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Africana Annual: Editorial Introduction

Peter Ukpokodu and Shawn Leigh Alexander
University of Kansas

In the archives of the Department of African & African-American Studies (AAAS) at the University of Kansas (KU) is a 1973 letter from the International Secretariat of the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (known also as "FESTAC" or "FESTAC '77") formally inviting the University of Kansas "which is already renowned for the importance it attaches to African studies and research [...] and for the quality of [...] publications" to attend FESTAC and contribute to the "success of the colloquium" on "Black Civilization and Education." As a world festival, FESTAC was a periodic homecoming of peoples of African ancestry in its widest sense in order to celebrate their various artistic, cultural, intellectual, and myriad contributions to the world and world civilization. *Africana Annual* (a Journal of African and African Diasporic Studies) aspires to accomplish on a smaller scale what FESTAC and its predecessor have done periodically on a larger scale. It is an international, peer-reviewed academic journal established by AAAS at KU (an intensive research university and a member of the select group of distinguished universities admitted to the AAU) to publish once a year, some of the intellectual, educational, cultural, artistic, literary, and humanistic accomplishments and contributions of, and about, Africa and the African Diaspora, and as part of the global and international community. The journal thus invites articles from all parts of the world.

The journal is intentionally interdisciplinary in nature to accommodate many fields and branches of research and knowledge as long as their diverse contributions find a thematic and epistemological relationship to Africa and its far-flung Diaspora. While this encompasses the more traditional and established studies in history, literature, music, politics, geography, philosophy, education, economics, business, fine and performing arts, anthropology, communication, linguistics, sociology, culture, and religion, the journal also invites articles from other academic fields such as gender and sexuality studies, global and inter-

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national studies, comparative studies, environmental studies, film and media studies, digital and emerging social platforms, international and national laws, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Reports from the world of science and medicine that relate to Africa and the African Diaspora are also considered.

While the *Africana Annual* is open to studies of a single area or phenomenon in the Africana world, it also aspires to reflect the intellectual and broadly-defined "political" connections between Africa and the African Diaspora, offering critical space for scholarly explorations of their shared historical and contemporary realities, and of future possibilities. Authors are thus invited to submit works that examine key issues that deepen interdisciplinary and global conversations on topics about Africa (north and south of the Sahara), African America, the Americas (North, South, and Central), the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe. The journal also visualizes an interconnected world with Africa as its center of inquiry, and welcomes profound articles that elucidate that vision.

In this issue of *Africana Annual*

1. In "'So rude and so crude': Charlotte's history with urban renewal and the annihilation of the African American community and culture of Brooklyn, 1960-1970," Maverick Huneycutt gives a fascinating vivid account of the lively and unifying culture that existed in the Brooklyn community of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the targeted destruction of that culture by city leaders under the guise of urban renewal. He asserts that the destruction of Brooklyn's physical community contributed to the forced displacement of people and the disappearance of their culture. His article links the past with the present by explaining that it is the historical experience that "has shaped the current residential landscape of Charlotte." The article is a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on gentrification.

2. An important tenet of postmodernism is the allure of epistemological and cultural relativism, among other things. Elias Adanu's article, "Learning to be Black in America: Heuristics of racial enculturation and fraternal nervousness between African immigrants and African Americans," is a postmodernist examination of how immigrants from continental Africa experience race and blackness differently from African Americans. This, the article contends, complicates relations between the two groups. The author contrasts Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* with Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* to support his reading of blackness. The "variance in the historical experiences of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid among different groups of Black people globally," Adanu argues, "has material implications for how we represent and theorize race and racism."

3. African women who accomplished so much and exhibited unimaginable courage and dexterity in political, commercial, and military leadership of their countries have been left out in most historical accounts or, at best, given a marginal reference. The incomparable Sayyida al-Hurra of Morocco is one such leader. In "Sayyida al-Hurra: A forgotten North African Queen and military leader," Amal El-Hameur goes into the depths of the sixteenth century to resurrect a North African queen and military strategist, Sayyida al-Hurra, to take her deserved place and recognition in African, Moroccan, Arab, and European historical accounts. A multilingual expert even at her time, al-Hurra's enviable skill and success in naval warfare struck terror among Spanish and Portuguese naval forces in Western Mediterranean and the Iberian Peninsula to earn her the nicknames, "pirate queen" and "princess of jihad." El-Hameur also argues that al-Hurra was an astute politician who used political marriages to forge alliances, respect, and favorable intrigues.

4. In Hassan Mbiydzenyuy Yosimbom's "Doublespeaking American immigration: The language and politics of asylum-seeking in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*," attention is drawn to one of the compelling and frustrating issues of our time, migration, in its two components of emigration and immigration. Using the analysis of *Behold the Dreamers* as a point of departure, the article examines the presence of manifold ordeals and perils to immigrants in their Western-bound "promised land" where immigration laws bring disillusionment and leave the desires of immigrants unfulfilled. The article's conclusion is harrowing and haunting—that immigration to the West "both kindles and kills hope, and (re)builds and destroys lives," depending on the particular Western government and political leader in power.

5. Seun Abimbola reviews Abimbola Adunni Adelakun's book, *Powerful devices: Prayers and the political praxis of spiritual warfare*, published by Rutgers University Press, 2022. Abimbola sums up his review by pointing out that the author "pushes the boundaries of the conventional discourse on Pentecostal [Evangelical?] power, uncovering a diverse range of critical narratives and experiences within the realm of spiritual warfare." The review opens a window to view "the relationship between religion and power structures," even if what is revealed is an uncomfortable truth.

The various topics covered in this issue are meant to signal the beginnings of something new, solid, and exciting in Africana scholarship. We are committed to curating an interdisciplinary experience that can be truly relied upon for the most critical and innovative ideas in our time. We hope you can rely on the *Africana Annual* to be a generative space for global conversations on Africa and its diaspora.

“So Rude and So Crude”: Charlotte’s History with Urban Renewal and the Annihilation of the African American Community and Culture of Brooklyn, 1960-1970

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Abstract. This article aims to highlight the impact of urban renewal on African American communities in Charlotte between the 1950s and 1970s, specifically the Brooklyn community. The work also identifies the numerous facets of culture that existed in the Brooklyn community and how urban renewal led to the destruction of that culture. Previous research has examined the impact that urban renewal has had on inner cities, on different ethnic groups, and how white city leaders used urban renewal to continue residential segregation. My research investigates the specific impact of urban renewal on African American culture, analyzing the effect of the destruction of the physical community of Brooklyn on the community’s culture. This paper relies heavily on my analysis of an oral history project by Dr. Karen Flint, which includes over forty interviews with former Brooklyn residents. The project also interviewed several of the white leaders who pushed the urban renewal project forward, illustrating how these white leaders remained blind to the significance of Brooklyn’s culture to destroy the community. My paper concludes that Charlotte’s white leaders’ inherent racism led to the destruction of Brooklyn’s physical community, contributing to the forced displacement of residents and led to the destruction of the pre-displacement culture. This research is important both to recognize the strength and significance of the Brooklyn community’s culture and to understand how racism in Charlotte’s past has shaped the current residential landscape of Charlotte.

Keywords: Urban renewal, 1960s, Charlotte, North Carolina, racism, culture.

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In 1961, John F. Kennedy promised to employ the Housing Act of 1954 "to provide decent housing for all of our people."[1] While this was a lofty goal, the opposite in fact occurred throughout the nation. Local redevelopment commissions completed surveys that deemed certain areas as blighted, and then federal funding with little oversight was provided to white city officials in southern cities to demolish these blighted areas. By 1973, urban renewal programs had destroyed 600,000 housing units and displaced two million people.[2] Under the leadership of Vernon Sawyer, the Redevelopment Commission of Charlotte stated their plan to "turn decaying sections of our city into pleasant, profitable neighborhoods."[3] Charlotte's white leaders, including Sawyer and Charlotte mayor, Stan Brookshire, embodied the southern spirit that was blind to the systemic oppression faced by African American communities. The fact that these "decaying sections of the city" turned out to be Brooklyn and other historically Black communities was not a coincidence. A strong religious community, a vibrant business district, and residents who looked after one another connected the community and created the culture of Brooklyn. Charlotte's white leaders could justify the destruction of Brooklyn by remaining blind to the vibrant culture and fictive kinship that fused the tight-knit community.

The destruction of Brooklyn's culture fits the definition of "ethnocide," a term created by Raphael Lemkin in 1944. Lemkin coined the term as a synonym for genocide to clarify that killing members of a group was unnecessary to carry out their destruction.[4] Early scholars of genocide argued that cases of ethnocide could only exist within broader cases of genocide. These scholars argued that when a group of people were killed, their culture was eliminated along with the physical being. Ethnocide did not receive widespread scholarly acceptance until 1970 when French ethnologist, Robert Jaulin, argued that culture could be destroyed while keeping the people.[5] Simply put, ethnocide is the erasure of a people's culture without physically eliminating the people. In the case of Brooklyn, white elites utilized urban renewal to destroy the physical community, leading to the forced displacement of residents and the erasure of the community's culture. African American culture has been strengthened through centuries of oppression to a point where it could be argued that Black culture is America's strongest culture. Charlotte's white leader's use of urban renewal, and forced displacement, to accelerate Brooklyn's loss of culture proves that even the strongest culture faced difficulty remaining intact when faced with forced displacement. This innate racism apparent in Charlotte's white leaders drove them to utilize federal urban renewal funds to destroy the entire Brooklyn community, which I argue led to the erasure of the pre-displacement culture.

Understanding what denotes a culture is necessary to recognize the erasure of one. Barrett Holmes Pitner's definition of a culture is "a collection of people in a specific place who work together to survive in perpetuity."[6] While Pitner provides a general definition, the richness and complexity of African American culture demands a deeper explanation. Centuries of oppression and exploitation during slavery and Jim Crow created a necessity to create a strong culture to combat these injustices. While African Americans fought to survive slavery, they fabricated music, dances, and religions to strengthen cultural ties within their communities. Even after slavery, whites still viewed African Americans as inferior and created new social and physical isolation practices. Segregation continued the need for African American communities to realize strong cultures to combat the systemic oppression they faced. Ideas of fictive kinship were still popular among Blacks during the nineteenth century in Charlotte. Harassed by hardships and struggling to find enough decent housing, Brooklyn residents took in and cared for many people outside of their immediate family.[7] Alfred Alexander, son of civil rights activist Kelly Alexander Sr., recalled how "the neighbors pretty much would watch out for everyone's children."[8] During Brooklyn's existence, the religious, social, educational, and economic centers worked in unison to create a cohesive culture that aided in providing safety and kinship in the lives of former residents of Brooklyn.

Establishing a more socially-inclusive and culturally-aware history of urban renewal is also necessary to realize how white business leaders utilized the federal initiatives to achieve their desired outcome of a racially divided Charlotte. Before the 1954 Housing Act, the 1949 Housing Act focused on "redevelopment" versus "renewal." Redevelopment consisted of clearing blighted communities and selling the land to private investors for new development projects. The new idea of renewal was introduced to emphasize the renovation of existing housing rather than large-scale neighborhood clearance. Due to a lack of federal oversight in the 1950's, white leaders were able to utilize federal funds to beautify their cities while neglecting the welfare of displaced citizens. Progressive idealists began to voice apprehension to urban renewal projects as the number of displaced residents continued to grow while low-income housing options stayed the same. To avoid a confrontational backlash, federal officials presented a new focus on renewal and rehabilitation of blighted areas rather than clearance and redevelopment. This change in policy came from evidence that clearance of low-income areas and the displacement of its residents only overcrowded existing low-income areas. This, in turn, created an environment for the growth of slums rather than the removal of slums.[9]

During the height of urban renewal projects in the 1960s, economic reasoning frequently outweighed the social impact these projects had on displaced residents. An early optimist of urban renewal programs such as Robert Weaver believed that raising tax incomes with redevelopment programs would provide funds for social welfare assistance. More recently, scholars of urban history such as Thomas Hanchett have uncovered how a multi-generational legacy of racism stemming from the Jim Crow era influenced local leaders to institute policies to disenfranchise and segregate Black communities in southern cities. Contemporary scholars agree that the practice of urban renewal did little more than displace mainly Black communities and replace them with mainly white business districts or higher income housing. However, there are few works that directly focus on how urban renewal led to the elimination of Black culture which existed in destroyed communities. Growing up during the Jim Crow era allowed Charlotte's city leaders to remain desensitized to the cultural significance of the Brooklyn community to the entire African American community of Charlotte.

Historians have analyzed the federal initiative of urban renewal, which encouraged white leaders in the South to reshape cities to protect a legacy of racism and segregation. Scholars of urban history between the 1950s and 1980s divide into two schools of thought: those who view urban renewal as an economically, politically, and socially positive practice and those who argue that the entire practice was racist, unjust, and targeted mainly poor Black communities. Robert Weaver and John Lindquist reflected the optimism of the 1960s by predicting that the federal urban renewal policy would raise property and tax values. Conservatives used this "market force" ideology to back justifications of urban renewal in the mid-1900s. William Collins and Katherine Shester represent a small percentage of modern scholars who continue to focus solely on economic arguments as ideal for urban renewal as a positive. This school of thought provides evidence of poverty reduction and employment growth, arguing that urban renewal has strengthened local economies in the past and can once again. Still, these scholars have failed to explain the disappearance of African American culture. Economic justification remained the standard during the height of urban renewal projects; however, strong opposition to these projects has always existed.

The second school of thought included social activist Jane Jacobs, a well-known critic of initial urban renewal programs from the 1950s. Her scholarship argues that urban renewal programs' "top-down" structure led to their ineffectiveness and effectively led to "the sacking of our cities."[10] Herbert Gans furthered this argument in 1972 by stating that redevelopment plans benefitted local redevelopment officials at the expense of the displaced residents.[11] The im-

pact of an absence of federal guidance on communities razed by urban renewal projects was never properly resolved, and local governments could forcibly displace thousands of culturally-connected minority communities with federal funding. Since the rise of skepticism of big government in the 1980s, scholars have arrived at a majority consensus that views urban renewal as a negative. Historians such as Brent Ryan and John Rennie Short have examined urban renewal programs' negative social and economic outcomes in specific cities. Hanchett and other contemporary scholars agree that white desire to maintain racial segregation had an overwhelming impact on plans to change and modernize cities. This paper argues that Charlotte's white leaders were oblivious to the culture in Brooklyn, which led to the use of urban renewal to destroy the community and to satisfy a racially-driven desire to maintain segregation in Charlotte. Concentrating on the cultural elements within the Brooklyn community rather than focusing on urban renewal policy allows this paper to add to the history of urban and African American studies.

Senator Robert A. Taft was an influential senator from Ohio during the 1950s whom scholars regard as one of the most influential legislators never to become president. Taft was also vocal in his belief that the only justification for providing federal funds for redevelopment was if this plan provided "everyone in this country with decent housing."[12] Taft took this even further by stating that if economic conditions did not allow displaced residents to afford decent housing, the federal government should provide subsidies to provide housing for the displaced. While Taft was arguing to justify the expenditure of billions of federal dollars, the social implications he mentioned were important. Not all federal officials were worried about urban renewal's impact on poor Blacks residing in slum areas. One federal official went as far to say that urban redevelopment provided city officials with "a good opportunity to get rid of the local niggertown."[13] This blatantly racist statement epitomizes how white city leaders continued to keep the racist ideologies from the Jim Crow era alive. Charlotte's leaders' failure to utilize urban renewal funds for social welfare purposes shows how city leaders misused the federal funds Charlotte received. The racial implication of this misuse becomes clear through the realization that white leaders erased the African American community of Brooklyn only to place Charlotte's government district on the land where the community once stood.[14]

Seventy years before the urban renewal program bulldozed Brooklyn, the Black elites of Charlotte, also known as the "better class," lived there.[15] During Reconstruction, and for a short time preceding it, Black and white "better classes" often created alliances that worked to raise the economic status of Charlotte. This intermingling of races solidified Charlotte's status as a New South

city. These civil race relations in the South only offered a brief interlude before the twentieth century ushered in the Jim Crow laws, furthering African Americans' disfranchisement.[16] As white supremacy continued to spread, the melding of races ceased, and communities and business districts became either all-white or all Black. White Charlotte businessmen pushed African American businesses out of downtown to strengthen this segregation. They placed restrictive covenants on lots in suburban areas denying ownership to anyone of the "colored race."[17] Due to disfranchisement from Jim Crow laws, communities of color lacked simple infrastructure such as paved streets, streetlights, curbs, and gutters.[18] Decades of diverted investment created a lack of infrastructure, allowing Brooklyn to deteriorate into what Charlotte's Mayor, Stanford Brookshire, described as "disgraceful crime-and-disease-ridden slums in the shadows of the uptown office buildings."[19] Charlotte's white leaders constantly tried to portray a narrative that viewed Charlotte as a uniquely southern city. However, their reasoning to eliminate the Brooklyn community was analogous to the reasoning Birmingham's City Commissioners provided to destroy the blighted community of Avondale, Alabama. The "blighted neighborhoods visibility to Birmingham's white elite" made the white elite uncomfortable on their drives to and from work.[20] Brookshire and fellow white city leaders in Charlotte focused on, and propagandized, the deterioration of select parts of Brooklyn to justify their decision to demolish the entire community.

Two hundred businesses, schools, churches, and recreational facilities made Brooklyn the cultural, spiritual, educational, and economic center for Charlotte's African Americans. Brooklyn was, in the words of local Charlotte NAACP leader, Kelly Alexander Jr, "a community… not a ghetto in the most negative sense of the term."[21] Brooklyn housed the first high school for Blacks in Charlotte, christened Second Ward High School. Carver College was also an academic institution for African Americans housed in the basement of Second Ward High. Brooklyn's residents had access to the Brevard Street Library, organized in 1905 as the first "colored" library in Charlotte.[22] There were numerous recreational accommodations within the Brooklyn community, including branches of the YWCA and YMCA. Brooklyn's youth participated in social enrichment with the Boy and Girl Scouts of America. Churches were central to social life in Brooklyn; according to resident James Ross, there were "twenty-three churches big enough for people to remember."[23] All these elements together created a self-sustaining community within Brooklyn that allowed residents to find anything nearby.

Oral histories from Brooklyn residents help paint a picture of a collection of people working together and utilizing kinship to survive. The urban renew-

al program destroyed the home, and the community that Barbara Steele called home for twenty-four years. She recalled her time at Second Ward High School, where "the teachers were just like your parents."[24] Steele noted that teachers from Second Ward High were even willing to buy their students a pair of shoes or a dress, and she felt that "it was really like another home."[25] These teachers were contributing to the culture of Brooklyn by working together to help their students survive. Arthur L. Stinson was another former resident of Brooklyn who explained the connectivity of the fictive kinship culture of Brooklyn: "We were raised by the community. Not just our individual parents or relatives. We were a much closer unit as a family, and I think that my being raised by the whole community was a lot better system."[26] These descriptions of Brooklyn equate to a community that worked together to overcome the oppressive conditions and helped residents survive and excel. According to cultural historian, Theodore Downing, redevelopment projects make low-income residents the "unfortunate victims of other people's progress."[27] No matter how strong the culture in Brooklyn was, it was nearly impossible for residents to maintain the community's pre-displacement culture in the face of involuntary displacement.

