PLACES OF CULTURAL MEMORY:

AFRICAN REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

Conference Proceedings, May 9–12, 2001
Atlanta, Georgia

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CONFERENCE PAPERS

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Introduction

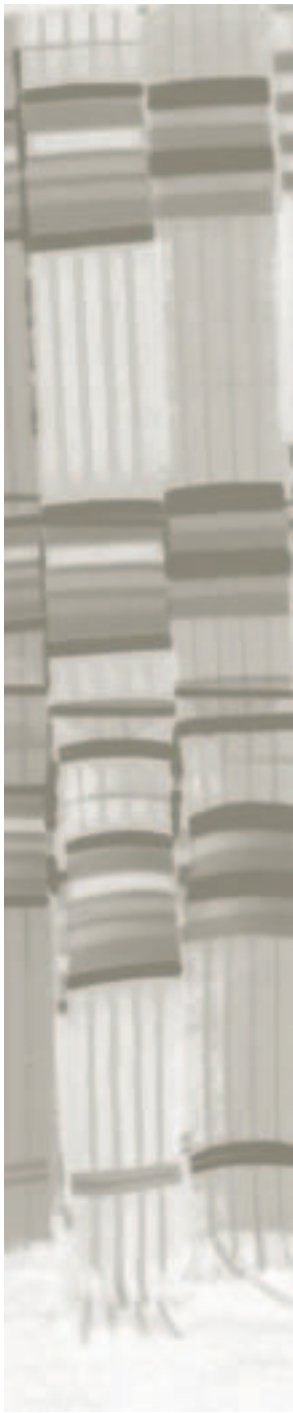
The 13 essays that appear in this compilation were prepared for the conference, "Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape." This conference was held May 9–12, 2001, in Atlanta, Georgia.

The conference developed from an idea posed by Falona Heidelberg, now the Executive Director of the African American Experience Fund at the National Park Foundation. While her initial interest was in the African Burial Ground in New York City, she believed that there was much about African cultural heritage in the United States that was little known and under-appreciated. Together with Katherine H. Stevenson, Associate Director, Cultural Resource Stewardship & Partnerships of the National Park Service, Ms. Heidelberg began a series of meetings to discuss the possibility of convening a conference on the tangible aspects of African American history.

As the conference program evolved, three consultants from the scholarly community were engaged to advise on the major conference themes and prospective speakers. The conference sponsors appreciate the major input of Joseph E. Harris of Howard University, LaVerne Wells-Bowie of Clemson University, and John Vlach of George Washington University. Their interest in and support of this conference clarified the program content.

Antoinette Lee of the NPS National Center for Cultural Resources was assigned to organize and implement the conference and provide editorial direction for the conference papers. Scott Whipple, now of the Maryland Historical Trust, assisted her in the early phases of the conference planning. Later, Brian Joyner was hired to coordinate the details of the conference and to provide editorial support for this compilation of papers. Marcia Axtmann Smith prepared the design for this compilation, based in part on the artwork for the printed conference announcement that LaVerne Wells-Bowie provided.

The topic of the influence of African cultural heritage on the American landscape is introduced in this compilation of conference papers. Readers will note that this topic is a potentially vast one—one that deserves additional attention if the historic preservation programs of the nation are to adequately reflect the contributions of Africans to the development of the United States.



Session One:

MEMORIALIZING PLACES OF DIASPORA

For centuries, Africans have been dispersed throughout the world and have established "communities" outside of Africa. These scattered communities retain their African identities within the culture of the host communities. The Diaspora involves places of departure, arrival, resistance, liberation, linkages, emigration, migration, escape, and other places where movement of human populations took place.

Freedom's Trail: The Florida Cuba Connection

Ralph B. Johnson

Before emancipation and during Reconstruction in the United States free Africans found themselves in a very precarious position, being neither slave nor free. Achieving freedom was a major accomplishment, but one that could not be taken for granted. Even after leaving slavery some people had to struggle to claim their civil rights and retrieve them if they were abrogated for some reason. They found solace in their own communities. These were self-contained communities where every member of the community contributed to the whole. Many were skilled carpenters, masons, and agriculturists. Together they cleared the land, planted new fields, built homes, built the church, and the fortifications to protect their community.

