy, wealth, and competing racial ideological projects in the turn-of-the-century U.S.

Mellon Fellows Caleb Bess and Mariana Oliver share an interest in housing policy and class in the U.S. and Uru-

guay, respectively, particularly as they shape the experiences and lives of residents. **Caleb Bess** conducted ethnographic research and interviews with stakeholders involved in the most recent iteration of urban housing policy and implementation in North St. Louis. Caleb argues that the project, part of the federal HOPE VI program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), intended to transform Public Housing by primarily focusing on the physical shape and architecture of housing. However, this policy will have limited ability to achieve the large goal of poverty reduction if the program does not equally focus on improving the wider economic and social environments in which residents live and access resources. **Mariana Oliver's** article explores the unique housing cooperative movement in Uruguay—its history and current challenges. Based on her analysis of interviews she conducted with cooperative residents, Mariana determines that two competing ideologies exist within the movement and between the different generations that now inhabit the coops. Mariana suggests that the future of the cooperative movement depends upon its ability to reconcile the older socialist ideology with the younger more individualistic ideology. Finally, **Marcia McIntosh's** project builds on her long-time interest in Black speculative fiction, a growing sub-genre within science fiction literature. Marcia's article explores speculative fiction writer Stephen Barnes's attempt to address the lack of black heroes in current popular fiction. Marcia examines Barnes's use of alternate worlds, male foils, and a traditional hero's path to create a literary space in which a black mythic hero may not only survive, but also win.

I am deeply proud of what these rising scholars have achieved during their two years in the MMUF program. As you read their articles, you too will be participating in the legacy of Dean James E. McLeod. Enjoy!

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- 1 From The Andrew W. Mellon website: http://www.mellon.org/grant_programs/programs/higher-education-and-scholarship/mellon-mays-fellowship (accessed April 16, 2012).
 - 2 Ibid.
 - 3 Ibid.

From the Whores' House to the Husband's Domicile: Labeling the Culprit of Venereal Diseases in Semi-Colonial Egypt

Parsa Bastani

***Abstract:** From Mehmed Ali's consolidation of power in 1805 to the mid-twentieth century, venereal diseases functioned as a public source of anxiety and a site for larger debates about the intersections of gender, class, and sexuality. An examination of archival documents, newspaper articles, and medical journals from the Egyptian semi-colonial period dealing with venereal diseases reveals that the years immediately after Egyptian independence in 1922 represented a unique, transitional moment in which elite men contested and articulated ideas of nationhood. Elite men determined each group's status in the nation according to their reproductive and sexual value. Bourgeois women, on the other hand, were reproductively and sexually valuable, allowing them to enter the confines of the nation if they remained venereal disease free. Among the groups of marginalized people, lower-class prostitutes were the worst off. Because they were sexually valuable to middle- and upper-class men but not reproductively valuable, they functioned in a dangerous, liminal space in which they could neither be the sites of larger state reforms nor prove their value by spawning children. This narrative of venereal disease control in the early semi-colonial period demonstrates the historically dynamic process through which male elites repeatedly sought to dictate the terms of disempowered groups of peoples' citizenship in order to substantiate their own political power and determine the nation's development.*

"How many [people] have you killed?" lamented Dr. Fakhri Faraj in a letter to the most widely circulated Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* on 7 December 1921.¹ These killers attacked "a fetus before breathing its country breeze, a child before growing up, a student in his school, a soldier in his camp, and a worker in his factory." The doctor claimed that the killers had infected and murdered throngs of young men and their families. "You have distorted so much beauty, gnawed away so many bones, and destroyed so many people's sight and hearing." He continued, "You have caused sterility, cerebral hemorrhage, and paralysis."



These cruel killers that Dr. Faraj referenced were venereal diseases, specifically syphilis, which he posited affected "the social body more than all other epidemics."²

Venereal Diseases like hereditary syphilis ravaged young men and rendered them incapable of contributing to the national labor needs.

Dr. Faraj's 1921 letter marked the end of his first year as a leading public authority on venereal diseases in Egypt.³ A staunch Egyptian nationalist, he was concerned that diseased men jeopardized the nation's social development and labor capacity. He portrayed Egyptian men as innocent victims of syphilis (and other venereal diseases). Missing from Dr. Faraj's letter was any discussion of the relationship between venereal diseases and Egyptian women. This paper will show that through the 1940s Egyptian doctors filled Dr. Faraj's silence by conceiving of women as the source of spreading venereal diseases and, consequently, as root causes of national degradation.

Dr. Faraj's article appeared in *Al-Ahram* on the eve of Egypt's political independence from Britain. In 1919, Egyptian nationalists revolted against the British military and administrative occupation of Egypt that had endured since 1882.⁴ While the British granted Egypt nominal independence in 1922, they reserved control over four areas of Egyptian affairs: the status of the Sudan, the protection of foreign interests and of minorities, the security of British communications, and defense.⁵ According to historian Hanan Kholoussy, Egypt should be called "semi-colonial" from 1922 until the Nasser Revolution of 1952 because of its quasi-independent status.⁶

The persistent British presence in the semi-colonial period made Egyptian nationalists reflect critically on national



شباب مصر الناهض يكسر قيود الأمراض التي تفكك بني وطنه

“Modern Egyptians Breaking the Chains of Disease That Destroy Nation Building”

“progress,” of which venereal diseases played a central role. While the Egyptian Department of Public Health reported only 17, 288 patients with syphilis or gonorrhea in 1925 out of a population of around thirteen million people, nationalists, such as Dr. Faraj, felt venereal diseases merited alarm because they were symbolic of deficiencies in the nation’s morality, development, and defense.⁷ In response to the perceived venereal crisis, nationalists called for increased surveillance and control over the population, in particular women, in order to take hold of the nation-building process and substantiate Egyptian claims to self-rule.

Theoretically, the state tried to propagate the notion of the “proper” woman that could serve as what historian Hibba Abugideri terms a “republican mother” to cultivate able children and a modern and healthy nation.⁸ As the semi-colonial state increasingly identified the concept of the nation with a bourgeoisie, middle-class consciousness, nationalists expected the “republican mother” to identify with and reproduce these middle-class ideals.⁹ However, historian Lisa Pollard notes that the Egyptian press often blamed “Egyptian women” for not performing their idealized and necessary functions when political setbacks to Egypt’s full independence emerged after 1919.¹⁰ No research exists that connects the narrative of ideal notions about middle- and upper-class women’s centrality to national progress with the realities of the venereal disease epidemic in the early twentieth century.

This paper argues that state-sanctioned male doctors implicated Egyptian women of all classes in holding back the nation-building project in the early semi-colonial period. In a cyclical process by which the middle- and upper-class male vectors remained innocent, physicians blamed prostitutes for spawning venereal diseases and middle- and upper-class wives for infecting the nation’s progeny. In the nationalists’ medical narrative of venereal diseases, lower-class women, including prostitutes, remained absent from discussions of healthy reproduction. The study of venereal diseases in Egypt reveals that conceptualizations of the nation were simultaneously classist and gendered. Venereal diseases, while

few, were important to the recently empowered, semi-colonial Egyptian state and its cadre of physicians because the details of their origin, spread, and blame could be manipulated to assert power and inscribe visions of the nation.

To argue this point, this article first situates the study of venereal diseases in the wider body of historical literature. Then it examines the professionalization and politicization of the Egyptian physician in order to understand the importance of the medical discourse of venereal diseases. Using physicians’ understanding of venereal diseases as a lens, the essay will construct how the state medicalized and criminalized women’s sexuality to render a classist vision of women’s role in the nation-building process. Finally, the essay will explore the politics of reproduction to demonstrate that only middle- and upper-class women and not prostitutes became crucial in birthing the nation’s progeny.

Situating Egypt’s Venereal Disease Experience

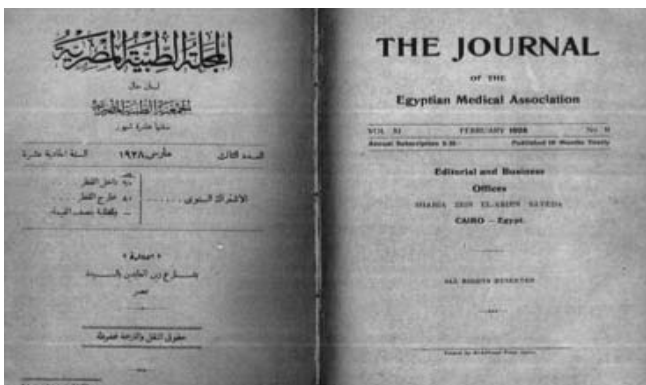
Although historians’ exploration of venereal diseases and sexuality across the reaches of the British Empire displays some continuity with the Egyptian case, their analyses construct these diseases as imperial phenomena with intrinsic connections to the colonial encounter. At the basis of the discourse on venereal diseases by the historians of empire is a foundational grounding in the prejudices of European medicine. Historians Mary Spongberg and Judith Walkowitz demonstrate that in the early nineteenth century, British and French doctors medicalized the prostitute as the organic source of venereal diseases.¹¹ The perception that venereal diseases spread through sexual contact with diseased prostitutes holds traction in Egypt’s perceived venereal crisis.¹² Unfortunately, historians of sexuality in the British Empire accord indigenous voices little agency in venereal disease narratives because they equate the metropole’s informative medical developments and political debates with the realities of the colonized peoples’ lived experiences. The case studies of historians Luise White, Phillipa Levine, and James Warren on sexuality and venereal diseases in colonial Singapore, Kenya, and India, respectively, are limited to the time period of colonial encounters and to the cross colonial-native interactions.¹³ This research creates an illusion that colonial states had a unified experience with venereal diseases by paying little attention to local dynamics both during and after colonization.

This paper is closely situated within the robust body of literature on Egyptian nation building. First, I interact with the historical literature on the role of family and gender in the nation-building process. Historians Lisa Pollard and Beth Baron argue that leading up to the 1919 Revolution, nationalists rendered the collective nation as a bourgeois family.¹⁴ Pollard further posits that Egyptian political leaders employed imagery in the press displaying that even the unruly poor could be brought into the fold of the bourgeois

nation with the necessary reforms.¹⁵ Unfortunately, their analysis does not extend into the semi-colonial period. Complementing the works of Pollard and Baron, historian Wilson Jacob constructs a fruitful narrative of middle-class masculinity in colonial and semi-colonial Egypt by articulating the insecurities, prescriptions, and formation of the idealized Egyptian man.¹⁶ My article extends Baron and Pollard's analysis of the bourgeois nation into the semi-colonial period while also providing a more complete relational history that is not present in Jacob's work.

Second, my project is situated within the historical literature on the Egyptian state's nation-building initiatives toward the social uplift of the lower classes in the semi-colonial period. Historians Bruce Dunne and Omnia El Shakry incorporate intersections of class in their narratives on population control but assume that the state's long-term aims to uplift marginalized groups of people were telling of its immediate goals to incorporate and "civilize" the masses into part of the national citizenry.¹⁷ Because these authors focus on the state's didactic rhetoric preceding Egypt's independence in 1922, they do not fully account for the state's initial hesitancy, as Pollard suggests, to include all groups of people into the idealized nation. The historiography has not provided both a relational and class-conscious narrative of the nation-building process in the time period of transition immediately after Egypt's independence and into the early semi-colonial period. The narrative of venereal diseases in the early semi-colonial period is able to account for the shortcomings in the historiography.

My wide-ranging body of evidence helps to substantiate my claim that the state did not intend to create a unified nation but rather it adjusted its expectations of people according to their sexual proximity to ruling men. This essay's claims of connecting the nation-building process to venereal diseases are supported by archival research in Egypt. This project considers an assortment of government documents, *Al-Ahram* newspaper articles, and articles from the *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association*. All sources were drawn from the Egyptian National Archives, the Egyptian National Library, the American University in Cairo Archives, and the *Al-Ahram* Archives. By supple-



Picture of "The Journal of the Egyptian Medical Review"

menting information about the Egyptian medical establishment with physicians' and government employees' voices, this essay arrives at a localized, social-historical narrative of venereal diseases that moves beyond colonial or state prescriptions. Consulting the medical discourse allows for a more nuanced, gendered, and classist understanding of the anti-venereal, nation-building campaign and breaks free from the didactic discourse of unitary Egyptian nationalism.

The Professionalization of Egyptian Medicine

The physicians' authority to control the public and state's perception of venereal diseases materialized from the professionalization of the Egyptian medical field. Egyptian professionalization was rooted in Egypt's pre-colonial experience during the wide-ranging governing reforms of Mehmed Ali, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt between 1805 and 1848. He commissioned the French director Antoine-Barthelemy Clot Bey to organize Egypt's medical system along European, biomedical lines and to supervise the creation of the first Egyptian medical school in 1825. The construction of Abu Zabal Medical School in 1827, which the government moved to Qasr al-Aini Street in Cairo in 1837,¹⁸ embodied Clot Bey's twofold project: one, to import French medical technologies that catered to Egyptian medical needs and two, to nationalize Egyptian medicine by putting medical care in the hands of the Egyptian government.¹⁹ Clot Bey contended that

medical institutions, to become durable, must necessarily be national and independent of foreigners whose interests, caprices, or a thousand diverse circumstances could cause them to return back to their own homelands. It is therefore only among nationals that both doctors and professors must be found; the teaching of medicine, and consequently medicine itself, cannot be perpetuated in Egypt unless Arab professors transmit the knowledge directly to Arab students. Both must be indigenous and therefore share a common language.²⁰

Clot Bey and his fellow French physicians did not intend to force Egyptian medicine to rely on French or foreign expertise. Instead, Clot Bey sought to produce an intellectually independent and sustainable Egyptian medical system. Clot Bey's guidance to form a four-year, free medical curriculum based on clinical medicine was one of Mehmed Ali's most notable achievements as he "modernized" Egypt along Western lines.²¹

However, the idea of self-reliant and independent Egyptian medicine ended after British colonization in 1882. The British instituted a hierarchy that cast Egyptian doctors as inferior to foreign doctors by altering the Egyptian medical curricula to produce doctors' "assistants" rather than independent physicians. The Anglicized medical system compensated Egyptian physicians at lower rates than for-

eign physicians and barred them from practicing in private, non-state-funded hospitals.²² In direct contrast to the pre-colonial time period, the British wanted the Egyptian medical establishment to be dependent on rather than independent from foreigners.²³

The curricular reforms prevented students from specializing in specific medical fields and prepared students for service as public health officers who had gained just enough general knowledge to treat deadly epidemics such as bilharzia, cholera, and malaria rather than engaging in groundbreaking medical research.²⁴ The British limited instruction in Egyptian medical schools to clinical training in state-run hospitals rather than research-based training that was typical in the medical schools of the United Kingdom. By limiting education to clinical training, the British administration discouraged scientific pursuit and trained Egyptians to occupy a subservient role to research-trained foreign doctors who had come to constitute the majority of the medical profession in Egypt prior to World War I.²⁵

Although British colonial rule deemed Egyptian doctors medically inferior to foreign doctors, the exclusive group of state-trained Egyptian physicians simultaneously occupied the highest position in the domestic medical hierarchy.²⁶ One of the first reforms the British instituted in 1893 was requiring the payment of tuition for study in state-run medical schools.²⁷ While before colonization most students at the Qasr al-Aini Medical School originated from the lower stratum of Egyptian society, the British's institution of school fees restricted medical school education to the wealthier, urban classes. As a consequence, student enrollment, which prior to the colonial takeover had ranged from one hundred to three hundred students per year, dropped to an average of less than twenty students per year. Between 1886 and 1913 there was a total of 494 graduates.²⁸ Although the British instituted a system that forced Egyptians to depend on greater numbers of foreign physicians for their healthcare needs, they developed Egyptian medical school education into an exclusive, state-sanctioned enterprise.²⁹ In 1891, a colonial government decree pronounced that only those with a medical license, either foreign or awarded



Egyptian Graduates of Qasr al-Aini Medical School in 1931 with degrees in Public Health and Tropical Medicine

from an Egyptian state-run medical school, could practice medicine in Egypt.³⁰ In this sense, the state became the sole guarantor of the education, employment, and licensing of Egyptian doctors. As the colonial government limited Egypt's medical output, it endowed a small group of wealthy, Egyptian men the exclusive right to attend to the health needs of the country and funneled prestige into the medical profession. Image 4 shows that the exclusivity of state-trained doctors extended into the semi-colonial period.³¹ In the image, recent graduates from medical school donned tarbooshes, representative of their secular and elite status, as they posed for a class picture alongside their English teaching staff.³² The image reveals that there were long-term implications of British colonization on the medical system. Egyptian doctors' authority over venereal diseases in the semi-colonial period was in fact rooted in the colonial model of state-run, medical exclusivity.

Egyptian Doctors at the Helm of State Medicine

After British doctors vacated their high-level positions to provide medical services to the Allied cause during World War I, Egyptian doctors had the opportunity to take charge of the colonial medical establishment. They could negotiate their professional status separate from the needs of the Egyptian state.³³ Emblematic of Egyptian physicians' shift toward greater professional autonomy was the resurrection of the Egyptian Medical Association, which was established in 1898 but did not become active until 1924. In 1898 the Egyptian Medical Association had thirty-one members. However, by 1928, the society recorded 450 members.³⁴ The Egyptian Medical Association produced the *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* in both English and Arabic, intended to advance the medical work of Egyptian doctors so that "Egyptian medicine will contribute its share in the promotion of medical science."³⁵ The contents of this journal included many medical topics, of which the treatment of venereal diseases and prostitutes appeared frequently. The *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* shows that after the departure of British personnel from Egypt, Egyptian doctors engaged in more research and specialization than the British had previously allowed.

While historians have focused on the Egyptian state's battle against epidemics such as bilharzia, cholera, and malaria, they have paid much less attention to the Egyptian government's approach to venereal diseases.³⁶ Despite the silence in the academic literature, the Egyptian-authored articles from the *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* on venereal diseases and records of medical specialization in venereal diseases show that there was a growing need for venereal disease specialists in semi-colonial Egypt. The semi-colonial Egyptian government in fact routinely sent students abroad to be educated about venereal diseases.³⁷ As an example of

the many students sent abroad, Dr. Mahmoud Safiq Younis studied skin, syphilis, and venereal diseases at the Saint-Louis Hospital in France in 1929. Also, Dr. Fathi Soleman received his medical degree in 1930 and his diploma in skin and venereal diseases in 1933 and a second specialization in 1943.³⁸ Records of education missions abroad confirm that there was enough of a demand in the practice area of venereal disease treatment to pursue specialties in the subject.

As the British regime in Egypt restructured the medical field, it simultaneously implemented changes that introduced the woman's body as a male doctor's medical subject.³⁹ Prior to British colonization, independent female practitioners, or *hakimas*, trained at the School of Midwifery exclusively cared for women's reproductive and general health needs. This was no longer the case when the British colonizers changed the School of Midwifery to the School of Nurses and Midwives and introduced the field of gynecology to the Qasr al-Aini Medical School. The School of Nurses and Midwives subordinated the *hakima* or independent female medical practitioner to the position of a doctor's assistant or nurse. After British intervention, medical prohibitions kept the *hakima* from heading operations that involved the use of medical forceps. For instance, *hakimas* could no longer deliver abnormal births because this procedure used forceps and other medical instruments.⁴⁰ The circumscription of *hakimas* effectively forced women who were patients at state-run biomedical institutions to transfer their bodies' medical authority to male gynecologists.⁴¹ Rather than existing alongside Egyptian physicians, the *hakimas* were relegated to a low position in the colonial medical hierarchy as mandated by the British reforms.

Male Egyptian and foreign physicians' medical authority over women's bodies gave doctors the discursive space to medically define womanhood. In the burgeoning popular medical journals and women's pages of mainstream newspapers, the colonial-trained Egyptian doctor focused on enlightening the middle and upper-class homemaker with home-front preventative care or domestic medicine to create a safe medical environment for the family. Doctors contended that in order to be loyal to the state, mothers must care for their households through a set of prescribed medical practices.⁴² Notwithstanding women's efforts to create disease-free households, physicians blamed them as the source of venereal diseases due to what they considered their "dangerous sexuality" and "faulty biology" of reproduction.

The Medicalization and Criminalization of Female Sexuality

In the early twentieth century, some middle-class men conceived of Egyptian women's sexuality as a possible threat to the chastity of society. While it is easy to trace rhetoric concerning the sexually corrupted Egyptian women back to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century British

presence in Egypt, it also had roots in cultural paradigms set forth by regionally rooted Islamic scholars in the tenth century. Underlying the interwar period marriage crisis was a sexual and social dichotomy prevalent in Egypt since the eleventh century: men viewed women's sexuality as active but their own as passive. Imam al-Ghazali (1050 AD-1111 AD), a preeminent Islamic scholar, argued in a chapter on the instability of marriage in his book *The Revivification of the Religious Sciences* that according to Islam, women were the hunters and men were their passive victims. Therefore, he believed that women's power was the most destructive element in the Islamic social order and that men must control women to carry out their social and religious obligations. He posited that society could only survive through the institutionalization of male dominance through sexual segregation.⁴³ The British articulated the same anxiety toward the "oriental woman" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but defined her sexual threat in terms of enduring Islamic social institutions and practices. British colonists believed that Egypt's moral decay and slow development directly resulted from indigenous polygamist practices and the prevalence of the harem. In the eyes of the British, these unwholesome social institutions prevented Egyptian women from morally training their offspring to build and support a healthy nation.⁴⁴

The middle class articulated the same anxieties about women's sexuality with reference to the marriage crisis in the 1920s. Historian Hanan Kholoussy argues that one reason the Egyptian press perceived middle-class Egyptian men as refusing to marry Egyptian women was because potential wives were breaking traditional social boundaries by leaving the domicile and entering male-dominated public spaces.⁴⁵ According to Kholoussy, the media helped to create moral panic linking women's entrance into male-dominated public space with the elimination of the need for marriage as men had more outlets to socialize with women. Another reason was middle-class bachelors' reliance on lower-class prostitutes rather than wives to fulfill their sexual desires. While once frequented mostly by foreigners, brothels became in the 1920s places of increasing sexual interaction between prostitutes and Egyptian middle-class men and students.⁴⁶ As a result of changing middle-class social norms, there was a perceived increase of bachelors and a consequent national marriage crisis. As young men and women gradually withdrew from the institution of marriage, it would be impossible to maintain the family unit, a fundamental component of the developing Egyptian nation. Therefore, some middle-class men believed that young women and prostitutes led men and the nation into a life of eternal bachelorhood and moral depravity.⁴⁷

It is not coincidental that the venereal disease crisis adopted language similar to that of the marriage crisis. Physicians considered women's "active sexualities" and their

“proclivity for seduction” at fault for the prevalence and spread of venereal diseases in the population. According to the topic of al-Ghazali’s logic that remained prevalent in the twentieth century, a man cannot resist a *femme fatale*, and only because of her sexual prowess and irresistibility did he contract a venereal disease.⁴⁸ In the 1920s, middle-class men believed that if women were allowed to roam the public sphere, then their very nature would incline them to seduce and infect innocent men with venereal diseases. A confined domestic space for women served as the only way to check their rampant and at times dangerous sexualities. Physicians usurped the logic of dangerous sexualities and incriminated women in spreading venereal diseases. Physicians targeted women’s sexuality as problematic in the entire venereal disease transmission process, from the prostitutes to their male clients and then to the male clients’ wives. My article argues that while middle-class men could be treated for venereal diseases and vindicated once clean, women, whether obtaining a disease by occupation or sanctioned marital sex, could never be acquitted.

Various permutations of state monitoring depicted lower-class Egyptian prostitutes as culpable for the spread of venereal diseases to Egyptian men. Prostitution had a long history of state monitoring and taxation in Egypt.⁴⁹ In pre-colonial Egypt, viceroy Mehmed Ali banned prostitutes from Cairo in 1834 as a means of protecting the health and maintaining the regulation of Egyptian troops. Mehmed Ali’s ban represented one of his administration’s tactics for controlling the spread of syphilis by limiting soldiers’ sexual activity with prostitutes.⁵⁰ The industry received stricter regulation after British colonization. British legal doctrine intimately tied prostitutes to venereal diseases whereas it depicted men as mere victims of prostitutes. While prostitution was medically dangerous, the British also viewed it as socially necessary for maintaining the morale of British soldiers. British generals believed that sustaining disciplined troops was contingent upon frequent, venereal-disease-free sexual contact, which could be guaranteed through medically certified and regulated brothels.⁵¹

The first set of colonial government regulations was administered in 1885. British laws required all prostitutes to register with local police authorities and undergo medical inspections. The new laws in 1905 were the basis for the regulation of prostitution up through its illegalization in 1951.⁵² The more detailed-1905 laws declared that all prostitutes must “submit to weekly medical examinations by doctors of the *Bureau des Moeurs* [Bureau of Morality] who recorded the dates of such visits and their medical observation on the [police identity] cards” and that “prostitutes infected with a venereal disease could not remain in a brothel. ‘Native’ prostitutes were confined to a government or other local hospital until cured.”⁵³ However, the law did not force the male clients to undergo medical check-ups after visiting prostitutes.

The Egyptian professional class of government workers did not consider lower-class prostitutes as women in need of state help and protection when considering the venereal disease epidemic. Rather, they were seen as hubs of disease polluting the nation. *The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Problem of Licensed Prostitution in Egypt* argued that the Egyptian government should give venereal diseases “preference among the recognized and combatable evils of prostitution since venereal disease affects the general health of the community in an alarming degree, and, thus involves not only the welfare of the greater number but the future vigour of the race.”⁵⁴ The report then advised that the government regard the welfare of prostitutes second to that of the spread of venereal diseases.⁵⁵ This report makes clear that according to the state’s rhetoric, there was less an impetus to protect prostitutes’ welfare because these lower-class women had voluntarily dissociated themselves from the national rubric of family-centered life and operated outside the customs of social protection that the state provided.⁵⁶ The state did not wish to incorporate or uplift prostitutes in the body of the ideal, unified nation. Rather, it desired to contain the repercussions of prostitute’s sexual activity.