Few white residents of Charlotte believed that clearing the buildings in Brooklyn would also effectively erase the community's culture. Don Bryant was a member of the Charlotte City Council in 1961 when Brooklyn's urban renewal was beginning. Bryant was also the only councilman to express the belief that residents of Brooklyn "had a culture all their own, they even had a language almost all its own."[28] When the executive director of the Redevelopment Commission of Charlotte, Vernon Sawyer, was asked about destroying the culture in Brooklyn, he replied, "the culture was so rude and so crude they couldn't defend it."[29] Sawyer's statement accurately represents the opinions that most of Charlotte's white leaders had of Brooklyn's culture. John Thrower was another member of the Charlotte City Council during the 1960s. During an interview with Thrower, he stated that "black people smell differently because they simply didn't have the facilities to remain clean."[30] Thrower's overtly racist statement shows that while urban renewal was being pushed to destroy the Brooklyn community, Charlotte's city council members embodied racist ideologies from Jim Crow. As bulldozers razed homes and businesses, the Brooklyn community lost physical and cultural foundations. Charlotte's whites may not have recognized Brooklyn's vibrant African American culture. Nevertheless, to most Brooklyn residents, Christianity and the churches were the strongest cultural elements within the community.

As was the case in many Black communities, a central element of Brooklyn's culture was religion. Before urban renewal bulldozed the Vinegar Hill section

of Charlottesville, Virginia, white elites viewed the community as "an American subsociety that functioned as an entity unto itself."[31] Brooklyn was no different; religion and the churches were a fundamental part of this subsociety. Every September, Bishop Charles Grace, also known as "Sweet Daddy Grace," from the House of Prayer for All People, hosted a parade in Brooklyn. This parade was the highlight of the fall for the community. Residents described the House of Prayer for All People as a church that cared for the entire community. The church's founder, Grace, specifically directed the efforts of the House of Prayer for All People at the low-income areas of Brooklyn as a way to help "the least of thine brethren."[32] Connie Patton recalled how, during hard times, the church "would feed people for five cents, they would get a bowl of beans and cornbread."[33] Patton also recalled how the church checked on anyone who got sick, "they were always there to help the people."[34] While Grace holds a special place in former inhabitants memories, the United House of Prayer for All People was not the only church influential to the culture in Brooklyn.

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church was another culturally important church that looked out for the entire community, not just church members. Reverend John Lewis Powell had a lasting impact on former resident, Arthur Wallace Sr., and many other former residents of Brooklyn. Wallace described Reverend Powell as a humble man who visited sick residents on his own "instead of having somebody special" carry out the visit.[35] These personal visits demonstrated the Brooklyn community's strong sense of kinship. Within the church, there was a vibrant musical culture that included songs that had grown from centuries of oppression. Members could have joined four different choirs: a hymn choir, a children's choir, a senior choir, and the main choir. Wallace explained that the hymn choir was a strictly vocal group, and "the words told the story of the songs."[36] Religious hymns like the ones Wallace describes have existed in African American culture since slavery. The varied forms of expressions that former slaves employed worked to teach their children about the situation they were in and ways they could change it.[37] Another former church member, Walter Kennedy, recalled how once the community "found out the church had to leave Brooklyn, we [members] did a thirty-day continuous service."[38] This thirty-day service shows the Brooklyn community's unity and Friendship Missionary Baptist Church's importance. Christianity and the churches were the foundations of the culture in Brooklyn. The schools and recreational centers also held strong importance in the lives of Brooklyn's residents.

Second Ward High School opened its doors as the first high school in Charlotte for African Americans in 1923.[39] Connie Patton who attended Second Ward High, he recalled that it was the "greatest high school in the world."[40] Patton also

recalled that the ROTC program at Second Ward High, prepared young men to excel in life as productive members of society. Second Ward High had a fierce rivalry with another Black school in Charlotte, West Charlotte High School. Each fall, this rivalry came to a head at the annual Queen City Classic football game at Charlotte's Memorial Stadium. This football game brought Charlotte's entire African American community together for a night of friendly banter and fierce competition. However, it was not always about competition between Second Ward High and West Charlotte High students. Former resident, Christine Bowser, remembered how the best players from each school's bands filled The Birdland with great jazz music each weekend.[41] Second Ward High's building was also home to Carver College, a night school created for African American veterans returning from World War II. Along with advancing students' educations and lives, Carver College also improved the Brooklyn community. The Carver College Annual Report from the 1958-59 school year lists the different activities students participated in throughout the year. These activities included distributing food baskets to needy families, "a beautiful and fun-filled May Day," a track meet, and assisting Johnson C. Smith's drama department with two plays and three dances.[42] Events at Second Ward High School and Carver College help to portray the strong sense of pride in the tight-knit community and culture of Brooklyn.

Segregation played an integral part in concentrating these elements into the community of Brooklyn. Racial segregation enacted by Charlotte's white leaders only permitted African Americans to live and establish businesses in the racial zones that city leaders had created. Charlotte's white business elites, such as John G. Hood and William Henry Belk, were two of the first to participate in the creation of racially divided communities. Hood completed and sold a development project to Belk in 1910, which included twenty-seven shotgun houses and twenty-two undeveloped lots. The project was sold for $13,500 for what would eventually become nearly fifty shotgun houses marketed to low-income Blacks in Charlotte. By comparison, the average sales price of just one home in the white suburbs of Charlotte was $4,000.[43] The rise of shotgun home communities led to the concentration of all community elements residing within Brooklyn, strengthening the community's cohesive culture. Brooklyn was a place where African Americans across Charlotte came to worship, engage in social events, and enjoy recreational activities, and shop for nearly any good or service they needed. When Mayor Brookshire sledgehammered the side of a home in 1961 to launch the urban renewal program, he was also taking the first swing at erasing a culture that the residents of Brooklyn could never replace.

By remaining ignorant of the strong culture residents of Brooklyn had cre-

ated, city leaders could utilize the term "slums" to depict Brooklyn as a place devoid of culture. Government bureaucrats who funded urban renewal defined "slums" as places with sub-standard housing which bred crime and disease. "Slums" and communities where African Americans lived became interchangeable to many white Americans.[44] Urban historian Kenneth Jackson argues that racial discrimination became so common that "socioeconomic characteristics of a neighborhood determined the value of housing to a much greater extent than did structural characteristics."[45] During the Jim Crow era, whites viewed African Americans as inferior, and in turn, these slum communities received few government resources. This racial prejudice was still present when urban renewal gained prominence in Charlotte during the 1960s. Segregation facilitated the creation of African American communities, and then decades of disinvestment in these communities led to the physical deterioration and creation of "slums." According to the blight study by Charlotte's Redevelopment Commission, the renewal program presented Charlotte's white leaders with an opportunity to displace 1,600 families from slum areas with "low tax returns, high crime rates, and low health standards." [46] Another study by the Redevelopment Commission indicated that once the urban renewal program cleared Brooklyn, the land would provide a "vital land development program, a vital building program for commercial and civic development and an improved major traffic system."[47]

Mayor Brookshire was committed and proud of using federal funds to erect brand-new buildings in the place of the Brooklyn community. In an interview with the *Charlotte Observer,* Brookshire noted, "I get a real kick driving through that area now just remembering what it was."[48] This quote from Brookshire shows that he was truly proud of what he had accomplished in the Brooklyn area. In his mind, he had saved Charlotte from a slum community labeled as a "center of disease, vice, crime, and dependency."[49] Brookshire believed in the fiction that eliminating this blight and replacing it with what would largely become Charlotte's government center was positive for everyone involved. Charlotte's white elites, including Mayor Brookshire, were racially blinded to Brooklyn's importance to Charlotte's African Americans, which destroyed the culture and community. This eagerness to rid Charlotte of Brooklyn represents how American culture has long been centered on obtaining wealth at the expense of human lives deemed inferior.

To stop the legacy of racial terror and disenfranchisement, African Americans around the United States rallied together for change. According to W. E. B. Du Bois, this group had "a strong, hereditary cultural unity, born of slavery, of common suffering, prolonged prescription and curtailment of political and civil rights."[50] The threat urban renewal posed to this cultural unity created another

justification to further the actions to gain equality. To achieve this equality, Civil Rights leaders focused on mobilizing Black communities, creating alliances with northern elites, and winning over the Supreme Court, White House, and National Democratic Party.[51] Kelly Alexander, Sr. was a member of Brooklyn's "elite" who was active in advancing Charlotte's African American communities. An event involving Alexander Sr. would prove that Charlotte was not a uniquely southern town. On the night of November 22, 1965, radical racists bombed his Brooklyn home with his family inside. This bombing illustrates how radical whites used violence to situate Blacks within the inherently racist image white elites fabricated for the race. Charlotte's leaders were worried about the city's reputation as racially progressive and used the short-lived unity of the bombings to limit an economic fallout.[52] Racial violence fueled African Americans' fight for equality while city leaders continued to optimize federal funds to employ urban renewal as a weapon against Black communities and displace Black citizens. It is obvious why many African Americans during these years justifiably referred to urban renewal as "Black removal."[53]

The lack of effort put into fair and just relocation efforts was a major downfall of urban renewal projects in Charlotte. City leaders claimed that rehousing was the top priority during the urban renewal program. Three separate city councilmen active during the urban renewal projects claimed that if people complained about relocation efforts, they never heard them.[54] However, interviews with former Brooklyn residents made it clear they were unsatisfied with their relocations. Barbara Steele recollected that "they really did not give us enough money to buy another home, that's what bothered me."[55] In an interview with the *Charlotte Observer,* Maggie Stinson explained to the interviewer that there is a difference between a house and a home and that she loved and missed her house in Brooklyn "because it was my home."[56] Placing more emphasis on relocating residents together rather than spreading them across the city would have better served Brooklyn's residents. The broad dispersal of Brooklyn residents' relocations furthered the erasure of the Brooklyn community's culture. As family members and friends found themselves living far apart, the day-to-day activities and community kinship that bonded the Brooklyn community started to vanish.

Another objective of urban renewal included incorporating social services into blighted communities to assist with social and personal problems. In Charlotte, Mrs. Avery Hood was the head of the Redevelopment Commission's social department. Hood assisted families with moving after relocation and other social problems. In a report compiled by Hood, she accurately portrayed what many displaced families endured during relocation. Hood studied a random

group of fifty families, twenty-two of which could not be reached. The Relocation Commission relocated four residents to houses that Hood could not locate, and seven families had once again seen their new homes destroyed by either urban renewal or the highway department.[57] Hood's study proved the ineffectiveness of relocation efforts in Charlotte, which directly contrasted with the narrative Charlotte's white leaders created about relocation. The evidence of failed relocation efforts provided more indication that Charlotte's white leaders were uninterested in the welfare of Brooklyn's residents. Expert Peter Marris argued that relocation efforts rarely provided better housing, normally placing families in similar neighborhoods with higher rents.[58]

By 1973, members of the Charlotte City Council had yet to learn about the negative impacts urban renewal projects placed on the low-income citizens of Charlotte. During a city council meeting, Councilman Fred Alexander reminded Vernon Sawyer that "relocation in any area is the key factor." At the same meeting, Sawyer noted that the current urban renewal plan included provisions "for Rehabilitation and Conservation." [59] These provisions showed a push for renewal and conservation of neighborhoods which was starting to hinder full-scale redevelopment plans. This push for renewal came too late to save the community of Brooklyn, and today only three original buildings from the community remain standing. Walking through the twenty blocks that used to house the community of Brooklyn, someone would only see government buildings and a few hotels. Mayor Brookshire and Vernon Sawyer made such strong arguments that by clearing Brooklyn and erecting new buildings, the tax value of the area would be raised. However, it is hard to imagine that these buildings now in place of Brooklyn raised the tax value of the area: Mecklenburg County Courthouse, Mecklenburg County Central Detention Center, Mecklenburg County Government Center, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, and the Charlotte National Building. Urban renewal was an utter failure in the eyes of the African American community of Brooklyn. But for Charlotte's city leaders, it was a rousing success because they utilized over seven million federal dollars to create a new government district and rid the city of what, in their eyes, was a "blighted slum."[60]

The first step to overcoming the injustices that urban renewal caused in Charlotte is the acknowledgment of these injustices. In 2020, Vi Lyles, Charlotte's first female Black mayor, apologized during a city council meeting for the negative impact of urban renewal on the Brooklyn community. The public apology was a groundbreaking statement that former Brooklyn residents say is a great start to restitution. Reverend Willie Keaton, Chair of Restorative Justice CLT, agrees that the apology was a great initial step in gaining justice for African

Americans. Keaton also believes that if this apology is to have any true meaning, "the restitution needs to be equal to the crime."[61] By land-grabbing, destroying homes, and shutting down businesses, urban renewal eliminated opportunities for the accumulation of decades of generational wealth for Black families in Charlotte. Charlotte's Black leaders are now fighting for a restorative justice project which would allot funds to grant loans for Black-owned businesses and provide more affordable housing throughout Charlotte. Mayor Lyles' apology will spread awareness about Charlotte's history of systematic racism and how that racism has shaped the city's current landscape. Still, as Keaton points out, the apology is little more than empty words unless financial resources are provided to assist the remaining members of the Brooklyn community and their families. As Charlotte struggles to maintain a progressive persona, studying the city's past continues to prove that Charlotte has never been a uniquely southern town. The culture of the Brooklyn community no longer remains, but by studying the history of the community, the cultural importance that existed can be realized.

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Learning to Be Black: Racial Enculturation and Fraternal Nervousness Between African Immigrants and African Americans

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Abstract. Although race discourse is rife in the United States, not as much attention has been paid to the meaningful distinctions in the racial experiences and perceptions of continental Africans who migrate to the United States. This paper presumes that continental Africans experience race differently from African-Americans, and that this experiential and notional difference complicates relations between these two groups. Upon arrival, African immigrants *learn* to live Black in a matured racial space – the United States – which does not often differentiate ethnic and national differences in racial experience. It is this *learning to live black* and *becoming Black* that I call racial enculturation. To elucidate this friction, the paper contrasts Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* with popular African American genres of narrating racial awareness to unearth the divergences in their accountings of racial encounters.

I posit a taxonomy of four enculturation anxieties that African immigrants to the US face: racial levelling, fraternal nervousness, racial etiquette, and political will. I propose these four nodes as generative lenses to understand how African immigrants encounter race beyond the predominant African American and white perspective. This paper will also show that the variance in the historical experiences of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid among different groups of Black people globally has material implications for how we represent and theorize race and racism, and the relational postures each group adopts toward each other.

Keywords: African immigrants, African Americans, race, enculturation, Black

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"Our passion for categorization, life neatly fitted into pegs, has led to unforeseen, paradoxical distress; confusion, a breakdown of meaning. Those categories which are meant to define and control the world for us have boomeranged into chaos; in which limbo we swirl, clutching the straws of our definitions…we find ourselves bound, first without, then within, by the nature of our categorization."

- James Baldwin

Introduction

In August 2015, I became one of over two million African immigrants living in the United States of America.[1] I knew that the land I was emigrating to was majority white, and that it had other people who looked like me, people whose bodies had been pillaged to build America. My knowledge of this was not sentimental; it was merely factual, and — save the similarity in pigmentation and my cursory knowledge of the slave trade — I felt little existential connection to them or their experience of being Black in America. Indeed, until I arrived in the US, I had little occasion to contemplate what it would mean to live in a Black body as I had not conceived myself as Black. According to Johny Pitts, "a black man is a *black* man, whereas a white man is simply seen as 'a man.'"[2] In Ghana, where I was born, the opposite was true: a black man was simply a man. I had not been raised Black. I had not been taught Black history. Or Black culture. In Ghana, blackness was a moot concept since nearly everyone was Black (just as whiteness is moot without Black othering).[3] The term and concept functioned occasionally as a descriptor for Africans in general, but had little sociological or existential recognition or perceptible consequence in my daily life.

It was in America that I first ticked immigration forms to *become* Black. I had to, as Baldwin has said, fit neatly into pegs meant to define and control my world.[4] By ticking these forms, I had become a member of the comity of "Black People in America," and had acquired with that denomination the assumptions ascribed to Black people, and the expectations concomitant with those assumptions. By my color alone, I was expected to know what it meant to be Black. I had entered a mature racial space with clearly demarcated rules of engagement, rites of passage, ways of being and mutual understandings among Black people, and between Black and white America. It was assumed that I knew the cues and taboos, how to talk about race, how to recognize racial prejudice, how to be offended by racism. It was further assumed that the skin tone and ethnicity I shared with African Americans and other Blacks, mostly of Caribbean origin, was sufficient evidence of racial solidarity: a shared race meant a shared history and a shared present. As Wachira notes, "black immigrants have been forced to contend with a socioeconomic system that sees a monolithic culture and

ethnicity within the US Black population."[5] I noticed that race discourse itself, not just racism, failed to account for ethnic, national, and continental distinctions in racial experience. My distinct ethnic, national, and continental identity (Ewe, Ghanaian, and African) had been subsumed into the grander, more potent American descriptor, race, and I had been brought under the umbrella of Blackness.

It is in this context that I come to this paper. This paper is about how the difference in race consciousness – based on different histories, contemporary socio-politics, and regimes of memory-work – between Black African immigrants and African Americans complicates the migrants' racial solidarity with African Americans in the struggle for racial equity in the US. As my introductory autoethnographic reflection suggests, with a few exceptions, newly-arriving African immigrants do not "necessarily experience or respond to racism in the same way or share the same notions of identity or affiliation as African-Americans."[6] Lenoir and Kidane further observe that "African immigrants remain disconnected from civic engagement, and more importantly, remain divided from their black American counterparts on issues of racial solidarity."[7] Their understanding of Blackness, how they live (with) it, and their perceptions of America's racial space are distinct from how African Americans experience race.

To explicate this condition, I propose a taxonomy of four enculturation anxieties which explain African migrants' posture towards race and its social consequences. To do this, the paper will explore Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah,* which might as well be classified as a "becoming black" narrative, a racial equivalent to a coming-of-age narrative. Adichie's novel recounts the story of Ifemelu, a Nigerian citizen who emigrates to America and struggles to make sense of her newly-acquired Blackness. Of its many benefits, *Americanah* furnishes a narrative structure and content that is realist enough to afford material deductions that do not strain credulity. Consequently, the text is chosen as a quintessential representation of the broad strokes of the typical African immigrant contact with, and experience of race in America. The shock of racial encounters, and the process of making sense of them in the context of her temporary sojourn in the United States, contrasts usefully with the tropes of racial discourse in America. Although *Americanah* provides the most sustained engagement with the subject of racial becoming for African immigrants, other recent immigrant novels including Teju Cole's *Open City*, Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*, and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names,* among several others, have broached the subject variously. Ultimately, this paper offers up the four enculturation anxieties – racial levelling, fraternal nervousness, racial etiquette, and political

will – as a set of generative themes by which to read the shock with which African immigrants encounter America's mature and complex racial context, and how it informs their strategic relations with African Americans. As with *Americanah,* these four enculturation anxieties emerge and could be applied in part or whole across the other African diasporic novels mentioned. A nuanced engagement with the migrant perspective complexifies US race discourse currently dominated by the African American perspective and nudges an engagement with the temporal, regional, and continental fluctuations of race, racialization, and racism for a fuller account of transnational Blackness. Additionally, this account of transnational Blackness aims to collapse some of the silos in Black Studies that focus exclusively on African or African American subjects when meaningful bridges from contrasting experiences exist. Finally, for scholars of diaspora and migration, these themes could function as analytic paradigms for assessing enculturation, solidarity, and political engagement among assimilated and new diasporas.