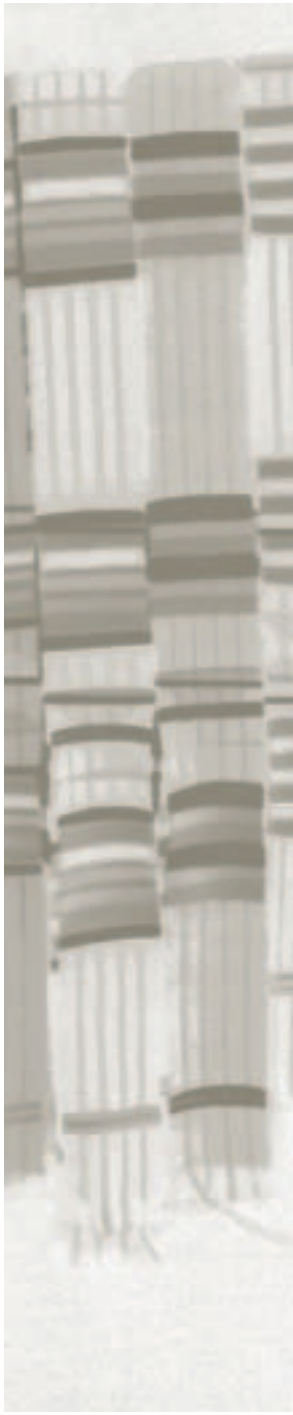
In their new communities, once again the Africans, now free, found it necessary to sacrifice their beliefs in order to fit within the host culture. They learned a new language, converted to a new religion, risked their lives as many had to escape bondage on this southern "trail to freedom," and acquired loyalty to foreign governments, often by military services. Such was the case in "La Florida," a province of the Spanish crown, and now the southeast region of the United States of America.

In 1762 the English were finally successful in capturing Havana, Cuba a stronghold of the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean. However, in the Treaty of Paris Spain ceded *La Florida* and *Gracia Real Santa Teresa de Mose* to England, in exchange for Havana and Puerto Rico. The following year the residents of her Florida communities were evacuated and moved to Cuba, even though His "Britannic Majesty" agreed to allow remaining inhabitants of in 1763 the "liberty of the Catholic religion." No more than eight Catholics and laymen could be found anywhere on the peninsula. Thus ended nearly a century of safe haven for run-away slaves from the British Carolina and Georgia low-country plantation system. This was most timely given the fact that the peak of the colonial import trade in slaves was probably reached between 1764 and 1773, the period that overlaps nine of the 21 years of British occupation of Florida.

Slavery in Spain and Her Colonies

The institution of slavery in Spain was different than other European nations. Slaves had a moral and juridical personality, and Spanish legislation specifically granted them rights and protections in addition to obligations. Spanish slave codes were derived from the Justinian Code, and had been incorporated into Castilian law in the thirteenth century by King Alfonso X. As African slaves reached Spain in the fifteenth century, they were ruled by this legislation, known as the *Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso El Sabio.* The *Siete Partidas* also governed slavery in the New World. The *Siete Partidas,* and its adaptations, formed a body of law that held that slavery was against natural law, for God had created man free. This philosophy was held in the context of a country steeped in religious righteousness.

The "Catholic Monarchs," as King Ferdinand and Queen Isabelle were affectionately called, were very concerned about the souls of their subjects. This applied most importantly to the Indies and Spanish Florida. Slaves, Native Americans, and free men were brothers in Christ and it was the responsibility of masters and the Church to teach them the rudiments of the faith so that they might be admitted into the Church and enjoy all its sacra-



ments. These included marriage. The sanctity of the family was protected by requirements not to separate members of the family. Brotherhood in the Church sometimes served to tie masters to slaves in fictive kinship arrangements, when owners served as godparents and marriage sponsors for their slaves.