The medical discourse also accorded no sympathy to lower-class prostitutes’ lives of “promiscuous vice.” While doctors wrote in the *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* about advances in the various cures for syphilis and gonorrhea, they nevertheless found its prevalence to be a shameful matter for women, especially prostitutes. Dr. Mahmoud Ibn Sabry, the head doctor at the Hod al-Marsud Hospital in Cairo that monitored the prostitutes’ medical check-ups, had no sympathy for disease-afflicted prostitutes. In reference to gonorrhoea, he wrote that some prostitutes were infected with an incurable strand. As a solution, he advocated that “there is no treatment of illness eradication except for [either] the complete eradication of its constituents, the female patients” or the designation of places of isolation where infected prostitutes can live apart from the world the rest of their lives.⁵⁷ His article lacks any reference to the complicity of men in the spread of venereal diseases. Nor did he advocate the isolation of men from society if they obtained a particularly violent strand of gonorrhoea. Despite middle-class men partaking in the same vice of illicit sex and aiding in the transmission of the same venereal diseases, doctors did not envision them as part of the medical problem. Physicians vindicated their fellow middle- and professional-class brothers in the cycle of venereal disease transmission. To medically blame these men would be tantamount to calling the foundation of the semi-colonial system of government immoral and corrupt.

Dr. Sabry’s construction of prostitutes as the source of venereal diseases was evident through his method of assessing the spread of syphilis and gonorrhoea. He wrote that in evaluating a particular venereal disease, he considered “the intensity of injury [more problematic] than the number of

people who have it.”⁵⁸ He believed that regular and systematic monitoring could mitigate the intensity of the disease even if it did not stop it from spreading.⁵⁹ Dr. Sabry was not concerned with the number of prostitutes who had a venereal disease but whether he could accurately record and treat the infected. Whether there were a large or small number of infected prostitutes was irrelevant because he perceived them as being beyond social protection. He envisioned venereal diseases a problem only to the extent that they were contagious enough to infect vulnerable male clients.

By 1929 doctors had become so adept in the detection of syphilis that Dr. Sabry felt syphilis was no longer a major problem because prostitutes could not use various remedies to hide their infection during medical check-ups. For this reason, there remained few medical complications of advanced neurosyphilis amongst prostitutes.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the lack of advanced medical technology to detect gonorrhea kept it a persistent medical and social problem. Prostitutes fooled doctors by injecting egg white into their cervixes to make their secretions look clean under a microscopic test or imbibed sugar plant and almond extracts to alter the results of their blood tests.⁶¹ The operative concept of this equation is state monitoring of women. By monitoring the rate of venereal disease incidence and attempting to mitigate its effects, physicians could control the disease at its source and prevent men from infection. Neither the monitoring of the number of men nor the intensity of their disease was a factor in the epidemiology of venereal diseases. A prostitute’s promiscuity, deceptive nature, and “utter lack of interest to the rules of public health” rendered her as medically and socially problematic despite being a sexual “necessity” for middle-class men.⁶²

While doctors believed lower-class prostitutes were the source of venereal diseases, Egyptian wives who contracted a venereal disease could not evade the wrath of social shame. In 1923, Dr. Samian Butrus Najjar wrote an article titled “Venereal Diseases and Marriage” that warned men about their reckless sexual behavior while he made clear that the woman suffered the most from obtaining a venereal disease.⁶³ He lamented that urban men of the time were not scared of contracting a venereal disease, most likely from a prostitute, and spreading it to their families. Men were not those losing social position, though. Dr. Najjar stated that if a husband contracts a venereal disease, his wife might dissolve her marriage in order to “save her family from great fear towards her marriage to him.”⁶⁴ It is clear that once a middle- or upper-class monogamous wife contracted a venereal disease, she would be the source of familial shame and disrepute. To protect her own and her family’s reputation, it would be best to end her marriage. According to Dr. Najjar, marital separation was the sole way a wife could avoid contracting a venereal disease from her husband, a legal action made even more necessary by the science of the 1920s that contended

venereal diseases were communicable from merely kissing or sharing a glass of water.⁶⁵ While prostitutes could never hope to enter the body of the nation, the masculinized state granted middle- and upper-class women recourse by suggesting they actively guard, limit, and protect their sexuality in order to fit into society’s social rubric.

National concern over women’s capacity to produce healthy children rather than concern for the women themselves is evident in Article 9 of the Egyptian Personal Status Law 25 of 1920 that granted the wife the right to divorce her husband if he contracted a chronic illness such as a venereal disease.⁶⁶ Before this law, Muslim women had very limited grounds for divorcing their husbands.⁶⁷ Kholoussy argues that Article 9 was an example of the intrusive state’s efforts to take a more active role in creating a nationalist, nuclear, and physically fit family rather than give credibility to Egyptian feminism. Men threatened to contaminate their wives with venereal diseases, and hence, their children, who constituted the future citizens of the nation. Venereal diseases were particularly worrisome because they could be inherited and lead to infant mortality.⁶⁸ I further Kholoussy’s argument by contending that the Personal Status Law 25 shows that the state sought to empower women only when the health of the nation was concerned. Furthermore the Personal Status Law 25, by legislating the monitoring of men’s sexuality, does not invalidate my argument that women’s sexuality was seen as the lynchpin to healthy reproduction and nationalism. The law underscored the need for women to guard their own sexuality and produce healthy children. Similar to physicians, the state endorsed middle- and upper-class women rather than prostitutes to proactively protect their health and limit their sexuality vis-à-vis their husbands who could serve as vectors of venereal diseases.

The notion that middle- and upper-class wives must guarantee healthy reproduction and moral households in the process of nation building served as the physician’s basis for conceiving the fragility of women’s sexual position in Egyptian society. The underlying reason for an infected women’s social shame was her inability to fulfill her domestic role as the bearer of healthy children. Dr. Mahmoud Kamal Barada warned that “if in every one hundred blind children in London, three percent are caused by syphilis and three percent gonorrhea with the severity of precautions that are taken there before birth, we note that in Egypt there is...equivalent to ten times this percentage...”⁶⁹ Like the Egyptian state, Dr. Barada feared that venereal diseases were destroying the future generations of the nation’s children. He was not only concerned with reproduction but also domestic caretaking. He wrote that “as to gonorrhea, what grows out of it besides the blindness, impotence, and infertility are injuries to women, especially those that make them invalid for their jobs as wives and domestic caretakers.”⁷⁰ Physicians believed that if wives contracted a venereal disease, then they served as

“vile” representations of sexually promiscuous and dangerous hunters, neither physically fit to reproduce nor morally fit to run the ideal middle-class household. A wife was the centerpiece to the national unit of the family, and her contraction of a venereal disease rather than her husband’s would corrupt the basis of national progress and development.

The Politics of Reproduction

Egyptian medical texts at the time argued that the female anatomy was easily capable of corrupting unborn babies with diseases and deadly afflictions. Egyptian doctors characterized women’s constitutional and emotional make-up according to the Victorian ideals of inherent weakness.⁷¹ Specifically, in the case of illnesses such as syphilis, Victorian-era European physicians contended that women underwent a total breakdown of their health. Men on the other hand, supported stronger constitutions and were more resistant to the predatory effects of syphilis.⁷² In terms of reproduction, Egyptian doctors viewed middle-class women’s anatomy as especially weak in comparison to the anatomy of lower-class tribal women, who could easily deliver a baby, even while walking.⁷³ Bourgeois women’s natural weakness was also problematic in that doctors saw them as the primary source of transmission of congenital venereal diseases to the nation’s children.

In the 1920s, international developments in the field of syphilology vindicated direct paternal infection as the source of congenital syphilis.⁷⁴ Before this time, scientists noted that syphilis could transfer from a syphilitic but non-contagious man to the baby through the sperm. Subsequently, syphilis could develop in the baby and transfer to the mother.⁷⁵ Therefore, women could remain healthy after coition with a syphilitic man but receive syphilis from the infected baby through the placenta exchange. By the 1920s, international medical teams refuted this theory and declared that the sperm could not communicate syphilis to the ova and to the future child.⁷⁶ Doctors observed that *Treponema*, the bacterial precursor responsible for syphilis, did not exist in the sperm.⁷⁷ Egyptian scientific authorities followed debates on the etiology of congenital syphilis and appropriated their conclusions, as evidenced through Dr. Najjar’s medical writings.⁷⁸ Physicians argued that congenital syphilis could only be passed to the child through the infected mother, either by blood exchange in the placenta or by infection from a diseased placenta or, lastly, by direct contact with syphilitic lesions of the birth canal or genitals at the time of birth.⁷⁹ In terms of the scientific narrative of the early- to mid-twentieth century, men were freed from blame for the direct transfer of syphilis to the nation’s children.

Pregnant women bore the responsibility to police their own and their husbands’ health to avoid contracting syphilis and infecting the unborn child. The concept of women’s self-monitoring of health fits with Abugideiri’s use of the term “republican motherhood.” If a woman was to embody

the ideals of a “republican mother,” she needed to follow the prescriptive advice of the Egyptian doctor that formulated the mother’s health as essential for the maintenance of a robust household and disease-free children.⁸⁰ For instance, Abugideiri notes that medical authorities requested that nursing women ensure their own health in order to produce the “perfect breast milk,” which was essential for the sleep and nourishment of the child. Similarly, doctors required women to ensure their own health to conceive disease-free babies. The time period before birth was especially precarious for the women because they needed to stay venereal disease-free. Physicians perceived many avenues, whether accurate in today’s logic or not, to acquire syphilis such as direct contact with genital chancres and salivary exchanges with a syphilitic person.⁸¹ Not only did Egyptian doctors’ placement of healthcare onto the middle- and upper-class “republican mothers” give them the complete burden of reproductive health but also depicted them as the source of blame for diseased children.

Egyptian medicine’s classist and gendered discourse on healthy reproduction appeared in doctor’s warnings to syphilitic men and women seeking marriage.⁸² While in 1923 Dr. Najjar envisioned that couples would seek venereal disease checks prior to consummating a marriage and engaging in sexual activity, I argue that he only insisted middle and upper-class Egyptians seek treatment.⁸³ In this moment at the beginning of the semi-colonial period, only wealthy Egyptians could seek medical check-ups and attain venereal disease treatment.⁸⁴ His perception of medical treatment was also gendered. In terms of middle and professional-class syphilitic men, he felt comfortable authorizing marriage after they had undergone treatment and not exhibited symptoms of syphilis for two years. This was by no means a foolproof plan. While Dr. Najjar authorized the patient’s marriage, he was well aware that the syphilis could return. He instructed that if chancre returned but blood tests identified the man negative for syphilis, then it was necessary to monitor him for four to seven years. He noted that there had been few cases in which patients still had the disease after seven years of monitoring and treatment. At this point, he posited that the infection was not contagious but almost lethal to its victims. Meanwhile, wives had to deal with possible infection from their husbands’ unpredictable illnesses.⁸⁵

Doctors prescribed syphilitic women greater precautions when considering marriage. Dr. Najjar offered three questions syphilitic women should consider when thinking about marriage:

1. Does the woman have infectious chancres? If so, she should not get married.
2. Has she gone through puberty and is she capable of being pregnant?
3. If number two is so, are there means for treatment? If she gets pregnant, will she accept to show

herself to professionals from time to time and will she accept that her children be treated?⁸⁶

While these precautions are similar to men's in that they are concerned with the transfer of the disease, there was the added concern of transfer during pregnancy. Reproduction constituted the reason for additional precaution on behalf of middle- and upper-class women. Dr. Najjar limited his concern to the transfer of syphilis from two routes: the syphilitic husband to his wife to her children, or from the syphilitic wife to her children. Both routes exclude transfer of syphilis from the wife to her husband. This reveals that while Dr. Najjar's article is titled, "Venereal Disease and Marriage," he primarily was concerned with the transfer of venereal disease to children through the institution of marriage.

When Dr. Najjar discussed the treatment of syphilitic female patients, he did not address treatment outside of pregnancy. The scope of his discussion highlighted that physicians did not idealize the nation through Egypt's women but through its future children. He argued that there was no guarantee that a pregnant, syphilitic woman undergoing treatment could produce a totally healthy child. While children may be born healthy, by the time they reach puberty, they may develop congenital syphilis. As a result of the associated risks toward children, he argued, most doctors did not recommend that syphilitic female patients marry. Dr. Najjar provided no timeline outlining when a syphilitic middle- or upper-class woman could seek marriage. His article implied that categorical hesitation should be applied to syphilitic women because no treatment could guarantee the creation of healthy children.⁸⁷ Rules governing men's marriage were more relaxed because men were not scientifically or ideologically seen as directly connected to the health of children. However, as demonstrated, doctors' fear of venereal diseases did not stop at middle and upper-class women. While they blamed middle and upper-class women as vectors of venereal diseases to the nation's children, they also blamed prostitutes as the source of the entire population's venereal diseases.

Conclusion

In semi-colonial Egypt, the state inextricably intertwined nationalism with insecurities about class and gender. The state and its middle and professional-class physicians saw women as the source of impediments, ranging from the marriage crisis to the perceived venereal disease epidemic, in the process of national building. The narrative of blame for venereal diseases in Egypt makes evident the fragmented, non-unitary concept of the nation that was prevalent among the ruling class. Although the state held all women responsible for spreading venereal diseases in the beginning of the semi-colonial period, it provided middle- and upper-class women recourse to join the nation whereas it excluded lower-class prostitutes.

However, the hypocrisy of middle and professional-class

men's ideals emerges in their exclusion of lower-class prostitutes from the idealized concept of the nation coupled with the state's hesitancy to declare prostitution illegal. The state did not legalize prostitution until after the semi-colonial period in 1953. While lower-class prostitutes were of sexual necessity, the very class of men who could afford to use their services lambasted them and deemed them unfit for reformation or inclusion in the nation. By looking at the cycle of blame associated with the transmission of venereal diseases, we can see both that in the early semi-colonial period the state continued to define nationhood according to bourgeois reproduction and that the state made little attempt to uplift certain marginalized populations into the idealized nation.

- 1 *Al-Ahram* sold 20,000 daily copies in 1919, 30,000 by 1929, and 50,000 by 1937. Hanan Kholoussy, *For Better, For Worse: The Marriage Crisis That Made Modern Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 13.
- 2 "Nadā' Al-Aṭbā': Mustashfā Al-Sil Wa Mustashfā Al-Jild Wa Amrād Al-Tināsiyya" [A Call to the Doctors: The Hospital of Tuberculosis and the Hospital of Skin and Venereal Diseases], *Al-Ahram* (7 December 1921): 3.
- 3 Wilson Chacko Jacob, "Overcoming 'Simply Being': Straight Sex, Masculinity and Physical Culture in Modern Egypt," *Gender & History* 22, no. 3 (2010): 663.
- 4 Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 108.
- 5 At the outset of World War I in 1914, the British legitimated their rule by severing ties with the Ottoman Empire, deposing the Egyptian khedive Abbas Hilmi II, and placing Egypt under temporary protectorate status. For the logistics of British rule over the colonial and semicolonial period, see Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 145, 108.
- 6 Hanan Kholoussy, "Monitoring and Medicalising Male Sexuality in Semi-Colonial Egypt," *Gender & History* 22, no. 3 (2010): 678.
- 7 "Reference Statistics Supplied by the Department of Public Health" (August 1932), *Al-Wizāra Al-Sh'ūn Al-Ijtimā'yya* [Ministry of Social Affairs], 20/5/16, 4029-000554, DWQ.
- 8 Hibba Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture: Colonial Medicine's Construction of Egyptian Womanhood, 1893-1929," *Gender & History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 96.
- 9 For more information on the recently independent Egyptian state's employment of the middle class as Egypt's new and idealized national subjects, see Lucie Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiya': Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt under the Monarchy in Re-envisioning Egypt 1919-1952," ed. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 124-163.
- 10 Lisa Pollard, "From Husbands and Housewives to Suckers and Whores: Marital-Political Anxieties in the 'House of Egypt,' 1919-1948," *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 665.

- 11 Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 35, 28; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 90-113.
- 12 Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 48.
- 13 Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Philippa Levine, "Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 4 (1994): 579–602; James Warren, *Pirates, Prostitutes and Pullers: Explorations in the Ethno- and Social History of Southeast Asia* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2008). For a general study on sexuality as it deals with Great Britain's changing stance toward venereal diseases in relation to British systems of empire, see Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990).
- 14 Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*; Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).
- 15 Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 180.
- 16 Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 17 Bruce Dunne, "Sexuality and the 'Civilizing Process' in Modern Egypt" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1996) and Omnia El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- 18 Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *The Creation of a Medical Profession in Egypt, 1800-1922* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 39-40.
- 19 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 86.
- 20 Sonbol, *Medical Profession*, 36.
- 21 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 86.
- 22 Hibba Abugideiri, "Off to Work At Home: Egyptian Midwives Blur Public-Private Boundaries," *Hawwa* 6, no. 3 (2008): 271.
- 23 Hibba Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine in Colonial Egypt* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 134.
- 24 Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine*, 138.
- 25 Donald Reid, "The Rise of Professions and Professional Organization in Modern Egypt," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no.1 (January 1974): 36.
- 26 Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine*, 168.
- 27 Sonbol, *Medical Profession*, 109.
- 28 Reid, "The Rise of Professions," 36.
- 29 In 1912, Cairo contained 418 doctors, of which only 168 were Egyptians (53 of whom obtained a medical degree from institutions outside of Egypt). Sonbol, *Medical Profession*, 110.
- 30 Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine*, 168.
- 31 "Egyptian Diplomas in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene," *The Egyptian Medical Review* (1931): 41.
- 32 For more information on the difference in status between "tarboosh-wearers" and "turban-wearers," see Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity," 128.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 171
- 34 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 173.
- 36 For discussion of public health epidemics, see Diana Davis and Edmund Burke, *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); LaVerne Kuhnke *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Nancy Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars: Epidemics and the Politics of Public Health* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).
- 37 This is made obvious from a government competition in 1946 that screened physician applications to sponsor study of venereal diseases in the United States and the United Kingdom. See Papers on Dr. Fathi Abdel-Hafez Soliman Study of Venereal Diseases in the United States and the United Kingdom (1946). al-b' thāt [*Missions*], No. 5754, DWQ.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 89-90.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 Abugideiri, "Off to Work At Home, 274.
- 42 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 93.
- 43 Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 32-33.
- 44 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 111.
- 45 Kholousy, *For Better, For Worse*, 57.
- 46 Dunne, "Sexuality and the 'Civilizing Process,'" 262.
- 47 Kholousy, *For Better, For Worse*, 10.
- 48 Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, 57.
- 49 Mehmed Ali also subjected both wives and the soldiers themselves to the dreaded medical check-ups. Hence, the state did not strictly monitor "immoral" women at this point. See the following for a more detailed history of prostitution in pre-colonial Egypt. Khaled Fahmy, "Prostitution in Egypt in the 19th Century," in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene Rogan (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 77-103; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002).

- 50 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 228-230.
- 51 E.H. Beardsley, "Allied Against Sin: American and British Responses to Venereal Disease in World War I," *Medical History* 20, no. 2 (April 1976): 190.
- 52 Kholoussy, "Monitoring and Medicalising Male Sexuality," 679.
- 53 Dunne, "Sexuality and the 'Civilizing Process'," 200.
- 54 *Report of The Commission of Enquiry into The Problem of Licensed Prostitution in Egypt* (Cairo: Government Press, 1935), 12, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, AUC.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 150.
- 57 Dr. Mahmoud Ibn Sabry (First Doctor at the Hood al-Marsud Hospital), "b'd al mulahzāt 'lai al amrād siriyya 'nd al 'āharāt" [Some notes on Venereal Diseases in Egyptian Brothels], *Al Majalla Al-Tibbiyaa Al-Misriyya* [The Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association] (June 1929), 451.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 456.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 *Ibid.*, 452.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 457.
- 63 Dr. Samian Butrus Najjar, "Al-Amrād Al-Siriyya Wa al-Zaūāj" [Venereal Diseases and Marriage], *Al Majalla Al-Tibbiyaa Al-Misriyya* [The Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association] (February 1923): 149-157.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 Kholoussy, "Monitoring and Medicalising Male Sexuality," 677.
- 67 Kholoussy outlines in *For Better, For Worse: The Marriage Crisis That Made Modern Egypt* that a woman could often successfully seek a divorce from her husband if 1) she could ask her husband to stipulate her right to divorce in the marriage contract 2) she could ask the judge to grant her a judicial divorce 3) she could ask her husband to divorce her by mutual agreement.
- 68 Kholoussy, "Monitoring and Medicalising Male Sexuality," 685.
- 69 Dr. Mahmoud Kamal Barada, "Al-Āmrād Al-Siriyya Fī Al-Ha' Al-Ājtmā'ī Al-Miṣrī" [Syphilis in Social Body of Egypt]. *Al Majalla Al-Tibbiyaa Al-Misriyya* [The Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association] (January 1933), 45.
- 70 El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 45.
- 71 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 94.
- 72 Jill Harsin, "Syphilis, Wives, and Physicians: Medical Ethics and the Family in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 1989): 93-94.
- 73 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 94.
- 74 Loyd Oscar Thompson, *Syphilis* (New York: Lea & Febiger, 1920), 435-437.
- 75 Dr. Najjar, "Al-Amrād Al-Siriyya Wa al-Zaūāj," 154, and Harsin, "Syphilis," 79.
- 76 Thompson, *Syphilis*, 435-437.
- 77 The scientific research of the 1920s posited that the relative size of the syphilitic organism in comparison to that of the sperm makes it impossible for the latter to carry syphilis. Thompson, *Syphilis*, 435-437.
- 78 Dr. Najjar, "Al-Amrād Al-Siriyya Wa al-Zaūāj," 153.
- 79 Thompson, *Syphilis*, 437.
- 80 Abugideiri, "The Scientisation of Culture," 93-94.
- 81 Harsin, "Syphilis," 75, 90.
- 82 While in 2011 it was known that syphilis could not be communicated to the baby through the semen, this fact still did not take away from the gendered Egyptian scientific discourse. Egyptian doctors placed the burden of healthy reproduction and transfer of syphilis on the Egyptian woman rather than the man who infected her.
- 83 Dr. Najjar, "Al-Amrād Al-Siriyya Wa al-Zaūāj," 152.
- 84 "Mulahzāt Tibbiyya 'n Mashrū' Qanūn Al-Amrād Al Siriyya" [Medical Notes on the Venereal Disease Legal Project], *Al-Ahram* (10 April 1929).
- 85 Harsin, "Syphilis," 75.
- 86 Dr. Najjar, "Al-Amrād Al-Siriyya Wa al-Zaūāj," 156.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 157.

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North Sarah HOPE VI Mixed-Income Community: A Progressive Attempt to Catalyze Urban Revitalization Efforts in Downtown St. Louis

Caleb Bess

***Abstract:** The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI program provides funds to municipal housing authorities and private developers to demolish deteriorating public housing projects and replace them with mixed-income communities. North Sarah, a mixed-income community due for completion in the fall of 2013, strives to improve living conditions for low-income residents and serve as a catalyst for reinvestment in the North Central neighborhood of St. Louis. Although North Sarah contains an extensive Community and Supportive Services Plan to connect residents with services like job training and early childhood education, this plan will have difficulty overcoming weakened infrastructure in the city of St. Louis. I argue that while North Sarah represents a commendable attempt to develop an effective mixed-income community, pre-existing social and economic conditions within the North Central neighborhood, and the city of St. Louis at large, jeopardize its potential for success. By situating North Sarah within the context of the city of St. Louis's history of decline and through policy evaluations of the HOPE VI program, I demonstrate how North Sarah is unable to address potentially debilitating social and economic conditions that will affect the economic self-sufficiency of its residents.*

Introduction

During the summer of 2011, the St. Louis Housing Authority and McCormack Baron Salazar, a nationally renowned private developer of affordable housing, began construction on the first phase of North Sarah, a mixed-income community funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program.¹ Representative of a fundamental shift in federal public housing policy, the North Sarah project strives to improve the quality of life for low-income residents and catalyze the revitalization of downtown St. Louis through the construction of a mixed-income community with social and supportive services. The units in North Sarah will replace those at 3501 Franklin Avenue, the last remaining public housing high rise building in the Arthur A. Blumeyer projects, as well as in the city of St. Louis.

Once completed in the fall of 2013, North Sarah will provide 229 units of housing for St. Louis citizens for low, moderate, and high-income levels.² Two- to three-story townhomes and garden apartments will provide the residents with an intimate scale of architecture meant to foster neighborly interaction and provide safe, defensible spaces for residents. Community participation and involvement with social programming both before and after the completion of the project distinguish North Sarah from past public housing developments like St. Louis's infamous Pruitt-Igoe projects of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. At the official North Sarah Phase One groundbreaking ceremony, 18th ward Alderman Terry Kennedy praised the project for

its ability to incorporate the voice of current residents into the planning and development process, stating: "The North Sarah Development is one phase of the North Central Plan created by residents in the Vandeventer neighborhood. Over a two-year period, residents gathered with professional planners to put into writing their vision and hopes for their community. Out of this community engagement grew the North Central Plan that includes the North Sarah Project."³ While North Sarah represents a progressive approach to developing public housing, this approach may not be powerful enough to overcome the social and economic conditions in downtown St. Louis, which may ultimately undermine the potential success of the community itself.

North Sarah's success depends not only on its ability to incorporate the needs and opinions of community members into the planning and development process, but also on the North Central neighborhood's (and ultimately the City of St. Louis's) ability to provide residents with education and employment. Although North Sarah comes complete with an extensive Community and Supportive Services Plan that will connect residents with job training, financial counseling, and educational programming for youth, these services may not be enough to overcome St. Louis's poor quality of educational institutions and economic disinvestment in the neighborhood. Without available jobs and decent schools, the residents of North Sarah will not be able to prosper and achieve economic self-sufficiency. While providing housing is certainly the first step in providing a better quality of life for low-income urban residents, ultimately the success of the community depends on the strength of urban

infrastructure and its ability to provide jobs and schools for residents.