While this paper's main thrust is that for African immigrants, immigration to the US per se is the event that begins a processual experiential awareness of race and a relational conundrum with African Americans, I begin with a brief discussion of race in America and how race consciousness emerges for African Americans. That discussion is followed by a discussion of African migration to the US, a brief overview of *Americanah,* and finally, the four enculturation anxieties which emerge from the novel, and which I assert, could be applied wholesale or fragmentally, across a variety of recent African and other immigrant literature and lived experience.

The African American Experience of Race Consciousness

Written as an autobiographical letter to his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* conveys the tenor of the historical, perceptual, and theoretical sentiments underlying African American experience of race in the US. This work of creative nonfiction chronicles the history of America's racism, the arduous parental angst associated with socializing Black children into the meaning of Blackness in America, and the development of racial awareness in children. Like Adichie's *Americanah,* Coates's text is by no means singular in its exploration of the subject. From Douglass to Du Bois to Morrison, African American writers have dedicated much of their oeuvre to contemplating their race and its psychosocial consequences. Toni Morrison puts it thus: "these slaves, unlike many others in the world's history, were visible to a fault. And they inherited, among other things, a long history of the meaning of color. It was not simply that this slave population had a distinctive color; it was that this color 'meant'

something."[8] While Morrison demonstrates how the weighty meaning of skin color became the sole definitive category of African American existence, Frederick Douglass, a century before Morrison, inveighed the psychological toll of this designation's manifestation through slavery: "I was born a slave - born a slave - and though the fact was incomprehensible to me, it conveyed to my mind a sense of my entire dependence on the will of somebody I had never seen…"[9] Similarly, W.E.B. Du Bois recounts how he learned of his difference in childhood: "The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, - refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others…but shut out from their world by a vast veil."[10] Beyond this childhood initiation, Du Bois observes that his Black body has rarely escaped interrogation at every turn. In "Of His Spiritual Strivings," Du Bois remarks that all his life, people have approached him with a curious glare which acts as a transmutation of the unasked question: "how does it feel to be a problem."[11] Aside from affirming the obvious pervasiveness of racism across generations, I cite these texts as a resultant genre of living Black in America.

In this tradition, Coates traces his own life growing up in Baltimore, his fear of the streets, his tense relationship with white America, his subsequent "racial enlightenment" instigated by reading Black authors at Howard, and his current life as a writer of race. For Coates as for the writers above, African Americans grow up afraid of living in their bodies, fearful that their bodies can be destroyed without their knowledge. He cites the death of his friend Carmen Prince Jones at the hands of the police — a crime for which no one was indicted — connecting it to that of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Elmer Clay Newman, and Gary Hopkins, noting that "Prince was not killed by a single officer so much as he was murdered by his country and all the fears that have marked it from birth."[12] Here, Coates expands culpability for these deaths to include the historical lineage and context that upholds it. Consequently, he writes, "black people love their children with a kind of obsession. You are all we have, and you have come to us endangered." [13] *Between the World and Me*, therefore, acts as a complex testament to Coates's fear driving his need to educate his son, Samori, about the embodied risks of his race. Samori will, of course, grow up with this knowledge and fear, but also the knowledge of his father's grievous frustration and helplessness. To Samori and Coates, it would be perplexing for any Black person to remain unperturbed by racial oppression, as James Baldwin eloquently put it, "to be black in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost all the time."[14]

The experiences narrated above differ vastly from Ifemelu's Nigerian up-

bringing. Indeed, the genre of educating one's children about race or writing about one's racial "coming of age," is almost nonexistent in contemporary African literature set in Africa. Nonetheless, the historical and experiential issues raised provide useful background for contrasting the African American experience with the African immigrant experience in *Americanah*. Independently, these texts deal with race and racism in America, but their accountings of racial encounters betray the yawning divide in how each group comes to, experiences, and lives with race, and how these disparate perceptual and experiential nodes coincide relationally. And, as the number of African immigrants grows within the US, closer scholarly attention needs to be paid to the nuances in historical experience and perspectives which inform political engagement.

African Immigrants in the US

It is into this potent racial space of Du Bois, Coates, and Morrison that African immigrants fall when they first arrive in America. After all, "in America, you don't get to decide what race you are. It is decided for you."[15] According to an analysis of the US Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center, there are currently 4.6 million Black immigrants living in the US, more than quadruple the number in 1980. This figure represents nearly ten percent of the nation's forty million Blacks. In Miami and New York, Black immigrants make up as much as thirty-four and twenty-eight percent respectively of the Black population. The greatest contribution to these numbers is Caribbeans from Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, and Africans from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya. By the mid-1960s, Africans accounted for only one percent of all immigrants in the US. Yet in 2013 and 2019, there were 1.4 and 2 million Africans respectively, living in the US. This exponential increase has been attributed to the relaxing of US immigration policies: the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which allowed family reunification and migration of skilled labor; the Refugee Act of 1980 which granted asylum to conflict fleers; and the Immigration Act of 1990 which sought initially to increase European immigrants. Collectively, these laws facilitated mass migrations to the US.[16] Notably, the greatest wave of Africa-born immigrants (over seventy percent) migrated to the US between the years 2000 and 2019, with the preceding years dominated by Black immigrants from the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Mexico. Despite their large numbers, African immigrants are only a meager fraction of the total Black population — "the Caribbean remains the most common region of birth for U.S. Black immigrants" — making it possible for their peculiar differences from African-Americans and other Black immigrants to be overlooked.[17] Consequently, immigrants from Africa are swallowed into the sea of Blackness.

Yet, excepting race, these African immigrants are unlike other Blacks in many ways. As one might expect, African immigrants are not a homogenous entity. They emigrate from their home countries for a variety of reasons, including the escape from political instability, the search for educational and job opportunities, and what Adichie calls an escape from the "oppressive lethargy of choicelessness."[18] Common among the varied reasons is the voluntariness of their presence in the US. Aside asylum seekers who form a small fraction of African immigrants, nearly all others come freely, with a view to improving their lives on the promise of the American Dream, and African skilled workers in the US have earned the reputation of being the most educated immigrant population in America.[19]

Taxonomizing African Immigrants' Enculturation Anxieties

Ifemelu, the protagonist in *Americanah* comes to America for exactly one of these reasons: to escape the incessant university strikes and continue her undergraduate studies in the US. She falls into the category of those upper middle-class Africans who come to America voluntarily, not out of duress, and whose lives in their countries of origin were not dominated by any kind of racial anxieties or economic lack. *Americanah* is a story of love and immigration, and it epitomizes the processes by which an African immigrant becomes Black in America, navigating what Wachira calls "the multiple identities of black immigrants": ethnic, immigrant, and racial identities.[20] These three identities overlap, contradict, and converse with Ifemelu's love life which we see through her relationships with Obinze, a Nigerian, Curt, a white American, and Blaine, an African American. (Because her relationship with Obinze precedes her immigration to the US, it does not factor as much in her racial knowledge as the subsequent two which take place in the US.) Through these relationships and her blog, we see the varied manifestations of race from the African immigrant perspective. Ifemelu's relationship with Curt betrays white Americans' ignorance of the diversity within Black communities and the necessity for nuanced treatment of each Black community based on how they come to race. Her relationship with Blaine, on the other hand, reveals the lethargy African immigrants often feel towards political movements aimed at highlighting racial discrimination. Through her blog, Ifemelu contemplates her racial coming-of-age, how she learns to be Black, how she learns to pretend to be Black, and the impacts these make on her experience of America.

Since its release to critical acclaim in 2013, *Americanah* has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. According to Shane McCoy, much of this literature has focused on the novel's engagement with cosmopolitanism, Afropolitanism,

Afrocentrism, and Nigerian nationalism.[21] Even so, several others have analyzed the novel's focus on racial solidarity, inter-Black diversity, and the complexities of American and transnational race discourse. For example, Shane McCoy's "outsider within" bifurcates African immigrants into old and new, associating *Americanah's* characters with the educated and apolitical new diaspora.[22] Clara Bafaluy Avenoza reads the novel via Althusser's interpellation in which white and Black America's enunciation of the term "Black" and America's history of racism is what transforms African immigrants into Black subjects.[23] Niyi Akingbe and Emmanuel Adeniyi lament the failure of attempts at transculturalism and interracial harmony.[24] Although these texts admit the complexity of African immigrant encounter of America's racial landscape, there still remains room for a unified theory that extends the tensions in racial solidarity raised in the novel beyond the confines of its literary world.

I posit four enculturation anxieties which emerge as Ifemelu navigates America as a newly-Black migrant: racial levelling (we all look alike to white people); fraternal nervousness (what ought to be my relation to African Americans?); racial etiquette (what are the ways of talking about race, what can or cannot be said or done about race in the public sphere?); and finally, political interest/will (what can or must I do politically about race?). I argue that these four nodes provide vocabulary by which to understand not only the stance of the novel's African immigrants toward race, but also to enrich the wider national discourse beyond the African American perspective which has long (for good reasons) dominated how we talk about race in America. I envision these four enculturation anxieties as generative axes from which to read contemporary African migrant fiction and nonfiction that engage race, migration, or inter-Black relations. It goes without saying, as readers will discern, that some of these themes are not by themselves novel, especially in discussing the African American experience of race. For example, racial levelling which has historically manifested as racial profiling in police surveillance is well known in race discourse. Yet, its particular experience by African migrants and its impact on their solidarity with African Americans is less documented. Thus, it is best to veer the fulcrum of applicability of these enculturation anxieties from the predominant race discourse to African immigrants in order to fully comprehend their impact and value.

The first enculturation anxiety, racial levelling, manifests through a recognition that phenotype alone, race, is a leveler which groups and flattens all people of African descent, African Americans, and other Black immigrants under one denomination: Black. In one of her blog posts, Ifemelu observes that "in America, you don't get to decide what race you are. It is decided for you… If a random

black guy commits a crime, Barack Obama could be stopped and questioned for fitting the profile. And what would that profile be? 'Black Man'"[25] Under racial levelling, Barack Obama, a globally-famous upper middle-class man is interchangeable with any other Black man. One needn't look further than Henry Louis Gates's 2009 arrest if Ifemelu's assertion stretches credulity.[26] In a subsequent blog post, Ifemelu writes: "Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't 'black' in your country? You're in America now."[27] For Ifemelu, this erasure of ethnic, national, and continental identity, becomes the first premise that drives African immigrants to seek differentiation from other Blacks. Her riposte is for African immigrants to "stop arguing," signaling America's indifference and capacity to subsume ethnic identity into racial monoliths. Elsewhere, when Ifemelu protests Aunty Uju's idea to use another Nigerian immigrant's Social Security card to seek employment, Aunty Uju retorts that all Black people look alike to white people anyway. Here, Aunty Uju verbalizes the widely known urban legend that some immigrants do in fact exploit this racial conflation as a survival tactic, even as they reject the more negative aspects, such as racial profiling.

For Ifemelu, and other African immigrants, racial levelling operates in two directions: the erasure of ethnic and other identities; and the acquisition of Blackness, a term which conveys centuries of American history and culture which is at once inaccessible, but applicable to African immigrants. Indeed, American society sometimes views African Americans as proxies of all Blacks.[28] And *Blackness* places the weight of four hundred years of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow, and all other weights that African Americans have had to carry for years, on the African immigrant.

The perception of being handed an undeserved weight becomes the premise from which the second enculturation anxiety emerges: fraternal nervousness. What is, or should be, the attitude of African immigrants to African Americans and, indeed, the wider Black community? Are they like us? Are we like them? Are these two groups the same people? Must race be the primary determinant of social relations? Or should their solidarity be premised exclusively on the commonness of their struggle, the struggle against racism, and for social equity? These questions lurk at several points in *Americanah*, and find expression through Ifemelu's writing and interactions with several characters. In conversation with other Tanzanian, Ugandan, Kenyan, and Nigerian students, one of them cautions Ifemelu to "try and make friends with our African American brothers and sisters in the spirit of true Pan-Africanism. But make sure you remain friends with fellow Africans."[29] The use of "brothers and sisters," especially

in obeisance to "true Pan-Africanism," betrays a nervous recognition of a historically necessary association that is as filial as it is political. This admonishment regarding relations with African Americans resurfaces in several other ways. For example, Jane, a Grenadian immigrant educates her daughter in a private school instead of in the suburbs, "otherwise she will start behaving like these black Americans." When Ifemelu probes, she is told she will not understand.[30] In both instances, relations with African Americans is approached with caution and mystery. When Ifemelu informs her family in Nigeria of Blaine, the African American Yale professor she intends to marry, her father's initial reaction is a baffled, "an American Negro?", followed by "but why a Negro? Is there a substantive scarcity of Nigerians there?"[31] Calling Blaine a Negro suggests a curious distance between the groups and excludes Nigerians from the category, "Negro." We are offered no future revelatory comments on these three instances beyond showing us the tense suspicion with which the African characters approach relationships with African Americans.

Here, I conjecture two reasons for this tense distance. First, because anti-Black racism involves the denigration of African Americans, African immigrants also imbibe these racist stereotypes, which they associate, not with racism, but with African American culture. In Jane's example, removing her daughter from an African American school shields her daughter from that "culture." For Jane, the problem is "these black Americans," not their history, not America, not racism. Second, because their pre-migration lives were rarely, if ever, based on race relations, there is a reluctance, when in America to associate with African Americans on that basis alone.

The opposite seems to be the case for African Americans. In the US, race has been the premise for African American solidarity. In "Black Like Who," Reuel Rogers explains that,

> Group identification among African Americans – that is their sense of racial group attachment and awareness – has had more political significance and utility than comparable ethnic ties among whites or panethnic identities among Latinos and Asians. Indeed, the sense of racial group attachment is so pronounced among African Americans that many routinely subscribe to a *linked racial fate* outlook.[32]

By this, Rogers opines that many African Americans tend to see a determinative link between their individual lives and that of other African Americans. Consequently, they are more likely to pursue racial unity than African immigrants who have, historically, never been united under *Blackness* alone. As Ifemelu's account suggests, for African immigrants, there is not a tangible communal link

premised on racial identification, oppression, and or emancipative struggle. For several African immigrants, such communal links exist along ethnic and national lines.

Coupled with racial leveling, and an ambivalence about solidarity with African Americans, African immigrants soon find that they ought to negotiate racial etiquettes in American society. What are the ways of being Black, and how do Americans talk about race? – these are the prevailing questions in this arena. With the exception of countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa which still have large white populations and settler colonialism, much of racism on the African continent manifested through colonialism which yielded entirely different sociocultural results. Thus, most new African immigrants are oblivious to the racial innuendos, stereotypes, taboo words, race awareness, and expectations associated with being Black in America. Black face, fried chicken, and watermelon stereotypes as racist tropes simply do not translate to the uninitiated immigrant. When Ifemelu allowed an old white woman to touch her "beautiful Afro," insisting that "How else will she know what hair like mine feels like? She probably doesn't know any black people," Blaine is infuriated! What Ifemelu finds normal, inoffensive, and attributes to white ignorance, Blaine interprets as a racist exoticization of Black hair, clearly with greater cognizance of the historical context which Ifemelu lacks. In response, Ifemelu muses that "there were things that existed for him that she could not penetrate."[33] Such missteps which reveal Black immigrants' ignorance of racial etiquette pervade the novel. Ifemelu notices, for example, that Kimberly calls all Black people beautiful, a phenomenon to which Ifemelu responds, naively, "not every black person is beautiful." Again, Ifemelu reads this as unironic ignorance, and reacts to gently correct Kimberly's perceived misperception.

This failure to situate "racial moments" within the broader history of race discourse and act appropriately becomes apparent again during an encounter with a cashier at a department store. There, Ifemelu and Ginika, her friend, realize that the white cashier cannot refer to her colleague as Black. Here, Ifemelu fails to grasp the limits of what can or cannot be said about race in the public sphere. Having arrived in America long before Ifemelu and thus possessing a better grasp of the landscape, Ginika quips, "because this is America… You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things."[34] Here, Ifemelu demonstrates her oblivion to habits of pretense that mask racial tension and misses socially-expected reactions in the form of pretense, outrage, and recognition of discrimination. What Ifemelu misses due to her recency in America, Ginika, another immigrant, notices, but not in the same way as Blaine in the previous example. Due to the historical knowledge of racism that Blaine, an Af-

rican American (and Assistant Professor of History at Yale) possesses, his reading of Ifemelu's encounters bears imprints of Coates's knowledge of American racial history in *Between the World and Me*, while Ginika interprets Ifemelu's reactions as mere naïveté of American culture which will pass with time. In other words, for Ginika, racial encounters are opportunities for pretenses whose mastery demonstrates cultural savvy, a stance that minimizes their gravity and erases their historical genealogy.

Due to this lack of recognition and knowledge of social etiquette with regard to race-laced encounters, recent African immigrants tend to be politically lethargic and unsure about what they are expected to do in championing the cause of Black people. This fourth node can be read under the rubric of political will or interest. This lack of political will is what ends the relationship between Blaine and Ifemelu. Ifemelu downplayed the value of the public protest Blaine had organized to exonerate Mr. White who had been racially profiled. Blaine's observation that "it's not just about writing a blog, you have to live like you believe it," demonstrates to Ifemelu that this accusation was "not merely about her laziness, her lack of zeal and conviction, but also about her Africanness; she was not sufficiently furious because she was African, not African American."[35] Of course, Blaine is cast as an extremely idealistic man, and we are expected to read this as an extremity, yet it provides useful material to contemplate what it means to perceive oneself as primarily African, to not consider one's Blackness as the sole definitive component of being, and to consequently not consider another Black person's problems as a shared problem. Additionally, it bears clarifying that Blaine's character and Ifemelu's reaction are by no means reflective of every African American's political activism or disinterest – that spectrum of political interest is wide enough and does accommodate both groups at each end. Even so, the focus on Ifemelu's lack of political interest rests on her reason for detachment, which is, as we have pointed out, connected to her lack of a linked fate outlook, which is the norm, not the exception, among African immigrants.