Slavery was considered as an accident of fate, and an aberration in nature, rather than a perpetual or preordained condition. These circumstances, the emphasis on a slave's humanity and rights, and the lenient attitude toward manumission embodied in Spanish slave codes and social practice made it possible for a significant free black class to exist in the Spanish world. Aside from this attitude, blacks were not free of racial prejudice.

Embroiled in a social and religious reconquest of its own at home, Spain was nevertheless preoccupied with racial purity and blacks that ruled Iberia for several centuries up to this period were assigned to the bottom of the social hierarchy. But the Spanish recognized early on the useful contributions blacks might make in their colonial empire. Their services were welcomed particularly in the area of defense. Florida was an important and strategic location for the safe passage of Spanish treasure fleets and later, as a buffer against French and English colonization. For some time blacks were drafted into the militia. As early as the sixteenth century, militia companies in Santo Domingo, Cuba, Mexico, Cartagena, and Puerto Rico included black regiments. In Florida a company of black and mulatto militia was formed as early as 1683, and there may have been earlier ones.

Blacks were incorporated into services in another respect. Pedro Menedez de Aviles, established the first successful Spanish settlement in Florida, assisted by black laborers and artisans imported from Havana. They worked on early fortifications, sawed timber, and built several structures, including a church, a blacksmith shop, and an artillery platform. They also cleared land for planting and harvested the crops. Florida was a part of Spain's strategy to substantiate its claim to the Americas, denied of course by its rivals, France and England. It was important therefore to effectively occupy and populate the respective territories.

By papal donation the lands of the so-called New World belonged to the Catholic Monarchs of Spain. The Spanish Crown hoped to populate these lands with Christian *pobladores* or population, much as they had done in the areas Spain re-conquered from the Moors. They hoped to build ordered and just communities in the Americas, modeled after those of Spain. Although earlier municipal legislation existed, the regulations of Charles V are notable for the detail with which they prescribe the rituals for town foundation, the establishment of municipal governments and parishes, the proper division of lands, and the actual physical organization of ideal towns. The Crown, through its local representatives (the governors or municipal officers) could allocate Crown land to deserving or needy subjects, and town building was considered a noble, and indeed, a necessary objective of the Spanish administration.

In October 1687, the first known fugitive slaves from Carolina arrived in St. Augustine, the Spanish colony in La Florida. Governor Diego de Quiroga dutifully reported to Spain that eight males, two females, and a three-year-old nursing child had made good their escape in a boat. Six of the men were put to work in the Castillo, but two others were assigned to work with the blacksmith, a possible indication that they already had skills in that area. The women became domestics in the house of the governor. All were paid for their labor. When an English official arrived the next fall to claim them, Governor Quiroga refused to release them, on the grounds that they had received religious instruction and been converted to Catholicism, had married, and were usefully employed. Moreover, they claimed to fear for their lives. Thus a fugitive slave policy began to evolve which would have serious diplomatic and military consequences for Spain.(1) King Charles II, on November 7, 1693, issued the first official position on the runaways, "giving liberty to all…the men as well as the women…so that by their example and by my liberality others will do the same."

Gracia Real De Santa Teresa De Mose

By 1736, records show that a total of 630 Spaniards and 143 slaves and free Africans were confirmed in the new church of St. Augustine, Nuestra Senora de la Leche. And, by 1738 the settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose or Fort Mose as it was commonly known, was established by African-born run away slaves from the English Carolina and Georgia plantations. It was located approximately two miles north of St. Augustine. Fort Mose was strategically situated to protect both land and water routes to St. Augustine; and, the African homesteaders vowed to "spill their last drop of blood in defense of the Great Crown of Spain and the Holy Faith, and to be the most cruel enemies of the English." They cleared the lands they received from the governor, planted crops to sustain their families, and built a settlement that included a small fort complex. It included associated structures such as a church and

sacristy, and a number of houses that seem to have been scattered among the planted fields.