While the North Sarah HOPE VI project represents the federal government's most recent, and most progressive approach to creating mixed-income communities in US cities, I will argue that the city of St. Louis's poor urban infrastructure in education and job availability threatens the residents' potential for economic self sufficiency, and ultimately the success of the North Sarah community. Through situating North Sarah within the context of St. Louis's long history of economic decline and depopulation, as well as by means of academic literature on the efficacy of federal public housing policies, I plan to demonstrate how the development's potential for success rests at the intersection of a variety of historical, structural, and political factors that must be taken into consideration during the planning and development processes.

Depopulation and Deindustrialization: Brief History of Economic Decline in the City of St. Louis

The North Central neighborhood where the development is located is just one of many downtown St. Louis neighborhoods still affected by the trends of depopulation and deindustrialization that began in the decades following World War II.⁴ In those decades St. Louis city experienced a period of rapid depopulation and deindustrialization that created a harsh economic climate for business in the city's downtown region.⁵ This disinvestment provides a bleak backdrop for North Sarah and new social and economic development. In *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City*, Colin Gordon uses demographic data and geographic information mapping to explore St. Louis's history of economic decline. Situating North Sarah within Gordon's research on St. Louis's post World War II economic decline elucidates the extent of deterioration and abandonment in the North Central neighborhood.

Even though St. Louis acted as a Midwestern-hub of manufacturing, transportation, and agricultural processing during the late 19th century, an exodus of industry and population in the decades following World War II led to the deterioration of the city's downtown region. Although downtown St. Louis and the North Side still contain some important businesses and institutions, abandoned homes and buildings are common throughout the area. During the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, St. Louis was home to large lumberyards, grain elevators, foundries, freight terminals, and chemical plants.⁶ However, by 1919 many of the city's manufacturers had begun to move their factories east of the Mississippi River for economic reasons. In the years after World War II, St. Louis emerged as the United States's second largest rail and

trucking hub.⁷ Unfortunately, this brief period of economic prosperity was followed by an exodus of industry and population that continues to define the city of St. Louis's current social and economic climate. The city's manufacturing sector suffered the most during this period. Prior to World War II, the manufacturing industry provided 200,000 jobs to residents in St. Louis city. By 1979, the manufacturing industry was providing only 99,100 jobs to residents.⁸ By 1994, the manufacturing industry provided only 46,400 jobs to residents.⁹

Trends of deindustrialization and depopulation within city borders coincided with the rapid growth of suburban communities in St. Louis County, the county surrounding St. Louis city. In 1876, legislators in the state of Missouri decided to separate the city of St. Louis from St. Louis County, resulting in the land locking of city borders at 61 square miles. St. Louis County operated as a completely separate governmental entity from the city of St. Louis.¹⁰ Unlike many cities that expanded their borders throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the city of St. Louis was landlocked and could not acquire newly emerged and prosperous counties in the suburbs. This proved problematic in the decades following World War II, when most of the city's citizenry and tax base moved to suburban communities in the county.¹¹ In other words, when middle-class citizens moved from the city, they took their money and their resources with them, therefore severely decreasing the city funds available for infrastructure like education and other public services. Suburbanization resulted in a major decrease in the resources available to the city of St. Louis, resulting in the deterioration of important infrastructure like education and other city services.

Federal housing policies such as the Federal Housing Act of 1934 and the GI Bill of 1944 encouraged the growth of the suburbs through subsidizing costs for white residents to purchase property in the suburbs.¹² The Federal Housing Act of 1934 resulted in the formation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a United States agency that insured loans and provided credit to home buyers. The FHA insured loans and provided credit only to white residents hoping to relocate to neighborhoods in "green" and "blue" zones located west of the city in St. Louis County. Neighborhoods that were racially, ethnically, or economically heterogeneous were designated as "red" zones, or redlined, by the FHA and the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC).¹³ The FHA and HOLC also encouraged the use of an unwritten "gentleman's agreement" that ensured that brokers did not sell property in white neighborhoods to African Americans or other racial minorities.¹⁴ In other words, federal housing policies engineered the migration and racial composition of neighborhoods in St. Louis city and St. Louis County. While these policies encouraged

white residents to purchase homes in the suburbs, African American and minority residents were confined to the deteriorating neighborhoods of the city. In the years between 1950 and 2000, the city of St. Louis lost around 10,000 people a year, and by 1970, the population of St. Louis County surpassed that of the city with 950,000 residents.¹⁵ In the years between 1950 and 2000, the city of St. Louis lost over half its population. The city had a peak population of 850,000 in 1950, but a population of only 348,000 in the year 2000.¹⁶ These federally encouraged trends of migration contributed to a weakened economic base and a decrease in tax revenue for the city. The harsh economic climate and lack of resources that originated from these trends still pervades the downtown neighborhoods like North Central and jeopardizes the potential success of the North Sarah development.

In addition to gaining population, St. Louis County also emerged as the region's economic anchor as businesses migrated from the city to the suburbs due to a common perception among business CEOs and executives that the harsh environment of the city did not foster the growth of business. By 1960, the number of business establishments in the county paralleled those in the city, and surpassed the city in retail and service sector businesses.¹⁷ The loss of manufacturing in the city led many business owners to believe that St. Louis was an "inhospitable business environment" and therefore incapable of supporting business and development.¹⁸ A 1975 study commissioned by the St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association discovered that many St. Louis region business owners cited crime and urban decay as two primary factors working against business development in the city center.¹⁹ This negative perception of the city became a self-fulfilling prophecy and hastened the deterioration of the city, resulting in the migration of city businesses to wealthy suburbs like Clayton and Sunset Hills.²⁰ Between 1960 and 1976, the development of commercial office space in Clayton and Sunset Hills rivaled that of downtown St. Louis.²¹ Although this study was conducted in the 1970s, these hesitations towards starting business and development in downtown St. Louis are likely still prevalent among business owners. Such perceptions certainly present a challenge to attracting new investment and development in the North Central neighborhood.

St. Louis's long history of disinvestment and decline in the decades following World War II created a loss of faith in the city among business owners and developers who were afraid that high rates of crime and the landscape of physical deterioration would lead to less profitability for their enterprises. This unwillingness to invest in city businesses further contributed to the economic dominance of St. Louis County. Despite the lack of population and industry in downtown St. Louis, city officials and private developers

have attempted to revitalize downtown areas through public housing and mixed-income developments. While many of St. Louis's past public housing developments like Pruitt-Igoe, Cochran, and Blumeyer have consistently failed to improve quality of life for residents, in recent decades the city of St. Louis has emerged as a leader in creating moderately successful HOPE VI developments.²² While North Sarah, and other HOPE VI mixed-income communities represent a natural progression in the evolution of affordable housing policy, North Sarah still employs the same demolish-and-replace approach of the slum clearance public housing policies of the past.

From Pruitt-Igoe to North Sarah: Brief History of Public Housing Development in St. Louis

North Sarah's stakeholder-inclusive, integrated approach towards creating affordable housing represents an acknowledgement of past public housing failures, while simultaneously perpetuating the demolish-and-replace approach that helped to build failed public housing projects like Pruitt-Igoe and the Blumeyer projects. Federal public housing programs like HOPE VI originated from the Public Housing Act of 1937, which provided up to \$800 million in loans for municipal housing authorities to clear "blighted" areas and construct low-income housing.²³ This housing was meant to provide affordable housing options for low-income urban residents during the Great Depression. After World War II, the U.S. Congress passed the 1949 Housing Act, which allowed the Federal Housing Administration to mandate and assist in slum removal and provide subsidies and loans to municipal agencies wanting to clear downtown areas for new developments.²⁴ This legislation also encouraged slum clearance and economic development as a means of revitalizing neglected neighborhoods. This demolish-and-replace approach to affordable housing still pervades the theory behind developments like North Sarah.

During the 1950s and 1960s, theories behind slum clearance and redevelopment eventually evolved into a new approach towards revitalization called urban renewal.²⁵ Urban renewal, or the redevelopment of large tracts of land in urban areas through the clearance of slums and the construction of architecturally "modern" structures, defined revitalization approaches at this time. In the 1960s, Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty legislation emphasized the importance of human services programs in conjunction with physical revitalization.²⁶ While the first public housing emerged out the federal government's attempt to provide inner-city Americans with affordable housing during the time of the Great Depression, the development of public housing in the years following the war was part of efforts to revitalize the city and usher it into an era of modernity.

Projects like Pruitt-Igoe and Blumeyer were marketed as progressive housing meant to advance the world-class status of St. Louis. Unfortunately, the erection of these projects accompanied the depopulation and deindustrialization of the city. Rather than stabilizing deteriorating urban neighborhoods, these developments further contributed to their decline.

In the decades following World War II, the city of St. Louis, with aid from the federal government, constructed a variety of public housing projects, most of which failed due to poor management and the economic climate within downtown St. Louis. The first public housing projects, Clinton-Peabody Terrace and Carr Street Village, were constructed pursuant to the 1937 Federal Housing Act; both were completed in 1942.²⁷ The 1950s saw the completion of public housing projects such as Darst-Webbe, Vaughn, Cochran, and lastly Pruitt-Igoe, a project that urban historians reference to exemplify the most egregious failures of public housing.²⁸ Completed in 1956, the Pruitt-Igoe projects consisted of 33 eleven-story high-rise buildings with a total of 2,870 dwelling units. Due to lack of physical maintenance and structural factors such as social tension and weakened economy in the downtown region, all of the buildings were demolished less than 20 years later in 1973.²⁹ Failed public housing projects like Pruitt-Igoe demonstrate how St. Louis's harsh economic climate and lack of resources for public housing residents have contributed to the decline of multiple communities. Although North Sarah will employ a different, more integrated approach to development, these same factors could contribute to its decline as well.

Federal housing policies of the past utilized theories of slum clearance and urban renewal that resulted in a demolish-and-replace approach to urban revitalization still prevalent among municipal housing authorities and private developers in the present. The federal government used the idea of slum clearance and urban renewal so that it could devalue existing urban communities and in theory improve the quality of life for residents through the construction of new properties. While the HOPE VI program differs from past approaches to public housing by employing an integrated approach to development, the HOPE VI model still perpetuates a demolish-and-replace approach. The HOPE VI program provides local housing authorities and private developers with the funds to demolish public housing projects that are in poor physical condition. In the case of North Sarah, HUD has provided funding for the St. Louis Housing Authority and McCormack Baron Salazar to demolish 3501 Franklin, the last remaining high-rise in the city of St. Louis. This building at 3501 Franklin is also the last remaining high-rise of the Arthur A. Blumeyer Projects, which once consisted of 16 high-rise buildings.

Although most HOPE VI projects never reach completion, the city of St. Louis has an exemplary record with HOPE VI developments. McCormack Baron Salazar, a nationally renowned developer of affordable housing based in St. Louis, has emerged in recent decades as a premier developer of HOPE VI affordable housing.³⁰

Recent Efforts: HOPE VI and the North Sarah Project

In order to understand the North Sarah project, a clear understanding of the HOPE VI program is crucial. The Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere, or the HOPE VI program, provides funding for municipal public housing authorities to demolish physically deteriorating public housing projects and replace them with high quality mixed-income communities.³¹ The United States Congress implemented the program in 1993, out of the federal and municipal governments' frustration with the poor quality of public housing projects, and the consequent low quality of life for housing residents.³² Unlike past public housing projects (which were completely funded by the federal government), HOPE VI employs a mixed-finance approach to development that allows for public housing authorities to partner with private developers. This mixed-finance approach to funding the HOPE VI program aims to increase available funding for construction and the implementation of supportive services programming in public housing developments. This mixed-finance approach to development allows localities to produce public housing using private equity, in the form of tax credits. This model allows more freedom in the design and management of the property and aims to attract more prosperous tenants and homeowners.³³

In the case of North Sarah, the St. Louis Housing Authority serves as the public housing authority, while McCormack Baron Salazar serves as the private developer. KAI Design and Build Architecture Firm is the lead architect for the Project, while Urban Strategies Inc. is responsible for creating a comprehensive Community and Supportive Services (CSS) Plan for the Project.³⁴ The project involves two main community partners: Blumeyer Village Tenants Association and TAALKE, LLC. The Blumeyer Village Tenants Association is the Tenants Association for the Arthur A. Blumeyer Projects as well as Renaissance Place at Grand. TAALKE, LLC, is a minority-owned business enterprise that has played an important role in making sure the needs of the community are incorporated into the planning and development process of the project.³⁵ St. Louis Housing Authority, Urban Strategies, Blumeyer Village Tenants Association, and TAALKE LLC were the main collaborators for the Community and Supportive Services Plan (CSS). The collaboration between all of these community groups on the CSS Plan represents a common

stakeholder commitment to providing supportive services for the low-income residents of 3501 Franklin Avenue.³⁶ This also acknowledges that supportive services are crucial to the success of affordable housing developments. Additionally, private housing developers and the public housing authorities make profit on the units. This revenue is either pumped back into property management, or used to create new development in the community. After the public housing authority and the private developer have received the initial funding, they leverage these funds with monetary and non-monetary contributions from other organizations and private funders. The HOPE VI program also requires that each funded development contain a Community and Supportive Services Plan (CSS) that connects residents with important social services such as childcare and job training.³⁷ The North Sarah CSS Plan has been created by an organization called Urban Strategies, Inc., which is a subsidiary of McCormack Baron Salazar.

North Sarah will create 229 mixed-income rental units in the form of garden apartments and townhomes on one acre of land in the North Central neighborhood in downtown St. Louis.³⁸ These apartments and townhomes will contain one, two, and three bedrooms. The project will also create mixed-use buildings that will provide spaces for local businesses and community services like a fitness center and an apartment management center. The first phase of the plan will construct 120 units on a 3-block area bordered to the North by Cook Avenue, West Belle to the South, Vandeventer to the East, and North Sarah to the West.³⁹ Of the 120 units, a total of 73 will be low-income tax credit funded units including 59 designated as tax credit/public housing units; the remaining 47 units will be offered at the market rate.⁴⁰

Although the first phase of North Sarah will produce only 47 market-rate-priced units, all units will be developed to market-rate construction standards. Unlike many public housing developments of the past, North Sarah will be constructed from high-quality materials like brick veneer, high beam metal roofs, and canopy fabrics that are designed to ensure that residents with a strong sense of pride will invest in their living arrangements. The mixed-finance approach to development makes available more funds to invest in high-quality materials and social services. The public housing units will look no different from the market-rate units, supporting McCormack Baron Salazar's belief that affordable housing ought to be of equal quality to market-rate housing. The public housing units in North Sarah will replace those from 3501 Franklin Avenue, a physically deteriorating public housing high-rise in the North Central neighborhood of St. Louis. The structure at 3501 Franklin is the last remaining high-rise in the Arthur A. Blumeyer housing Projects and the last remaining single-family

public housing high-rise in the City of St. Louis.⁴¹ The other fifteen buildings that once belonged to the Blumeyer Housing Projects were demolished and turned into Renaissance Place at Grand, another mixed-income community developed by McCormack Baron Salazar and the St. Louis Housing Authority.

Community Supportive Services Plan: Integrating Residents into North Sarah's Planning and Development

The Community and Supportive Services (CSS) Plan for North Sarah is meant to connect the residents of North Sarah, especially those of low and moderate incomes, with important social services and resources, such as education and job training. The Community and Supportive Services Plan, which emerged out of an initial assessment of demographics and community needs, certainly represents North Sarah's most inclusive and progressive part of its approach to creating public housing. During the summer of 2011, when I initially conducted my fieldwork as an intern with McCormack Baron Salazar, I had the opportunity to experience many of the planning and development meetings for North Sarah. The most inclusive of these many planning and development meetings were the bi-weekly CSS meetings held at the St. Louis Housing Authority. At these meetings, representatives from all the various stakeholder groups involved in North Sarah were present. These various stakeholders include McCormack Baron Salazar, St. Louis Housing Authority, and Urban Strategies Inc, as well as representatives from various community-based organizations such as the Blumeyer Village Tenants Association (the community organization for the residents of 3501 Franklin). Often these meetings lasted for at least two hours as residents criticized the CSS Plan, the design sketches, and the construction schedule. Officials from the St. Louis Housing Authority listened intently and took note of issues raised. In addition to these bi-weekly CSS planning and implementation meetings, McCormack Baron Salazar also created a Resident Design Committee so that residents had a forum to voice their concerns about the actual design of the properties. If the planning and development process serves as any indication of final project outcomes, then the completed North Sarah community will certainly reflect the needs and concerns of community residents.

Reflective of community needs and demographics, the comprehensive CSS plan for North Sarah created by Urban Strategies initially emerged from community needs assessments and meetings with community members. HOPE VI projects like North Sarah are required by the federal government to have plans for community programming. A clear acknowledgment that past public housing projects'

failures can partially be attributed to a lack of community programming, the CSS plan further indicates how HOPE VI represents an evolved approach to revitalizing communities. Even before North Sarah had received HOPE VI funding from HUD, Urban Strategies began drafting the CSS Plan. After the funding had been awarded, Urban Strategies began to solidify the plan and garner commitments and funding from organizations in the community. Part of this elaboration on the plan included specific household assessments for every family in 3501 Franklin. A case manager who lived in 3501 Franklin, and was specifically hired by Urban Strategies, conducted the assessments in an effort not only to involve the community in the process of creating a plan but also to elicit honest responses from residents. These household needs assessments were meant to determine important factors such as career aspirations, interest in homeownership, early childhood care, and family support needs (childcare, transportation, youth programming, etc). Urban Strategies, McCormack Baron Salazar, St. Louis Housing Authority, and the Blumeyer Village Tenants Association, the four major stakeholders in the project, focused time and energy on the plan because it represents an essential element for the success of North Sarah. The CSS Plan acknowledges that the success of North Sarah depends not only on the quality of the architecture, but also on the residents of North Sarah and their ability to prosper economically and socially.

The results of the household assessments demonstrated that 3501 Franklin Avenue contains mostly large, female-headed households with an abundance of children. The survey showed that out of the 139 households located in North Sarah, 127 were headed by women.⁴² Ninety-three of these women were under the age of 30, and among these households there were 138 children beneath the age of 5.⁴³ There were over 50 school-aged children between the ages of 6 and 18. This means that 53% of the residents at 3501 Franklin are children and that children under the age of 5 comprise 70% of the children at 3501 Franklin. Only 37 percent of the households have earned income, and the average annual household income for all families at 3501 Franklin Avenue is 6,701 dollars. Forty-eight of the households receive their income through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a program that provides cash assistance to low-income families with children. Nineteen households receive their primary source of income from Social Security.⁴⁴ Most of the residents receive between 0 and 30 percent of the Average Median Income for the area. In terms of education, only 6 of the 354 residents living at 3501 Franklin have a college degree, while 40 residents have some college education. Seventy-four of the residents have a high school diploma, while 45 have less than a high school diploma or a GED. As for access to financial services, only sixteen percent of residents have a checking account, while

fourteen percent of residents have both a checking and a savings account.⁴⁵ Thirty six percent of the residents expressed interest in obtaining a checking account. Sixty-one percent of the heads of households have expressed interest in owning a home, and 87% of those expressed interest in participating in a homeownership program.⁴⁶

After conducting the household assessments and determining the demographics of 3501 Franklin Avenue Residents, Urban Strategies established a variety of human service components, or focuses for the CSS Plan. These various focuses include life skills programs, case management and service coordination, workforce development, education, early childhood care, childcare, youth development programs, health and wellness programs, computer and broadband technology training, and transportation assistance.⁴⁷ In addition to determining these specific focuses for the CSS plan, Urban Strategies also created individual plans for each household from 3501 Franklin planning to enter the new development. In order for the CSS Plan to work, Urban Strategies garnered social service commitments from over 15 community partners, some of which include the St. Louis Agency for Training and Employment, St. Louis Community College, and COCA (Center of Creative Arts), just to name a few.⁴⁸ The plan attempts to address unemployment by connecting residents with job training for green industries, childcare services, and healthcare careers. SLATE and SLCC are the primary providers for employment-related services.⁴⁹ The CSS Plan addresses childhood education through providing access to Head Start programming for 3501 Franklin residents. The organizations donating childhood education services include the YWCA, Grace Hill Settlement House, and the University City Children's Center.⁵⁰ Organizations like College Bound and College Summit have agreed to provide college preparation services for middle- and high-school aged youth at both 3501 Franklin and North Sarah. Organizations like the Washington Tabernacle Church and the Youth & Family Center will provide continuing education courses for adults. The CSS Plan's attempt to connect North Sarah's residents with as many education resources as possible represents a clear commitment to seeing the residents of North Sarah succeed.

Although the CSS Plan for North Sarah will connect residents with important social services, the plan's success is threatened by pre-existing social and economic conditions in St. Louis. Even the most comprehensive CSS Plan may not be able to overcome the depopulation and deindustrialization that has affected downtown St. Louis. Social services such as job training, early childhood education, and financial counseling serve little purpose if jobs are not available and local schools cannot provide a quality education. Providing housing and community programming is only one part of revitalizing urban communities that must

exist as part of a larger, comprehensive citywide reform effort to improve quality of life for residents. Without addressing these larger citywide social and economic conditions, North Sarah may face the same fate as public housing predecessors like Pruitt-Igoe and Arthur A. Blumeyer Projects. Although North Sarah represents a more integrated and progressive approach than public housing developments of the past, North Sarah is still susceptible to the difficulty of establishing itself in an economically desolate climate.

Previous St. Louis public housing projects like Blumeyer and Pruitt-Igoe failed due to social and economic conditions that prevented the residents of these communities from improving their social and economic circumstances. Because they were constructed in areas suffering from loss of population and industry, Pruitt-Igoe and Blumeyer were doomed from their inception. No matter how grand the architecture or the quality of the housing, the residents of these projects could not achieve self-sufficiency without the availability of decent jobs and education. Given the deteriorating social and economic conditions in combination with the poor management of the high rises from the St. Louis Housing Authority, the residents of these projects had little chance of success. In the case of North Sarah, the lack of job availability and educational opportunities is not the only problem plaguing the community. A spatial mismatch between the availability of jobs and those who need the jobs also undermines North Sarah's potential for success.

The high concentration of available entry-level jobs in the St. Louis suburbs and the dearth of these entry-level jobs within city limits will likely hinder the ability of North Sarah residents to find employment. The exodus of industry and population from St. Louis city borders also created a spatial mismatch between entry-level jobs and the low-income residents who needed those jobs. According to a report on Workforce Affordable Housing Development from local policy think tank FOCUS STL, most entry-level and low-wage jobs emerge around economic development in the St. Louis suburbs, far away from low- and moderate-income residents living in public housing.⁵¹ "In many communities, researchers and housing advocates have noted a 'spatial mismatch' between where jobs, particularly entry-level and low-wage positions, and affordable housing are located," the report states.⁵² Migration to the St. Louis suburbs and subsequent development has deprived city-based low- and moderate-income residents of the entry-level positions they need to prosper. When these low-income residents do not thrive, neither do the affordable housing communities they reside in. While the North Sarah CSS Plan includes abundant job training and educational services, it will be difficult for residents to leverage these services without the availability of actual job opportunities.

Although the North Sarah stakeholders are not attempting to address all of the broader structural inequalities that

have resulted from deindustrialization and migration to the suburbs, North Sarah's focus on providing supportive services and property management represent a viable success strategy and a step in the right direction. Arguably, North Sarah's CSS Plan and inclusive planning and development processes represent a new type of affordable housing development that strives to ensure success through community empowerment and investment in the process and project, provision of social services and integration of all stakeholder interests. When the concept of mixed-income development emerged during the 1990s, urban policy makers and government officials believed that mixed-income communities would improve the quality of life for urban residents by teaching them more "productive" social and economic behaviors, as well as providing them with new housing.

HOPE VI Policy Research and Recommendations: Scarce Acknowledgement of Pre-Existing Structural Conditions

In 2003, the HOPE VI reauthorization process in combination with the Bush administration's attempts to eliminate the program altogether resulted in the creation of a new field of HOPE VI evaluation and efficacy literature. Upon its establishment in 1993, the HOPE IV program was authorized by Congress for only ten years, so this period of reauthorization and evaluation came as no surprise to legislators. During this process of reauthorization, the Bush administration attempted to eliminate the program, citing its low rates of project completion and implementation. Due to bi-partisan support for the program, Congress eventually reauthorized the program, but only at an allocation of \$150 million for another 10 years, a decrease in its initial funding allocation of \$500 million dollars.⁵³ In response to this process of reauthorization and attempts to eradicate the program, urban policy research institutions like the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and the Urban Institute Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center have published evaluations of HOPE VI policy and implementation in order to demonstrate the importance of the program to the legislators and policy makers responsible for reauthorizing the program at its original levels in Congress. Although this HOPE VI evaluation literature filled an important void by providing much needed evaluations of the HOPE VI program, the literature primarily focuses on the results of HOPE VI projects rather than the social and economic climates that led to the neighborhood's initial decline. While this research aims to use the results of successful projects to prove the efficacy of the HOPE VI program, I argue that these evaluations might be enhanced through a consideration of larger structural and historical factors.

"HOPE VI and Mixed-Finance Redevelopments: A Catalyst for Neighborhood Renewal," an evaluation of the program from the Brookings Institution, demonstrates

the lack of emphasis these reports have on the pre-existing social and economic conditions that precede and define HOPE VI projects. The report highlights four case studies of successful HOPE VI projects in Atlanta, Louisville, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. The St. Louis portion of the report focuses on the transformation of the George L. Vaughn high rises into the Murphy Park mixed-income community. When describing the context for the Murphy Park project, the report states: “Vaughn’s four nine-story buildings were distinct eyesores to the surrounding single-family neighborhood. Furthermore, poor management, deferred maintenance, and lack of services contributed to the community’s decline.”⁵⁴ Although factors such as poor management and lack of access to social services played an important role in the decline of the Vaughn projects, the report does not address the historical social and economic trends of depopulation and deindustrialization in downtown St. Louis. These trends certainly contributed to the physical deterioration and poor quality of life for residents living in the Murphy high-rise apartments. While situating these projects within a historical context is not the priority of these reports, I argue that the reports ought to place a higher consideration on this historical context, as it explains the current state of disinvestment in the neighborhood. Although North Sarah began construction last summer, many of the area’s social and economic conditions of disinvestment and abandonment are similar to those that existed when the Vaughn and Blumeyer Projects were developed.