However, beyond the realm of representation within this novel, this weak political engagement is not in a vacuum. Considered in the context of the aforementioned enculturation anxieties – racial leveling, fraternal nervousness, racial etiquette, and political will – we discern a few other impulses that drive these relational postures. First, as I have pointed out earlier, the pre-immigration identities of African immigrants tend to lean towards ethnic or national allegiance than to a racial one. After decades of colonialism, several African countries fought for independence beginning in the early twentieth century and culminating in the mid to late twentieth century in nearly all countries gaining independence from European colonial rule. The independence projects across

the continent galvanized and deepened nationalism, not racial solidarity.[36] The converse happened in America: African Americans fought for manumission, emancipation, integration, and civil rights, processes that galvanized internal racial solidarity. For several new African immigrants to the US then, racial solidarity does not have a recognizable historical political outcome in their direct experience.

The second, and perhaps more important factor that undergirds the enculturation anxieties might be that voluntary immigrants tend to have a sojourner mentality. This sojourner mentality manifests itself in the immediacy of *home* in the African immigrant's imagination, the anticipated temporariness of sojourn in America, and their sometimes weak familial and generational linkages to America. In discussing nostalgia, Ato Quayson notes that "the place that one finds oneself in is constantly calling up evidence of some elsewhere, the place that was departed from, or, as often happens, a utopia erected in place of the location of departure."[37] Because of the immediacy of home in their recent past, it is discernible that recent immigrants are still anchored in life as previously lived in their homeland, complete with nostalgia, tangible memories of family members expecting their return, checking their wellbeing through frequent phone calls, etc. They may be in America, but not fully so. Their ships have not yet been burnt. They live in both worlds. And the ligatures that bind them to home are strong and firm, while those that bind them to America are still superficial. These nostalgic tendencies, and the concomitant feelings of recency reduce migrants' likelihood of fierce engagement in racial politics. As from Ifemelu's story, there is a reluctance to participate in American national life beyond what is necessary for subsistence. To accomplish this, they form ethnic and national enclaves, and confine themselves to carefully chosen aspects of the host society.

Furthermore, for voluntary immigrants seeking educational and professional opportunities, integration is utilitarian, intended to secure greater opportunities and remove barriers to success. Aunty Uju captures this sentiment best: "you are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed."[38] For these immigrants, the pursuit of economic and educational ends for which reason they emigrated, becomes the primary motivation undergirding attempts at assimilation or integration. Consequently, race politics is viewed as a distraction from their more urgent migratory goals. Additionally, gratitude for the opportunity to live in, what for most of them is a more advanced country, erodes their perception of the gravity of racism. Relatedly, Obinze, Ifemelu's Nigerian lover, rightly observes that African immigrants have an "exaggerated gratitude that came (*sic*) with immigrant insecurity."[39] This is borne out by Obinze's failure to secure a US visa after four attempts, although his

good grades had secured him admission to American universities. For Obinze then, the strict immigration rules, tortuous visa processes, and fear of deportation for minor infractions conspire to make immigrants eager to not stir strife in their host country. Coupled with the strong pull of home, and the voluntary nature of their immigration, these immigrants do not readily feel they *own* a part of America. Collectively, these circumstances and perceptions ameliorate the otherwise caustic effects of harsh racial encounters and become bases for enduring actual or perceived racism, and for differentiating their response to racism from that of African Americans.

Conclusion

To whom then must African immigrants owe the greatest allegiance? Their racial allegiance is "impelled" by the Black struggle whose frontlines are occupied by African Americans. Their immigrant allegiance is owed to the American state whose "benevolence" has made their passage and sojourn possible, and whom they are not eager to offend. And finally, their ethnic or national allegiance is forged by an African country (or Africa, loosely construed), which is the land of their birth, and where their strongest familial bonds exist. As we learn from Ginika's reaction to Ifemelu's naive reading of social cues, tensions of allegiance resolve as acculturation deepens. Ginika's long stay did not obliterate her distinct Nigerian identity. Instead, it educated her about the racial mores of social interaction, weakening the shock of racial encounters even if it did not "correct" her lethargy.

What should we make of how these different historical and experiential perspectives clash in the same racial space? How do we disentangle African immigrants from "the power of classifications that form the foundation of social representation and the experiences of social relationships?"[40] Is there a need for them to be disentangled at all? For African immigrants living in America, this is an ongoing question, an introspective search for reasons to distance or associate with the ramifications of accepting Blackness – not that they have a real choice – and what it means for their relationship with African Americans. How must an African immigrant doubtful of her *Blackness* but increasingly aware of the consequences respond? Alain Locke, in his *The New Negro,* written several decades ago, offers some useful insights:

> Each group has come with its own separate motives and for its own special needs, but their greatest experience has been the finding of one another. Proscription and prejudice have thrown these dissimilar elements into a common area of contact and interaction. Within this area, race sympathy

> and unity have determined a further fusing of sentiment and experience. So what began in terms of segregation becomes more and more, as its elements mix and react, the laboratory of a great race-welding. Hitherto, it must be admitted that American Negroes have been a race more in name than in fact, or to be exact, more in sentiment than in experience. *The chief bond between them has been a common condition rather than a common consciousness; a problem in common rather than a life in common.*[41] (italics mine)

This quote was intended to inspire internal cohesion with the African American "nation," yet, it may be a useful framework for dealing with enculturation anxieties experienced by African immigrants. Read with them and African Americans as audience, Locke's words become a useful proposition because it makes no appeals to historical, cultural, or even ethnic bonds as justification for interracial solidarity. It begins from the place of acknowledging difference, not from an insistence on similarity. Difference established, Locke calls for an emphasis on the common condition – racism – experienced by both groups, even if one group's consciousness of that fact is lacking. It is a call to transcend the disparate historical consciousness and unite for a cause whose victory benefits both groups.

Notes

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3. Jemima Pierre's *The Predicament of Blackness* discusses the hidden vestiges of racism in Ghana and Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* reinforces the lack of race consciousness and the erasure of slave history in Ghana.
4. James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 24.
5. Abeygael Wachira, "The Manifestation of Race in the Lives of Black African Immigrants in the United States," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education* 1, no. 2 (2013): 31
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7. Gerald Lenoir and Nunu Kidane, "African Americans and Immigrants: Shall We Hang Together or Hang Separately?" *The Black Scholar* 37, no. 1 (2007): 50
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10. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994), 2

11. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1

12. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me,* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 78

13. Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 82

14. James Baldwin in a 1961 radio interview

15. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 419.

16. Kelvin J.A. Thomas, "What Explains the Increasing Trend in African Emigration to the US?", *International Migration Review* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 6

17. Christine Tamir, "Key Findings about Black Immigrants in the US" *Pew Research Center*, January 27, 2022.

18. Adiche, *Americanah,* 341

19. According to US census data, forty-three percent of all African immigrants in the US have a bachelor's degree, a percentage higher than those for Asian and European immigrants, and both African American and white Americans.

20. Wachira, "The Manifestation of Race," 31

21. Shane A. McCoy, "The 'Outsider Within': Counter Narratives of the 'New' African Diaspora in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah,*" *Journal of the African Literature Association* 11, no. 3 (2017): 281

22. McCoy, "The 'Outsider Within'"

23. Clara Bafaluy Avenoza, "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*: American Blackness and White Privilege Through the Lenses of the African Diasporic Experience," *Ph.D. Dissertation* (University of Barcelona, 2020).

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26. The Root Staff, "Lawyer's Statement on the Arrest of Henry Louis Gates Jr.," *The Root*, July 20, 2009. https://www.theroot.com/lawyers-statement-on-the-arrest-of-henry-louis-gates-jr-1790869828

27. Adichie, *Americanah*, 273

28. Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, "African Immigrants and African-Americans: An Analysis of Voluntary African Immigration and the Evolution of the Black Ethnic Politics in America," *African and Asian Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2009): 93

29. Adichie, *Americanah*, 172

30. Adichie, *Americanah*, 137

31. Adichie, *Americanah*, 389

32. Reuel R. Rogers, "Black Like Who? Afro-Caribbean Immigrants, African Americans, and the Politics of Group Identity," in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York,* ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 170

33. Adichie, *Americanah*, 388

34. Adichie, *Americanah*, 155

35. Adichie, *Americanah*, 427-8

36. This is so despite the strong ties between the Civil Rights Movements, the pan African movements, and independence projects across Africa during which several independence and civil rights advocates in Africa and America compared notes and shared ideas and strategies. For example, Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, studied in the US and UK during which time his vision of a free Ghana and Africa calcified as he witnessed racial discrimination in the US. Stokely Carmichael, and W.E.B. Du Bois had active engagements across Africa in that era as well. Yet, the specific nature of these struggles and their concomitant residue differed on each continent.

37. Ato Quayson, "The Ethnography of Nostalgia," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 41, no. 2 (2005): 132

38. Adichie, *Americanah*, 146

39. Adichie, *Americanah*, 16

40. Jo Ellen Fair, "'Black-on-Black': Race, Space, and News of Africans and African Americans," *A Journal of Opinion* 22, no. 1 (1994): 36

41. Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: A. and C. Boni, 1925): 6-7

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Sayyida al-Hurra: A Forgotten North African Queen and Military Leader

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Abstract. This study examines a largely forgotten sixteenth-century North African queen, Sayyida al-Hurra. During a critical period when Morocco was suffering from political fragmentation and attacks by the Portuguese and Spanish, al-Hurra emerged as a well-trained and respected governor and military leader. This study employed a historical and ethnographic approach, drawing data from a variety of primary and secondary local Moroccan sources, including secondary Arabic literature, interviews with historians, and visits to historical sites. According to the findings, factors that helped al-Hurra be an exceptional leader for over three decades included her respected lineage, her family's leadership in the region, her education, intelligence, flexibility, fluency in multiple languages, skill in naval warfare, and a strong personality. Both of her marriages also served the political goal of bringing stability to northern Morocco.

Keywords: Leadership, Morocco, women, Islam, history

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1 Introduction

Various women have held political power in Islamic countries throughout history (Al-ʿafia 1978). One such figure is Sayyida al-Hurra, a sixteenth-century Moroccan queen of Andalusi descent who successfully ruled the city of Tétouan for over three decades (c. 1510-1542 CE) during a turbulent time for the region (Hakim 1983). *Sayyida* is the feminine form of *sayyid*, meaning "master" (Mernissi 2000, 15), "lord, chief, head and leader" (Baalbaki 2001, 653). Another title given to Muslim women with power is *hurra*, indicating freedom and independence (Baalbaki 2001). Despite their importance, however, these women are often forgotten or relegated to historical footnotes. This is especially the case with al-Hurra. In an interview, the local historian Ali Risouni stated that relatively little was known about al-Hurra, as Arab historians were not interested in writing about her during her own time, although she has continued to be known in her home city. In contrast, foreign scholars have long been fascinated by al-Hurra and her politics (Al-ʿafia 1978). In another interview, the historian, Fatima Bouchmal, blamed this on society not traditionally celebrating women who hold leadership positions. To help address the lack of information on this figure, especially in English, this study examined al-Hurra's background, impact on northern Morocco, and key factors that contributed to her success. By synthesizing the available Arabic literature with insights from local historians, this work seeks to increase the understanding of this historical figure and bring her to the attention of a wider audience.

Adopting a historical and ethnographic approach, the study drew data from three sources: Arabic secondary texts that are often not available in English, interviews with local Moroccan scholars, and fieldwork by visiting qasbah (fortress). The Arabic materials largely complemented each other. ʿOmrani (2015), for instance, gives insights into the importance of sharifian nobility, Hakim (1983) gives a short biography about al-Hurra's birth and family, and Daoud (1959) goes over the history of Tétouan, briefly mentioning al-Hurra's tenure as governor, while Abrzaaq (2016) provides information on al-Hurra's influence over piracy and naval warfare. Bouchmal (2020) gave a quick report about the geography and history of Chefchaouen. Bouchmal (2016) also gave a summary about al-Hurra's home city and factors that caused the city's fall. In this article, Bouchmal briefly talked about al-Hurra and her role in strengthening international relations with Ottomans. Alouh (1967) talked about Moroccan princesses who took part in maintaining the Moroccan throne and al-Hurra was one of those princesses.

The interviews were conducted with the two main historians of al-Hurra's city, Ali Risouni and Fatima Bouchmal, as well as Mohammed ben Saaid, who

ran the museum that was built in al-Hurra's father *qasbah* (fortress). Resouni was a researcher in the history of Chefchaouen, including its emirs (princes) and Arabic and Islamic identities. Bouchmal was formerly in charge of preserving the qasbah and had been the director of the cultural center in Chefchaouen. At the time of the interview, she was a professor of history, heritage, and monuments in Beni Mellal, Morocco. She had been studying the history and culture of Chefchaouen for 20 years, researching its history from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. Both historians speak Spanish and have access to Spanish sources about al-Hurra. The interview was an opportunity to get responses to complex questions that have never been addressed such as "why al-Hurra's history is not known." Ben Saaid was a technician in the cultural center in Chefchaouen and in charge of the qasbah museum.

The fieldwork consisted of visiting al-Hurra's grave, the zawiya (an institution or structure associated with Muslim Sufis) where she once lived, and a museum located in the qasbah where her father ruled, now a historical site. The signs available at the museum give insights into al-Hurra's status and highlight factors that helped her as a successful leader. Sources are very rare and hard to obtain from libraries in Morocco. Many sources I used in this research were not available at libraries and there was no printed edition I could buy. The only solution was to travel to al-Hurra's home city and ask historians who studied the history of the city for a copy of their sources.

2 Findings

According to the primary and secondary data, many factors contributed to al-Hurra's success as a ruler, including her noble lineage, her family's status, the political role her father played in Morocco, her education, the political environment (according to the interviews with Risouni and Bouchmal), and her own intelligence and personality (Al-ʿafia 1978).

2.1 Al-Hurra's Lineage, Family, and Upbringing

Although an extraordinary figure, al-Hurra was greatly shaped by her environment. Northern Morocco has a complex and rich history, occupying a strategic location and having human and natural resources (Abrzaaq 2016), long making it a target of foreign powers. The first half of the sixteenth century was an important period that would shape modern Morocco with the fall of the Wattasid ruling family, the rise of the Saadi rulers, and Spanish and Portuguese attacks along the Moroccan coast (Al-ʿafia 1978; Alouh 1967; ʿOmrani 2015). Morocco, during this time, suffered intense pressure from these internal and external power struggles, as governments were overthrown and, as the histo-

Figure 1. Picture taken by the researcher of a display in the qasbah museum. It states that Portugal took two northern Moroccan cities, Tangier and Asilah, in 1471, after which Moulay Ali ben Rashid declared war and built the qasbah to protect the city, which grew from an influx of Muslim and Jewish refugees.

rian Risouni noted in the interview, the Portuguese occupied the Moroccan cities of Tangier, Asilah, and Ksar es-Seghir in 1471. Born in northern Morocco around 1440, al-Hurra's father, *Moulay* (Prince) Ali ben Rashid, was the governor of the northwestern Moroccan city of Chefchaouen (Hakim 1983), which as Risouni noted in the interview, he founded in 1471 to defend Morocco against the Portuguese.

Al-Hurra's father was of sharif descent and one of the grandchildren of Moulay Abdsalam ben Mshish (Bouchmal 2016). Sharif here refers to the elite or nobles who traced their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammed ('Omrani 2015). Ben Rashid moved to Granada in 1460 when it was still under Muslim control and joined the palace of Muhamed Sarir, the last Granada prince, to learn military skills. There he married a young Andalusi woman from the town of Vejer de la Frontera. Born in Cadis, al-Hurra's mother converted to Islam after her marriage, and was renamed Lala Zahra. After the fall of Granada, al-Hurra's father returned to Chefchaouen and became the prince of war in northern Morocco due to his skills in the mountains and Andalusian field ('Omrani 2015). He built a qasbah to defend the region against Portuguese invaders and served as the governor of Chefchaouen. This qasbah is now a museum. According to an interview with Mohammed ben Saaid, the museum curator, al-Hurra's father built this fortress in a mountainous area far from the sea because the Portuguese were attacking and occupying cities close to the sea, making the fortress harder for the invaders to access.

After the fall of Granada, a large number of Muslims and Jews fled from Spain and settled in this area (see Figures 1–3). Led by Ali Al-Mandri, a Moroccan of Andalusi origin, they rebuilt the city, Tétouan, in 1483-1484, and it

Figure 2: Picture taken by the researcher inside the qasbah museum in the summer of 2022.

acted as a quasi-independent state (Daoud 1959). An alliance of emirates, including Chefchaouen and Tétouan, formed to face the Iberian threat from the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts due to the waning power of the Wattasid rulers, whose authority in Morocco was largely limited to Fez, the capital in the era of Ahmad al-Wattasi (1549-1524). After failing to rule independently, Ali ben Rashid and Al-Mandri represented the Wattasid king in the North. Ali ben Rashid died in 1516 CE.

In the midst of the social and political upheaval of this period, al-Hurra was born sometime around 1495 CE, the exact year of her birth being unknown (Hakim 1983), and was raised in Chefchaouen, a rich intellectual and political environment (Abrzaaq 2016; Al-ʿafia 1978; Daoud 1959). The lineage and political authority of her family helped her acquire leadership and cultural skills that would be indispensable in the political scene in the North. Al-Hurra was trained and received a strong education from well-known scholars (Alouh 1967). For instance, Risouni noted in the interview that she received instruction from Abdallah al-Ghazwani, a prominent Sufi scholar and saint, and that al-Hurra herself was a Sufi. He also noted that her uncle was Fernando Martín, for which the city of Martil was named. In another interview, Bouchmal noted that al-Hur-

Figure 3: Picture taken by the researcher outside the qasbah museum in June 2022. A sign states that the fortress was built by Moulay Ali Ben Rashid, the founder of Chefchaouen, in 1471.

ra's father "brought her one of the most important scholars in the region, who educated her in law, religion, and Arabic in addition to her excellent skills in Spanish and Portuguese." Bouchmal mentioned that this education extended to military matters as well. As a result, al-Hurra was very knowledgeable and forged her own vision for her people's future (Alouh 1967).

Regarding her family life, Bouchmal stated that al-Hurra "was spoiled by her oldest brother, Moulay Ibrahim. She also had a half brother and sister," although nothing is known of her sister. Despite this promising background, Bouchmal stated that al-Hurra's real rise to power began with marriage. Both of her marriages helped her acquire authority and gradually take the reins of leadership. It was highly uncommon for women to have formal positions of power in Morocco (Daoud 1959), but al-Hurra's remarkable skills facilitated her rule politically, socially, and militarily (Daoud 1959, 119).

2.2 First Marriage and Rise to Power

Al-Hurra married her first husband, Moulay Ali Al-Mandri, who was the governor of Tétouan (1504-1519), in 1510 (Bouchmal, 2016). The purpose of this marriage was twofold: to strengthen the ties between the two main ruling families in the North and to have a reliable ally in their war against the Portuguese (Al-ʻafia 1978; Bouchmal 2016). As the qasbah museum curator noted in the interview, Al-Mandri "married her as she was of sharif origin and to guarantee people's loyalty and her tribe's loyalty as well." While waging war against Iberian forces, her husband was often in the field, away from their qasbah, and left al-Hurra in charge in his absence. He also tasked her with addressing certain issues as she was known for her ability to manage problems (Daoud 1959, 119). In this way, her marriage and work in her husband's stead brought political stability to the North (Alouh 1967; Daoud 1959). During this time, she learned naval skills, as the Al-Mandri control of the North was partially based on their naval power. Their ships were led by skilled sailors, especially Andalusi immigrants, which made them a greater threat to Spanish and Portuguese ships.