In many ways, the settlement at Fort Mose resembled those of the Native American villages also on St. Augustine's periphery. The structures at Fort Mose were said to be thatched *bohios,* "such as the Indians have." Archeological investigations at the site also prove the diet of Africans and Indians to had been heavily dependent upon riverine resources and non-domesticated animals hunted or trapped in the surrounding forests. Historical records indicate that an African Mandingo leader named Francisco Menendez governed the community. This Mandingo warrior also commanded the Fort Mose militia for almost thirty years.

The Free Black Militia Company of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose consisted of the following:

> Commander Don Geronimo de Hita y Salazar; *Cura Beneficiado,* Don Agustin Geronimo de Resio; Captain Francisco Menendez, Lieutenant Antonio Joseph Eligio, Second Lieutenant Francisco Escobedo, Sergeant Pedro Graxales, Antonio Gallardo, Thomas Chrisostomo, Pedro de Leon, Pedro de Fuentes, Francisco Rosa, Juan Fernandez, Juan de la Torre, Francisco Joseph Menendez, Joseph Escobedo, Francisco Graxales, Antonio Blanco, Francisco Diaz, Joseph Bentura, Manuel Rivera, Joseph de Pena, Nicolas Briones, Francisco Suni, Joseph Fernando, Santiago Solis, Francisco de Torres, Juan Lamberto, Antonio Garcia, Julian Bulero, Pedro Martines, Nicolas de Cesar, Ignacio Roso, Juan Chrisostomo, Juan Thomas de Castilla.(2)

After the British General James Oglethorpe destroyed the first settlement of Fort Mose during the 1740 invasion, Menendez and his "subjects" built a second settlement in 1752. Historical and archeological research at the second Fort Mose has produced a rich picture of the Afro-Hispanic colonial life on the Spanish frontier. Fort Mose withstood repeated Indian attacks, and the deprivation associated with an embattled frontier until the 1763 mass evacuation of La Florida colonists to Cuba. There, they established a new frontier homestead, San Agustin de la Nueva Florida in the province of Matanzas.

San Augustin De Le Nueva Florida, Cuba: Ceiba Mocha

The Seven Year War, known in America as the French and Indian War, culminated with English forces capturing the port of Havana. In the First Treaty of Paris, La Florida was chosen over Puerto Rico by King Charles III of Spain to be the more easily expendable property. The transfer of sovereignty to England was formally done, and the first Spanish Period of Florida came to an end.

By March 1764, eight transports arrived in Havana with 3,104 people. Florida's governor, Melchor Feliu, oversaw the evacuation of the Spanish colony, organizing a flotilla of ships to carry its citizens to Cuba. The exiles included Spaniards, Canary Islanders, Catalans, Indians from the mission villages of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de Tolomato and Nuestra Senora de la Leche, and African residents of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose.

Initially the Floridians were housed in Havana, and in the outlying towns of Guanabacoa and Regla. Within months of their arrival in Cuba, however, the government arranged the transfer of 73 Floridian families or a total of 331 persons to a new settlement in the province of Matanzas, to be called San Agustin de la Nueva Florida. It was also popularly known as Ceiba Mocha. (The word "Ceiba" is the Spanish name of a tree also called the Cottonwood tree that in Africa possesses a sacred significance.)

The group included 13 Spanish families, 43 Canary Island families; four English families (called Germans on the reports), four free *pardo* or *mulatto* families (members of the free disciplined militia of Havana posted in St. Augustine); and nine free *moreno* or *black* families (from the free militia of Mose). The following year, 11 more service families from Florida joined them.

A wealthy rancher, Don Geronimo Contreras, donated the land to establish the new town and the Crown gave each household head a *caballeria* (approximately) of uncultivated land, a stipend of sixty *pesos,* tools, and a slave newly imported from Africa to assist in the labor of homesteading. The Mose militiamen received the following plots of land:

> Lot # 40 Francisco Menedez
>
> Lot # 45 Juan Chrisostomo Gonzalez
>
> Lot # 60 Juan Fernandez
>
> Lot # 61 Francisco Diaz
>
> Lot # 65 Antonio Gallardo
>
> Lot # 67 Joseph Ricardo
>
> Lot # 68 Lieutenant Joseph Antonio Elixio
>
> Lot # 91 Captain Francisco Menendez
>
> Lot # 92 Domingo de Jesus Parilla
>
> Lot # 93 Thomas Chrisostomo

The free pardo militiamen from Havana posted in St. Augustine received the following plots of land:

> Lot # 83 Captain Manuel de Soto (of Havana militia)
>
> Lot # 94 Joseph Orozco
>
> Lot # 98 Juan Fermin de Quixas

Government officials also provided the new colonists with food until they could harvest crops. After nine years, the homesteaders were obligated to repay the cost of the slave (150 pesos) and the subsidy (60 pesos) or a total of 210 pesos to the royal treasury.