Another report, “A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges,” from the Urban Institute, also tends to oversimplify the social and economic conditions that have contributed to the lack of success of HOPE VI developments. Similar to the report from the Brookings Institution, this report strives to evaluate the program and determine whether the program has successfully achieved its intended benefits and how it has affected the quality of life for public housing residents. Although the report discusses the program’s efficacy or lack thereof, it tends to simplify issues pertaining to the social and economic conditions that often precede HOPE VI project developments. For example, when providing context for the HOPE VI program and citing the reason for its failure, the report does not directly refer to trends of economic decline or depopulation within cities. More than the Brookings Institution report, the Urban Institute cites some of the structural factors for the failure of public housing developments, stating: “Although many local housing agencies maintained and operated high quality programs, living conditions in the nation’s most dilapidated public housing developments were deplorable and a complex layering of problems left these developments mired in the most destructive poverty. These problems included extreme racial and economic segregation and inadequate public services, particularly police, schools,

and sanitation.”⁵⁵ Although these factors contributed to the deterioration of many public housing projects during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, many of these trends can be attributed to larger trends of depopulation and the loss of business in large cities. Identifying these larger trends of depopulation and the loss of business and linking them to other conditions—schools, sanitation, racial segregation—would have been a significant contribution to understanding the promise and challenge of the HOPE VI program. Yet, both the Brookings Institution and Urban Institute reports missed that opportunity. These insights would have been extremely helpful for planned developments like North Sarah.

In addition to oversimplifying the factors that contribute to the downfall of past public housing developments, HOPE VI efficacy literature tends to measure success based on interactions between individuals of varying socio-economic levels rather than the improvement of the projects’ surrounding social and economic conditions. In “The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty through Mixed Income Development,” sociologists Mark Joseph, Robert Chaskin, and Henry Webber conduct an extensive literature review of theoretical pillars behind mixed-income development and then argue whether these pillars actually define success for HOPE VI mixed-income communities. Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber argue that while HOPE VI mixed-income developments focus on the interactions between residents of different socioeconomic statuses as a means of uplifting low-income residents out of poverty, these developments should really focus on addressing the social and structural issues surrounding the development. Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber highlight that when the concept of mixed-income development emerged during the 1990s, urban policy makers and government officials believed that mixed-income communities would improve the quality of life for urban residents by teaching them more “productive” social and economic behaviors, as well as providing them with new housing.⁵⁶ Although Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber do not hold this view themselves, they acknowledge that this view unfairly depicts low-income residents as impressionable individuals that are not prosperous because they lack moral character and proper examples for how to succeed economically. While this demeaning view may not shape current approaches to mixed-income development, it certainly played a prominent role in the initial conception of mixed-income communities.

Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber argue that while the four theoretical pillars for mixed-income communities place an emphasis on interaction between high-income and low-income residents as a means of creating social change, the provision of supportive services ultimately determines the success of mixed-income communities. The first pillar assumes that interaction between low-income residents and higher-income residents will introduce low-income residents to social networks that will provide access to information,

resources, and employment. The second pillar is a social control argument, which assumes that the higher presence of moderate- and high-income residents will lead to more socially productive behaviors among low-income residents.⁵⁷ The third pillar, behavior, posits that the presence of higher-income residents will lead to the diffusion of behavior to low-income residents, therefore creating behavioral changes that will lead to more productive behaviors. The fourth pillar, political economy of place, asserts that the presence of higher-income residents will lead to increased public services and economic activity in mixed-income communities.⁵⁸ Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber argue that affordable housing developments should attempt to address these structural issues and that success depends on the provision of social services rather than the facilitation of cross class interaction.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Although the North Sarah mixed-income development represents an earnest attempt from the St. Louis Housing Authority and McCormack Baron Salazar to improve the quality of life for low-income urban residents and catalyze the revitalization of weakened urban communities, the plan may not be able to overcome larger social and economic conditions in St. Louis. While the North Sarah CSS plan strives to address some of these social and economic conditions through connecting the residents of North Sarah with resources like job training, financial counseling, and supplementary youth educational programming, even these extensive resources may not overcome the lack of industry and infrastructure in downtown St. Louis. Providing quality affordable housing is just one part of improving quality of life for urban residents and encouraging reinvestment in downtown St. Louis. North Sarah and other HOPE VI projects operate as part of larger, citywide reforms and revitalization efforts. Without the simultaneous revitalization of St. Louis's downtown business district and city infrastructure, North Sarah's potential for success is limited. Although North Sarah and other HOPE VI projects address criticisms from housing analysts and scholars surrounding the failures of past public housing projects and policies, the success of HOPE VI communities ultimately hinges upon the economic landscape surrounding these newly constructed developments, and residents' abilities to take advantage of economic and social resources.

1 McCormack Baron Salazar, FY 2010 Application for Blumeyer (3501 Franklin) Executive Summary, St. Louis, Missouri, 2010, 1.
 2 Ibid.
 3 Chris King, "'Unprecedented' Inclusion on North Sarah," *St. Louis American*, June 30, 2011.
 4 Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 13.

5 Ibid., 14.
 6 Ibid., 13.
 7 Ibid., 9.
 8 Ibid., 14.
 9 Ibid., 15.
 10 Ibid., 22.
 11 Ibid.
 12 Ibid.
 13 Ibid., 96.
 14 Ibid., 97.
 15 Ibid., 10.
 16 Ibid., 22.
 17 William E. Winter, "Development Decision Making in St. Louis, Missouri: Institutions, Incentives, and Urban Development" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2006), 42.
 18 Ibid.
 19 Ibid.
 20 Ibid.
 21 Ibid.
 22 Ibid., 353.
 23 Ibid., 46.
 24 Ibid., 47.
 25 Ibid., 48.
 26 Ibid.
 27 Ibid.
 28 Ibid.
 29 Ibid.
 30 Ibid., 253. On federal housing policies see: Gail Radford, *Modern Housing For America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Failure: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
 31 Valerie Piper and Mindy Turbov, "HOPE VI and Mixed Finance Redevelopments: A Catalyst for Neighborhood Renewal" (Policy Evaluation, Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2005), 4.
 32 Ibid.
 33 Ibid., 8.
 34 McCormack Baron Salazar, FY 2010 Application.
 35 Ibid.,
 36 St. Louis Housing Authority, HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services Plan (St. Louis, Missouri, 2011).
 37 Ibid.
 38 McCormack Baron Salazar, FY 2010 Application.
 39 Ibid.
 40 Ibid.
 41 St. Louis Housing Authority, HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services Plan, 9.
 42 Ibid., 9.
 43 Ibid., 11.

- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid., 10.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., 11.
- 49 Ibid., 10.
- 50 Ibid., 11.
- 51 FOCUS St. Louis, "Affordable Housing For the Region's Workforce" (St. Louis, Missouri, 2005): 3.
- 52 Ibid., 4.
- 53 Piper and Turbov, "HOPE VI and Mixed Finance Redevelopments," 10.
- 54 Ibid., 18.
- 55 Susan J. Popkin, Bruce Katz, Mary Cunningham, Karen D. Brown, Jeremy Gustafson, and Margery Turner, "A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges" (Policy Evaluation, Urban Institute, 2004): 7.
- 56 M.L. Joseph, R.J. Chaskin, and H. Webber, "The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty through Mixed-Income Development," *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 3 (2007): 373.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., 395.

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“Oil Made Pickaninny Rich”: Sarah Rector and the Social Construction of Race

Liz Jordan

Abstract: : On January 15th, 1914, the Kansas City Star published an article entitled “Oil Made Pickaninny Rich.” Shortly after that article, the Oklahoman published an article entitled “Indian Girl Profits By Scarcity of Cushing Oil.” Despite the difference in racial description, both of these articles detail the life of one person: a child of former slaves in the Creek Nation named Sarah Rector. Rector was one of many so-called Creek Freedmen who received an allotment of oil-rich land as a result of emancipation and The Dawes Act of 1887. Her wealth led to a widespread interest in her racial identity; her personhood was claimed and exoticized in order to advance the competing goals of particular demographics. In particular, African Americans, American whites, and Native Americans discussed Sarah in various newspapers, each one assigning her a different race. In this article, I analyze the racial terms used to describe Sarah in newspaper articles and archival data from 1907–1922. I argue that the interest in and misappropriation of Sarah’s racial identity furthers the idea that race is not only strategically constructed, but also historically fashioned and geographically dependent.

Introduction: Land and Identity

In the book *Red Earth: Race and Agriculture in Oklahoma Territory*, historian Bonnie Lynn-Sherow examines how the changes in racial relations in the Creek Tribe and changing patterns of land ownership and use in the tribe coincided between the years of 1887 and 1915. She posits that this relationship was one of causation rather than simply correlation, arguing that these changes in land ownership occasioned by the government-enforced privatization of formerly communal land¹ transformed both the use of land in the Indian Territory² as well as the racial frameworks in the region. According to Lynn-Sherow, “the [Native American] Indian and African American peoples who lived and worked in the territory were systematically displaced”³ by allotment. It hindered their traditionally fluid social mobility in favor of a more rigid hierarchy. Lynn-Sherow introduces the linkage of changes in land ownership and use with racial and ethnic identity, demonstrating the intricately intertwined nature of the two, and arguing that race and land ownership mutually influenced each other during the early part of the twentieth century. While Lynn-Sherow’s analytic framework is useful, she simplifies the connection among land, identity, and prosperity, presenting a unilinear trajectory in which Oklahoma lost its ethnic diversity as it became more developed agriculturally. In other words, an *increase* in land ownership could have only led to a *decrease* in racial diversity and identity.

The case of Sarah Rector, a child of former African-descendant slaves in the Creek Tribe, complicates this intersection of race, land, and status. The discovery of oil lying beneath Sarah’s government-allotted land turned her from a poor child of former slaves to a wealthy oil tycoon. This transformation in wealth placed her at the center of a key racial debate of the time, revolving around the assumed lev-

els of competency and intelligence that were being ascribed to the emerging and codifying racial categories in the U.S.

In this article I examine Sarah’s role in this racial debate, exhibiting the contradictory ways in which she was described and arguing that race is strategically employed in situations of need or benefit. I examine newspaper articles between the years of 1887 and 1923, specifically focusing on the ways in which Sarah was racially described. I consider the authorship of the newspapers at hand, as well as the historical moment and the other (non-racial) ways she was described in order to illustrate the trends of racial ascription and stereotype evocation.

Depending on the specific historical moment and newspaper, Sarah’s race was described in various and often-conflicting ways. For instance, black newspapers were explicit in their goal of clarifying that she was a “member of the [black] race,” while white newspapers ascribed a racial category meant to invoke already present racial stereotypes and assumptions, depending on the subject matter of the article. In most cases, she was described as an “Indian” when she was depicted as being money-hungry and infantile. Similarly, she was described as “black” (or some derivative thereof) when she was portrayed as ignorant and feeble. The racial descriptions of Sarah and the newspaper articles from which they stem argued against and reinforced the already existent racial stereotypes, hierarchies, and projects (e.g., “racial uplift”) in early 20th-century America.

Sarah’s wealth and eventual prominence made her a marvel, and we can understand her identity as an instrument in the emerging racial codification of ideologically loaded categories in the U.S. The motivations behind the constantly shifting racial ascription given to her lay within one of the major forces behind the social construction of race according to Critical Race theorists: privilege.⁴ Her

wealth privileged her in a way with which ordinary African Americans, Creeks, and even whites at the time were not familiar. In this way, her wealth allowed her to transcend traditional notions and stereotypes concerning race and economic status. Through the media representations of her, I argue that Sarah became a pawn in the battle between whites who subscribed to contemporaneous stereotypes of feeble and ignorant blacks, and blacks who felt her very existence aided in their quest for racial uplifting. Despite the unlikelihood that she exclusively identified with any of the characteristics that the newspapers placed on her, her case is a rich addition to the discussion on the politics of racial identity in the United States, as it illustrates the strategic nature of race.

Unfortunately, this research is limited in many of the ways that make it necessary. Its limitations include the dearth of primary data authored by Creek Freedmen themselves in general, and Sarah Rector, specifically. I have been able to find enough outside contemporaneous sources to fill in the gap as much as possible. The evidence that I cite suggests that, despite the numerous and contradictory racial categorizations of Sarah, race was historically a fluid idea among the Creek Tribe; thus it is unlikely that Rector identified exclusively with any one racial category. The fact that there is not much scholarship on the Creek Freedmen adds to my research's necessity. Furthermore, this study has the potential to add to the growing field of race theory. I have encountered many sources pertaining to how race is socially constructed, but there has been very little discussions on why particular races are assigned in moments of fluidity. This case study illustrates that phenomenon, while still adding to the currently-lacking historical dossier of Creek Freedmen.

Creek Freedmen History & Identity: From Tribal Affiliation to Race

Prior to the Dawes Act of 1887, identity in Indian Territory was not primarily based on racial affiliation, but rather based on spatial relations and shared language. In this sense, tribal affiliation was much more prominent and valued than Euro-American conceptions of race. Still, society among the Creeks was not completely egalitarian. Class differences existed among slave owning, non-slave owning, and enslaved Creeks, and these categories transcended racial boundaries. In this system, individuals could move up and down the status hierarchy, depending on their life narrative and eventual economic status. As a result of this alternative social structure, phenotypic similarity was not necessarily valued. In other words, the black Creeks⁵ did not identify with other black persons from different tribes and locales. An understanding of this social structure and the history surrounding it is necessary in the discussion of Sarah Rector, as it allows us to appreciate how the attempt

to place her into a racial category became a complicated and contentious undertaking.

Sarah was a Creek Freedman, meaning she was a descendant of African slaves that were once held by the Creek Tribe. The Creeks entered the slave trade as a result of the close interactions between the Creeks and the slave-owning whites in the Southern United States during the late 18th and early 19th century. Seeking to assimilate Native Americans into antebellum culture, slave-owning whites and federal officials encouraged their entry into this trade through formal and informal methods. The cultures of various tribes differed, but the Creeks tended to be slightly more egalitarian than their white and Native counterparts. A somewhat cohesive community was formed in and after this time of slavery, in which blacks and Natives intermarried, lived together, and worked the land together. Former slave John Harrison supported this claim in the anthology *Black Indian Slave Narratives*, where he stated, "Before the war, the people as a whole were living very comfortably and satisfied." He went on to describe the fluidity of racial interactions in the Creek tribe, prior to the war, claiming that "Creek Indians had intermarried with the white and coloreds, and they became citizens of the tribe."⁶ While still problematic, slavery amongst the Creeks was distinct and separate from its Southern counterpart in that a person's labor function (as a slave) did not define that person racially. It was more like a feudal system than any contemporary notion of American slavery: black slaves lived relatively autonomously in their own houses, despite their duty to provide a portion of their crops and/or profit to their "owner." Historian Gary Zellar, author of *African Creeks: Estelovste and the Creek Nation*, has called into question "whether the relationship could even be classified as slavery at all."⁷

Once slavery was abolished, all of the slave-holding Indian tribes were mandated to accept their slaves into their respective tribes as full citizens. This mandate applied to all of the Five Tribes of Oklahoma (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole), although there was a varying degree of adjustment necessary for each tribe, depending on their customs. For instance, the Seminole Tribe was relatively unrestricted, and had already accepted the slaves into their tribe for all intents and purposes. The Choctaws and Chickasaws were at the other end of the spectrum, having a slavery-style similar to that of white Southern plantations. The Creeks and Cherokees, however, were in the middle of this hypothetical spectrum, both allowing their slaves to ingest the dominant culture but still keeping them in an inferior position, if nothing else than by name. This cultural fusion continued and increased after slavery was abolished, with Freedmen participating in Creek civil society and politics, and continuing to gain acceptance and prominence in other areas.

By almost all accounts, black Creek slaves and eventual

Freedmen were culturally Creek. This cultural identity was especially evident amongst those Creek slaves that spent most or all of their lives in Indian Territory. These people lived in a relatively secluded and exclusive portion of the United States, free for the most part from white influence and that of other segments of African American culture. After taking a trip to Indian Territory, Booker T. Washington even noted the historical, economic, and cultural differences of the Freedmen in comparison to the rest of the country's African-descended population, stating that the blacks that had been settled for long periods of time in the Indian Territory had made unique and considerable progress.⁸ Unfortunately, there are very few sources available that detail the identity preferences of Creek Freedmen themselves in the early 19th century. What is available, however, suggests that the Freedmen conceptualized themselves ethnically more than they did racially. In other words, in the same way that Booker T. Washington did, the Freedmen identified themselves more heavily with the Creeks and other Creek Freedmen than with other blacks who were not Creek Freedmen.

In many of the narratives of former Creek slaves that were gathered by the Works Progress Administration, Freedmen referred to themselves as "Natives" and to other blacks as "state negroes." Mary Grayson, a former slave interviewed by the WPA, introduced this "native" term, explaining that she was "what we colored people call a 'native.'" She elaborated on what that term actually refers to, stating that she "didn't come into the Indian Territory from somewhere in the Old South, after the War, like so many Negroes did, but I was born here in the old Creek Nation, and my master was a Creek Indian."⁹ In these two quotes, she both includes and separates herself and her culture from the former slaves of the South, implying that, while she was a part of a larger "colored" group, there was something notable about being "native" to the land.

More conclusions about Creek Freedman identity can be drawn from Lucinda Davis, another Creek Freedman and former slave that was interviewed by the WPA. In her interview, Davis advanced the idea that Creek Freedmen were significantly culturally distinct, stating that she only knew two traditionally black American hymns. She used that statement to launch into a conversation about how she was unable to speak English for most of her life. She notes that she learned the song much later in her life as she "didn't know nothing but Creek talk long after de Civil War." She mentioned that her mistress could speak both Mvskoke and English, but she "never did talk [English] because none of de people talked it."^{10, 11}

These narratives provide modern scholars with a small opportunity to see how Creek Freedmen identified themselves, rather than only having access to the iden-

tity that was ascribed to them by others. The Freedmen acknowledged their undeniable linkage with the broader African American community, while still maintaining their separate and distinct Creek cultural influence. The acknowledgment of their African roots seemed to be an uncomfortable secondary identity; they only brought up their African American roots in an effort to show distance between "state Negroes" and themselves. They privileged their Creek identity over any racial one, as far as we can tell. This helps to explain the later confusion that came from outsiders attempting to ascribe an identity to them. In the dominant American culture of the time, such ethnic identification was non-existent; a person was solely White, Black, or Native, with no room for mixture or overlap. This dichotomized way of thinking is described in Critical Race Theorist Haney Lopéz's book *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* as "exclusivity." According to Lopéz, race is reasoned by the dominant American culture to be "physical—meaning innate, heritable, universal, and exclusive." He explains exclusivity as meaning "only one race is assigned,"¹² making the Freedmen a spectacle, due to their inability to fit easily into such stark categories. This is important in analyzing how various newspapers described Sarah Rector, as it allows us to better understand the reasoning behind the public interest and acceptance of such conflicting racial and ethnic descriptions.

A New Indian Territory: The Dawes & Curtis Acts

The Dawes Act was the first step in the absorption of the Creek Tribe into the national framework through the growth of state capitalism and privatization of land. As a result of the Dawes Act, the enforced racial categories used by non-Indian regions began to influence conceptions of Creek identity. Sarah Rector, as a result of this act, was symbolically removed from the confined Creek Territory and thrust into the wider social and racial structure in the wider United States.

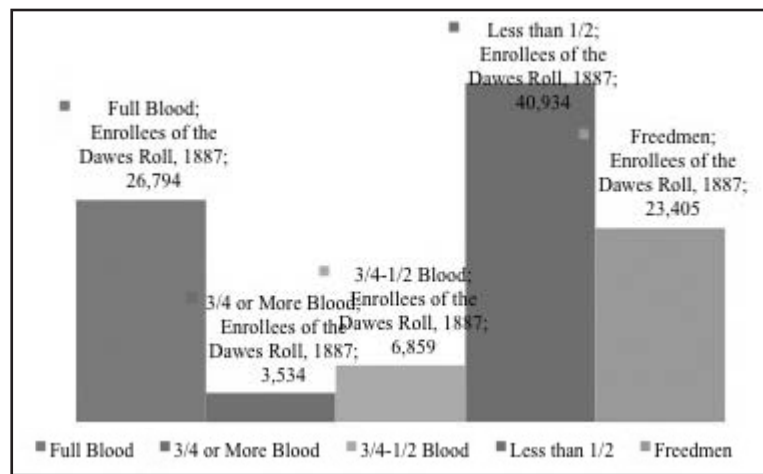
Sarah Rector's life story was forever changed with the implementation of the Dawes & Curtis Acts. These acts changed the way race and identity were thought of in the Creek Nation, transforming perceptions from the traditionally ethnically based system to a somewhat more rigid race-based hierarchy. Zellar claims, "With allotment and statehood [brought on by the Dawes], the tradition of Creek tolerance was eliminated."¹³ This view is reiterated by historian David Chang, who states that "the imposition of allotment, the political conflict it engendered, and the way it was executed encouraged a shift by many Creeks toward a racial conception of the Creek Nation."¹⁴ Furthermore, the Dawes Act set into motion many of the crucial events that eventually shaped Sarah's life, including land allotment and

the intricacies (such as white guardianship, mineral rights leasing, etc.) that followed, many of which Bonnie Lynn-Sherow illustrates in *Red Earth*.

The Dawes Act was passed in 1887 with the official goal of assimilating Native American tribes into the dominant American culture. It aimed to do so by changing the land ownership structure of most tribes from communal and public to private and individual. Initially excluding the Five Tribes in Indian Territory, the Dawes Act was amended in 1898 by the Curtis Act, which negated that exclusion and began the land allotment process for the Creeks. While the explicitly stated goal of the Dawes Act was assimilation, the more likely goal was to vacate large portions of Indian-owned land in order to make them available to white settlers. The Curtis Act had a more truthfully stated goal: according to historian Kent Carter, it aimed to provide “protection to the unfortunate whites who entered Indian Territory and had no voice in government, no schools, and no protections against criminals.”¹⁵ Carter also states that the Act intended to aid so called “common Indians,” who were reported as being exploited by their leaders and unable to access the communally held land. The Curtis Act had a devastating effect on the Five Tribes, as it effectively destroyed tribal courts and government and gave the Department of the Interior control over the various townships and communities in Indian Territory.

The Dawes and Curtis Acts (hereby collectively referred to as “The Dawes Act”) had a large effect on the Creek Tribe’s structure as well as the conceptions of power and identity within the tribe. Ranging from citizenship to concepts of wealth, the Dawes Act influenced many of the legal and moral issues that continue to plague the Creek Tribe and Freedmen today. In order to allot land to all of the tribe’s members, the Dawes Commission (the federal agency responsible for the creation and implementation of the act) created census-like rolls for each tribe, aptly called “Dawes Rolls.” These rolls were split up into rigid categories including “full-blood,” “3/4 to 1/2-blood,” “1/2 to 1/4-blood,” “less than 1/4-blood,” or “Freedmen.”¹⁶ In order to remain a citizen of the tribe, and eventually become a citizen of The United States, tribal people were mandated to participate in allotment and thus, pick a racial category. The constraints of this act pushed Creeks to acquire rigid racial identities that they had not considered previously. Granting land based on a consideration of how much Indian, white, and black ancestry a person possessed (“blood quantum,” as it is called), was more specific than the slavery system, as it inquired about the specific racial mix of each person.

David Chang lists the reasons that Creeks might have opposed the Dawes Act: poor Creeks would lose their



Enrollees of the Creek Dawes Roll by race. (Data from *African Creeks* by Gary Zellar. Graph made by Elizabeth Jordan.)

communal land; rich, former slave-owning Creeks would lose their large estates, and the Creek government would be dissolved in favor of the federal rule of the United States. While the Dawes Act was feared because of its ability to take power away from the Creeks, its ability to grant power to certain Creek individuals was just as threatening. Through the Dawes Act, many Creeks began profitable enterprises on their land, and became influential and wealthy. It was through these circumstances that some Freedmen found racial flexibility and an outlet from the new rigid racial ideology, although the flexibility was most often externally imposed rather than a result of self-expression (as was the case for Rector).

The Dawes Act was seemingly meant to elevate “mixed-blood” Creeks above others as a result of their easier access to farmable land. Creeks that were considered mixed-blood were only those mixed with white,¹⁷ making the motivations for this discrepancy in land ownership and economic elevation clear. In addition to the white-mixed Creeks that were already in the Creek Tribe, the Dawes Act attracted white statespeople as well.

With the Dawes Act came more white settlers—*grafters*, as they were sometimes called—who brought with them the hunger for money. They profited from the Dawes Act in several ways, the main one being the resell of land belonging to Freedmen or mixed-blood Creeks. The federal government deemed full-bloods incompetent and in need of protection, so their land was placed under a twenty-five year hold, during which time they could not sell or lease the land unless they proved themselves “competent.” Mixed-blood Creeks, typically having more access to schooling and Western ideals of intelligence, were automatically deemed competent and were able to sell and lease their land as they desired. Similarly, Freedmen were free to sell and lease their land as they wished, although that policy likely had less to do with competency and more to do with the

different government attitudes towards people deemed “Indian” versus those deemed “black.”¹⁸ In both of these cases, however, the gaps in the laws surrounding land ownership were exploited. The previously mentioned outside grafters would buy up large portions of land from Freedmen or mixed-bloods, as well as the surplus land that the government designated. In many cases, the grafters bought the land for a small fraction of what it was worth, capitalizing on the disinterest that many Creeks had towards private property and a capitalist economy.