After al-Hurra's first husband died in 1519, her brother Moulay Ibrahim ben Rashid appointed her as governor of Tétouan. She proved to be skilled in political matters, the power dynamics at play in the Mediterranean, and managing the city's affairs. The people of Tétouan accepted her leadership, as they were accustomed to her running things when her first husband was away and she had shown herself to be a competent ruler. This is notable since the people of Tétouan could have backed Al-Mandri's brother over her, as he was competing with her and wanted to take over after the death of his brother.

2.3 Al-Hurra's Active Role as a Governor and Military Leader

During al-Hurra's three decades in power, the qasbah was the center of her government, and housing, for example, the treasury and prison. From this fortress, she was also in charge of supervising military operations and protecting the city, making major decisions with the assistance of advisers such as her brother, Ibrahim ben Rashid, who was a minister of Sultan al-Wattasi in Fez (Abrzaaq 2016).

Despite drawing authority originally from her husband and brother, al-Hurra had distinct policies of her own. She collaborated with the Ottoman corsair Barbarossa, allowing his ships to stop at Moroccan ports. The purpose of this was to gain a powerful ally against the Iberian threat. She also offered them a market for their economic grains from piracy (Abrzaaq 2016; Boushamal 2016). As Risouni noted in the interview, the Ottomans at the time were protecting Algeria from Spain.

Al-Hurra was celebrated in her country as a hero who defended the North from foreign threats. For example, Figure 4 shows a picture taken in the qasbah museum that calls her a “princess of jihad”; in contrast, she was often called a “pirate queen” in Europe. Abrzaaq (2016) discussed the differing views of piracy among Christian and Muslim countries at the time. Muslim countries viewed employing pirates to attack European ships and cities as a way to respond to the forced expulsion of Andalusi Muslims when the Spanish conquered Granada. In this way, piracy was seen as part of a religious obligation, based on precepts from the Quran, to protect Muslim lands. In contrast, European countries took a less positive view of these activities.

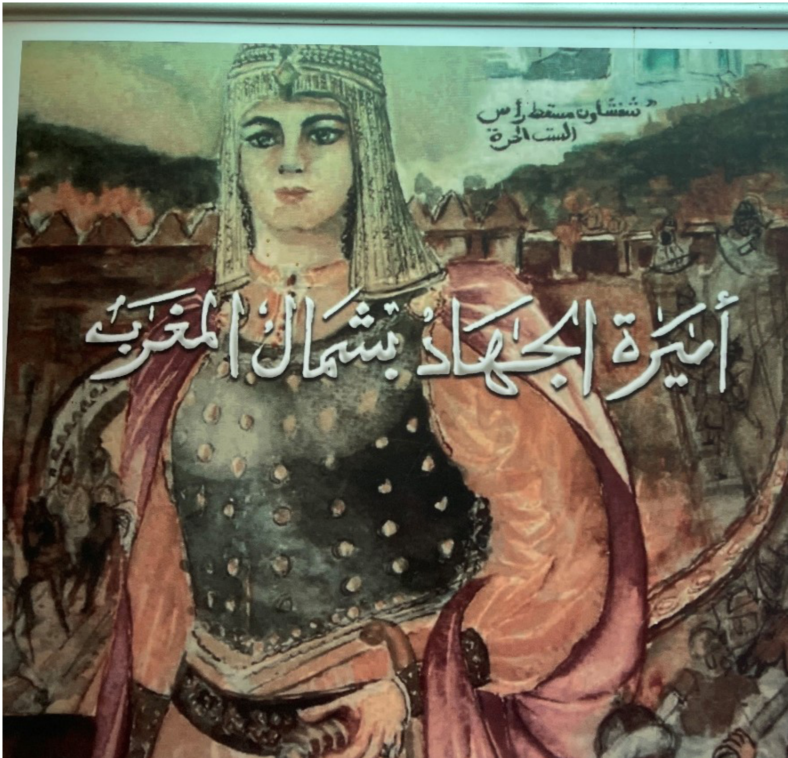

Figure 4: An artist’s depiction of al-Hurra as a “princess of jihad” in northern Morocco.

Geography, naval power, piracy, and naval trade all played a crucial role in Moroccan foreign relations during this time. Given the strategic importance of the Strait of Gibraltar linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean, Spain and Portugal sought to capture cities along the northern coast of Morocco. As a result, al-Hurra was forced to protect her territory and prevent the Europeans from seizing it. To accomplish this goal, she engaged in defensive as well as offensive campaigns. Her personal forces and those sponsored by her thus attacked numerous European ships and cities, taking ships, cargo, and thousands of prisoners (Daoud 1959), which she used to enrich the economy, strengthen the country, and pursue her interests, such as by selling European captives into slavery or ransoming them back to their countries of origin. As Risouni noted in the interview, she attacked Gibraltar, for example. For this reason, the number of prisoners Morocco took greatly increased during her reign. As a notable example, in 1528, her ships captured Portundo, a Portuguese who was called the prince of the sea. In this way, piracy gave al-Hurra revenue as well as a means to strengthen diplomatic relationships with foreign countries (Bouchmal 2016). In 1541, the Spanish priest, Contreras, came to Tétouan to free Spaniards in Al-Hurra's prison. Al-Hurra agreed to free 340 prisoners in return for a ransom of 3,000 riyals (Hakim 1983). The number of prisoners taken throughout the years is shown in Table 1, taken from Abrzaaq (2016, 303) and translated from Arabic into English.

Table1: Number and Year of Prisoners under Al-Hurra

Spoils	Nationality of spoils	Number of ships coming to Tétouan's port	Year
150 prisoners and 8 ships	Portuguese	8	1527
	Ottoman	22 or 26 then 16	1531
	Ottoman	30	1531
	Ottoman-Tétouani	A group	1531
	Tétouani	25	1536
80 women and children	Tétouani	4 or 5	1540
A Portuguese Ship	Ottoman	1	1541

Clearly aware of the importance of naval warfare, al-Hurra expanded the fleet she inherited from her husband by increasing the number of vessels and sailors and building a shipyard (Al-fkiki 1996). Because of her strong trade and diplomatic relations with the Ottomans, they used her port as a base from which to attack Iberian ships starting in 1530. For this reason, the number of Ottoman ships gradually increased in Tétouan (Abrzaaq 2016). Although the Portuguese occupied many northern Moroccan cities, they never conquered Tétouan (Daoud 1959). Al-Hurra's fleet operated freely throughout the western Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic, representing a major threat to Iberian trade and occupation of parts of northern Morocco. This type of asymmetrical warfare shaped her foreign relations, especially with the Portuguese and the governors of occupied cities. According to Mernissi (2000), "Spanish and Portuguese sources" mentioned that she "was their partner in the diplomatic game," and Mernissi described her as "the undisputed leader of the pirates in the western Mediterranean" (18). Her oldest brother, Ibrahim bin Ali bin Rashid, who ruled Chefchaouen after the death of her father and who was a minister and adviser of the Sultan, had a different vision for dealing with the Portuguese. He was against war and signed many agreements with them, including an armistice with the governor of Ceuta in 1538. Because of the importance of naval warfare and piracy in defending and enriching her city, al-Hurra asked her brother that Tétouan and Larache not be included in this agreement (Hakim 1983).

Al-Hurra likewise commanded her forces on land. For example, she was involved in the battles led by Sultan al-Wattasi against occupied Moroccan cities, such as helping lay siege to occupied Asilah in 1512, attacks that Tétouani forces led against Ceuta in 1528, and the attack on Asilah in 1528 (Abrzaaq 2016; Hakim 1983). Hakim (1983) mentioned that in Portuguese Foreign sources al-Hurra was involved in foreign diplomacy. Bouchmal (2016) mentioned that when Islam in Morocco was facing serious threats, warfare and the sharifian nobility played a major role in overcoming tribalism, unifying the people, and protecting the country.

2.4 Second Marriage and Downfall

Al-Hurra married her second husband, Sultan Ahmad al-Wattasi (1524-1549), in 1541. Instead of giving up her role and going to live with him in the capital, Fez, she had him come to her for the marriage, after which she stayed in her city and he returned to Fez (Daoud 1959). This was remarkable as it was the first time in Moroccan history that a sultan married far from the capital. As Bouchmal explained in the interview, "It is the norm that the sultan does not go anywhere to marry a woman; the woman or princess is brought to him. This

tells us about the status of her family." The power of the Wattasid rulers was deteriorating, with their control limited largely to the capital, and they were unable to fight the Iberian threat in the North. This was thus a political marriage to strengthen al-Wattasi's rule and extend his power by marrying the strongest leader in the North. The sultan leaving the capital to propose to al-Hurra showed her status as a political leader and a prominent figure in efforts to stabilize the country. After this marriage, al-Hurra started representing her husband in the North (Abrzaaq 2016; Hakim 1983). Her oldest brother, Moulay Ibrahim ben Rashid, was also married to the sultan's sister, Aisha. According to Hakim (1983), after her marriage, al-Hurra had absolute authority. Bouchmal mentioned in the interview that al-Hurra's marriage gave her more power as "She started forming allies with the Turks [Ottomans]. She made important gains. The Wattasid government needed this defense against Portuguese and Spanish forces." In other words, her importance to the sultan gave her a certain leeway in foreign affairs.

This marriage failed, however, to save the sultan's reign (Abrzaaq 2016; Daoud 1959). In 1549, the Saadi family, based in Marrakech in southern Morocco, took control of Fez and overthrew the Wattasids. Since al-Hurra had become part of the Wattasi family, this rebellion was a threat to her reign as well. Her first husband's family rebelled against the Wattasids in support of the Saadis in 1542. Her youngest brother, Mohammed ben Rashid (Emir of Chefchaouen), also joined the Saadis in rebelling against her and the Wattasids. Her main supporter, her older brother Moulay Ibrahim ben Rashid, had died in 1539. After her brother's death, she would not find the same level of support from her half-brother Sidi Mohamed as Emir of Chefchaouen, who wanted to add Tétouan to his emirate (Hakim 1983).

Another challenge that came with her marriage was the conflict between al-Hurra's desire to fight the Portuguese and her husband's desire to improve relations with them (Hakim 1983). She did not heed his advice on this matter, which made her position more tenuous. The Saadi rebellion necessitated greater flexibility with Portugal so that the Wattasids would not have to fight the Saadis in the South while also fighting the Portuguese in the North. After al-Hurra launched a war against a Portuguese governor and her younger brother turned against her, she became isolated. Subsequently, her first husband's family, the Al-Mandris, defeated her, took all her belongings, and forced her to return to her home city of Chefchaouen, where she lived out the remainder of her life and was buried (Al-ʿafia 1978; Hakim 1983). In the qasbah museum, a sign by the historian Bouchmal claims that her fleet's readiness for war against Portugal and receiving Ottoman ships led her opponents to plan to overthrow her. Bouchmal

also noted that this was a consequence of a shift in power across the country:

> As the Wattasid government fell, it meant the fall of all its government representatives, wherever they were, whether they were in Chefchaouen or other cities…All of them would fall as the Saadis' power had expanded from the South and aimed at unifying Morocco under the Saadi government and ending small emirates.

In his interview, Risouni said that al-Harra did not have any child and so left no descendants. At the time of the interview, Risouni was living in the house where al-Hurra lived after her defeat (see Figures 5 and 6). The house is now considered to be a *zawiya*, an institution or structure associated with Muslim Sufis. These structures serve a variety of purposes, including offering a place for worship, religious gatherings, and education (Berriane 2015; Burke 1969). As such, they play a strong religious, social, and cultural role, with a type of zawiya called the *tijaniyyah* connecting Morocco with its African neighbors (Berriane 2015). Historically, zawiyas often double as mausoleums, housing the remains of saints, and since al-Hurra's tomb is in a zawiya, she may be seen as a saint in this respect.

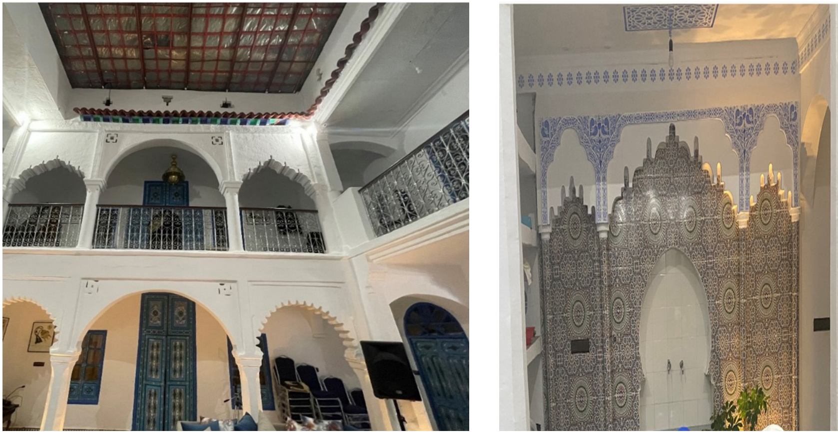

Figure 5: Photographs taken by the researcher of the house where al-Hurra lived after she was deposed.

Figure 6: Interior photographs taken by the researcher of the zawiya connected to al-Hurra's house.

2.5 How al-Hurra Is Remembered Today

The qasbah built by al-Hurra's father is today the only place in her hometown of Chefchaouen that displays information about her. However, the signs displayed at this museum do not cite any historians, as shown in Figure 5. According to my interview with the historian Dr. Fatima Bouchmal, who used to work in Chefchaouen to preserve and document its history, she was the one who wrote the information on these signs in 2011 in a partnership between Chefchaouen and Granada municipality.

The sign shown in Figure 7 states that al-Hurra was a Moroccan woman who proved herself on the political and national scene, which would have been highly unusual. She represents leadership in this historical period, and the conditions around her prepared her to lead. The sign notes her training by scientists and *fuqaha* (Muslim theologians) of that time, stating that she showed a high aptitude for politics and governance. This display suggests that al-Hurra's noble lineage was a major factor in her success. The title on the right of the sign states, "Sayyida al-Hurra: A Wattasid princess of 'Alami origin," emphasizing her noble origin and prestigious marriage to the Wattasid sultan. The text on the left highlights her active role as a war leader. The text in the middle states that few women have proven themselves in politics as she did, breaking the stereotype of a princess in a castle and distinguishing herself as a strong political leader. The sign also mentions that she left a strong, beautiful picture of herself not because she was married to a sultan but because she was among the very few women to hold government office in the country. It notes that she was an educated princess

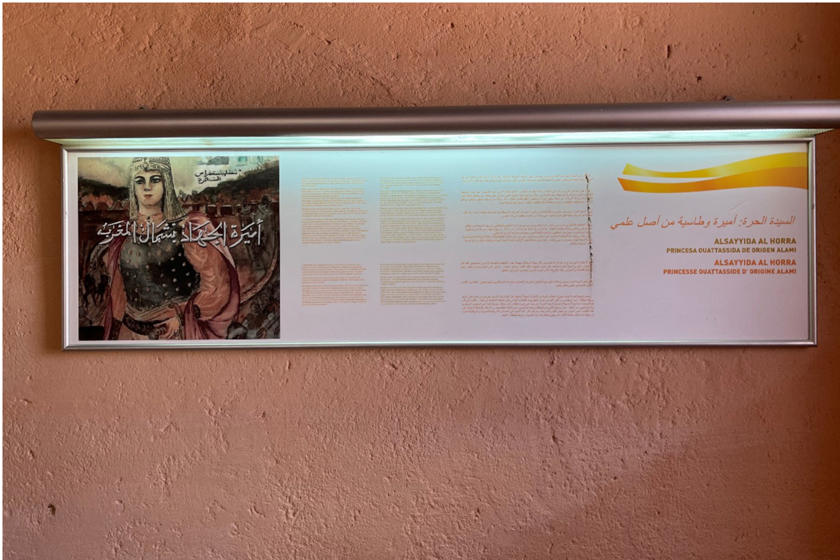

Figure 7: Sign in qasbah museum presenting information about al-Hurra.

experienced both in politics and the military, is a Moroccan and Arab icon in terms of political power and glory, and had diplomatic relations with foreign powers.

In the interview, Bouchmal explored the question of why students did not learn about al-Hurra in Moroccan schools. One issue was how history classes viewed women in general:

> First of all, it is not only Sayyida al-Hurra who is not known. There are many women in the history of Morocco that we don't know. The history that we study is limited to important historical events; we don't talk about the history of women. Usually we don't teach about the role of women in the history of Morocco. It is just a minor thing.

However, Bouchmal noted "a change in the awareness of the role of women," who "sacrificed a lot to support Islam from the beginning." Despite this role, she noted that "In our Islamic world, traditions and culture are stronger than religion. In a patriarchal society, men's opinions hold sway, contributing to the marginalization of women…"

Bouchmal also blamed the French occupation for contributing to this marginalization as they did not want to highlight positive portrayals of Muslim women:

> Occupation [of Morocco by France] fought any woman who had a bright history, distorting the picture. They didn't want to show the bright side of [our] history. French occupation attacked whatever was Islamic and sought to prove that Roman civilization was the origin [of anything positive]. Occupation distorted the picture of women. They wanted to show that women were either slaves or working on plantations.

4 Conclusion

This study explored the historical context, background, and leadership qualities of Sayyida al-Hurra, a Sufi Muslim woman who ruled over the city and environs of Tétouan in northern Morocco for 30 years during the sixteenth century. The study employed a historical and ethnographic approach, drawing data from a variety of primary and secondary Moroccan sources, including secondary Arabic literature not available in English, interviews with local historians, and visits to historical sites.

In the years leading up to al-Hurra's rule, the Spanish and Portuguese had conquered what remained of al-Andalus, forcing many Muslims and Jews to flee to northern Morocco. At the same time, the Portuguese and Spanish launched attacks along Morocco's coast, conquering cities and threatening to conquer others, while the central government in Fez was greatly weakened and unable to repel these attacks. Al-Hurra emerged as a well-trained and respected political and military leader, who employed conventional warfare, piracy, political marriages with local leaders, and a political alliance with the Ottomans to defend her people and northern Morocco.

Both of her marriages served to increase local political stability and her personal power. Her first marriage to Al-Mandri in 1510 strengthened the ties between the two ruling families of the North. During this marriage, she often ruled while her husband was away, learning much about statecraft and warfare. After her husband's death in 1519, she was appointed the governor of Tétouan and neighboring cities. When Sultan Ahmad al-Wattasi felt his reign threatened by the rise of the Saadi dynasty, he married al-Hurra in 1541. Instead of al-Hurra traveling to Fez, she required the sultan to come to her for the marriage, after which he returned to Fez and she continued ruling from her own power base. From there, she employed a large naval fleet to attack Spanish and Portuguese cities and trade through piracy. She also launched attacks on Ceuta and Asilah (Moroccan cities occupied by Portugal at that time) in 1528. She became a close ally of the Ottoman forces in Algeria against the Iberian threat, opening her markets to their goods and helping her own economy to grow through a combination of piracy and normal trade.