Conditions at the new settlement were difficult. The homesteaders struggled to clear the land, plant fields, and build new structures in an untamed wilderness. Smallpox swept among the slaves, killing many. Several slaves revolted and killed their owners. The Floridians pleaded for more assistance from Havana. They reported, "We have not been supplied with (shelter) to protect our bodies from the punishments of the weather, and consequently, without housing or sustenance find ourselves obliged to sleep under doorways exposed to inclement conditions."

Another report from 1766 stated that all the conditions at Ceiba Mocha suffered the same defect—there was no water to drink, it was difficult to drill wells in the land, and the closest water was the river which was one-half to two-thirds leagues distant.

The report added that the only reason 16 families stayed there was that they were too poor to move. Although a total of 200 *solares,* or town lots, had been donated for the Floridians, there was some delay in allotting the property. The people lived in huts scattered around the countryside among their fields. These "sad shacks" were described as being constructed of yagua, which is the impermeable and pliable material that joins a palm frond to the trunk of the palm.

Because the homesteaders lacked oxen with which to plow and could not afford to buy any, all the land had to be cultivated with a hoe. The only crops that the people had been able to grow were maize, yucca, some beans, *boniatos,* and squashes. The settlers had no bread or meat, and even cassava was scarce. The report continued, saying the woods were so thick that they did not have wherewithal to clear much land for planting, and the people were reduced to misery.

The settlement of Ceiba Mocha had no doctor, no barber, no pharmacist, no priest, and people died without the benefits of the sacraments. The closest church was in the city of Matanzas, 24 leagues distant. For the reasons given, only 16 of the total 84 families actually remained on the lands allotted for the new town of San Agustin de la Nueva Florida. Others rented outlying farmlands or moved to Matanzas and Havana. Those that left sold their allotted lands to the remaining families, allowing the latter to consolidate and enlarge their holdings.

The free pardos and morenos of the original Fort Mose community were scattered by the evacuation to Cuba. Antonio Joseph de Elixio, his wife, and five children remained on the lands of San Agustine de la Nueva Florida, or Ceiba Mocha, as did Captain Manuel de Soto of the pardo militia of Havana, and his wife, Gertrudis Contrera, and child. Thomas Chisostomo, his wife Francisca Rodriguez, and their three children rented land in the countryside outside of Ceiba Mocha. Thomas appears in the burial registers of Ceiba Mocha. He died on February 23, 1798, by which time his wife Francisca had already died.

Antonio Gallardo, his wife, and two children; Domingo de Jesus Parrilla, his wife, and seven children; Joseph Ricardo and his wife; and Juan Fernandez and his wife, Flora de la Torre; all of these families moved to the city of Matanzas, where they supported themselves by working for daily wages. The pardo (actually Indian) militiaman from Havana, Joachim de Orozco, with his wife, and four children; Pedro de Leon, his wife, and three children; and Francisco Diaz, his wife, and two children, all returned to live in the vicinity of Havana where they subsisted on *limosnas,* or government subsidies. Each of these families received one and one-half *reales* daily (eighty *reales* equals a *peso).* The pardo militiamen from Havana, Juan Fermin Quixas, his wife Maria de Soto, their child, and Marcelo de Cordova, and his wife did likewise.