These grafters were primarily interested in monetary gain by extracting value from the land that they purchased and/or stole. They set into motion what led to the discovering of one of the largest oil pools in the United States, Cushing Field, in 1912. Many Creeks received land with small portions of oil under it, but it seems that the large pools of oil were found under the land of Freedmen and full bloods. Freedmen were given land that was “rocky and hilly, having no ten acres slanting the same way,” and as being “virtually unfit for farming.”¹⁹ Unbeknownst to the Dawes Commission, however, much of this unfarmable land was some of the most valuable land in the United States. In an ironic twist, the Act that was meant to elevate the status of mixed-Creeks and settlers actually ended up having an opposite effect: it elevated the economic position of the Freedmen as a result of their often oil-rich allotments.

“Sarah Rector: Heiress to Millions”

Cushing Field was not the only oil-rich location that was situated under Creek lands. According to a lawsuit filed on behalf of the Creek Nation, “[in] 1906, 2,770 wells were drilled in Oklahoma, of which 2,266 or seventy-seven percent produced oil.” This trend continued on for the next several years, and eventually “four out of every five wells drilled within the ... Creek Nation produced oil.”²⁰ The presence of oil presents a unique factor in the consideration of Creek race relations and the Creek economy. As a provision of the Dawes Act, all enrolled Creek citizens, despite their age, were given allotments of land. This allowed the Freedmen to become some of the first land-owning former slaves in the nation. Many Freedmen used this land to begin profitable enterprises. Sarah, a ten-year-old Freedmen girl, received what turned out to be the most profitable land in the Creek tribal area.

Sarah Rector was enrolled on the Creek Freedmen Newborn rolls at 3 years of age.²¹ She, like all other Creek Freedmen children, received a plot of land that was meant for her to inhabit and farm on later in her life. At age ten, however, several oil fields were found under her land. Upon this discovery, Sarah’s life took on a series of dramatic turns. She began to receive mineral payments for her land, which ranged from \$15,000 a month, to \$1000 per day, or

\$30,000 per month.²² The State of Oklahoma decided that her Freedmen parents were not suited to manage her new-found wealth, so she was entrusted to a white guardian.

This white guardian, who was described by the *Chicago Defender* as a “real Southerner” who “didn’t believe in education for Colored boys or girls,” made Sarah live in a shack behind his house.²³ She was frequently described as wearing rags and going shoeless, while her guardian was finely clothed and living in a large house. With the help of the *Defender*, blacks nationwide pushed for a relocation of Sarah. They wanted her parents to receive education so that they could handle her guardianship, or they wanted the government to assign a black guardian to her. It was their opinion that she would be best in the hands of a fellow black person, regardless of any tribal affiliation or lack thereof. In 1914 these activists succeeded, and Sarah was sent to the Tuskegee Institute to live with Booker T. Washington. She went on to graduate from the Tuskegee Institute and to move with her family to Kansas City, where she became a homeowner and a wife. She never had any children, and little is known about the fate of her fortune after her death as an old woman.

Critical Analysis: Racializing Sarah

Sarah’s life was not very well documented after the early 1920s. She was described as being simultane-



Sarah Rector, “Sarah Rector: The Richest Colored Girl in the World,” *The Defenders Online*, <http://www.thedefendersonline.com/2009/02/18/sarah-rector-the-richest-colored-girl-in-the-world/>.

ously reclusive and extravagant, staying relatively under the radar while still entertaining the likes of Count Basie and Duke Ellington. In many ways, these contradictory accounts of Sarah’s adult life run parallel to those of her young life. The fact that Sarah never got the chance to tell her own story explains these contradictions. In telling her story for her, the public changed and edited facts as necessary to suit their needs and advance their own causes. The often-inconsistent accounts of Sarah’s racial and ethnic identity illustrate this self-interest and provide us with an interesting way with which to view the creation of race. In short, various news outlets described her race differently depending on what they had at stake. They made efforts either to claim her for their own or to

exoticize her and her wealth in order to maintain the static social and racial norms of the early 20th century.

Journalists and government officials fixated upon Sarah's life due to its uncommon circumstances. She was made into an exhibition, and the details of her life were covered in newspapers from Oklahoma to Washington DC. Authored by white Americans and non-Creek Freedmen blacks, these articles provide us with insight on how outsiders ascribed Sarah Rector's identity. When considering the motivations behind these differences in description, we are confronted with a telling exhibition of the true functions of race and relationships.

In my analysis of 18 articles, I found that three factors influenced the trends of Sarah's racial ascriptions. First, the internalized racial identity of the describer or describing group was critical, as it explained the point from which the racial ascription emerged. Secondly, the wealth of the described plays a big role. In Sarah's case, her wealth consistently made her an object of interest and thus contention among those that described her. Using López's terminology, it privileged her in ways that members of certain races were not supposed to be privileged. Finally, the temporal and spatial context was critical. Some publications changed their descriptions of Sarah over time as a result of changing racial ideology or occurrences in Sarah's own life as time went on. The *Oklahoman* newspaper's depictions differ significantly from other accounts in places where there were not as many Natives. There were more negative connotations attached to being "Indian" in the *Oklahoman*, given the significant presence of Natives in that part of the country. Furthermore, the *Oklahoman* produced the most contradictory accounts of Sarah's race, possibly due to its familiarity with the debate surrounding Sarah's belonging and the wealth in the region. These three factors motivated Sarah's racial ascriptions, and they exhibit the ways in which race is formed, and how it functions.

The most traditionally Anglo-American and seemingly unlikely newspaper to cover Sarah's story was the *Fort Wayne Daily News*. The *Fort Wayne Daily News*, which was circulated in Indiana, published an article entitled "Rector Pays Largest Income Tax in Oklahoma." The authors of this article described Sarah Rector as "as child of ten years and of mixed blood."²⁴ Failing to go into more detail about her so-called blood-mixture, the article went on to state that she was the descendent of a Creek Freedmen, seemingly adding that detail as some sort of elaboration of the previous mixed-blood claim. The descriptions in this article call into question whether outsiders understood the history and background of the Creek Freedmen as a whole. If they did know the background of the Creek Freedmen, the mixed-blood claim was done purposefully, to elicit a certain response to Sarah's wealth. Even without background

knowledge about the particulars of racial relations in Oklahoma amongst the Creeks, this mixed-blood assertion carries weight. In Klan-run Indiana, it is likely that the idea of a black child accruing so much wealth was unacceptable. Calling her mixed-blood, then, likely eased the shock and awe that she would have aroused had she been identified as of primarily African heritage.

Similar to the *Fort Wayne Daily News*, the *Atlanta Constitution* was separated from Rector in both space and culture, as a Confederate Army veteran in Georgia owned majority rights to the paper and influenced much of what it published at the time. The article on Rector, written on Sunday, September 14, 1913, was titled "Negro Girl's Big Income." While containing only three paragraphs, it set up a dichotomy between "negro" and "Freedmen." The first line of the article referred to Sarah as a "negro girl," while the second paragraph identified her as a "descendant of a Creek freedman."²⁵ These two descriptions were set up by the *Constitution* to be separate things, making it seem as though Sarah could not be both a Negro and Creek Freedmen. After mentioning that Sarah was the descendant of a Creek Freedmen, the article went on to suggest that she was oblivious to the details of her allotment and her land. The discussion of Sarah ends there, with the rest of the article focusing on the oil gusher itself. In a strategy similar to the one used by the *Fort Wayne Daily News*, the *Constitution* simultaneously grouped her with African Americans while distancing her from them, in an effort to compensate for her unusual and unprecedented wealth. They tried to both shock and calm their readers.

The *Oklahoman* was the most contradictory in its portrayal of Sarah. Founded in 1889, the *Oklahoman* was the largest newspaper circulated throughout the region in which Sarah lived. The *Oklahoman's* description of Sarah is particularly important to analyze, because of its regionalism and relative immersion in Creek culture as well as its constantly inconsistent descriptions. These descriptions show that the *Oklahoman* had a great deal at stake in terms of Sarah's racial identity and social prominence. As the largest newspaper in the region with a primarily white authorship, this newspaper more than likely wanted to maintain the racial status quo as much as possible. Sarah's life and wealth were antithesis to said status quo, which, I argue, was a motivating factor in the *Oklahoman's* constantly switching racial ascriptions. The newspaper used whatever tools it needed at any given moment to theoretically remove Sarah's personal agency and legitimacy in its writings.

In the first article of many published on Rector, "[Kell] Sued by Negro Girl for Royalties on Oil Wells on Riverbed Lease" (1913), the *Oklahoman* described Sarah as a "negro child," a "little negro girl," and a "dusky heiress."²⁶ This particular article not only racially linked her with blackness but also exoticized her (the term "dusky heiress" brings to mind

images of Orientalism and royalty) and infantilized her by repeatedly using age qualifiers. Still, no other conflicting race descriptions were made.

In another *Oklahoman* article, however, Sarah was described solely as an “Indian girl,” and in yet another she was described as black, Indian, and a nigger. These differences in descriptions call into question the continuity of the newspaper’s authorship over time, as well as the purposes behind each description. On May 5, 1918, she was referred to as an “Indian girl,” a “poor little Creek nigger,” and an “Indian minor.”²⁷ She was only referred to as a “Creek nigger” in sentences that attempted to show her incompetence. For instance, the article claimed “she is a poor little Creek nigger who is besieged and pestered and bothered with the care of a fortune which would well tax the ingenuity of an able financier to handle” and her guardians “drag the poor little, apparently friendless Creek nigger around almost by the nose.” These claims were meant to depict a feeble-minded, ignorant Sarah that had no control or business savvy. When she was described as “Indian,” some description of assertion or agency either directly followed or preceded it. For instance, the main point of the article in which she was described as Indian is to discuss how her father appeared before a judge in order to arrange her financial investments. Similarly, the ascription of “Indian” is accompanied in every instance by words denoting capital: “money,” “profit,” “these vast sums,” etc. These descriptions contributed to and drew upon the growing stereotype of rich and undeserving Indians, profiting off of an unfair advantage. Considering the contention at the time between white Oklahomans and indigenous and otherwise long-term residents of the region, this stereotype was particularly useful for those in power.

The *Washington Post*, a nationally distributed newspaper, took another route in describing Rector. In an article mainly focused on fellow Freedman child Danny Tucker, Sarah was described as “an orphan, crude, black, and uneducated, yet worth more than \$4,000,000.”²⁸ The article, titled “Negro Boy Gets \$190 a Day,” described Sarah’s life in fantastical ways. Claiming that her experience was “unparalleled except by Aladdin and Cinderella,” the article erroneously asserted that Sarah’s parents died early and she was forced to live a life of homelessness and desperation until her allotment. In actuality, Sarah’s father died in 1922 in Texas,²⁹ and her mother lived with her in Kansas City until her death several decades later.³⁰ The tragic version of Sarah’s life that was published by the *Post* could be the result of racist beliefs that even if blacks could acquire wealth, they could not retain it. The only explanation for Sarah’s extreme profits, then, was one of fantasy and fiction in their eyes.

Sarah eventually became not only a public interest, but also a potential government threat, as evidenced by an FBI-filed memo concerning Sarah’s wealth and land that has now been found in the Old German Files in the Oklahoma

Historical Society’s archives. The significance of the connection between the FBI, Germany, and Sarah, is unfortunately unknown, but the very existence of an FBI file detailing Sarah’s life and race is indicative of the level at which she was scrutinized. In the file, Sarah’s land and wealth were described amongst a host of other oil fortunes and investors. She was racially described as a “native Indian girl” in this particular memo, without any further description or discussion of her person. For reasons stated previously, the connection between profits and Indian background was becoming especially prominent in the public eye, so much so that the FBI more than likely found it easier to simply describe her as an Indian in order to conjure all of the preconceived connotations that came along with such an identity.

Defending The Race: The Chicago Defender and the Emerging Counterpublic

The most explicit example of a newspaper attempting to describe Sarah in ways that benefited their constituency or cause was the *Chicago Defender*. In the early 20th century, a nationwide black counterpublic began to emerge in response to the dominant newspaper’s hegemonic subject matter and authorship. The *Chicago Defender*, founded in 1905, contributed greatly to this counterpublic. The *Defender* acted more like a national black news source rather than the regional publication that its name might suggest. It was named the best-selling black newspaper in America during this time, with a large majority of its readers living in the black South.³¹ When the story broke about Sarah Rector’s oil wealth, the *Defender* immediately began to cover her as “one of the race.”³² Many of the articles featuring Sarah in the *Defender* had her racial identity as the forefront and main purpose of the article, which is a marked difference from the other sources that used her perceived race to either explain her wealth or conjure stereotypes, or ignore her race altogether.

One *Defender* article, entitled “Brown Skinned Girl Made White,” claims that whites in Oklahoma wanted to “enamel her, and others want to use skin success so that she might pass.”³³ The author goes further, suggesting “the politicians are so stirred up that they are making her white by passing a law to that effect.”³⁴ The law in question likely refers to an amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution, passed in 1907. This amendment read “the word or words, ‘colored’ or ‘colored race,’ ‘negro’ or ‘negro race,’... shall be construed to apply to all persons of African descent. The term ‘white race’ shall include all other persons.”³⁵ Supporting earlier claims that the general race-based consciousness of the time period consisted of a dichotomized “black” versus “white” idealization with no room for in-between, this amendment effectively made Native Americans white according to the law. Whether this would have applied to

Sarah (as she was technically a member of a Native American tribe) is unknown. The *Chicago Defender* was fearful, however, that it might. The newspaper therefore used its resources to ensure that the public knew what its writers believed to be Sarah's "true" identity. All of the remaining articles that the *Defender* published about Rector mention her race explicitly in the title, including "Richest Colored Girl Forced To Live in Shack," and "Sarah Rector is Not A Foreigner But an Afro-American."

An explanation for the *Defender's* attempted acquisition of Sarah's racial and cultural identity can be explained by looking back at Booker T. Washington's comments about his visit to Indian Territory. He stated:

I am inclined to believe that at the present time there is no place in this country where one can study the race problem to better advantage than in the Indian Territory and Oklahoma. Into this new country the colored people from the south came in considerable numbers...In certain parts of the Indian Territory, where they have been longer settled and have had special opportunities, I found the Negro people had made considerable progress in the line that I have indicated...on the whole, I came away from this southwestern country with the feeling that the Negro people in this region were making real and rapid progress and doing as well as any one could possibly expect of them.³⁶

Washington spoke not only to the general fascination with people that were native to Indian Territory, but also to the desire to make them an example with which to address "the race problem." In thinking about the *Defender's* appropriation of Sarah's identity through this framework, we see that the newspaper desired to use Sarah as an example. With so much at stake in the early 20th century, the black population of America needed success stories and heroes, and the *Chicago Defender* made Sarah out to be just that. She was introduced as a timely example of what the *Defender* saw as an age-old conflict: the advancement of blacks, hampered by the greed of the government and of whites. Once again, Sarah was forced to fit into a dichotomy that was unnatural for the population from which she came.

Conclusion

The government attempted in many ways to assimilate the Native American into the dominant American culture, while deeming blacks as incapable of integration and subsequently segregating them completely. In this sense, the differences in permissions among races is just an extension of the already present racial ideology: the government wanted to appear helpful towards Native Americans while continuing to subjugate and place people they considered black in a different category completely. The newspapers analyzed

in this article can be seen as an extension of that ideology. Journalists around the nation propagated racial terms in order to invoke racial stereotypes and either maintain notions of white supremacy (and conversely, black and Native incompetence), or contribute to the Black ideology of uplift.

The phenomenon that we see with Sarah Rector's racial identity is not unique. In *White By Law* Lopéz presented three prerequisite cases for his argument about race that are in many ways similar to Sarah's case. Still, Sarah opens up more diverse sources and gives us a unique lens through which to view the social construction of race and the general disregard for multiculturalism and ethnicity. Beyond the typical assertion that forces in power attempted to describe Sarah in ways that benefited their own racial and economic causes or constituencies, Sarah's case shows us that even disenfranchised groups mold race to fit their own needs. The preoccupation that the *Chicago Defender* had with her racial identity confirms this assertion, along with the narratives from the Creek Freedmen in which they distanced themselves from the broader African American culture. In both of these cases, the groups were aware of an economic and historic difference between them, and they attempted either to distance themselves from or to group themselves together with the other, depending on the benefit or loss associated with such an action.

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- 1 This process is known as "land allotment," as it was mandated by the Dawes Act of 1887.
 - 2 Located in the region that is now known as Oklahoma.
 - 3 Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, *Red Earth: Race and Agriculture in Oklahoma Territory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004): 145.
 - 4 Ian Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 158.
 - 5 Both free and enslaved.
 - 6 John Harrison as quoted in Patrick Mingos, ed., *Black Indian Slave Narratives* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2004): 84-99.
 - 7 Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelveste and the Creek Nation* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007): 34.
 - 8 "Booker T. Washington Comments on Trip Through Oklahoma," *Muskogee Democrat*, January 15, 1905, p. 5, col. 5.
 - 9 Mary Grayson, as quoted in Patrick Mingos, ed., *Black Indian Slave Narratives* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2004):100.
 - 10 Lucinda Davis, as quoted in Patrick Mingos, ed., *Black Indian Slave Narratives* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2004): 116.
 - 11 Davis' narrative has been extremely useful and widely circulated in the study and research of Creek Freedmen, due to the sheer amount of detail she provided. She went on to describe many cultural practices that she adhered to, citing food preparation techniques and religious practices that were distinctly Creek.

- 12 Lopéz, 161
- 13 Zellar, 258.
- 14 David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010): 76.
- 15 Kent Carter, *The Dawes Commission and the Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893-1914* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry.com, 1999): 34.
- 16 See graph, p. 69.
- 17 Creeks mixed with black were lumped into the Freedmen category, whether they were descendants of enslaved Creeks or not.
- 18 The government attempted in many ways to assimilate the Native American into the dominant American culture, while deeming blacks as incapable of integration and subsequently segregating them completely. In this sense, the differences in permissions between races is just an extension of the already present racial ideology: the government wanted to appear as helpful towards Native Americans, while placing blacks in a completely different category completely.
- 19 "The Negro and Oil," *Crisis Magazine*, September 1914, p. 229.
- 20 Indian Claims Commission 383, p. 407, 1977, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/icc/v39/icc39p383.pdf>.
- 21 Dawes Rolls, as accessed by okhistory.org.
- 22 "Sarah Rector is Not a Foreigner but an Afro-American," *Chicago Defender*, February 14, 1914.
- 23 "Richest Colored Girl Forced to Live in Shack," *Chicago Defender*, November 29, 1913.
- 24 "Rector Pays Largest Income Tax in Oklahoma," *Fort Wayne Daily News* (Fort Wayne, IN), November 8, 1913.
- 25 "Negro Girl's Big Income," *Constitution*, (Atlanta, GA), September 11, 1913.
- 26 "Kell Sued by Negro Girl For Royalties On Oil Wells on Riverbed Lease," *Oklahoman*, (Oklahoma City, OK), February 14, 1913.
- 27 "Indian Girl Profits By Scarcity of Cushing Oil," *Oklahoman*, (Oklahoma City, OK), May 5, 1918.
- 28 "Negro Boy Gets \$190 a Day," *Washington Post*, (Washington, DC) May 10, 1914.
- 29 Joseph Rector Death Certificate, as accessed in the archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society.
- 30 Kansas City, City Directory, 1922.
- 31 James R. Grossman, "Blowing the Trumpet: The *Chicago Defender* and Black Migration During World War I," *Illinois Historical Journal*, 1985, p. 84.
- 32 The *Chicago Defender*.
- 33 This quote refers to the potential chemical lightening of Sarah's skin, so that she might be able to hide her African features and live her life as a white woman.
- 34 "Brown Skinned Colored Girl Made White," *Chicago Defender*, November 15, 1913.
- 35 Constitution of the State of Oklahoma, 1907, sec. 2, art 23, and sec. 35, art.6, quoted in David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 161.
- 36 "Booker T. Washington Comments."

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To Buy or Not to Buy? Mutual Assistance Housing Cooperatives in Uruguay and the Challenges of Shifting Ideologies

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Abstract: *Uruguay's mutual assistance housing cooperative model is an intriguing example of a system that provides alternatives to Western notions of homeownership for working-class people, turning the tables on capitalist-inspired ideals of privatization and individualism in favor of solidarity and collective action instead. Though the cooperative system has survived and thrived for the past forty years, today it faces challenges associated with the change in ideology that has accompanied the modernization of urban cities in Latin America. The ideologies of resistance, solidarity, and cooperation that resonated so strongly with Uruguayans during the labor union movements of the '60s and '70s, and then later during the military dictatorship in the '80s, are harder for younger generations to relate to. Today's ideologies have shifted towards capitalism's consumer culture and individualism, posing a serious challenge to the sustainability of the housing cooperative system's emphasis on a historical, class-based ideological narrative. Nevertheless, the problem of housing remains for many working and lower-middle-class people who do not have the economic resources to enter into the private housing market. Given this reality, people continue to acknowledge, accept, and appreciate the alternative the cooperative system provides for them.*

Introduction

"The notion of the home is a definition which both defines and separates us." – statement by a FUCVAM administrator

The above quotation illuminates the importance of what the following paper will show is a divisive and complicated issue—housing. In capitalist societies, the home is not just four walls and a roof, but an indicator of socioeconomic class, affluence, and a sign of economic stability or lack thereof. While notions of the home are largely considered in terms of privately owned houses in the United States, this is not the predominant practice worldwide. In Latin America, for example, the norm is more likely to include renting an apartment or home instead of owning one. The variation in the kinds of home ownership or usage is largely tied to access—who can access what kind of home. As we see widening socioeconomic gaps and a reduction in individuals' purchasing power, the feasibility of homeownership is slowly being challenged. As countries like Brazil struggle with the lack of housing that has given rise to the infamous *favelas*, Alan Gilbert, author of *In Search of a Home: Rental and Shared Housing in Latin America*, poses the matter very clearly, declaring that, "Governments have let themselves believe in the myth of universal owner-occupation."¹

What then, are some alternatives to this capitalist model of home ownership that are both accessible and esteemed? Uruguay,² the small Latin American country above Argentina known largely for its quality beef and leather prod-

ucts, offers an intriguing example of an affordable housing model.

The mutual assistance housing cooperative model in Uruguay, begun in the 1960s, has built on existing Uruguayan culture and previous historical precedents to create a unique cooperative culture with specific ideals and values. The cooperatives are an example of a system that provides alternatives to capitalist ideals of homeownership for working-class people³ and that attempts to challenge ideals of individualism in favor of class solidarity and mutual cooperation. Born out of a working-class⁴ historical narrative, these ideals of solidarity and cooperation have long defined the cooperative system and were even used as a means of resisting economic reforms implemented by the military regime from the 1970s to '80s. Members of the cooperatives have always been considered *usuarios* (users) rather than owners of each individual unit in the cooperative building, and living units are never available for sale on the market—they will remain within the cooperative and will be available only to members and their families.⁵

Nevertheless, while older participants, including the Uruguayan Federation of Mutual Assistance Housing Cooperatives (FUCVAM), of the cooperative system continue to pledge a firm allegiance to this older ideological narrative, younger cooperative members are embracing a cultural shift in ideological beliefs. This shift in ideology is situated within the context of modernization processes and the adoption of free-market structures, both of which emphasize consumerist and individualist values. Despite

the cooperatives' historical success, one that is tied not just to social achievements but also to political gains, this paper posits that the question of ideological sustainability remains one of the cooperatives' biggest long-term challenges.

Through a narrative discussion of the history of the cooperatives and ethnographic research that I conducted in Montevideo,⁶ Uruguay (the capital), my aim is to comprehend and convey how the cooperative system and culture are being accepted and welcomed (or not) in an era where community bonds and sociopolitical solidarity have been greatly weakened. The current literature on mutual assistance housing cooperatives in Uruguay provides a thorough analysis of the system's structure and history, but offers a weaker critique of the system's ideological sustainability. I hope to add to the existing conversations on housing cooperatives by focusing on personal accounts of what life after entering a cooperative is like and the challenges involved in maintaining a cooperative culture.

My methodology includes analysis of secondary sources, as well as an ethnographic component focused around interviews conducted in Montevideo. The interviewees consist of several different groups somehow affiliated with or knowledgeable of the cooperative system, including members, administrators from FUCVAM, scholars, architects, and government officials. A standard questionnaire was used for the interviews, which were recorded on a digital tape-recorder and conducted in Spanish. These interviews have been translated into English for this paper, and names used throughout the paper are pseudonyms for the purposes of anonymity and protecting individuals' privacy. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, administered through Washington University's Human Research Protection Office, was obtained for all of the interviews in this project.

My literature review draws mainly from the fields of Geography (focusing on urban studies), Sociology, and Latin American Studies. Because a significant portion of the literature I read is in Spanish, my project also involves lengthy translation work of scholarly papers that have rarely, if ever, been cited in English research projects.

"The City as a Scene of Urban Struggles"⁷

As I rang the doorbell, waiting for someone to let me in, I took in the magnificence of what is a nineteenth-century mansion turned into a housing cooperative. The enormous oak door and tiled terrace are remnants of a lost architectural style, and yet they have been excellently preserved to serve the new tenants. The tenants, all single women and their children, were my first encounter with members of Uruguay's mutual assistance housing cooperative system, and are part of a cooperative group called MUJEFA (Heads of Household Women), an all-women's group composed of single heads-of-household mothers. An

example of a cooperative based on the concept of recycled homes, whereby abandoned buildings are transformed into multi-family housing cooperatives, MUJEFA is reviving life in an area of urban decay. The women are neither owners nor renters; rather, they are *users* whose homes derive their values from members' personal, manual labor investment, but never from the market.

The existence of the cooperative housing system in Uruguay, specifically in the capital city Montevideo, begs the question: why do Uruguayans need a cooperative system to obtain a home, when the market purportedly provides this social good already? In order to understand modern Uruguayan housing cooperatives, one must examine the historical precedent that prompted the demand for collective action within the housing sector.