The sources available largely agreed on the factors that helped al-Hurra be an exceptional leader for so long. These included her respected sharifian (noble) lineage, her family's leadership in the region, an excellent education in various fields, her intelligence, flexibility, fluency in multiple languages, skill in naval warfare, and a strong personality. Despite her importance, she is seldom mentioned in local or regional history books in Arabic, and Western sources go little beyond depicting her as simply a "pirate queen." Nevertheless, there has recently been renewed interest in this figure, and local historians are starting to raise awareness about her life and legacy.

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Doublespeaking American Immigration: The Language and Politics of Asylum-Seeking in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*

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Abstract. Drawing illustration from Imbolo MBue's *Behold the Dreamers*, this paper demonstrates that postindependence socioeconomic and politico-cultural disillusionment caused by the rise in a crop of populist or strongmen African leaders, conflicts, dictatorship, and the general failure of governance have exacerbated poverty and African youths have been "dying to reach Europe" by hazardously crossing the Libyan Desert, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. The paper argues that once in Europe or the US, African immigrants encounter convoluted immigration laws and nonchalant employers that doublethink and doublespeak them into disenfranchisement and marginalization thereby rendering their asylum seeking difficult and, in most cases, impossible. The paper concludes that emigration to Europe or the US both kindles and kills hope and (re)builds and destroys lives and that the coming to power of leaders such as Donald Trump (with very strong anti-immigration policies) has proven that the US border is gradually becoming as unsafe as the sweltering heat of the Libyan Desert and the tempests of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

Keywords: Immigration, Doublespeak, Marginalization, Asylum-seeking, Americanophilia

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Introduction

Discussing Africa's lofty dreams of decolonization, Albert Memmi says that the end of colonization was naively expected to bring with it freedom and prosperity. The colonized were expected to birth into citizens and masters of their socioeconomic and politico-cultural destinies. But "unfortunately, in most cases, the long-anticipated period of freedom, won at the cost of terrible suffering, brought with it poverty and corruption, violence and sometimes chaos" (Memmi 2006, 3). Even though it was reassuring for African peoples to be governed by leaders of their own, replace the colonizer's flag with theirs, own a nascent armed forces, have a currency and boast ambassadorial and diplomatic representatives in the family of nations, all these represented only a change of masters and like new leeches, the new ruling classes turned out to be often as greedy and in some cases greedier than the colonizer (3). One of the numerous consequences of postindependence disillusionment has been the global rise in a crop of populist or strongmen leaders since 2012 such as Donald Trump (USA), Vladimir Putin (Russia), Boris Johnson (Britain), Xi Jinping (China), Tayyip Erdogan (Turkey), Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (Egypt), Narendra Modi (India), Viktor Orban (Hungary), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines), and Paul Biya (Cameroon). Their rise and the development of policies such as Brexit and Trump's Border Wall against Mexico have questioned borders and destabilized citizenship and made the governance of migration and asylum-seeking buzz phenomena characterized by *doublespeak* and *doublethink*. Such doublespeak and doublethink remind us that there are people born into contexts where they feel they belong and suddenly that belonging is threatened, perhaps because of ideological, religious, cultural, and political reasons. For example, joining a group characterized as "fundamentalist" or "terrorist" and moving to Iran, Iraq, Syria or Afghanistan, may cost one his/her British or American citizenship or nationality in the same manner that joining a group designated as "secessionists", "restorationists", "separatists" or "Ambazonian" may cause a Cameroonian living in the country to be imprisoned and those in the diaspora with dual citizenship to be stripped of their Cameroonian nationality.

For people of African descent, the diaspora has been a central and challenging but attractive experience. For instance, Alain Locke in "The New Negro" declared that Harlem "is the home of the Negro's 'Zionism'" (1925, 14) and Jorge Amado in *The War of the Saints* refers to Bahia as the "capital of all Africa" (1993, 5). Locke's "home" and Amado's "capital" have escalated, and nowadays the African Diaspora represents a global space, a worldwide web, that accounts as much for the mother continent as for wherever in the world her offspring may have been driven by the (un)kind forces of history. The socioeconomic and

politico-cultural implications of the mixing and morphing mindscape; the scattering which is also a sowing; and the dispersion of a people that is also their implantation in a new land as a result of that escalation have been hyper-celebrated by several US presidents.[1] Ronald Reagan once recounted that he received a letter just before he left office from a man who "wrote that you can go to live in France, but you can't become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Germany or Italy, but you can't become a German, an Italian. He went through Turkey, Greece, Japan, and other countries. But he said anyone, from any corner of the world, can come to live in the United States and become an American."[2] Bill Clinton boasted that, "More than any other nation on Earth, America has constantly drawn strength and spirit from wave after wave of immigrants. In each generation, they have proved to be the most restless, the most adventurous, the most innovative, the most industrious of people. Bearing different memories, honoring different heritages, they have strengthened our economy, enriched our culture, renewed our promise of freedom and opportunity for all."[3] George W. Bush also boasted that, "It says something about our country that people around the world are willing to leave their homes and leave their families and risk everything to come to America. Their talent and hard work and love of freedom have helped make America the leader of the world. And our generation will ensure that America remains a beacon of liberty and the most hope-filled society this world has ever known."[4] Barack Obama concluded that, "No matter who you are or what you look like, how you started off, or how and who you love, America is a place where you can write your own destiny."[5] Africans, especially the youths, have continuously found such immigration promises attractive. Granted the prevalence of conflicts, dictatorship and the general failure of post-independence governance, African youths have been "dying to reach Europe" by hazardously crossing the Libyan Desert, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. Many Africans have been fleeing the social pressure caused by the absence of economic opportunities. Political insecurity as a mother factor, has caused events such as the ongoing Cameroon Anglophone crisis, to precipitate emigration to the West, especially the US. However, testimonies, documentaries and experiences are continually proving that no sooner do African immigrants get to the US, than they are stunned by the fact that the US border is most often not safer than the sweltering heat of the Libyan Desert and the hazardous waves of the Mediterranean and Atlantic tempests.

This paper draws on Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers* (*Behold* hereafter) to critically analyse the Orwellian doublethink and doublespeak of the USA's immigration policies by examining the encounters between asylum seekers and the migration regime in the novel. The paper investigates whether asylum-seek-

ing kindles/kills hope and (re)builds/destroys lives by arguing that most institutions that lay claim to facilitating asylum-seeking for US immigrants are often characterized by doublethink and doublespeak about the safety of those that arrive at the US border and that of those facing the sweltering heat in the Libyan Desert and the tempests of the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. In *Behold*, doublethink which mostly takes the form of euphemisms, is a process of indoctrination whereby the asylum seeker is expected to simultaneously accept two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct, often in contravention to his/her memories or sense of reality. For instance, sometimes the asylum seeker is forced to reconcile the fact that even though the guarantors of asylum are purportedly for the withering away of the state, at the same time they stand for the strengthening of the most powerful of all forms of the state. In this novel the desperation of/for asylum-seeking often forces the asylum seeker to become conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies. It also privileges the asylum giver to simultaneously hold two immigration opinions which cancel out on asylum benefits. Knowing them to be mutually exclusive but believing in both, the giver uses asylum-granting logic against asylum-seeking logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it. That is, the asylum seeker is expected to constantly doublethink by forgetting whatever is necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again when it is needed. The doublespeak of asylum-seeking discourse is a language that sometimes deliberately obscures, disguises, distorts, or reverses the meaning of words. It also refers to deliberate ambiguity in language or actual inversions of meaning that disguise the nature of asylum-seeking truth and engenders the hostility of some US citizens towards African migrants. Drawing on the concomitant doublethinking and doublespeaking in *Behold*, this paper investigates: the extent to which USA asylum policies have upheld a seemingly hidden decision to systematically block migration into the US; the degree to which seemingly unpopular policies such as Donald Trump's Border Wall quintessentially represent US foreign policy towards immigrants; the degree of the flexibility or fluidity of both physical and psychological US borders that immigrants must cross before they become socioeconomically and politico-culturally engaged or disengaged, and how US borders and borderings have moved from the margins into the center of political and social life thereby affecting racialized minorities in their everyday lives while creating growing exclusionary grey zones in the US. These levels of analysis would affirm the compositeness and always-in-the-making nature of contemporary global citizenship and networks of governance. Most importantly, such an analysis would open a range of questions concerning the forces of spatial socialization that define and are defined by asylum seekers in *Behold*.

This paper garners its relevance from the fact that even though a lot of critical attention has been given to *Behold*, no critic has attempted to analyze its thematization of migration using doublespeaking and doublethinking as a critical lens.[6]

Orwellian Doublespeak and Doublethink as Part of Contemporary Society

On 25 April 2018, Emmanuel Macron delivered a speech to the joint houses of the US Congress in which he captured the reigning political zeitgeist by directly confronting the issues of fake news, post-truth, and misinformation as corrosives to the very spirit of democracies[7] As early as 1946, George Orwell, in his essay, "Politics and the English Language," had referenced this ever-deepening linguistico-political malaise by identifying insincerity as a great enemy of clear language that is often manifested through the gap between one's real and one's declared aims and the use of long words and exhausted idioms (1946[1952], 137). Orwell went on to express his belief that language is an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought by asserting that in our time political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible; political language consists largely of euphemisms, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness; and "political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (136, 139). Orwell's belief in the power of language to achieve and maintain political control is affirmed in his novel *1984* where the Party in Oceania understands the power of language to control of society. The official language of the world of *1984* is Newspeak, a language that deliberately diminishes instead of extending the range of thought; provides a medium of expression for the Party and its members; and hinders all other modes of thought (Orwell 1949, 247). Newspeak is the medium used to express mental processes in the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To Winston Smith, the protagonist of *1984*, doublethink involves knowing and not to knowing, being conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, holding "simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them," using logic against logic, repudiating morality while laying claim to it, believing that democracy is impossible and that the ruling party is the guardian of democracy (32).

Doublethink also involves forgetting whatever it is necessary to forget, drawing it back into memory when it is needed, promptly forgetting it again, and then applying the same process to the process itself. It equally prompts conscious inducement of unconsciousness and becoming unconscious of the act of hypnosis performed. Put differently, understanding the word doublethink involves the use of doublethink (33). As Lutz (1999, x-xi) rightly clarifies, dou-

blespeak is characterized by incongruity between what is said, or left unsaid, and what really is, between the word and the referent, between seem and be, between the essential function of language (communication) and what doublespeak does (misleads, distorts, deceives, inflates, circumvents, and obfuscates). Doublespeak is language that avoids responsibility, makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, the unpleasant appear attractive, appears to communicate, alters our perception of reality, corrupts our thinking and breeds suspicion, cynicism, distrust and hostility. Doublespeaking and doublethinking are two concomitant processes. In most societies, doublespeak is often masterminded by the police. In Orwell's Oceania, the secret police, Thinkpol, are responsible for the detection, prosecution, and elimination of unspoken beliefs and doubts that contradict the Party. They use audio-visual surveillance via the telescreens and offender-profiling to monitor the populace. In *Behold*, doublespeak and doublethink take the form of what Lutz (1989, 4-6), in his affirmation of Orwell's idea, calls euphemisms and jargon; Gobbledygook or bureaucratese characterized by the use of bombastic diction; and inflated language that makes the ordinary seem extraordinary, elevates the common, makes everyday things seem impressive, gives an air of importance to unimportant people, situations or things, and complicates the simple. The use of doublespeak as an analytical parameter for immigration discourse in Mbue's *Behold* is especially legitimated by the fact that Orwellian Thinkpol parallels immigration officials and economic operators in the novel.

Summary of the Narrative in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*

Set in Cameroon and the US, *Behold* tells the story of Jende Jonga (a Cameroonian immigrant in the US on a temporary visa pending his asylum case) and his wife, Neni Jonga, (a community-college student on a student visa). The couple have recently fulfilled their biggest dream by emigrating from Cameroon to the US in search of greener pastures that they hope would create a better life for their son, Liomi. Neni works as a home health aide to the elderly and studies chemistry at a community college, with the hopes of becoming a pharmacist. Clark Edwards, an executive at Lehman Brothers (the firm whose bankruptcy played a major role in the US recession in 2008), offers Jende a driver's job, which pays $35,000 per year – far more than he earned when he was working as a dishwasher or driving livery cabs in the Bronx during his first couple of years in New York. Clark's wife, Cindy Edwards, is a nutritionist with a rags-to-riches background. The central plot of the novel focuses on the intersections of the lives of the Jonga and Edwards families; intersections that reveal their master-servant relationships as well as the parallelisms between high-class stress and lower class worries. Clark is increasingly an absent father who is stressed because he feels

a sense of premonition about the overdependence of Lehman Brothers on gimcrack bookkeeping and investments in subprime real estate products. He occasionally seeks refuge through encounters with prostitutes. Cindy, burdened by an imposter syndrome because she grew up in poverty and was conceived out of unforgettable rape, resorts to alcohol and Vicodin to soothe her worries over her marital insecurity and absent husband. Clark and Cindy's first son, Vince, on the brink of graduating from a prestigious law school, rejects his high-class-assured pathway into the wealthy elite by deciding to go to India to find his lost self especially because he considers his family as too materialistic. His younger brother, Mighty, grows increasingly unhappy as he overhears the ever-increasing acrimonious arguments between his parents. Similarly, Jende's life is complicated because of his pending immigration case, being overseen by a marginally competent Nigerian-American lawyer, who preys on Jende's misfortune by making constant requests for more fees.

Jende's request for asylum is rejected and deportation looms large. Matters come to a cataclysm for both families through a series of interrelated happenings: Vince overwhelms his parents by choosing to go to India; Lehman Brothers announces insolvency; and the judge rejects Jende's manufactured story of persecution back in Cameroon and he loses his asylum case. Also, a newspaper story about a madam with Wall Street clients confirms Cindy's suspicions about Clark's extramarital affairs and Cindy forces Clark to fire Jende for covering for his boss; Neni gives birth to their daughter Timba; and Dean Flipkens refuses to nominate Neni for scholarships and the pharmacy school becomes unaffordable. Determined to get a lawyer's fees for Jende and salvage their American Dream, Neni blackmails Cindy for $10,000 to keep silent about Cindy's binge alcohol and drug addictions. Neni's attempts to secure her American future fails and Jende makes it clear that he is tired of struggling, and voluntarily opts to return to Cameroon. Neni's tenacity for her American dream makes her consider her friend Betty's idea of divorcing Jende and then marrying her cousin, an American citizen, for a green card, which infuriates Jende. Alcohol and drugs kill Cindy. Clark becomes a lobbyist for the credit union industry. The Jongas, using the windfall from Cindy as a nest egg, return to Cameroon, where Jende plans to become a ballsy entrepreneur and live comfortably in Limbe, where such money is enough for affluence. Neni acquiescently stands by Jende, despite her own obsession for America and disillusionment that her children may miss out on the matchless opportunities in America.[8] The novel, therefore, explores the sustainability of the American Dream by taking a critical look at the idea that anyone who is willing to work hard can become prosperous in the United States.

The Disenfranchisement of Holders of Nonimmigrant Visas in the United States

In *Behold*, Mbue captures Jende and his wife, Neni's search for greener pastures through the novel's epigraph drawn from Deuteronomy 8: 7–9: "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land – a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig-trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills" (Mbue 2017, 2). When the novel opens, Jende has been living in that Promised Land, the US (illegally?) for three years. Referencing Jende's visa application process to the Promised Land, the narrator tells us that when he went to the American embassy in Yaoundé to apply for the visa, he had told the consulate that he was going to be in New York City for only three months (18). The evidence he submitted to back his claim included: "his work supervisor's letter describing him as a diligent employee who would never abandon [his work] to go and roam aimlessly in America; his son's birth certificate, to show he will never remain in America and desert his child; [and] the title on a piece of land his father had given him, to show he intended to return and build on the land." There were also, "a letter from the town planning office stating that he had applied for a permit to build a house; [and another letter] from a friend who swore under oath that Jende wasn't going to remain in America because they were going to open a drinking spot together when he returned" (18). The relatively long incomprehensible list of requirements represents inflated language because it seems designed to make an ordinary global-village 21st-century visa seem extraordinary, impressive, and complex. No wonder, we soon learn that in his desire to get the impressive visa, Jende lied to the consulate, and the narrator affirms that people like Jende got to America and stayed until they became green-card conquerors or "American passport-bearing conquerors with pockets full of dollars and photos of a happy life" and that when Jende boarded an Air France flight from Douala, he was "certain he wouldn't see Cameroon again until he had claimed his share of the milk, honey and liberty flowing in America" (19). Jende is a contemporary symbolization of what Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies and Ali A. Mazrui refer to as colonialism's "era of the *labor imperative*" that was marked by an exportation of millions of Africans to the Americas (vii). What slightly differentiates him from his forbears is that his movement is volitional while theirs was enforced by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. His mind frame reminds one of the brain drain that has been depleting Africa of her skilled human resources.

Referencing the spatial setting as an antagonist/foil to immigration dreams, Mbue reveals the devastating state of the Jendes' "sunless one-bedroom apartment" (27) when Vince and Mighty Edwards, the sons of Jende's employers, Clark and Cindy Edwards, visit them for a little dinner. The Edwards boys are fazed by the obvious signs of poverty such as the worn-out brown carpet; the retro TV sitting on a coffee table; the fan struggling to do the job of an AC; the fake flowers hanging on the wall; and the fact that everyone sleeps in the same bedroom (163). The apartment's size and the room furniture give a picture of the most telling signs of abject impecuniosity and remind us that on no account will these immigrants ever be able to find the kind of lucullian life for which they risked everything and moved to America. The narrator tells us that to sustain himself and his family, Jende is obliged to work two low paid jobs washing dishes at two restaurants with one of them named Hell's Kitchen. He works mornings, afternoons, evenings, and weekends (257). Like Jende, many other immigrants such as Betty, a close friend of Neni, are relentlessly working two jobs with different days and time. We are told that after thirty-one years in the US, Betty is still trying to survive even though she already has her papers. A citizen for over a decade and in her early forties, she is still working two jobs as a certified nursing assistant at nursing homes and stuck in a nursing school (315). The cultural subordination of the Jongas' periphery to the Edwards' center, the shattering of immigrants' apocryphal expectations of the American Dream and the underlying international economic hierarchy seen through the number of jobs that immigrants are forced to do, represent the emblematic practices and abuses characteristic of imperial capital. Most importantly, the Jongas' life of misery in a land of plenty (the USA) reminds us that the hyperbolic promises of the American Dream are as unattainable as the vaunted promises of African independence that the Jongas had tried to escape from by emigrating to the US. The unattainability of both dreams symbolized by Jende's workplace, "Hell's Kitchen," with its symbolic insinuations of hellfire, questions the socioeconomic and politico-cultural benefits of their visas. Furthermore, Mbue's "Hell's Kitchen" affords the possibility of a useful analogy – if one were to consider the US economy where Jende works as an apartment or a house that is hellish, then one could argue that the name "Hell's Kitchen" is an indirect suggestion that by emigrating to the US, Jende has moved into hell and even there, his situation is so bad that he neither finds himself in the comfort of a parlor nor a bedroom.