The Floridian immigrants to Cuba continued over the years to petition the Crown and Havana officials for some relief, and finally, in 1770, the Crown established a pension for wives and orphaned daughters of men exiled form Florida. Several of these pension lists, dating as late as 1805, have been located, and they show that only white Floridians were recipients. Documents from the Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain, show that Maria Gertrudis Rozo, widow of Ignacio Rozo, a free militiaman from Mose, tried for nine years to win the same pension for herself and her orphaned daughter, but despite their proofs of legitimate marriage and government service, they were repeatedly denied on the basis of their color.

Nineteenth Century Ceiba Mocha Town Plan and Layout

The development and growth of colonies throughout the Spanish Empire were prescribed by the Ordinances for New Towns or Laws of the Indies. Produced by Seville administrators for the King, the Ordinances determined exactly how the new towns of the New World would be physically organized. The layout used in San Agustin de la Nueva Florida was the simplest example of Spanish American town planning.

As was common in Spain the plaza was the main urban organizing element. Around the plaza of Ceiba Mocha there were no civic buildings usually associated with the Laws of the Indies guidelines, rather simple houses that line the narrow dirt streets. The church was the only architectural element that identified this site as a public space. It served as the place of worship as well as an official point of reference and record keeping. The church was a dominant force in the lives of the early settlers. Its presence then, as it does today, provided order for the town layout of Ceiba Mocha.

The African militiamen that settled in Ceiba Mocha were skilled carpenters, ironsmiths, and masons and were familiar with the classical style of nineteenth century Europe. They built all their own structures at both the first and second settlements at Fort Mose. They built the defense line and the stockade outpost on the Sebastian River and in the repairs of fortifications at the Castillo de San Marcos. Most importantly, they had also assisted in the carpentry on the church of St. Augustine.

The Church of Nuestra Senora de la Candelaria was built in 1792, almost 30 years after the town's founding, as a result of the town's growth and a sense of permanence brought about by better economic conditions. The church is a small, but significant structure. It is approached from the north end of the plaza and accessed through a façade that is simple, but classically attractive in design. The upper part of the façade terminates in a classic pediment that reflects its pitched roof. Simple pilasters with bases and Tuscan capitols frame the façade and flank the main entrance.

As with most of the churches of this period, the church in Ceiba Mocha has an open rectangular plan. The interior space or nave is proportioned approximately three-to-one, length versus width. The height of the ceiling is slightly more than the width. The nave has no visible structural elements, other than a column that supports an interior balcony. In its present form, the balcony is too small and low for much practical use, and is not an original element of the church. Although it has been there for many decades, it is believed that there was originally an area for a choir. There are three niches in the interior wall of the nave, one of which holds a statue of the African, St. Augustine, an Early Christian Bishop. A classical neo-Gothic wooden altar was located in the sanctuary.

The bell tower is attached to the main building and to one side. It consists of three vertical sections, each separated by flat horizontal bands. The tower terminates with a cupola with four arches from which the bells are hung. There are also four pinnacles, one on each corner, and the cross that symbolically connects the building to the sky. The walls of the church were constructed of *mamposteria,* a technique that utilizes a mixture of materials including irregular fragments of stone, clay tile, or brick with soil and sand. The walls are very thick and require the placement of square stones at the corners, and at intermediate locations along the walls for reinforcement.

Housing

Most of the buildings in Ceiba Mocha were houses built in the nineteenth century that gave form to the public spaces of the town. They were built to conform to their respective sites and reflect the simple domestic life style associated with this community. There were two basic types, row houses and detached homes. The predominant building materials were stone, red clay, sand, and lime mortar utilizing the *mamposteria* technique. The houses built in the *mamposteria* fashion utilized unfinished stone instead of the more polished and regularly shaped stone or *canteria* found in more important buildings in the larger towns. Clay bricks were bonded together with mortar joints from a mixture of lime and sand. The older structures have thicker joints with a narrower brick. The builders reinforced the structure with timber studs placed every two or three meters.

In several examples, houses were also built of wood. In these cases, one can easily distinguish between earlier examples of the nineteenth century and those more recently constructed. The older structures were constructed with planks of a wider width. The more recent a structure is, the narrower the planks.