As a country born largely out of European (mostly Spanish and Italian) immigrants, Uruguay has been characterized by a tradition of labor unions⁸ that involves members' strong self-association with the working class. This union affiliation explains the important role that class, workers' rights, and social organization continue to play, though to a lesser extent, in Uruguayan society and politics. The first cooperatives were in fact born out of labor unions, and soon the unions' ideals of solidarity, cooperation, and "brotherhood" were adopted as the cooperatives' ideologies as well.

Perhaps one of the greatest moments in the history of affordable housing in Uruguay came in the form of the National Housing Law 13.728 in 1968. The law, promoted by Senator Juan Pablo Terra, was passed in conjunction with the formation of the Housing Ministry, which would use funds administered by the Uruguayan Mortgage Bank. The law included in its writing, specifically in article 10, housing cooperatives as a housing alternative that would operate outside of the free market.⁹ This article was a truly historic moment: "that in a capitalist country there exists an entire article on collective property is totally unheard of in any other country," with the exception of Sweden.¹⁰ The law, which exists to this day, established a Housing Fund and provided a legal framework for housing cooperatives. Only two years later, in 1970, the Federation of Uruguayan Mutual Assistance Housing Cooperatives (FUCVAM) was created when the newly-formed cooperatives decided that they needed a more formal organization to promote their union history; today, one of FUCVAM's main purposes is to actively promote the mutual assistance housing cooperatives as a cultural alternative.¹¹ The organization would come to play an especially important role during the military regime in Uruguay, a time when affordable housing options would be drastically curtailed.

Economic Downturn and A Military Coup

Despite the booming post-war years, by the 1950s Uruguay had begun to experience an economic downturn that eventually became severe. During this economic downturn, the working class¹² experienced a significant decline in their standard of living. The economic stagnation led to low production in the construction industry (from 23,500 to 14,000 buildings), the displacement of 20,000 people, high unemployment rates, and the beginnings of squatter settlements called *cantegriles*.¹³ The downturn in the housing market was soon followed by the significant decline of the central district of Montevideo, and those with the financial means began to move to the areas outside of the city center.¹⁴ The tradition of strong residential stability that had been seen as so characteristic of Uruguayan society began to be tested as neighborhoods disintegrated, and for those who did not have the means to move, they found themselves in greater threat of precarious living conditions.

To add to these economic woes, in 1973 Uruguay experienced a political shock when a military coup overthrew the sitting president and effectively assumed control of the government for slightly over a decade.¹⁵ This military coup entirely altered the housing system by implementing economic policies inspired by economist Milton Friedman's Chicago school of economics. The deregulation enacted under the military regime, which sought to follow neoliberal economic policies, had disastrous consequences for affordable housing. In keeping with neoliberal practices, the Uruguayan government began a process of mass privatization, which included the housing sector. The Law of Landlords, passed under the military regime in 1974, outlawed all forms of rental control, thereby allowing landlords and private real estate companies to charge much higher prices.¹⁶ The market became the sole price regulator, and the private sector was given priority in urban development.

These policies proved to be destructive for the housing cooperative movement, as the dictatorship required all collective property to be re-sold to individuals. Eventually, the government stopped financing new cooperative groups altogether, and meanwhile the downtown district of Montevideo continued to fall apart and disintegrate.

"All That Is Solid Melts into Air"¹⁷

While the dictatorship and its implementation of extreme free-market policies (often referred to as neoliberalism) were certainly a huge factor in the degradation of urban housing, the government was not solely responsible for the changes occurring in the urban city. The ongoing process of modernization, which had started decades before in Europe and the United States, had taken hold in Latin America too, and with it came great changes for Latin America's cities and urban cultures.

The process of modernization in Latin America has often been referred to as "the unfinished European project."¹⁸ This modernization "is usually taken to denote the complex constellation of socioeconomic phenomena which originated in the context of Western development."¹⁹ These "phenomena" have been imported and copied in non-Western countries and have come to include industrialization, the onset of market capitalism, mass communications and transportation networks, and also urbanization. The fifties and sixties is when modernization truly began to take shape in Latin America and included a "consolidation of urban expansion." Later, the region attempted to emulate market capitalism, with a strong focus on export economies, so that by "the eighties... modernity identified the substitution of the State by the market as the constructive agent of hegemony."²⁰ The modernization process had replaced the powerful State or nation with the newly powerful capitalist market, so that all over Latin America this economic system would come to predominate.

With the onset of modernization, there began a decentralization of urban centers and a "*fragmentation* of communities and their conversion into audiences segmented by the market."²¹ This idea of fragmentation began as capitalism made socioeconomic divides among neighbors more openly visible. Marx and Engels reference the fragmentation and "ceaseless change" that resulted from modernity, and their famous statement (below) foreshadows the challenges that changing traditions, ideologies, and cultural practices would pose for societies:

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations... All fixed, fast-frozen relations... are swept away... All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.²²

As social cohesions began to disintegrate, individual aspirations and class mobility took on new significance within this modernizing era. Author Ben Singer explains, "Modernity commonly has been associated with the rise of the individual... This sea change in ideological conceptions of the individual set the stage for, and became intimately tied to, the rise of capitalism."²³ The market offered the chance for socioeconomic mobility, and people were, and continue to be, eager to take advantage of this opportunity. This opportunity, however, has come at the cost of weakening social networks as individual gain takes precedence over communal well-being.

Singer's reference to a change in ideology is especially significant to this paper, for it is this shift from the collective to the individual that has been one of the cooperative system's biggest setbacks. Whereas once people might have had a personal relationship with their local baker or shoemaker, to give just some examples, capitalism encouraged depersonal-

ized transactions, such that, “subjective, personal human ties and feelings no longer factored... into the process of acquiring material goods.” The shift was that, “capitalism separated the individual from the *specific* others, specific people with whom there were long-standing personal, human... relationships.”²⁴ In Uruguay, which is characteristically provincial in nature, this change was not experienced as profoundly as in Western countries, but nonetheless this social detachment has become problematic for the cooperatives. The cooperative system encourages individuals to work collectively in the production of a commodity (homes) and fosters communal bonds through this process, but the system is working against the increasingly hegemonic ideal of individualism.

Despite the setbacks posed by both the modernization of Uruguay’s urban capital and the market-oriented reforms of the dictatorship, there is still a great need in Uruguay for affordable housing. By the time the military regime was finally toppled in 1985, few anticipated the massive economic recession that hit Uruguay (faced with a soaring national deficit) and Argentina in the late ‘90s, followed by the banking crisis of 2002. Such political-economic factors gave momentum to the rapid rise of the housing cooperative system.



COVISAP 1, one of the oldest housing cooperatives in Montevideo. Picture courtesy of Mariana Oliver.

Structure of the Housing Cooperatives

This particular paper does not focus on the structure of the cooperative system, although there is extensive literature on the subject.²⁵ Below is a very brief outline of the workings of a mutual-assistance housing cooperative:

FUCVAM can be thought of as the head organization that oversees and directs most of the mutual assistance cooperatives in Uruguay. The process begins with recruiting and gathering a group of people who are in need of housing and who are interested in the collective experience of a cooperative system. There then follows a promotional

strategy (to advertise the cooperative group to others) and close work with members of FUCVAM and Technical Assistance Institutes (IATs), which are NGO’s that are made up of interdisciplinary teams of professionals whose jobs entail the technical assessments a cooperative requires.²⁶ Once a cooperative group has been formed, it applies for a loan from the government. This loan, if granted, has a very low, fixed interest rate and includes the costs of purchasing the territory, of materials, and of paying the hired overseers and architects and IATs. Each cooperative member puts down a certain amount as down payment, according to his/her income level, and is required to put in between eighteen and twenty-one hours of manual work per week. These hours count as a form of payment.

The entire process of developing a cooperative is demanding and long, taking anywhere from two to even seven years from start to when members are handed the keys to the apartment/condominium. The long process not only entails construction, but also the education of new members, since those who enter a cooperative are committing themselves to being much more than the caretakers of a home, but also active participants of a collective lifestyle. Due to the longer process, the cooperative system is not for those in immediate need of housing, and even for those who become cooperative members, the commitment is anything but easy. The following section will draw on experiences from three different cooperative members to outline the current problems facing the cooperative system.

“A Tale of Three Cooperatives”



A recycled cooperative in Montevideo -COVICIVI. Picture courtesy of Mariana Oliver.

MUJEFA

When presented with the idea of forming a cooperative, the women of MUJEFA agreed because the traditional norms of individual home ownership or rental were

too expensive to maintain. Today, they manage their own building in the downtown district of Montevideo, and each one was involved in the manual construction of what are today their homes.²⁷ Though defying traditional gender norms, these women accepted the less popular approach of mutual assistance because it was a viable alternative that provided them and their children safe and sustainable housing.

Ana²⁸ has been living in the MUJEFA cooperative since 1997, or now fourteen years. For someone who spent a large part of her life moving from place to place, this number shows a residential stability that would probably not have been possible without the cooperative option. Ana's story is one typical of many single, working-class women in Uruguay. For many years she was living in precarious housing conditions, moving from place to place because money for rent would run out, and all the while caring for two young children. Ana worked several jobs, mostly as a janitor or maid in various houses or offices, and could barely make ends meet. She sent her children to a city-run nursery during the day, but reflects that she missed out on her children's youth because she spent her day working and then came home exhausted. Ana says that, by the time the city Municipality presented her the offer of a housing cooperative, she was about to get turned out from the boarding house room she was renting downtown, and she is convinced that sooner or later she would have ended up on the street.²⁹

Fourteen years later, Ana is forty-five years old and has her own home and a stable job as a cleaning woman for an office downtown. She proudly shows off her home to me, pointing out the very stair rails and windows that she herself learned to install; she painted the house, helped lay the bricks, and learned countless new skills. Ana concedes that "the value of my home comes from my hard, personal work, not from the value the market assigns to it."³⁰ Other positive aspects, as Ana sees it, include that everyone works together to obtain a dignified house with equal conditions.

Most importantly, Ana explains that she was finally able to enjoy, *gozar*, as they say in Spanish, her son's childhood. This is an experience she laments she was never able to have with her eldest children, due to the fact that before she was working three or more different jobs just to make ends meet, giving her little free time to actually spend time with her children. The payment system of the cooperative, which allowed her to put down a small, affordable loan and then pay off the rest in small increments over a long period of time, has afforded Ana the benefit of working one job where most of her salary does not go towards rent. Instead, she has been able to save money and enjoy time with her youngest son; these benefits would not have been possible without a stable housing situation, which the cooperative was able to provide for her.

COVIREUS

COVIREUS, begun in 1998, is one of the largest cooperatives in Uruguay. When I visited in February of 2011, the cooperative was still under construction, and though it was summer vacation there were still plenty of people working on the construction site. A book is used to keep strict tab of everyone's work hours, and the level of organization is quite impressive. Perhaps the most striking part about COVIREUS is its location: located just blocks from the ocean, it is situated in the Barrio Sur neighborhood. This neighborhood has a fascinating history, as it used to be occupied primarily by Afro-Uruguayans and became the famous site of Carnaval festivities.

Carlos³¹ is the *capataz*, or overseer, of the entire COVIREUS construction project. With the background noise of machines and hammers, Carlos briefly recounted his life narrative and how he got to be overseer. He is 39 years old, divorced, and has been working with construction companies for most of his life. As is characteristic of the very informal Uruguayan culture, Carlos got involved with the cooperative system through word-of-mouth—a friend mentioned the project to him, he became interested, and in 1998 he landed himself a job. When I spoke to Carlos in June of 2011, it had been three years and one month since he began working as overseer.

As Carlos recounted the history of COVIREUS, it was clear that the process had been long and complicated. The territory on which COVIREUS is being built is just two blocks away from FUCVAM's headquarters, and very centrally located. After lengthy negotiations to acquire this territory, FUCVAM administrators needed to form a cooperative group, so they set about talking to several workers' unions. Eventually, a group was formed out of workers from the gas union, a teachers' union, and from the UNRA metallurgy union. These three groups, together with a group of ten to twelve cooperative families living nearby, came to form the COVIREUS cooperative group. From 1998, it took seven to eight years alone to get the project approved, figure out the loan,³² purchase the land, etc., and they are currently into their fourth year of construction, about two years longer than the ideal time frame for cooperatives.

From the one hundred and eighty-two families who originally started out with the COVIREUS project, Carlos estimates that only about eighty or ninety will actually end up moving into the cooperative by the time it is finished. He admits that the entire process has been much too long and trying, and eventually people leave because they get tired, or because they cannot put in all of the work hours, or because the costs of construction get too high. COVIREUS has been constructed in two phases, and Carlos hopes that by July they will be able to finish and turn over

one hundred and thirty-eight living units to families.

When describing his job as overseer, Carlos admits that working with people who have no previous construction experience is surprisingly not hard, just more complex. The members require guidance and teaching, which often comes in the form of workshops where they learn all the necessary skills they will need. There are different areas of work, such as the making of plaster, which the cooperative people make themselves rather than buying it. Carlos proudly boasts that today, there are no hired personnel who would do this kind of job for you. While some of the materials, such as cement, bricks, and iron, are purchased, the members of COVIREUS have made all of the stair rails, balconies, and countless other materials out of their own hard labor.

Another man I spoke to, Miguel,³³ is a 49-year-old taxi



COVIREUS cooperative, currently under construction.
Picture courtesy of Mariana Oliver.

driver who self-classifies as a socialist and has been living in the cooperative system since he was nineteen years old. Even though labor unions since the '80s have lost much of their power, there are still many adults such as Miguel who belong to a labor union and take pride in their worker background. He admits that, when he first joined the cooperative system, it was purely out of necessity, as he was a young man with little money but in need of housing accommodation. Slowly, he began to learn about the system and the fact that it was not just about the roof above your head, but that it was also about a way of life. Today, he proudly tells me, "I believe in the cooperative system," and he is one of the members of the COVIREUS cooperative project who will move into one of the living units upon completion.³⁴ Miguel recounts how he learned many skills throughout the construction process, including how to self-organize, but he stresses that his introduction to a certain ideology was key. The emphasis on solidarity helped him to see the virtues of mutual collaboration in contrast to the shortcomings of

capitalist individualism.

For the most part, Carlos says that the people involved in a cooperative project have a good attitude towards the many complications and setbacks that are bound to arise, but people do get tired. People have their own families, and four years of major labor investment is a long time during which you miss out on a large part of your family life. On the other hand, in the end the people who stay are those who are deeply committed to the cooperative and who truly desire to stay.³⁵ It is these people who will ideally maintain the cooperative in pristine condition and who will pledge to upkeep the values and culture of a cooperative life—they are the ones that new families who join the cooperative must look up to for inspiration and guidance on how to live collectively.

COVISAP 1

The final cooperative I will discuss is COVISAP 1, one of the oldest cooperatives still standing in Montevideo that dates back to the '70s. The man I interviewed, Luis,³⁶ is fifty-five years old and belongs to the leftist, militant generation that resisted the military dictatorship.

Luis spent a long time describing the impact the dictatorship had on the cooperative system, and how the government's efforts to repress this system actually served to strengthen it. Though most people who entered the cooperatives were of leftist-leanings, Luis explains that the majority did not actively participate in politics. This all changed with the onset of the military coup. The cooperative neighborhoods transformed into areas of covert resistance against the dictatorship. The cooperatives were allowed to keep having their weekly assemblies, though these were heavily monitored. For example, each cooperative group was required to send in a list of the names of all members who attended these meetings, as well as a copy of the agenda for each meeting, to the Ministry of the Interior of the armed forces. With a coy smile on his face, Luis admits that even this measure was not enough to stop the cooperatives from functioning.

From the manner in which Luis describes these incidents, it is clear that he has a very militant background and is proud of his part in resisting the neoliberal changes the military was trying to impose on the cooperative system. Nevertheless, he also readily acknowledges that this historic moment in Uruguay "was something that will never again be lived."³⁷ This kind of unity, which brought together entire sectors of society, is hard to replicate in times of democracy. Luis fears that there has been a significant change in mentality since he first got involved in the cooperative system. When he was younger, he and his fellow cooperative neighbors would do all of their grocery shopping together, but this no longer occurs. He admits, "I am

an orthodox. I can't stand deviations because I know that we start making small changes and end up minimizing the entire system."³⁸ Luis does not want to accept a shift in the ideological culture because he fears that this could jeopardize the basic pillars of the cooperative system.

The Challenges of the Cooperative System: Shifting Ideologies and Modern Desires

Without the context of using collective action as a political weapon against a repressive regime (as it was during the Uruguayan dictatorship), the appeal of collective culture today looks very different. Today's younger generations have known nothing but a democratic government, and furthermore live in a time where the labor unions have lost a lot of influence and power. As one person put it, FUCVAM is fighting "an ideological battle" now that the consumer model has taken hold of Uruguayan society.³⁹ As our society continues to embrace individualist cultural models, structures that enforce solidarity and mutual assistance—such as labor unions and even neighborhood groups—become outdated, and class-based associations no longer seem as relevant. While it is clear from Miguel's constant references to me as *la compañera*, or "the compatriot," that he maintains much of the rhetoric and ideology of the socialist and labor movement, this is not true for most who participate in the cooperatives today. Miguel admits that he thinks the cooperative system has been improving over time, but also acknowledges that there have been important shifts in people's values that affect the cooperative culture.

Despite offering mandatory workshops for cooperative members where they can learn the basics of organization and collective living, there is a discrepancy in FUCVAM's efforts to keep the cooperative culture alive versus the expectations of newer cooperative members. Miguel believes the system has been improving, but people's values have changed. He says:

... My generation ...we already had a strong tradition of political alliance based on unions. We were sons of workers, and the values were different. This is not so today. We are living under the trend of globalization, from which Uruguay cannot escape. We are a society of consumption, which leads us to have more and more materials that we do not necessarily need, but for which we have to work more in order to consume them – this requires a certain level of individualism.

As Miguel's discourse highlights, the values of his youth are not those of today's younger generations. Our globalized society, where consumption and accumulation of wealth are so strongly emphasized, does not cater to a culture that does

not promote the individual above all else. The American Dream of home ownership is no longer exclusively attributed to the United States, but is being copied in many countries, including Uruguay.

Miguel argues that the housing cooperatives continue to be attractive to people, but mostly just as a form of solving their individual housing needs. In fact, he believes that if there were an alternative housing offer outside of the cooperative system, many people would take it. The complexities of ownership notions are clear in Ana's own accounts of her feelings towards the cooperative: she values and appreciates it, but continues to idealize and fantasize about a kind of lifestyle that is not yet, and may never be, attainable for her. Despite all the praise Ana has for the cooperatives, perhaps the most surprising fact is that Ana admits she wishes another lifestyle for her children.⁴⁰ In other words, if given the opportunity, Ana wants her kids to leave the cooperative and acquire their own homes. Even Luis, who is a strong advocate and long-time member of the cooperative system, admits to this discrepancy in regards to his children. He explains that his children love having grown up in their cooperative, but would not live there as adults. Luis adds that:

For a child, growing up in a cooperative is beautiful, they will tell you that it is fantastic. But what has happened to many young people? ... we did not raise them properly... in other words, my children thought that every family had a garden, that everybody grew up with a soccer field by their house, or a communal space that could be used for everything, and this was just simply not the case. So this is where we fell short; there is much work to be done with the younger generations.⁴¹

Despite the more egalitarian nature of the cooperatives, the risk of taking comfort for granted still exists. It is easy for children to assume that the way problems are solved in the cooperatives, through dialogue and meetings, works the same way in other environments. Some argue that it is important for children of cooperative members to have a greater role in the construction of the cooperative so as to have a greater awareness of the long and hard process involved before acquiring a home; this is an issue that FUCVAM has been trying to resolve and address, but it is not easy.

Ana's desire for her children to live a different kind of life is perhaps largely due to her own complaints against the cooperative system. Ana spent a long time explaining how the biggest challenge of the cooperative system is the *convivencia*, or the coexistence. While the homes are being built, everyone is willing to work together because of the urgency of having a home. However, once people move in, that sense of solidarity is often overshadowed by the demands of a collective lifestyle. Of course, every family gets

their own living unit, but part of the cooperative system entails living in close proximity and actively engaging and building a community. This development comes through weekly cooperative meetings, and every decision, whether it is a family's petition to add on a room to their house or accept a new family into the cooperative, must be voted on and agreed upon by a three-fourths majority. Furthermore, every family still has an obligation to help with the up keeping of not only their own living unit, but of the entire cooperative building(s). The obligations of communal living have worn Ana down, and she admits that her kids are very aware of their mother's frustrations.

Luis's account of the cooperative movement during the dictatorship is telling of the generational divide that exists between those cooperative members who experienced the dictatorship and those who did not. He firmly believes that "Uruguay is living through a process of de-ideologization that is both significant and regrettable... anyone associates themselves with the Frente Amplio [the leftist party], and this process can be seen in the labor union movement as well."⁴² Today, it would seem that people are less and less keen to associate themselves with any one movement or party, except for perhaps capitalism: this system, at least for now, appears to run no risk of becoming universally unpopular. Luis admits that he no longer has the same energy he had when he was twenty-two, and he, like many others, feels very disillusioned with the democratic governments that have come and gone without making good on all of their promises. This demoralization, as Luis calls it, is perhaps an important factor contributing to the perceived apathy among many cooperative members today, so that the promise of the alternative lifestyle the cooperative system promotes is no longer enough to inspire people.

The ideological narrative of the cooperative system has long defined this housing model, but will it continue to do so? That is the question that seems to be most eminent as far as the sustainability of the model. Nobody is speaking of doing away with this housing alternative, at least so far, but it is clear that the culture within the cooperatives has already begun to change. Luis argues, "If there were no ideological force, no FUCAVM, we would be just housing cooperatives, and nothing more – we would not be the structural movement that we are today." Do the cooperatives run the risk, then, of becoming *just* a housing model that happens to prefer cooperativism? And would this be a bad thing?

Many of the older members, such as Luis and Miguel, would argue that a shift away from a political, class-conscious ideology to one that is more individualistic would be a catastrophic failure for the cooperative system. Others like Ana, however, might not be so concerned, so long as they can continue to live in and afford their homes. Though

Ana admits that there are many days when she gets very frustrated with the cooperative lifestyle, she insists that, "you have to find the positive in order to keep going."⁴³ Ana maintains that the cooperative system is the best solution to having a dignified house because the value you give your own house by actually building it has no monetary value. Ana may not have the same ideological allegiance as Luis, but she certainly understands what the cooperatives have done for her and her family, and she cannot bear to imagine where she would be without this alternative.

Conclusion

In the debate on affordable housing, an administrator from FUCVAM very accurately noted, "Governments come and go, but the necessity for a home continues, and every day more."⁴⁴ There is a reason why there are over twenty thousand families integrated into the cooperative system today in Uruguay, and were it not for this alternative, many of these families would be at risk of precarious living situations. Though everyone may not buy into the ideas of mutual assistance and collective action, the cooperative system offers an alternative as rising prices, privatization, and troubled housing markets worldwide make it harder and harder for middle class people to access housing.

The challenge comes in sustaining communal efforts and ideals of collective action among the newer generations of cooperative members. Just because people initially participate in collective movements does not necessarily mean that they will keep faith in these ideals in the long run or that they will continue to engage in acts of mutual assistance. Consumerism is one of the biggest challenges to collective living, and as someone from FUCVAM noted, "The cooperatives are not an island."⁴⁵ Consumerist culture has undoubtedly permeated through the walls of the cooperatives, and this makes transmitting and reproducing values such as mutual assistance and solidarity, especially to younger people, much harder.

As Miguel explained to me, he sees the cooperative system as playing an integral role in sustaining communal values in a world where market and global forces tend to emphasize individual needs and gain. As long as FUCVAM is willing to concede that people's motivations, but not needs, have changed, there is the very feasible option of adjusting the cooperative system without losing the essence of its message: that collective participation and action can function, and furthermore succeed, under a capitalist, individualist-driven society. The workshops that FUCVAM and other NGOs provide will become even more important for younger generations with little collective experience, and with the proper leadership, can be instrumental in helping members resolve any internal conflicts in the cooperatives. The culture of self-help and mutual assistance,

seen best in the construction process, will remain crucial to sustaining a system that runs on the will of individuals to accept the problem of housing as one that is collective rather than individual.

A sign of hope for the future of the Uruguayan housing cooperatives is that the model is being copied elsewhere in Latin America. Part of FUCVAM's goal is to export the housing cooperative model to other countries in Latin America. Already, several countries, such as Costa Rica and Brazil, are looking to the case of Uruguayan housing cooperatives as a model to be studied and implemented. Luis has been heavily involved in this exportation project, and through close collaboration with the Swedish Agency for International Development, he sees significant progress being made. Perhaps what is so appealing about the model that FUCVAM and people like Luis are pitching internationally is that, rather than promoting a one-size-fits all product, they pitch the cooperative model as a local solution for local problems, so that countries are free to adapt the system to best fit their own needs. If the Uruguayan housing cooperative model can be adapted abroad, then there is reason to believe that it can be adapted in its country of origin too.

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- 1 Alan Gilbert, *In Search of a Home: Rental and Shared Housing in Latin America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993).
 - 2 2008, UNICEF and <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2091.htm>: As a country of barely three million people, Uruguay is arguably one of the most homogenous countries in Latin America. Besides a small Afro-Uruguayan population (5.9%), most citizens are of European descent (93.2%). The countryside has remained largely undeveloped, and the sprawling pastures are used to feed Uruguay's livestock for beef, one its main exports. Along with being an unusually agnostic population for Latin America, Uruguayans enjoy a 98% literacy rate, a high life expectancy, and universal and compulsory suffrage beginning at the age of eighteen.
 - 3 David Harvey defines the working class as "producers who possess only their labor (skilled or otherwise) and must sell it on the open market if they and their families are to survive." See David. L. Harvey, *The Right to the City and The Practical Contradictions of Marxism*.
 - 4 Uruguay's demographics are important to note for the purposes of this paper. The country has a large urban middle class, with 1.6 million of Uruguay's 3 million people living in its capital, Montevideo. Uruguay does not face the same economic disparities that one finds in other larger countries in Latin America, such as Chile, Brazil, and even Argentina; most Uruguayans, when asked, would likely classify themselves as middle class. It is important to bear this self-classification in mind when, throughout this paper, I refer to someone as being "middle class."
 - 5 Jorgelina Loza, "Experiencias De Lucha Por La Vivienda En Ciudades Del Cono Sur: Los Casos De Las Cooperativas El Molino Y COVIESFE," VII Reunión De Antropología Del Mercosur, GT 43: Diálogos Latinoamericanos sobre Modos

y Experiencias de Vida de Sectores Populares (Buenos Aires, 2009), 1-15.