The above physical and psychological socioeconomic and politico-cultural borders confronted by immigrants especially the Jendes which are a product of their visa types testify to the unviability of the American dream. Jende and Neni have nonimmigrant temporary visas that have allowed them to visit the US for

work and studies respectively. Their stays are temporary and should have clear departure dates. Jende's temporary work visa is issued to people who come to the US for employment lasting a fixed period. A petition is usually required by a prospective employer, who needs to apply to the US authorities beforehand. An approved petition is then used by the worker to obtain a nonimmigrant work visa.[9] The US Department of State's, Bureau of Consular Affairs offers at least 34 nonimmigrant visa and at least 16 immigrant visa categories that can further be subcategorized and this makes the US border as challenging as the Libyan Desert and the Mediterranean and Atlantic tempests.[10] As an international student, Neni qualifies for either: the F-1 Visa (usually subcategorized into F-1, F-2 and F-3) for academic studies, the J-1Visa (usually subcategorized into J-1 and J-2) for practical training, and the M-1Visa for non-academic vocational studies.[11]

In "What Makes a Concept Good?", John Gerring suggests eight-fold qualities: "familiarity, resonance, parsimony, coherence, differentiation, depth, theoretical utility and field utility" (1999:357). Granted the continuing surge in emigration to the US by even the half-educated like Jende and Neni, one could argue that even though the concept of the visa does well on most of these criteria, it would be difficult to say it is either especially familiar, parsimonious, or particularly coherent. By that token, one could also argue that its lack of familiarity, parsimony and coherence steadily makes it more enigmatic. The argument here is that a simplified, parsimonious, and coherent description of US visa categories would help ease comprehension for the Jendes and Nenis. Following Orwell's injunction that "Good prose is like a windowpane, it hides nothing" (1968, 6), one could analogically argue that a good visa description should be like a windowpane to emigration. Thus, the above relatively lengthy explanations of nonimmigrant visas, especially study visas, testifies to the jargon and Gobbledygook or bureaucratese of immigration and consequently its Orwellian language. Thus, to deal with immigration law is to experience the full force and power of language: the imprecisions, limitations, and problems. In many respects, immigrants' reading of immigration law is very much like reading poetry, where we sometimes miss the power by concentrating on the syntax of the poem. Immigrants, too, miss the power of immigration law by concentrating on its sometimes-convoluted structures. Taken together, the complex descriptions of Jende's and Neni's visas attest to the fact that they are symbols of socioeconomic restriction and that the study of immigration law can no longer be confined to the US geographic borders, that the matter of where immigration law begins and ends is always, necessarily, in a state of flux and cannot be settled conclusively in advance as immigrants usually naively think before immigrating to the US.

This is exactly what happens to the Jendes because they never fully comprehended the strengths and limitations their visas imposed on them. Even though Neni qualifies for, and is invited, to join the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, her request for nomination for scholarships is turned down by Dean Flipkens who tells her that he does not nominate students by their requests. He decides to send Neni to financial aid but changes his mind because, as an international student, she is not eligible for scholarship or grants offered to citizens or permanent residents (295). He even tells Neni outright that the dream of becoming a pharmacist is not meant for people like her (296-97). The Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society thinks that Neni is a Talented Tenth, but the Dean thinks that she is a commoner striving for what only the distinguished can achieve. To some extent Flipkens reminds one of the need to decolonize universities and make them "pluriversities."[12] In the same vein, Bubakar, Jende's lawyer for his asylum case, affirms that immigration law/language induces/necessitates selective amnesia and prompts conscious inducement of unconsciousness, thereby engendering doublespeak when he advises Jende that immigration has "many things that are illegal and many that are gray (things that are illegal but which the government doesn't want to spend time worrying about). My advice to someone like you is to always stay close to the gray area and keep yourself and your family safe" (72). Bubakar concludes that Jende must, "Stay away from any place where you can run into police [because] the police is for the protection of white people. Maybe black women and black children sometimes, but never black men. Black men and police are palm oil and water" (72). Bubakar's advice corroborates the characterization of the US as both a gatekeeping nation and a nation of immigrants, making the history and contemporary state of US immigration law reflect a deep-rooted ambivalence about the role of immigration and immigrants in US society. Furthermore, his idea of many immigration things that are illegal and gray foregrounds US borders, not primarily those that are policed by the guards, which is how immigration controls are commonly imagined, but the borders between citizen and migrant, between us/Americans and them/foreigners. The doublespeak of immigration law asserts US international borders as highly selective filters, sorting out the desirable from the undesirable, the genuine from the bogus, the legal from the illegal, and permitting only the deserving to enter state territory physically and psychologically. Jende's cousin, Winston, affirms this by telling Jende that a black man does not get a good job in the US by speaking the truth to white people (17).

Winston acknowledges that to make better Jende's opportunity of getting a job as a chauffeur, he had lied to Frank that Jende drives a limo sometimes, and that he used to be a chauffeur for a family in New Jersey. This highlights

the importance of race in America. The issue of race is further confirmed when the narrator references the fact that once, while on Fifty-eight Street, Neni had observed that on both sides of the street people were relating exclusively with their kind: white men and women holding hands; black teenagers giggling with one another; white mothers pushing strollers alongside one another; and black women chatting with each other (94). She had further observed that, "Even in New York City men and women, young and old, rich and poor, preferred their kind when it came to those they kept closest" to avoid spending their limited energy trying to blend into worlds they were being excluded from (95). Winston believes that Black men are disenfranchised by their race and can only achieve success by compensating with lies. Through Bubakar's disclosure of illegal and gray things of immigration, and Winston's assertion of the necessity of lies on a black man's CV for job seeking, Mbue reminds us of the linguistic duplicity and the disconnection between expectation/promise and outcome within which immigration proceedings operate to create gray areas manipulable according to the dictates of America's malleable foreign policy. The act of lying to get jobs also reminds one of Orwell's idea of doublethinking and doublespeaking as a metaphor in this paper. That this practice has been adopted by the immigrants is Mbue's manner of suggesting that sometimes, powerlessness, just like power, corrupts absolutely. It is also Mbue's way of telling the reader that power means being in a position to make one's definition the only one people use. Thus, the great power of immigration law resides in its power to define, and to apply its definitions of who qualifies for jobs and who does not; to define what is illegal and what is gray by creating new illegalities and erasing old ones. In fact, what is illegal or gray on one occasion, city or state may not be gray in another and vice versa. Thus, much of immigration law involves learning definitions of legalities, illegalities, and grayness, and ways in which those definitions can be applied to specific situations.

US immigration law doublespeaks by promising possibilities but only to disappoint, and that forces Jende and Neni to doublespeak by lying. This exacerbates their disenfranchisement and marginalization in US society. Jende's lies to the consulate, cited earlier, bespeak unbridled Americanophilia that is later captured through the narrator's referencing of Neni's dreams in her late twenties. The happy and successful, well-educated, and respectable African Americans she saw on TV in Cameroon made her believe that everyone could flourish in America. She saw the movies, *Boyz n the Hood* and *Do the Right Thing*, but was not convinced that the kind of black life they depicted was true. To her, these movies represented a very small percentage of black life in the same manner that she thought Americans understood that the popularized images of war and star-

vation in Africa were but a very small percentage of African life. "Every picture she'd seen of Cameroonians in America was a portrait of bliss: children laughing in snow; couples smiling at a mall; families posing in front of a nice house with a nice car nearby. America, to her, was synonymous with happiness" (Mbue 312). We are also told that shows such as *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and *The Cosby Show* further gave Neni the impression that the US was a place where blacks had the same chance at prosperity as the whites. Through Neni, Mbue delineates a quintessentially naïve African who fails to make a distinction between the coziness of American life in the movies and shows and the reality on the ground. The episodic tales which the movies and shows gave her were not related to one another to produce a more complete American scene. Each was presented as an isolated, self-contained event rather than part of a wider tapestry of American experience. The life-in-the-US picture drawn by the movies and shows was incomplete; they engaged in shorthand by reporting rather than explaining, and this performed a great disservice to Neni's dreams. Thus, one could argue that Neni's naivety reminds us that the global entertainment media sits awkwardly between, and at the service of, a cultural imperialism and globalization that ensure that economies, polities, and cultures are interconnected by several asymmetrical power relations and processes without necessarily developing an acute understanding of the interdependencies between the national and the international spheres, the domestic and the foreign and global.

Mbue's use of the omniscient point of view to reference Neni's television-shows-nourished-naivety of the power dynamics in the US society and consequently in the US immigration realities/nightmares is perhaps her subtle manner of saying that almost everyone, except Neni, knows the difference between US television/immigration appearances and the US society's realities. It is important to recall that one of her favorite sitcoms, *The Cosby Show*, was filmed in New York because blacks such as Bill Cosby disliked working in Hollywood (the symbolic apex of the US entertainment industry) perhaps because of his sensitivity to Hollywood's service to cultural imperialism and hegemonic globalization. A neighborhood located in Los Angeles, California, Hollywood is synonymous with the glamour, money, and the power of the entertainment industry to shape minds and opinions. As the show-business capital of the world, Hollywood is home to many famous television and movie studios and record companies with glitzy statuses where stars are (still)born and dreams come true only for a lucky few. By referencing how these sitcoms have shaped Neni's perception of the US, Mbue seems to be reminding us that just like *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and *The Cosby Show*, Hollywood and the US entertainment industry, US immigration on the surface reeks of glitz, but a dark side lurks

underneath. It is only when Neni learns how to strip away the phony tinsel (of glamor and success) of US immigration that she finds the real tinsel (of discrimination and marginalization) lurking underneath. Also, just like the appealing US entertainment industry that Neni's television shows represent, each year, the appeal of immigration attracts thousands of starry-eyed runaway Africans and naive dream-pursuers to the US with little chance of making it big. Like Neni and Jende, many spend what little money they have on pursuing false education and hiring legal agents such as Bubakar and when the money runs out, these would-be stars/immigrants often become desperate, even homeless. Those who are not courageous like Jende turn to drugs, prostitution, or the thriving porn industry. The US entertainment industry and US immigration, therefore, parallel each other with false hope, and this perhaps explains why hundreds of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, William Holden, Truman Capote, Heath Ledger and Whitney Houston have experienced drug or alcohol-related deaths in the same manner that thousands of African immigrants die in the sweltering heat of the Libyan Desert and the hazardous waves of the Mediterranean and Atlantic tempests emigrating to Europe and the US. The US entertainment industry and US immigration are, therefore, two utopias that encourage Neni to uncritically embrace the belief that what is pragmatically possible is fixed independently in our imaginations and shaped by our visions without the interference of societal structures and ideologies. Through the sitcoms, the entertainment industry doublespeaks at the service of US immigration, thereby misleading immigrants.

The rhetoric of Jende's purported evidence (referenced earlier), that he will leave America when his visa expires, demonstrates that the immigrants' ability to circumvent immigration law through blatant lies-telling is not only a type of knowledge, but also a form of communication and a decision-making strategy based on persuasion or conviction through the mobilization of the persuasive potential of accepted and even objectionable verbal and nonverbal sequences and artifacts. That the consulate easily buys into Jende's lies – we are left wondering how, for instance, a child's birth certificate can prove that the father will return home after visa expiry – is Mbue's manner of saying that the maniacal mutual suspicion between the consulate and the immigrants often creates situational imbroglios where the consulate sometimes ends up trusting the dishonest/illegal immigrants and distrusting the trustworthy/legal ones. It is also her manner of demonstrating that the rhetoric that forms a structural component of immigration law sometimes forces immigrants to lie. Furthermore, the convoluted nature of Jende's proof of willingness to return after visa expiry equally signifies the bureaucracy that has clogged the immigration machinery. Immigration

law bureaucracy becomes a subtle communication form, a selection restriction blueprint and a decision-making strategy based on US authoritative impositions through the mobilization of the demonstrative potential of regularized procedures and normative standards. Thus, by referencing Jende's "temporary visa" and Neni's "student visa," Mbue navigates the US immigration landscape of confronting perspectives, aiming not so much to iron out the contradictions of US immigration law nor to disprove the verdicts (though such disproving will at times be necessary) as to think within the paradoxes, perplexities, and apparent certitudes that the American Dream is taken to insinuate. Brazenly cosmopolitan yet enmeshed in singular biographies and localities, saturated with conflicting promises, the limitations of nonimmigrant visas glimpsed in Mbue's novel are those of immigrants' creative practices of remembrance, anticipation, and active forgetting fueled by both the doublespeak of US immigration laws and the immigrants' art of blatant dishonesty.

The Doublespeak of the Business and Economics of Hiring and Firing Immigrants

The world of *Behold* can arguably be divided between the powerful employers and the powerless employees. Before Clark hires Jende, he strictly tells him: "Let me tell you what I want in a driver. I demand loyalty. I demand dependability. I demand punctuality, and I demand that you do as I say and ask no questions" (Mbue 8). It is important to remember that on the day of the interview, Jende wears a green pinstripe suit that symbolizes the subtle cultural markers of wealth in the US. When Clark is about to fire Jende, he lackadaisically says "I'm really sorry, Jende, but I'm going to have to let you go" (251). Words and expressions such as loyalty, dependability, punctuality, do as I say and ask no questions possess employer-determined fluidities which employers usually exploit to sound positive and justifiable the laying off of workers as constructive dismissal, production cessation, elimination of positions, strengthening global effectiveness, and synchronization of organizational structures. Sometimes they refer to firing as curbing redundancy, excessed, transitioned, voluntary severance, excess to requirements and correctsized (Lutz 117). Also, euphemistic expressions are often turned into dysfemisms when the need for firing a worker arises. This is what happens when labor ethic is manipulated to suddenly become the foundation for unethical dismissal from work. Clark's repetitive pronouncement of his expectations constitute Gobbledygook or bureaucratese because his piling of words is meant to overwhelm Jende. This explains why the only thing Jende says in response is "Yes, sir, of course, Mr. Edwards" (8). As if the intimidation is not enough, Clark tells Jende that he will have to sign a confidentiality agreement

that he will never say anything about what he hears him say or sees him do to anyone. Such an agreement implies that Jende does not have the right to report Clark even if Clark were to turn out to be a criminal of any sort. This affirms Jende's position as a symbol of powerlessness in the face of US corporate greed. In Chapter sixteen, Vince exposes the cannibalism of such greed by telling Jende that "the Americans killed Patrice Lumumba in their effort to stop the spread of communism and tighten their grip around the world" (Mbue 103). When Jende, just like his wife, naively expresses his Americanophilia by telling Vince that there is nothing Vince or any man can say to convince him that America is not the greatest country in the world, Vince explains that the problem is that people like Jende are not willing to see the truth about the US because the illusion suits them by feeding their ambitions. He cites his parents as an example of people struggling under the weight of so many pointless pressures imposed on them by US life (103). His parents, Vince concludes, have been going down "a path of achievements and accomplishments and material success and shit that means nothing because that's what America's all about, and now they're trapped" (103-104). In the novel, these achievements, accomplishments, and material success that symbolize the success of corporate greed are aptly symbolized through Vince's father, Clark, a workaholic, and authoritative investment banker who has been working at Lehman Brothers for twenty-two years.

Two weeks before the world learns about the collapse of Lehman Brothers, Jende has a dream in which his old friend, Bosco, reappears expressing his hatred for the Cameroonian "money doublers" (swindlers) who take money from people with the promise to double their sum but run off with all the money. In the dream, Bosco recalls how his mother once gave the doublers his school fees so that they could double the sum and help her use the second half to pay for Bosco's sister's school fees but they ran away with the money (168). Mbue uses the dream to foreshadow the financial doom that will befall the world when Jende wakes up. Though the doublers are street criminals in Cameroon, far removed from the elite, privileged world that the Wall Street brokers inhabit, both are linked by their immoral willingness to exploit people's dreams to enrich themselves. The doublers are parallel figures to Wall Street stockbrokers and investment bankers, signifying the possibility of corruption and exploitation anywhere. Lehman Brothers Holdings, Inc. was the fourth-largest investment bank in the United States at the time of the housing market crash (2007-2009), employing over 25,000 employees worldwide. When Lehman Brothers collapses, the narrator captures the spiral effects of "the plague that had descended on the homes of former Lehman employees" by indicating that restaurateurs, artists, private tutors, magazine publishers, directors, limousine drivers, nannies,

housekeepers, employment agencies, virtually everyone panicked because their bread and wine would disappear along with the billions of dollars that vanished the day Lehman Brothers died (174). Their bread and wine did disappear because the firm filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on 15/09/2008 (to date the largest bankruptcy filing in U.S. history) and is widely credited with being responsible for the financial crisis that ensued.[13] The fall of Lehman Brothers constitutes a climax that is further aggravated when Mrs. Edwards learns of her husband's adultery. This massive upset in the Edwards's lives leads to a corresponding massive upset in the Jonga family's lives. Jende confirms that the crisis led to loss of jobs, postponements of retirements, withdrawals of college education funds, abandonments of the purchase of dream homes, reconsiderations of dream wedding plans and cancellations of dream vacations (184). Following the language of the doublespeak of the business and economics of hiring and firing, the death of Lehman Brothers implies that there would be constructive dismissals because a production cessation has occurred, triggering an elimination of positions. In other words, a need has arisen in the US economy for strengthening global effectiveness through various measures. Having worked with the Lehman Brothers for more than two decades, Clark has become an adept in the art of hiring and firing workers. It is, therefore, not surprising that one person who immediately suffers from the spiral effect is Jende. Clark calls Jende to his office and doublespeakingly tells Jende:

> I hope you know, Jende, that I think very highly of you. You've been by far my favorite chauffeur, there really isn't any comparison. You're hardworking, you're respectful, you're a good guy to be around. It's been really great. I'm really sorry, Jende, but I'm going to have to let you go. I know it's a horrible time for something like this to happen, with the new baby. (251)

Jende demands to know why he has been fired and instead of coming out clearly and saying that his sack is a combination of punishment for having naively exposed Clark's extramarital affairs and also one of the side effects of the collapse of Lehman Brothers, Clark again doublespeaks: "There's just too much going on now, Jende… I'm really sorry. I'm trying to do the best I can… I really am, but, apparently, it's not good enough, and it's … it's all getting to be a bit too much. I'm just… It's a very complicated–" (252). Clark does not realize that the more euphemistic he tries to be, the more Jende feels hurt because his euphemism suggests insincerity, evasiveness, and lack of candor.

Behold alludes to the time before the 2008 election, reflecting the hope that lots of black Americans and immigrants had about a black man running for

president, the economic horror that struck the country after the stock market crashed, and the fears and experiences of many Americans during that time. From this perspective, someone who sees things from Clark's perspective could argue that Clark's use of euphemism is aimed at protecting or shielding Jende against psychological harm; uplifting, talking him up and boosting his morale; provoking and inspiring him; and creating phatic cohesion by showing solidarity towards Jende's condition. But Clark's euphemism (in)advertently alters the direction of their conversation as Clark (un)consciously becomes arguably ludic thereby (un)wittingly making fun of Jende by mystifying, misrepresenting, and inhibiting clear communication especially as Jende wants to know the role that the discovery of Clark's adultery by his wife might have played in his sacking. Clark's use of euphemisms at the service of a neoliberal capitalist regime/corporation of which immigration is part and parcel reminds us that he is a symbolic representation of the policies of neoliberal capitalism such as its advocacy of fiscal austerity, its potential danger to workers' rights, its giving of too much power to corporations, and its worsening of economic inequality. To some large extent, Clark synecdochally represents ironfisted Reaganomics. He reminds us of neoliberalism's creation of monopolies that ensure that skilled workers command higher wages while low-skilled workers suffer from stagnant wages. The sack teaches Jende that the US he and Neni have long seen as a house of reason in which they have been working has proven to be a prison house of paradoxes whose rooms do not connect and whose passageways lead nowhere. The failure of Lehman Brothers dispels the immigration myth that there are global needs but only one (diverse) center, the US, where knowledge, economies, polities and socialities are produced to solve the problem of everybody. To contribute to breaking the code of Americanophilia, the Jendes will need to begin to argue that the anchor of deconstructing the doublespeak/doublethink of hiring and firing shall be that US greener pastures are greener only from a distance and so immigrants can (better) make it even in their home communities. Furthermore, such unexplained firing promotes cosmopolitanism of the fittest, and the fittest are those who fit capitalist and neoliberal designs, which, of course, are not universal, but, postulated as such, and leave out of the US cosmopolis all those who are not interested in "fitting" or are not qualified to fit in. Delineating such cosmopolitanism of the fittest is Mbue's manner of reminding us that today, in the US, the idea that the American Dream engenders a survival of the fittest that is in turn naturally connected with brutal competition is being contested. Her argument, therefore, is that it is possible for the US economy to think of survival of immigrant communities, rather than of the fittest so that the idea of the common good would return to liberal thinking through a constructive

detachment-without-antagonism of economy from capitalist greed. When this happens, both Americans and immigrants would enter into a fuzzy socioeconomic and politico-cultural terrain where cosmopolitanism would cease to be a US project, and as such part of Americanization and become a project in which all will participate, in which every cosmo-polis (immigrant histories) will join as an ambitious design in which the pluriversal will be the multiversally accepted aspiration; that is, a cosmopolitan localism or cosmolocalism that would advance alternatives that would indubitably subvert dominant capitalist imaginary significations, attitudes, and modalities such as arbitrary firing. Even though some may argue that the liberal tradition that engendered capitalist competition was never based on such harmonization; that the postulation of such harmonization is rather evangelical and at odds with a civilization that has proven to be fostering competition, there is relatively an undeniable sense in which Mbue's narrative is also about the possibility of human utopia.

Jende's situation is compounded by his receipt of a letter from Immigration stating:

> On the basis of being admitted to the United States on August of 2004 with authorization to remain for a period not to exceed three months and staying beyond November 2004 without further authorization, it has been charged that he is subject to removal from the United States. He has to appear before an immigration judge to show why he should not be removed from the country. (224)

After considering the extent of the economic doublespeak that has been engendered by the financial crisis, Jende opts for voluntary departure to Cameroon, telling Neni in mock instruction that she has been sold "the stupid nonsense about America being the greatest country in the world. America is full of lies and people who want to hear lies. Anyone who has no sense can believe the lies and stay here forever, hoping that things will get better for them one day. I won't live my life in the hope that someday I will magically become happy" (332-333). Granted that Jende's decision to return is economically motivated, Neni's incapacity to see how happy they would be in Cameroon, where the cost of living is far cheaper, compared with their current condition, reveals how economically biased Americanophiles can become. Neni's Americanized mind cannot conceive of the possibility that the poor people of their hometown, Limbe, Cameroon, could possibly be happy. Like the immigration laws that have been waged against them, her Americanized mind has a rigid, one-dimensional, and ideological understanding of the term prosperity. The immigration office's decision that the Jongas should leave the US implies that the once undying myth that the

Jongas' immigration will remove all poverty forever from their lives, now lies shattered. It is surprising that the Jongas, like so many people, believed it for so many years with such childlike innocence; forgetting that even US societies that had witnessed unprecedented prosperity before the financial crisis, were never able to exile either poverty or destitution completely from within US borders.

Jende reminds Neni that nonimmigrants are not the only ones for whom the pursuit of the American Dream has turned out to be a scam: "You should have been with me last week when I saw this man who used to drive another executive at Lehman Brothers. We used to sit together outside the building sometimes; he was a fresh round man. I saw him downtown: The man looked like he had his last good meal a year ago. He has not been able to find another job" (310). Arguing that the financial crisis has proven to be no respecter of race and visas, Jende further tells Neni: "Everyone is losing jobs everywhere and looking for new jobs. If he, an American, a white man with papers, cannot get a new chauffeur job then what about me? I don't know if I can continue suffering like this just because I want to live in America" (310). Mbue's tone that has been one of cautious optimism now turns to eventual pessimism about the American immigrantion experience. She has shown us the possible ways that immigrants can succeed, in a way that cautiously reminds us of how that can be taken away, and then shifts to a tone of pessimism as she makes clear that success for immigrants is almost impossible. If the argument that the Statue of Christopher Columbus Symbol Icon which stands in Columbus Circle in Manhattan (95) symbolizes the Jonga family's search for a land of prosperity and riches – not unlike the purpose of Columbus's journey; if the Jonga could be considered an explorer who led his family in this search and who, like Columbus, realized that the land where he disembarked was not what he expected; then just as Columbus eventually realized that he had not arrived in India, Jende has realized that despite his designation of New York as the center of America and America as the center of the world, America is not his true home. Through Jende's voluntary return, Mbue argues that as a pulsating beehive of humanity, the US Immigration needs to kindle the hope and build the lives of immigrants through Mignolo's general philosophical principles of *proportionality-solidarity* (proposals and motivations of political actions and thinking in favor of immigrants like the Jongas who have less); *complementarity* (encouraging participation, convergence, and conviviality of diverse cultures of various immigrants); *reciprocity* (creating rights and responsibilities from which no immigrant is exempt); and *correspondence* (encouraging the need for immigrants to share responsibilities) (Mignolo 2011, 335). Even though such ethical perspectives may not tie in with the psycho-social universe of the average American especially with the advent

of Trumpian politics, Mbue's narrative suggests that there is room for change.

Conclusion

Behold attests that immigration officials and economic operators such as the Lehman Brothers live in two worlds: the world of what they believe and the world they want the immigrants to think they believe in. In other words, they strive to use doublespeak to resolve the continuing contradictions between words and actions of immigration law and economics to explain and justify their actions or say that they did not do what they did, or what they did is not what immigrants think they did. They are spin doctors striving to construct verbal realities of immigration that are designed to tell the public that the immigration officials' reality is correct and what the public/reader saw or heard happened to the Jongas is not what it saw or heard. Jende affirms this spin doctoring by asserting that, "In America today, having documents is not enough. Look at how many people with papers are struggling. Look at how even some Americans are suffering. They were born in this country. They have American passports, and yet they are sleeping on the street, going to bed hungry, losing their jobs and houses every day in this economic crisis" (Mbue 307). He then concludes that "One can never trust any government – I don't trust the American government and I definitely don't trust the Cameroon government" (380). His lack of trust in both governments affirms this paper's stance that there is no immigration without proper conditions of immigration and so it is imperative to fight against the perversion of immigration laws and economics. In the context of Mbue's novel, to speak of the conditions of immigration implies speaking of the radicalization of US rules of entry. The novel attests that the immigration that exists in countries such as the US is false, simply because it is shrouded with doublespeaking. Mbue uses the Jongas' plight to suggest that immigration needs to be radicalized by deepening authority-sharing and respect for differences in the social domains where the immigration rules are established; spreading immigration rules to cover a larger number of domains of social life; and transforming it into a activity with the potential to regulate all social relations. Mbue also uses their plight to demonstrate that capitalist greed hinders the spread of this activity in the US; that we need to start thinking of a post-capitalist world that engages to make it possible because the collapse of the Lehman Brothers and the consequent firing of workers prove that capitalist greed leads only to more capitalist greed. For this to succeed, the immigrants themselves must be truthful about their immigration intentions and such truth must be national, in places such as in the US Embassy in Yaoundé (where Jende lies to the consulate); and in their relations with immigration officials in the destination countries (such as the US

Immigration to whom Jende and his lawyer Bubakar try to lie).

Behold also affirms that US-centric assumptions about immigration do not allow for a sufficiently wide-ranging circle of reciprocity capable of capturing the new called-for balance between the principle of equality and the principle of recognition of difference. Such assumptions define immigrants according to a narrow principle of marginalization which condemns them against many forms of sociability. Mbue uses Jende's volitional return to Cameroon to suggest that true immigration should be an internationalism aimed at acknowledging every society's celebration of her socioeconomic and politico-cultural diversity within the broad limits of mobility. It should encompass many different types of mobilities and see itself as a meeting ground where global citizens can interact freely and as an incubator of new networks generated at the exclusive initiative of those participating in them. The positive implications of such mobility emerge from, and are complicated by, Mbue's novel through her referencing of the existence of diverse African immigrants in the US and the US immigration institutions' equivocal acceptance of eccentric immigration lawyers such as Bubakar. Perhaps this is what the US has always been or maybe this is what it has always pretended to be because as mentioned earlier, Reagan, Clinton, Walker Bush, and Obama waxed lyrical about the US's role as the beacon of global immigration. They must now be looking back either in anger or disappointment because things have changed. The US border has never been, or is no longer safer than, the Libyan Desert and the Mediterranean and Atlantic tempests because during the same year that *Behold* was published, Donald Trump kicked off his presidential campaign on June 16 from the Trump Tower in Manhattan, and immediately touched off alarums and excursions with his negative comments about immigration.[14] He said, "We want people to come into our country, but they have to come legally and properly vetted, and in a manner that serves the national interest. We've been living under outdated immigration rules from decades ago. To avoid this happening in the future, I believe we should sunset our visa laws so that Congress is forced to periodically revise and revisit them to bring them up to date." Insisting that US immigration laws were archaic and ancient, Trump reiterated that, "We wouldn't put our entire federal budget on auto pilot for decades, so why should we do the same for the very, very complex subject of immigration? So let's now talk about the big picture. These 10 steps, if rigorously followed and enforced, will accomplish more in a matter of months than our politicians have accomplished on this issue in the last 50 years."

Trump promised to, "issue detainers for illegal immigrants who are arrested for any crime whatsoever, place [them] into immediate removal proceedings, and terminate the Obama administration's deadly non-enforcement policies

that allow thousands of criminal aliens to freely roam our streets, walk around, do whatever they want to do, crime all over the place." He was unequivocal that first among his 10 steps would be to build a border wall against Mexico, "On day one, we will begin working on an impenetrable physical wall on the southern border. We will use the best technology, including above-and below-ground sensors, towers, aerial surveillance, and manpower to supplement the wall, find and dislocate tunnels, and keep out the criminal cartels, and Mexico will pay for the wall." Whether he ended up building the wall or not, what the events in *Behold* affirm is that US border walls have always been there especially against Africans because as Jende reminds Neni, "I work as a servant to people, driving them all over, the whole day, sometimes the whole week, answering yes sir, yes madam, bowing down even to a little child [because] I want to stay in America! But if America says they don't want us in their country, I [cannot] keep begging them for the rest of my life" (230-231). There is a strong sense in which Jende's knowledge of immigration, just like that of most Africans, jars with evangelical waxing, apparently gazing up to celestial sanction. No country would allow floods and waves of immigrants to bring down its walls and like Milton's populous north, swarm into its territory. For instance, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea are blood brothers to the Yaoundé people of Cameroon, yet they still practice border protection. Racism may play a part in the US situation, but there are times that the movements of the Jendes raise nightmares about the receiving nations' wholesome survival. No US president has ever truly prescribed an open-arms policy towards the thousands of the destitute trudging from Africa and Latin America to find dream succor in the States; it would be the deliberate courting of an apocalypse and no government is democratically elected to sink the nation. So, maybe, just maybe, the outrage that was unleashed towards Trump by both Americans and immigrants was a result of the fact that Trump had exercised the chutzpah of singlespeaking the doublespeak of US immigration.

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Notes

1."Immigration Quotes from Great Americans." https://citizenpath.com/immigration-quotes-great-americans/

2. "Immigration Quotes from Great Americans." https://citizenpath.com/immigration-quotes-great-americans/

3. "Immigration Quotes from Great Americans." https://citizenpath.com/immigration-quotes-great-americans/

4. "Immigration Quotes from Great Americans." https://citizenpath.com/immigration-quotes-great-americans/

5. "Immigration Quotes from Great Americans." https://citizenpath.com/immigration-quotes-great-americans/

6. One Book 2019-2020: Immigration, Borders and Education - *Behold the Dreamers* & Papers: Behold the Dreamers: about the Author & Book https://libguides.greenriver.edu/c.php?g=933213&p=6796193

7. Macron, Emmanuel. "Address to the U.S. Congress." April 25, 2018. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://transcripts.cnn.com/Transcripts/1804/25/ctw.01.html

8. "*Behold the Dreamers* Summary and Study Guide" https://www.supersummary.com/behold-the-dreamers/summary/

9. Temporary U.S. Visas Explained. https://www.boundless.com/immigration-resources/temporary-u-s-visas-explained/

10. Travel. State. Gov. U.S. Visas. Directory of Visa Categories, ttps://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/all-visa-categories.html

11. Temporary U.S. Visas Explained. https://www.boundless.com/immigration-resources/temporary-u-s-visas-explained/

12. Walter D. Mignolo defines a pluriversity as a multicultural center of learning that combines diatopical and pluritopic hermeneutics because it was deals with a pluriverse of meaning. A Pluriversity is a "key argument for calling into question the concept of universality, so dear to Western cosmology." A pluriversity questions Western epistemology and hermeneutics universalization of their own concept of universality and asserting the fact that all known civilizations have been founded on the universality of their cosmologies. The pluriversity aims at seeing beyond the Western claim to superiority and sensing the world as pluriversally constituted; it is a decolonial institution dealing with forms of knowledge and meaning exceeding the limited regulations of epistemology and hermeneutics; it names the principles and assumptions upon which pluriverses of meaning are constructed. Consequently, the pluriversity teaches that the universal cannot have one single owner: the universal can only be pluriversal, a world in which many worlds coexist (2018: ix-x). See also Boaventura de Sousa Santos "From the University to the Pluriversity and Subversity," 2018: 269-292.

13. Kovacs, Kim. "The Lehman Brothers: This article relates to *Behold the Dreamers.*" https://www.bookbrowse.com/mag/btb/index.cfm/book_number/3447/behold-the-dreamers

14. Fulltext: Donald Trump immigration speech in Arizona https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-immigration-address-transcript-227614

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Book Review

Abimbola Adunni Adelakun. *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022. ix + 194 pp. ISBN: 978-1978831520

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Abimbola Adunni Adelakun's book, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*, offers a different exploration of the transformative potential of prayer as a performance of spiritual warfare. By focusing on the role of prayer as a powerful device in the Nigerian context, the author brilliantly suggests how prayer shapes and is sometimes shaped by certain social and cultural logics. The interventions in this book build on the author's experiences in the field of performance studies, shedding light on the defiance of societal norms and the radicality inherent in religious practices.

This book is divided into four sections, each providing a unique viewpoint on the intersections of spiritual warfare and power dynamics. The introduction sets the stage for the examination of powerful tools and the mechanics of Pentecostal power, while subsequent sections explore topics such as prayer as apocalyptic tools, the authority of spiritual warriors as God's human weapons, the con-spirituality of "fake science" during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shift of churches to virtual platforms during the crisis. One of the book's focuses is on the skepticism expressed by Nigerian Pentecostal pastors who questioned the government's decision to keep places of worship closed for a prolonged period. Using this as a premise, Adelakun interrogates the influential power held by Nigerian Pentecostal leaders, which shapes public opinion and challenges state authority. In the process, the book offers a solid argumentation that recalls other more recent works on Nigerian Pentecostalism, including Ebenezer Obadare's *Pentecostal Republic* and its 2023 sequel.

However, Adelakun's analysis exceeds the confines of religious practices and addresses the intricate relationship between charismatic Christianity and

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various societal spheres, including science, secular authority, technological discourses, and neoliberal capital. By critically engaging with established power structures, the author unveils alternative narratives and challenges prevailing norms, highlighting the transformative potential inherent in spiritual warfare. The author explores the deliberate attempts by Nigerian Pentecostal actors to "disestablish various forms of authority" (9) particularly in relation to scientific authority during the pandemic. In this sense, Pentecostalism may be read as caught up in the constitution of power and its various modes of refutation. In the context of the pandemic, therefore, the book particularly examines the significance of attributing supremacy to God's power by Nigerian Pentecostal pastors over the impact of the virus, which led to skepticism towards the prolonged lockdown measures in the country.

Powerful Devices, enriched by the author's engagement of firsthand accounts and experiential observations, provides a solid ethnography and a nuanced understanding of prayer rituals as devices that shape conceptions of time, self-enhancement, political dynamics, and authoritative structures in contemporary Nigeria. Its critical approach enhances the scholarly rigor of the study and engages readers in an intellectually stimulating experience. While the book focuses on Nigerian Pentecostals and US Evangelicals, its thematic and analytical implications extend beyond these specific groups. It serves as an intellectual catalyst for readers to critically reflect on the multifaceted roles of religious practices within broader societal frameworks and invites a deeper exploration of the complex relationship between spirituality, power dynamics, and social transformation.

However, there are times it appears the book, like many other works on (Nigerian) Pentecostalism, suggests a limited understanding of the Pentecostal experience that does not always capture its complexities and diverse manifestations. It tends to situate Pentecostalism within a mediatized realm that ignores the voices and perspectives of many who have a tenuous relationship with popular media cultures. More so, in certain instances throughout the book, the author's commentary appears to exhibit a subtle bias that replaces conjectures for scholarly evidence. For example, when comparing a teleportation story to scenes from fantasy novels, the author's subtle biases come through. For instance, the author writes: "While this story of teleportation looked like a scene out of D.O Fagunwa or Amos Tutuola's fantasy novels or science fiction where characters can be magically teleported, what is reflected here is how religious imagination of keeping up with the reality of a world where time and space can be folded and unfolded" (62). In this instance, rather than seek to articulate the conditions that produce and shape people's faith in such a fantastical world as

the author claims, what is presented is a hasty dismissal that runs contrary to the kind of objectivity often expected in Adelakun's writings.

In sum, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare,* is an important work that brilliantly explores the complicated dynamics of spiritual warfare and the transformative role of prayer in shaping societal structures and fostering social transformations. Following in the footsteps of other critical works on Pentecostal power, Adelakun pushes the boundaries of the conventional discourse on Pentecostal power, uncovering a diverse range of critical narratives and experiences within the realm of spiritual warfare. The book offers valuable insights and contributes to the relationship between religion and power structures which many readers will find useful.