- 6 This paper focuses on the capital city of Montevideo because the majority of the population and cooperatives are located here—when I refer to "Uruguay" in this paper, I am referring to Montevideo specifically.
- 7 Quoted from anonymous interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, February 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 8 As historian Lauren Benton explains, until the 1950s, workers enjoyed many employment and social welfare benefits similar to those in Europe. Along with employment benefits, the state implemented rent-control legislation in favor of renters that made it almost impossible for landlords to evict tenants or raise rents, and the advent of public housing projects and low mortgage rates encouraged a large-scale movement of people into the urban center.
- 9 Jorge Di Paula, "La Federacion De Cooperativas De Ayuda Mutua Del Uruguay Como Movimiento Social" (Rep., 2006): 5.
- 10 Anonymous cooperative member, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, February 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 11 Ibid. 3-4
- 12 According to Uruguay Daily News.com, a Uruguayan worker's average salary (bearing in mind that the total population is 3.3 million people, 92% of whom are urban) is ~10,810 pesos (\$522.2/month). People working in domestic service make ~\$130.5/month, while construction workers make ~\$350.28/month. According to World Bank Statistics on Uruguay's GNI (Gross National Income), the average income for Uruguayans was \$13,890 for the year 2010.
- 13 Jorgelina Loza, "Experiencias Urbanas De Acción Colectiva: El Caso De MUJEFA En Uruguay," *XXVII Congreso De La Asociación Latinoamericana De Sociología. GT20: Sociedad Civil, Protestas y Movimientos Sociales* (Buenos Aires, 2009), 1-7.
- 14 Lauren A. Benton, "Reshaping the Urban Core: The Politics of Housing in Authoritarian Uruguay," *Latin American Research Review* 21, no. 2 (1986): 37.
- 15 Ibid., 45-46.
- 16 Benjamin Nahoum, comp., *Una Historia De Quince Mil Protagonistas: Las Cooperativas De Vivienda Par Ayuda Mutua Uruguayas*, eds. Gustavo Carrier and Nella Peniza, 2nded. (Montevideo: Intendencia Municipal De Montevideo, 2008), 30.
- 17 Passage from Marx and Engels: Ben Singer, "Meanings of Modernity," in *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 17-35.
- 18 Jesús Martín Barbero, "Modernity and Postmodernity in the Periphery," in *Latin America Writes Back: Postmodernity in the Periphery (An Interdisciplinary Perspective)*, ed. Emil Volek (New York: Routledge, 2002), 32-37.
- 19 Rita Felski, "Modernity and Feminism," in *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995): 12-13.
- 20 Barbero, "Modernity and Postmodernity," 34.
- 21 Ibid., 35.
- 22 Singer, "Meanings of Modernity," 29.

- 23 Ibid., 31.
- 24 Ibid., 32.
- 25 See Nahoum's *Una Historia De Quince Mil Protagonistas* for a full description of the housing cooperative structure and process.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Loza, "Experiencias Urbanas De Acción Colectiva," 5-6.
- 28 The name Ana is a pseudonym, as all interviews were conducted anonymously.
- 29 Anonymous member of MUJEFA, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, June 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 The name Carlos is a pseudonym, as all interviews were conducted anonymously.
- 32 The entire loan consists of money allocated for construction, purchase of territory, purchase of materials, and the paying of hired overseers, architects, and other personnel. Money is collected from all the cooperative families, each of whom puts down a certain amount that is dependant on their income, and the rest of the loan is later paid off in gradual increments.
- 33 The name Miguel is a pseudonym, as all interviews were conducted anonymously.
- 34 Anonymous COVIREUS member, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, June 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 The name Luis is a pseudonym, as all interviews were conducted anonymously.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Anonymous, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, February 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 40 Anonymous member of MUJEFA, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, June 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 41 Anonymous cooperative member, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, February 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Anonymous FUCVAM administrator, interview by Mariana Oliver, February 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 45 Anonymous FUCVAM administrator, interview by Mariana Oliver, tape recording, June 2011, Montevideo, Uruguay.

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Steven Barnes the Mythmaker: The Representation of the Black Hero in the Speculative Fiction Novels *Lion's Blood* and *Zulu Heart*

Marcia McIntosh

Abstract: *Writer Steven Barnes observed early in life the need for African American mythic heroes in American popular culture. To craft myths, Barnes uses what he considers “the mythology of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries”:* speculative fiction, an inclusive term for the literary genres of science fiction, fantasy, horror, erotica, utopian, dystopian, futuristic, and alternate history. Using an outline for myth called the Hero's Journey, Barnes accomplishes the task of creating myths of triumph for African Americans that communicate universal truths for all audiences. In his alternate history novels *Lion's Blood* (2002) and *Zulu Heart* (2003), Barnes develops a black hero with the potential to change perceptions of the black male in society. I argue that (1) Barnes reveals his idea of a black mythic hero by identifying differences between his protagonists and other dominant male characters and that (2) this presentation is made possible only by Barnes's clever use of a speculative setting to neutralize stereotypical perceptions.

It Begins with Myth

As an avid young reader and pop-culture consumer, writer Steven Barnes found that books and movies featuring African Americans were less ambitious than many others:

Most of the black films and books that have been popular or promoted as wonderful are about black people born into misery and getting to be OK... Every other ethnic group has a mythology that says they're connected directly to God and they are the center of the universe. Black Americans may be the only people in the world whose mythology was hammered into them by the dominant group in whose interest it was to keep them servile. We've been fighting for *equality*—and frankly that's a losing position. Everyone else wants to win.²

In other words, the narratives in which black characters are depicted should present not only survival but also victory over life's burdens. Barnes developed an early understanding of the power of myth in positive personal and social development and how a sense of triumph appeared to be missing from African American stories. This understanding is not isolated to Barnes. Psychotherapist and historian Clyde W. Ford similarly finds the African American story focusing on “the atrocities of racism and oppression” a mere fragment of a larger tale of transcendence that is not generally told in its entirety.³ Ford notes that *myth* in today's vernacular refers to “unwarranted falsifications rather than unceasing truths.” The problem with this *fabrication-based* definition, one rooted in ideas of falsehood, is that it undermines the underlying benefit of myths and their influence on their consumers: the transmission of universal truths. Myths, before faith in sci-

ence, were guides that helped listeners or readers know how to encounter and overcome life's difficulties. They communicated truth and knowledge of what to expect from existence and how to deal with it most effectively. Steven Barnes realized the need for myths in the African American community and embarked on the task of myth creation. Although they have received relatively little critical attention, the novels *Lion's Blood* (2002) and *Zulu Heart* (2003) present a socially beneficial character, Kai, who represents Barnes's idea of the black mythic hero and a path through which reconciliation and healing can empower positive perceptions of the African American male.

The literary medium in which Barnes found himself most inclined to invent, and the one he found most similar to traditional myths, was speculative fiction, an inclusive term for the modern genres of science fiction, fantasy, horror, erotica, utopian, dystopian, and alternate history. “Science fiction is a dream,” he contends, “a dream of dreaming, the mythology of the 19th, 20th, and now the 21st century. If I add my voice to that chorus, I get to help direct which way the vehicle goes.”⁴ In these particular myths, Barnes uses the “Hero's Journey,” a theoretical guideline that shapes and connects all myths, to stimulate an understanding of American slavery and curb some of its side effects; he then empowers African Americans with the creation of a black mythic hero. Neither of these goals is accomplished without the help of the other. An understanding of Barnes's vision of inverted slavery—in which white slaves serve black masters—is not possible without blacks being seen as superior members of society, and Barnes's black hero, Kai, cannot be developed and revealed without his white best friend, Aidan, standing in for the stereotypes that haunt the black image.

Myth for Barnes is a mouthpiece for what he has identified as universal truths. The inspiration for his concept of myth originates in the scholarship of anthropologist Joseph Campbell and his research on the relationship between world religions and myths, which has come to be known as “The Hero’s Journey.” Barnes’ accepts and adapts the Hero’s Journey into his own ten step formula: (1) The Hero is confronted with a challenge; (2) the Hero rejects the challenge; (3) the Hero accepts the challenge and takes responsibility for his actions; (4) the Hero journeys down the road of trials; (5) the Hero gathers skills and allies; (6) the Hero confronts evil and is defeated; (7) the Hero faces the Dark Night of the Soul, and realizes his incapacity to fulfill goals; (8) the Hero confronts the leap of faith—he must then turn to one of three saving forces: faith in self, faith in companions, or faith in a higher power; (9) the Hero confronts evil again and wins; (10) and the student becomes the teacher. Each step need not come in chronological order. Some steps may be repeated or skipped during a cycle. And a person or character can stand on different steps of separate journeys in different areas of his or her life.

The Hero’s Journey not only undergirds the life of Kai in Barnes’s novels, but also Barnes’s own path to Kai’s creation. Barnes moved beyond the known expectations of an African American male, and became a black speculative fiction writer. He took a leap of faith, and wrote *Lion’s Blood* and *Zulu Heart*. He confronted evil, stereotypical ideas of black men. And he won his challenge, becoming a writer and filling the need in literature for positive black mythic heroes. In what follows, I argue that Barnes reveals his idea of a black mythic hero by cleverly employing a speculative setting to neutralize stereotypical perceptions of the black male before identifying his mythic hero through differences from other dominant male characters. Barnes’s novels are crafted for consumption by a broad black and non-black audience. His literary myths both foster communication and understanding about slavery for non-black readers and empower African American readers through a role model’s positive self-development.

The Hero and the Challenge

While on his journey to create the myths, Barnes encountered several challenges that affected his path of creation. The first of these was the absence of a black male role model during his youth. Born in 1952 in California, Barnes was raised for the most part by his mother and older sister. His father, a musician, eventually divorced Barnes’s mother after frequently being away from home. The absence led Barnes to try and find male role models elsewhere, particularly in books. His love of reading soon developed into a love of writing and the desire to become a professional writer with the conscious goal to answer the

major question his father left unanswered: namely, how to become a black man. Barnes states his purpose for writing in a white-male dominated field this way: “I looked around and realized that young black men who often did not have fathers in their homes had nothing and no one to teach them how to deal with stress and prevail, succeed, kick butt, and win.”⁵ The knowledge that Barnes found lacking in the young black men he observed is most often found in the form of experience that is transferred through storytelling.

Barnes’s second challenge, though it may not directly affect the trajectory of his novels, is the relatively light critical attention he has received. This neglect certainly affects the dispersion of his work among readers. A veteran writer with over twenty years in the field, Barnes has still received less critical attention than other black speculative fiction writers.⁶ Moreover, academic criticism on black speculative fiction has, until recently, focused on black feminism and the homosexual male. In contrast, I plan not only to fill a gap in the critical literature on Barnes but also to spotlight an analysis of the positive black heterosexual hero in his novels.

The third significant challenge Barnes has faced is that of the society’s general anxiety or fear of black men. To begin to understand how Barnes attempts to bolster the positive perception of the black male hero in his fiction, we must first understand what ideas exist about the black male figure in literature and culture. These ideas, or stereotypes, can be thought of as negative perceptions of the black male figure prevalent in the world beyond the text.

Hero Confronts Evil and is Defeated: The Statue of Bilal

In the early pages of *Lion’s Blood*, the first of the two Barnes novels I will discuss, Aidan, an Irish twelve-year-old and one of two protagonists in the book, stares amazed at a gigantic statue of a black man, whose outstretched arms welcome him to his new home:

As they glided into harbor Aidan was finally able to see the man’s face, towering above them. It was strong, but not cruel. After a moment of superstitious awe, Aidan realized that this immense statue was the work of men, not some living being frozen by ice or magic. The unknown artisans had given the face a sublime nobility. The features were clearly those of a black man: thick lips, blunt nose, and hair like wool.⁷

Initially, Aidan is not sure of what he sees, of whether the being belongs to the world of men, animals, magic, or God. His thought runs from uncertainty to fear because of the figure’s size and Aidan’s inability to categorize him. But this fear is replaced with a sense of awe and admiration. The

transformation from fear to respect takes place between the beginning of the encounter and Aidan's finally sailing past the statue. And this transformation is similar to the reader's reaction to Barnes's hero after experiencing both his novels. The reader begins with an aversion to the black masters in Barnes's topsy-turvy world of white slaves and black owners, and then comes to understand, even admire them. The statue's placement in North America, but not the North America we know, makes possible Aidan's transformation from fear and suspicion of the statue to respect. Barnes's choice to write in the speculative fiction genre allows him to speculate on what America would have looked like if Africa had advanced faster than Europe. In this avant-garde America, American slavery has been inverted: white Europeans serve Africans and black Bilalists, or residents of Barnes's alternative North America.



Barnes's *Bilalistan*

The Statue of Bilal's symbolism moves beyond the process of transformation from negative illusions to positive perceptions of the black male. It additionally acts as a boundary between real-world perceptions and those of the alternative America Bilalistan. Isiah Lavender III, a science-fiction scholar, looks at *Lion's Blood* and *Zulu Heart* with a focus on meta-slavery, or the construction of slave narratives that use science or technology to relocate and observe the experience of bondage.⁸ Lavender argues that

Barnes consciously replaces our Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island with the statue of a majestic black man on an island in the Gulf of Mexico. When I think of the Statue of Liberty, I immediately think of freedom, its costs, and the spirit of Americans; it is a defining landmark of the United States. In contrast, when I think of a giant black man, I think of the racist paranoia that such a statue might project in our world. In Barnes's world, however, the black statue symbolizes the spirit and dreams of Bilalistan.⁹

This interpretation is compelling for several reasons. The first is Lavender's comparison of the Statue of Bilal, the imaginary statue described above, to the Statue of Liberty. Though one might compare the statue of Bilal to the Colossus of Rhodes, all three statues are in fact connected. The design of the Statue of Liberty was indeed based on that of the Colossus of Rhodes.¹⁰ Barnes, it can be assumed, thought of both because he describes the Statue of Bilal as a "Colossus" and probably enjoyed the irony, as Lavender notes, of having Aidan sail into the Harbor guarded by an embodiment of liberty to be sold as a slave.

Barnes's statue of Bilal was designed after a man who was one of the Prophet Mohammed's first followers. The historical figure Bilal told his followers on his deathbed to go westward to find the sun, or Islam, in a purer form than that which could be found in Africa at the time of his death.¹¹ The difference between Bilal's statue, the Statue of Liberty, and the Colossus of Rhodes is thus a matter of positioning. The Colossus faced outward from Rhodes. It was constructed to celebrate a victory Rhodes gained over Cyprus. It was, therefore, a figure representing a challenge to those who entered the city. The Statue of Liberty, which faces sideways, or at an angle, to Manhattan Island, welcomes those who come to enjoy her bounties in America. Bilal, however, faces west in the direction of the land he guards. His back is to Aidan as the boy's ship comes into the harbor. This direction might suggest an encouragement of westward movement, as he proclaims on his deathbed. But I see the Bilal Statue as a container, or border guard, for Barnes's alternative American setting, a visual representation of what is being kept out of the New America Barnes has created. In both novels, this container wards off religious impurity, strife, and colonial rule. From a literary critical perspective, Bilal guards against stereotypes that have shaped the perception of the black male in the popular imagination.

Dark Night of the Soul: Real World Stereotypes

"The conflict between Black and white men in contemporary American culture can be traced directly through history to the earliest days of chattel slavery."¹²

This conflict between black and white men, as African American studies professor Manning Marable observes, continues in the form of stereotypes in American culture and literature. Throughout the history of American letters, there have been noticeable limitations on what blackness or black characters represent in fictive texts. Barnes expands on the idea of black character limitation in his article "Can a Brother Get Some Love?" commenting that "When *Star Wars* came out, [speculative fiction] icon Samuel R. Delany wrote an essay [claiming] it was a wonderful movie, but wouldn't it have been nice if there had been a black character in there somewhere? He was re-

warded with a stack of hate mail from white readers. How dare he intrude on their fantasy—and their world? ‘When we see black people,’ they said, ‘it means trouble.’”¹³ The difficulty of race and its stereotypes often prevents speculative fiction, and its writers, no matter how well known, from separating themselves from real worldviews of race.

In much speculative fiction, the social “leftovers” of the presence of a black character have been dealt with by trying to erase race, or those who visually represent it. For example, some mainstream science fiction writers choose not to include race in their futuristic works on the grounds that their story takes place in a time that has transcended race. “Robert Scholes seems to have this concept in mind,” notes critic Sandra Govan, “when he remarks that science fiction as a form ‘has been a bit advanced in its treatment of race and race relations. Because of their orientation toward the future, science fiction writers frequently assumed that America’s major problem in this area—black/white relations—would improve or even wither away.’”¹⁴ If, as Scholes believed, no character needs to be described by specific exterior cues such as “skin color, hair type, and physiology”¹⁵ in the future, then presently these differences must mean something—a something the mainstream authors who make this argument do not want represented in their books. Award-winning black speculative novelist Octavia Butler mentions in an interview how this *something* disturbed an editor she knew: “He said that he didn’t think that blacks should be included in science fiction stories because they changed the character of the stories.... [Y]ou could use alien instead and get rid of all this messiness and all those people that we don’t want to deal with.”¹⁶ What this “messiness” is, exactly, can be traced back to slavery. This something includes ideas of hyper-sexuality, laziness, unintelligence, minstrelsy, and criminality, elements the mainstream speculative fiction writers and editor discussed above think would overshadow everything else in their stories.

Scholar of black masculinity Maurice O. Wallace names the “something” that the speculative fiction writers and editor did not want to include in their fiction through a simile from photography:

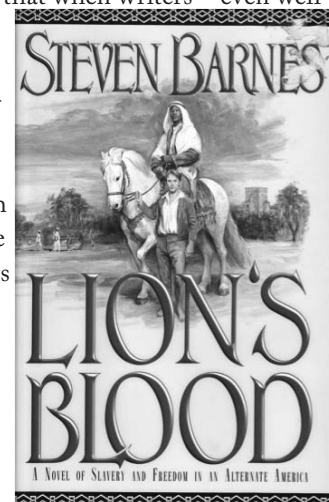
[Photographer Albert Watson’s 1994 New York Times Cover picture of the back of an African American man’s head]... is an ideograph for the American propensity to see black men half-blindly as a blank/black page onto which the identity theme of American whiteness, with its distinguishing terrors and longings, imprints itself, onto a photographic negative. Black men come to embody the inverse picture necessary for the positive self-portrait of white identity.¹⁷

In other words, society perceives the black figure as embodying the literal negative, or opposite, of all that is perceived as good in a white person. This process of perception is only

possible if the being on which the negative projections are made has no identity, or is a blank page, an invisible man or woman. And the only time a person is perceived as having no identity occurs when there is a relationship of anonymity between the projector and his screen, the black male. In order for the projection, the observer’s perception of the black male, to be believable, there can be no registered image, no identity, already displayed. Whether the screen, the black male, has any knowledge of the projector, his observer, is unknown, though Watson’s photograph suggests it is doubtful, with the black man’s face turned away from the gazes of his projectors.

While it is disturbing that this process takes place regularly when black males enter society, it is even more unfortunate when these negatives are accepted as realities by both the projectors and the projected upon. In his book *Constructing the Black Masculine* (2002), Wallace quotes James Baldwin, who reasons that “the American image of the [black man] lies also in the [black man’s] heart; and when he has surrendered to this image life has no other possible reality. Then he, like the white enemy with whom he will be locked one day in mortal struggle, has no means save this asserting his identity.”¹⁸ The black man is first wiped clean of his own identity and forced to wear a sign that speaks of a criminality to which he has no relationship. Then, if he believes the sign written on his chest, hands, and face, and starts acting in accordance with the perception, he will also lose his true being, the man he was before his identity was stripped from him. Baldwin’s analysis explains the acute danger of a projector accepting society’s projection of his identity.

The socially projected identity of black males is so engrained in American society that when writers—even well-known and respected black writers—attempt to disturb the perception, there is resistance. How, then, does an author combat these stereotypes? And what lies beneath them, the true identity of the black figure? These questions are Barnes’s central challenge. His answers are his myths.



Leap of Faith

In Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, the Dark Night of the Soul is directly followed by the Leap of Faith, which is embodied by Barnes’s creation of the alternate history novels *Lion’s Blood* and *Zulu Heart* and the representation

Lion’s Blood front cover

depicting Kai (on horseback) and Aidan (standing)

of what he believes are universal truths: the importance of self-worth, legacy, and a centered identity developed from the connection with a higher power. For Barnes, the dark night was confronting the stereotypes that plague the black male image. In order to escape this night, the hero must have faith in either himself, his companions, or a higher power. Barnes picked all three routes. Barnes demonstrates his hero Kai's faith in his companions by using another character, Aidan, to neutralize the stereotypes that challenge Barnes's presentation of Kai. The reader can see the "faith in himself" demonstrated in Barnes's undertaking of such a complex invention as an inverted American slavery and in Barnes's description of Kai's growing confidence in his identity as a black male and a hero. And the faith in a higher power stems directly from Kai's reaching enlightenment at the end of *Zulu Heart* with the aid of the voice of Allah. However, Kai's enlightenment could never have been possible without Barnes's use of a speculative plot and setting. Aidan's floating past the Statue of Bilal situates him as Kai's protector in the same way the Statue of Bilal keeps real-world stereotypes out of the world of Barnes's creations.

Faith in Companions

Barnes uses his unusual speculative fiction setting not only to divert attention from the stereotypes that would distract readers from his black hero but also to provide a shared experience between the African American experience and white America. These two benefits of the special setting are important because they allow Barnes to communicate how slavery can negatively affect the enslaved then avoid those side effects to reveal the unseen nature of his hero. Isiah Lavender explains the different importance of setting in realist fiction and in speculative fiction:

Mainstream as well as African American literature usually bases itself on character development and relationships between characters to reflect human reality as it occurs in the familiar world. But sf is as much about the environment, the constructed world, as it is about character. In truth, sf is more about the environment, the characters' relationship with the environment, and what these interactions can tell us about the possible futures and alternate pasts of humanity in the present.¹⁹

While the relationship between characters in these novels is still very important, Barnes uses the environment he creates and its effect on his characters to either deflect or attract stereotypes that are projected onto and incorrectly assumed as reality for African American men. Speculative fiction scholar Mark Jerng describes how another black writer, Samuel R. Delany, managed to overcome race by "redistribut[ing] the reader's attention to race by juxtaposing racial markers with other contingent features of the landscape."²⁰ In other

words, the words that would describe race are attributed to other objects in the scene rather than to characters. Barnes's course around stereotypes is similar to Delany's in that they both confront rather than try to ignore race, and pass off stereotypical ideas to other parts of the narrative. Barnes, however, uses the social situation of his setting, white slavery, to provide another character on which to focus the negative ideas that follow the formerly enslaved, such as hyper-sexuality, laziness, and social inferiority.

There are two protagonists in *Lion's Blood* and *Zulu Heart*: Kai, the black son of the rich Wakil Abu Ali, and Aidan, a white Irish slave looking for freedom for himself and his family. Barnes's decision to place these men in both books provides him with many opportunities to deflect stereotypes as well as chances to discuss issues relevant to African Americans. The beginning of *Lion's Blood* is told in the third person from Aidan's perspective. He and his family are enjoying their day on the crannog, or village, on the island Eire, Ireland, until they are attacked by Northernmen (Vikings). Aidan's father is killed. Aidan, his sister, and mother are forced aboard a ship to Africa before enduring a Middle Passage-like voyage to New Djibouti—or the southern United States. The first fifty pages of *Lion's Blood* are therefore told from the perspective of the character most affected by Barnes's reconception of slavery. This plot twist allows Barnes to provide his readers an experience of New Djibouti and its people from the beginning alongside Aidan. Barnes decision to choose Aidan over Kai as the first narrator in the story avoids a taboo in slave narratives suggested by the writers Nisi Shawl and Cynthia Ward in their craft manual *Writing the Other*. This taboo is not dealing directly with the characters who are most affected by slavery. Shaw and Ward explain that it is common for slave tales to "pivot[...] around the concerns central to those far removed from the unmarked state (say, slavery for example), but the plot is all about how the issue affects those in the unmarked state (say, American whites)."²¹ Although it is initially off-putting, Barnes' emphasis on Aidan as the prominent hero of *Lion's Blood* supports African American criticisms of white portrayals of slavery, and allows Barnes to introduce his new world, Bilalistan, through a guide who is also new to the land.

Aidan also provides Barnes with an outlet through which traditional prejudices can be explored and commented on. His position as a white slave deliberately draws readers who previously may not have been able to relate to the social position of the enslaved. In *Zulu Heart*, after Aidan has been freed with his family for fighting in the Shrine of Our Father's Battle, he establishes a homestead far north and hopes to begin his new life with dignity. But slavery's effects have not finished with the hero. He walks in the neighboring black town when a black woman accuses

Aidan of touching her and raises an alarm:

“You touched me!”

“? No!” he protested....

The man accompanying her snarled. “Are you calling her a liar?”

... Aidan seethed, but managed to bank the fires burning within him. He’d risked life and limb to be “free” and still had to lick his neighbor’s black ass?! Still, survival warred with ego and won. “I apologize for any offense. Please forgive.”²²

The apology is not accepted and the incident only worsens the already poor relations between the free whites and the local blacks. Through Aidan, Barnes represents how slavery unjustly colors the perception of the formerly enslaved, and how this perception can then turn violent, as the angry blacks, suspecting the whites of seducing their women, attack Aidan’s village.

By centrally locating Aidan first and in relationship to the slavery plot and its effects, Barnes frees Kai, the black hero, for new narrative exercises. Kai, the son of a wealthy landowner, is not concerned about food, money, or trying to free himself as he would be in a typical American slavery novel. He is not worried about offending those positioned above him, or protecting those he loves from the people who own them. Kai instead thinks about girls, his training as a warrior and estate managers, his reading, his friendships, and Islam. Essentially, he focuses on growing up and becoming a man like his role models. Because Kai is not stranded on thoughts of slavery and freedom—his interactions with these topics are exercises in justice when he helps to free Aidan, Aidan’s family, and many other slaves at the end of *Lion’s Blood*—Barnes allows himself to explore Kai’s development as a hero.

Faith in Self

While Aidan is busy dealing with plot conflicts involving his enslavement, Barnes develops Kai, his mythic hero, by defining his identity against other male characters and building Kai’s confidence and self-assurance. I use the term “mythic hero” because Barnes inserts what he believes are universal truths of identity in Kai’s development: the necessity of self-confidence and subsequent self-development. Barnes knew that the best way to make his black mythic hero develop confidence in his role as a hero and his own identity was to make him different from other men in the novels. Barnes has Kai recognize these differences, and though he initially bemoans them, he eventually learns how they can or have worked to his advantage. But what is first typically heroic about Kai is his underdog appearance (the youngest of two sons), his exceptional warrior skills, his wealth, his attraction to beautiful women, and

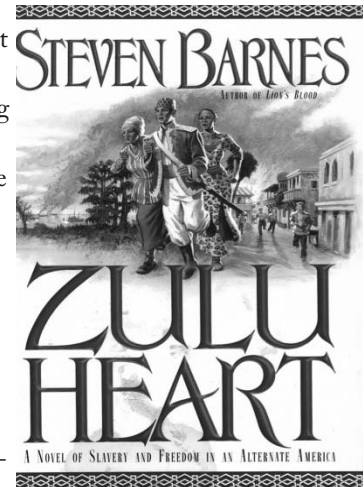
his righteous temper. These heroic qualities can be found in protagonists throughout world literature. Yet Barnes sets Kai off from the traditional hero by emphasizing his differences. Kai is more effeminate, more conflicted by the influence of dual role models, and has a more vital relationship with his religion as a Sufi Muslim than is usual among other Muslim characters. Barnes describes each of these differences in a manner that would suggest they adversely affect Kai’s progress towards becoming a mythic hero. By the end of *Zulu Heart*, however, we see that what was deemed a disadvantage is highly significant for the identity Kai attempts to discover.

Feminine Hero

Kai’s effeminacy in comparison to the hyper-masculine appearance of the traditional hero, the first of the differences, is a

tangible stand-in for what Barnes believes is the power and danger of appearance-based underestimation and an opportunity for Kai to learn self-appreciation. In *Zulu Heart*, Kai journeys to the city of Radama in his role as the new Wakil to discuss with the Senate the threatening wars in Bilalistan. Kai speaks against any military action because of his own experiences in battle and his desire to spare men’s lives. His words are pronounced “Woman’s talk,” and his anti-war stance brands him a coward in the minds of the other politicians.²³ Kai has the opportunity to defend his honor but refuses, on the grounds that pride should not be an impetus for violence.²⁴ His refusal leads directly to an assassin’s attack that takes place later that night. The would-be killers think Kai a coward and are surprised by his reaction, confident restraint, to their assault: “For just an instant !Ting was taken aback, as if Kai’s response had been different from that expected, both in words and posture.”²⁵ They are swiftly dispatched, the last of the two saying “We were wrong about you...You are not a coward. You are a devil.”²⁶ The trajectory of these two scenes, with the Senate meeting and the swiftly following attack, relate to each other because Kai is judged for his feminine or soft words and his refusal to act to protect his honor. Both traits seem unheroic, but then become valuable to Kai as he wards off future attacks. The assassins and their employers think twice before threatening Kai again because they made the mistake of underestimating him once before.

Some paragraphs after the attack, Kai storms into a



Zulu Heart front cover, Kai and his two wives, (on left) and (on right)

brothel with the head of one of his would-be assassins in a bag, and with the aim of finding the dead man's commissioner. Barnes writes from the perspective of the brothel keeper, Joi: "The man was younger than Joi had initially thought: perhaps twenty-two or -three. Clean-shaven and slender, Joi might almost have thought him effeminate. At this moment, gazing into the fire blazing in those brown eyes, the invader seemed both more and less than human."²⁷ Kai's appearance, his youthful, beardless face and his small build, suggest his femininity—or, in the vocabulary of combat, his weakness. This scene ironically appears just after Kai has easily slaughtered two assassins. The reader is then aware of the brothel keeper's inaccurate assessment. Joi becomes conscious of his possible underestimation when he sees Kai's eyes. Barnes appears to comment on how focusing on the superficial or seeing from afar without intimate knowledge of the subject can lead to gross misunderstandings. Though Kai is young, slender, beardless, and effeminate; though he does not fit the bill of the generic, tall, thick-muscled, and overly-hairy man; and though he is not what is usually expected when one thinks of a hero, he is not disqualified from being a competent, even spectacularly violent, heroic warrior.

In the scenes above, the audience observes how misreading visual cues, stereotyping, can be a benefit for the underestimated person who can then exceed those set expectations. This next example demonstrates Kai's realization of these underestimations and how he must value himself beyond society's perception of him. Later in *Zulu Heart*, Kai arrives at Aidan's new homestead in the north after the two have been separated for some time:

He and Aidan circled each other, noting clothing, weaponry, and trimness of waist. Finally Kai chuckled. 'Still ugly as ever, I see.'

'And apparently,' Aidan replied, 'among your people effeminacy remains no barrier to power.'

There was a pause, a long moment in which the two regarded each other almost as if they were afraid to break the silence or close the distance.

Then they could restrain themselves no longer, and embraced heartily, smacking each other with rib-rattling buffets about the back and shoulders.²⁸

Although this friendly exchange or mini-battle can be seen as benign and humorous, there is a more critical understanding that the comparison reveals. Because Barnes is dealing with two heroic primary characters, any time they are compared provides a moment of clear character definition. Aidan in this reunion scene represents conventional mythic heroes. Kai is thus being compared with the established tradition of white heroic figures, and Barnes makes their defined differences beauty and effeminacy. The phrase "You're ugly" has without a doubt been used throughout history as an insult. All the

same, Barnes may base Kai's comment on Aidan's physical appearance on the assumed attractiveness of these traditionally white heroes. Kai may also be remarking on his own beauty, boasting in his comparison that he is more attractive than Aidan and in some ways more worthy. Barnes thus presents a contest that Kai would lose everywhere outside Barnes's novel, but here Kai employs his own judgment, not the world's. He identifies his own good looks in comparison to Aidan's. What was at first thought of as a negative, Aidan's linking of femininity to a lack of power, is a positive, for Kai now has confidence in his outward appearance.



Dar Kush, plantation of Wakil Abu Ali in *Lion's Blood*, inherited by Kai in *Zulu Heart*

Conflicting Influences

Barnes expresses his opinion that cultural legacies should be maintained but not worshipped through Kai's second difference from the traditional hero, his conflicted view of role models. Barnes expresses this idea through the setting or distinctive architecture associated with Kai's two most prominent elders, his Father the Wakil Abu Ali and his uncle Malik. In analyzing their personal spaces—Wakil's and Malik's houses—we can see what Barnes values in his mythic hero's mental formation. The relationship between architecture and identity in *Lion's Blood* and *Zulu Heart* deals with ideas of mind, history, and knowledge. Architecture is used as a medium of representation for male identity. Critic Maurice Wallace comments this way on the relationship between spaces and black masculinity identity: "the house (and certain other architectures—the closet, the cabin, the cellar) achieves the image of the structure of black masculine consciousness and is among the principal objects, materially and metaphorically speaking, of African American men's literary and cultural figuration."²⁹ In other words, by examining the physical structures black male characters inhabit, we can gain an understanding of their character and what they use to create it.

The identity of Kai's role models in each physical structure is important because Kai's relationship with these models pulls him in two directions. The structures are emblems of the difference of each role model. Kai struggles between becoming more like his peace-loving, diplomatic father, or his successful, war-hungry uncle, a struggle he describes as "two wolves fighting in my mind."³⁰ Each man

is important to Kai's formation; each provides a different lesson on how to craft identity; and each becomes a piece of Kai's self-understanding at the end of *Zulu Heart*. Kai remarks on his identity at the close of the novel, concluding, "So, then Malik lived within him, and always would. But so did his father. And so did [his Sufi teacher Babatunde]. And perhaps it took the three of them to make him human."³¹ Barnes here suggests that the role-model relationship is not one of a single model and its mimicry, but a composite of many different sources and many different lessons. This mixture of examples provides the benefit of options from which the student may choose.

The first example of residential-identity structure is Barnes's grand plantation, Dar Kush, a property that belongs to Kai's father, the Wakil Abu Ali, and which represents an understanding of the past's influence on present identity. In *Zulu Heart*, Kai has inherited this magnificent house and its surrounding land after the death of his father and older brother:

Kai paused as the gates closed behind him, allowing a moment's pause to absorb the sight of his ancestral home. It was ludicrously easy to take such splendor for granted, and he had sworn never to let this happen. Too much blood and sweat had been spilled to create this elegance, and after three generations, his were the shoulders upon which the responsibility chiefly rested... Some said Dar Kush's manor was the finest in all New Djibouti, and Kai found no flaw in that judgment. A Banner fluttered from the turrets above the main house, displaying Dar Kush's flag: Bilalistan's moon and lion, with the lethal arc of *Nasad Asab*,... The castle had been disassembled and shipped stone by stone from Andulus five decades earlier. Its hundred rooms, three stories, vaulted Moorish ceilings, six rose-lined fountained gardens, miniature date palms, and thousand-pillared hallways were the envy of any fortunate enough to explore her. To others it was a museum, or a monument. To Kai, it was simply the only home he had ever known.³²

The emphasis on words such as "estate," "ancestral," "three generations," "five decades," "museum," and "monument" all encourage the idea of legacy and long-lasting existence. Kai's history is easily identifiable through that of his father and the older brother who was meant to inherit Dar Kush. Kai's history includes his whole life. His distant past is part of his relationship to the house he lives in, the land he lives on, and his associations with his neighbors and servants. That legacy is part of who he is. Kai remarks that he feels pressure to live up to the standard set before him. Accordingly, one may ask if Barnes is once again contradicting himself in both denying and demanding that black men

recognize their history. Perhaps not. Barnes uses Aidan to distract stereotypes from Kai's characterization, but gives no evidence to support the idea that those "types" are actually true. They are not the history Barnes wants revered.

Barnes' recognition of the past also does not contradict the use of narrative interiority to express identity, because, for him, history is indistinguishable from that interiority. Barnes represents this stance by noting "it was simply the only home [Kai] had ever known."³³ Kai internalizes the experiences of growing up in his father's castle and how the castle was constructed along his family line. These experiences become lessons that result in values that he carries with him in the form of his identity. I believe that Barnes promotes identity formation through appreciation of the past and the recognition of its effects on the present instead of dismissing the humble efforts of one's ancestors. Barnes thus has Kai think early on in the passage that "[i]t was ludicrously easy to take such splendor for granted, and he had sworn never to let this happen."³⁴ The house represents what is, or the present. And the legacy for the African American male in general is how it came to be built. The final lesson is to acknowledge the construction, to maintain what has been created, and to take advantage of the work that has already been done. Using what already exists allows for greater progress than starting from nothing. Black novelist John Edgar Wideman describes this stance nicely: "Each generation approaches the task of becoming men as if no work has been accomplished before. Treats an unfinished building as if it's a decaying, useless building and feels compelled to tear it down, start over, instead of utilizing solid foundations bought and paid for with *their* ancestor's blood."³⁵ Kai is then allowed to use his inheritance because it is a source of the person he has become. But he must not use his history solely to express his identity.

Malik, Kai's uncle, models properly heroic behavior for Kai by refusing to live in the shadow of his older brother, the Wakil. Instead, Malik becomes a legendary warrior fighting for the government, a decision we can read as maintaining what has already been built before and for him. Malik errs, however, in not being able to separate himself from his military career. His choice to define himself through this violent past eventually consumes him and almost everyone he loves at the end of *Lion's Blood*. Barnes describes Malik's home in detail:

Of Moorish design, it wasn't as large as his father's, but it didn't need to be. Malik was wealthy, of course, but his wealth had also been granted from the government as a result of long and intense service.... The entire house was filled with the memoirs of a life spent in warfare. It seemed that every digit was filled with armor and weapons, maps and paintings of their warrior ancestors

astride muscular, dark steeds. Kai's pulse quickened whenever he strode these halls. These were his people. There were the men of Dar Kush.³⁶

The home's exterior is similar to Kai's father's castle, but is lined within with war memorabilia. Even while Malik's services as a warrior have not been called upon for some time in the book—he spends his time teaching his nephews and other rich young men how to fight—we see that his military career is what he is most proud of. His success gave him wealth, fame, and independence from his older brother. Malik's focus on warfare is again demonstrated in his training room where he instructs future generations in the military arts: "Malik's main training hall was in the very center of the house, a wide courtyard with a glass ceiling imported all the way from Alexandria, both natural and artificial light illuminating the place where young men learned to survive on the field of honor."³⁷ The room's location, in the center of the house, and the light shining onto the "field" as if blessing it from above, gives a clear idea of what is most important to Malik and how he defines himself. Malik's home represents his worship of external stimuli in place of an identity. And his self-destruction after the death of his wife in childbirth provides Kai an example of what *not* to do, no matter how tempting or approved of by society.

Faith in a Higher Power: Literature and Islam

Complementing the edifices of Kai's father and uncle is the small Sufi Islamic mosque of Kai's tutor Babatunde. Among other things, this mosque restates the figure of underground identity construction that can be observed in much African American realist literature. Followers of Sufi Islam are described in Barnes's book as the disliked minority of a Sunni majority land. Babatunde's mosque serves as a separate space for him and his congregation. Though Barnes positions Islam in Bilistan in the same way that Christianity was practiced by blacks and whites in the 19th-century days of American slavery, Kai's observance of the Sufi Islam again positions him as different from other men. The more direct connection to Allah in the Sufi faith described by Barnes allows Kai to look for identity internally without the attention, contribution, and judgment of the external world.

Scholars have discussed the origin of black masculinity in classic American texts by looking at surface and subterranean physical spaces. Similarly, I employ the terms vertical and horizontal identity construction because of their metaphorical appeal in describing the internal life of a character as well as the external perception of the outside world. Identity formation that actually takes place underground has the benefit of escaping the attention and judgment of the surface world. Those who find their identity in the metaphorical underground, or vertically, develop an inner

strength and can combat external, horizontal judgments. Texts that underline this type of identity construction include the first autobiography of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*; the Harlem Renaissance classic *Cane*, by Jean Toomer; the influential one-hit wonder *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison; and the legendary, if controversial, *Native Son*, by Richard Wright. All of these works use a similar pattern in presenting the failure or success of their characters in crafting identity in a hostile setting. African American literary historian William L. Andrews describes the situation confronting black characters: "Ellison's protagonist understands that freedom and fulfillment for a Black man in America depends on the recovery of his cultural antecedents and the assertion of his individual identity against those forces that would deny him either one."³⁸ Here again we see the struggle of the black man against an outer, horizontal collective, which wants to define him in ways that are inauthentic to his identity. But not wanting to project society's idea of black male identity is only one remove from the problem. What is truly desired is for the black man to represent his own vertical understanding of self, his unity with Allah and his cultural background, black and white. Andrews presents the black character as not only refusing to be a blank screen, but also desiring to represent his authentic self and other larger ideas. Andrews discusses the victorious ambition of a mythic hero in a reading of the conclusion of *Invisible Man*:

As a result, he [the Invisible Man] achieves his ultimate fulfillment, his greatest completeness as a self, in his teasing request of Blacks and whites, male and female, to consider whether 'who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?' In this suggestion that Americans may finally learn to read who they are in and through the Black man rather than merely projecting what they fear or fantasize onto his person, Ellison brings the Black man in the literature of the United States to his apotheosis as potentially representative of America's dream, not just its nightmare.³⁹

Not only to live out one's identity but also to represent the positive elements of one's society moves the black male to the other side of the identity-development spectrum. Kai removes his own projector screen on which society has displayed its view of his identity. Then, with Aidan's help and through Islam, Kai finds an internal, vertical identity not based on social identity markers, but instead representing the achievements of his family's legacy.

Islam in mid-twentieth-century African American communities promised the tools necessary to present a self-formed black identity. Scholar of Black Islam Sherman Jackson writes that "[t]he early Blackamerican 'Islamiz-

ers'...enlisted Islam not only as a strictly religious expression but as a basis for developing an alternative modality of American Blackness. Blackamericans at large came to see in this religion a path to spiritual salvation and a more authentic Blackamerican self.⁴⁰ Islam provided an alternative perception for blacks, particularly black males, who did not tolerate common identity projections. Barnes harnesses this idea of an alternative identity for his black mythic hero, granting him the keys to unlock and realize his own values.

Kai's road to manhood through Islam begins after his first physical fight with Aidan over Kai's former concubine, Sophia. As Kai mourns the loss and betrayal he feels towards his best friend and the woman he is emotionally attached to, his father moves to comfort him:

Kai's face was tortured. Abu Ali gathered his son in his arms. Kai gripped at him desperately, as might a child. 'You're on the cusp,' said Abu Ali. "And crossing is always difficult, and often feels like death itself. This is the moment, this is your time. It is not the sex that makes a boy a man, not feats of arms, nor wealth, nor worldly responsibility"

"What, then?" Kai voiced was muffled by his father's chest.

"The understanding that other human beings have a spirit, an essence equal in the eyes of Allah, whatever their station in life. That we must measure our actions and reactions in this world lest we pay dearly in the next. It is this measured consideration of every word and action, and their consequences, that makes a man a man. Nothing less."⁴¹

Abu Ali plants the idea that identity should not be based on horizontal, or externally located, objects or positions, the dangers of which we have seen demonstrated by Malik. The chapter immediately following this scene describes Kai's conversion from Sunni Islam to Sufism—a version of Islam that Barnes has Abu Ali later describe as "a path of heart."⁴² The Sufi followers in the book are said to desire unity with the divine, an internal oneness with the creator and the soul with which they were born. Kai recites the doctrine supporting this theology during his conversion ritual: "Kai paused but for a moment before repeating what had been patiently learned, and what he still only fleetingly understood. 'What dies,' he said, 'is what that person is other than Allah. What Allah preserves is the divine essence that came with the first breath.'"⁴³ Though Kai does not need to struggle with the negative stereotypes of an African American male, he does have responsibilities of wealth and power that can likewise rob a man of his individual identity. But by removing these items as identity markers in exchange for Allah, a word that is traced over Kai's heart, he begins looking internally for his "self" and not outwardly to how the society would define him. That this aspect of his relationship

with Sufism is most important is evidenced by Kai's vow at the end of the ceremony: "Babatunde [asks] 'Do you witness that God is the only God, swear to profess your faith, to act in charity and piety to keep holy the sacraments, and to protect, at cost of your own life, the inner chamber?' 'I do.' Kai said."⁴⁴ Kai's "inner chamber," his heart, and his ability to define and represent his "self" and the good, are worth the price of his life. He is no longer concerned with choosing to follow either his father or his uncle. He has the support of the men who came before him to help understand what should and should not be done. And he understands his self-worth enough as a hero not to have to make comparisons or to be traditionally heroic. All the differences Barnes presents in Kai allow him to become an especially enlightened mythic hero at the end of the novels.

Hero Confronts Evil Again and Wins

I knew that a turning point in the individual healing process often came when the "personal stories" of trauma shifted from litanies of victimization to legends of empowerment, and I felt that something similar must be true about social healing, though it was harder to grasp what those "social stories" might be.⁴⁵

What is central to myth is its adherence to truth not in plot or action but in the universality of the basic message. Only through widespread honesty can myths help individuals, communities, and even whole societies with no special color, country, or religion required of the consumers, nothing except their humanity. Barnes states that his representation of slavery in *Lion's Blood* and *Zulu Heart* was not designed to seek revenge on the descendants of American slaveholders. Instead, it aimed to stimulate communication: "I have to try to create a way to help people understand what it was like to go through this, but at the same time I don't want to inoculate them with despair, or make them feel like it's their responsibility to pay for what their ancestors did. If I can let people know I don't want anything from them that I do not earn, if I can communicate our shared humanity, then I've achieved my goal—but if I'm to do that, I have to create a new language."⁴⁶ Barnes method for creating that new language, his literary myth, involved the use of speculative fiction as a modern mythic vehicle, the adoption of the Hero's Journey mythic formula, and the insertion of universal truths into this myth. The results of his formula are two novels that create a black mythic hero who possesses the potential to change society's perception of the black male. No longer is the mere presence of black characters in books the standard for equality in representation. Barnes stresses the necessity that these black characters not only survive but triumph over their obstacles. But his novels have benefits for all audiences, as Barnes suggests: "I was able to build a bridge from the ordinary experience of

white Americans to the experience of black Americans and simultaneously... a work where black Americans can read for the first time about a world in which they were the winners.⁷ Barnes has once again prevented his readers from misreading others by explaining a social institution and its effects, with his subject this time a social institution rather than a person. He has inverted the white-black logic of racial slavery and imagined what could have been had blacks furthered their glorious African heritage. In some ways, Barnes's creations are social or anthropological speculations on another, fairer type of equality, one in which each social group achieves victory every once in a while. Barnes has alluded to a desire to write other stories with Aidan and Kia, and I would not be surprised to see Aidan staged as the victor in later sequels. Thus far, in *Zulu Heart* in particular, Barnes has worked to provide an example and establish a higher standard of ambition for African Americans. His empowering agent, Kai, develops what Barnes believes to be the finally universal truths of a mythic hero: a character alert to self-worth, influenced by worthy role models, possessed of an understanding of the contributions of ancestry, and centered internally through a higher power.

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- 1 Steven Barnes, "White & Black" *Locus* 50, no. 33 (March 2003): 85.
 - 2 Ibid.
 - 3 Clyde W. Ford, *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), vii.
 - 4 Barnes, "White & Black," 85.
 - 5 Ibid.
 - 6 The "Big Four" black speculative fiction writers are Samuel R. Delany, Octavia Butler, Nalo Hopkinson, and Steven Barnes.
 - 7 Steven Barnes, *Lion's Blood: A Novel of Slavery and Freedom in an Alternate America* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 40.
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- 21 Nisi Shawl and Cynthia Ward, *Writing the Other: A Practical Approach* (Seattle: Aqueduct Press, 2005), 56.
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Parsa Bastani, who was raised in an Iranian-American household, has always felt an intimate attachment to the Middle East. At Washington University, he has had the opportunity to turn his curiosity and connection to the region into an academic pursuit. While his research interests are broad and not always directly connected to his heritage, each is anchored in a special part of his identity. With the Middle East as a whole as his area of inquiry, the subject with which he most enjoys engaging is sexuality. Especially in light of the current politics around women's rights and homosexuality across the Arab and Iranian world, Parsa's research pursuit of this topic seems timely and necessary. Specifically, he is inclined to uncover a truer narrative to displace that of the Western media and to engage in a historical approach to uncover the realities and bases of notions of sexual and gender identity in the Middle East. He hopes to keep exploring these topics in the future, no matter what his profession, in order to enrich his own understanding but also that of the media and his peers.



Caleb Bess is a senior from Washington, D.C., majoring in Anthropology. His project focuses on North Sarah, a new mixed-income community currently under construction in downtown St. Louis. Through analyzing the planning and development process of North Sarah he explores the viability of North Sarah, considering St. Louis's social and economic climate. Upon graduation, he plans to pursue a career in filmmaking, where he will use the research skills he learned as a Mellon Fellow to create documentaries about processes of urban revitalization. The program has helped Caleb hone his analytical thinking and critique skills while providing him with the intellectual framework essential for all career paths. He would like to thank his mentor, Dr. Margaret Garb, as well as Dr. Shanti Parikh, Dr. Joseph Thompson, Dean Mary Laurita, and Shannon Koropchak. He would also like to thank his amazing Mellon cohort and looks forward to all the great things they will achieve in the future!



Liz Jordan is a senior from Chicago majoring in African & African American Studies and Anthropology. She is also a writing minor. Her Mellon article is titled "Oil Made Pickaninny Rich: Sarah Rector and the Social Construction of Race," and it was inspired by her family's ethnic background as Creek Freedmen. Post-graduation, Liz will be attending law school at Georgetown University, where she plans to dedicate her life and career to public service and policy.



Mariana Oliver is majoring in International and Area Studies, with a concentration in Latin American Studies, and minoring in Spanish. Her family is Latin American, and she lived abroad for seven years before moving to Memphis, Tennessee, with her family. Her work on affordable housing stems from her larger interests in income inequality and the intersection of public policy with sociology. As a junior she studied abroad in Santiago, Chile, and while there traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay, to conduct ethnographic research. Thanks to programs such as the International Leadership Program and the Annika Rodriguez Scholarship, Mariana has maintained a growing interest in organizing internationally-focused events on campus. During her time at Washington University, she has enjoyed being a part of Controversy N' Coffee, Sigma Iota Rho, and a staff writer for the *Washington University Political Review*. Mariana is currently especially interested in immigration issues, specifically regarding Latinos in the U.S. Next year she hopes to be in Washington, D.C., doing public policy work, and after working she plans to go to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D. in Sociology. She wishes to thank the MMUF program and her mentors for their support and guidance.



Marcia McIntosh, a senior from Bartlesville, Oklahoma, is an English Literature and African & African American Studies double major with a minor in General Business. Her academic interests include African American Literature and Speculative Fiction novels, both of which are explored in her research on writer Steven Barnes and his alternate history novels *Lion's Blood* (2002) and *Zulu Heart* (2003). When she is not studiously reading for her project or other classes, she enjoys working at Washington University's Olin Library as a circulation and digital library worker. After graduation, she anticipates attending graduate school in Library and Information Science.



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