Perhaps the most striking feature about the houses found in Ceiba Mocha was the use of clay barrel tile roofs. Houses have flat as well as slightly pitched roofs. In every case, however, a porch was typical. In the older buildings, signs of structural members are evident. The beams are larger and located closer together that those built in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The floor plan of the house reveals another characteristic found to be typical in this region and unlike those found in Matanzas and the larger towns. The perimeter of the houses are normally rectangular, as opposed to different configurations, such as "L," "T," "U," or "J" layouts. Ceiba Mocha houses included a patio that stretches across the entire back. Normally only one room in depth, the Ceiba Mocha houses have excellent cross ventilation. This condition is enhanced by the fact that the interior partitions dividing the house into three major spaces do not extend up to the ceiling. Instead, there is adequate space to allow hot air to rise, creating a comfortable living space below.

Conclusion

Although there is no physical evidence of the first architectural elements developed in Ceiba Mocha, we can observe existing configurations and spatial organizations that help explain how the domestic space was organized. The repetition of spaces, the relationship of the house with the street and the clarity of its interiors indicate the original way in which people interacted with each other and with the environment. The dwellings show that the builders had learned how to fit their structures to the climate. The house, with its personal openings, represented privacy within the collective. And, its façade announced the quality of its inhabitants, and their function in the community of Ceiba Mocha.

The flight to freedom for the African was "against all odds". They were challenged on all fronts. However, by the reliance upon skills learned or inherent skills they brought with them from Africa and cultural identities they were able to survive even within the culture of their host countries.

Notes

1. Jane Landers, *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slaves Societies of the Americas* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), 6.

2. Taken from *Pie de Lista,* January 22, 1764, in AGI, Santo Domingo 2595.

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Africanisms Upon the Land: A Study of African Influenced Place Names of the USA

Annette I. Kashif

The vitality and trans-ethnic influence of African American language continues to be a widely acknowledged phenomenon within the American populace.(1) Since the mid 1900s, there have been several systematic studies which demonstrate that that vitality is in some ways a function of African influences in African American language varieties.(2) The African stratum preserves remnants of the various predecessor African languages in complex, though uneven and interesting ways. As more evidence is uncovered which delineates Africanisms in the Diaspora, the once widely held belief that African culture was extinguished under the devastation of slavery will be more firmly overturned.

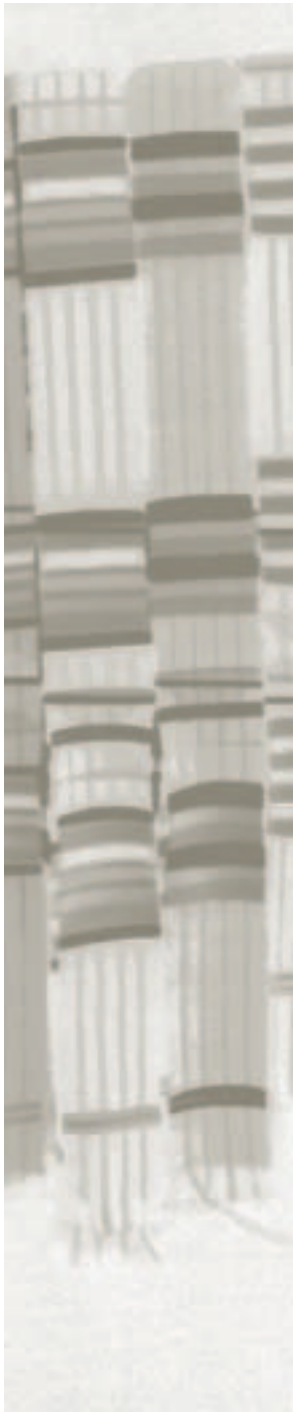
For a complete picture to emerge, American place names research needs to be included in the effort to discover linguistic Africanisms. It is important to understand that a "unique source of information about a society's history, beliefs, and values is in the names people give to their surroundings."(3) This sources is referred to as place names, or toponyms, a part of onomastics.(4) One language study could be found on the subject, and it focused on only Bantu (Central African) linguistic influences in the place names of nine formerly confederate states. Of course, African descendants in the United States have a heritage of African admixture extending from Central Africa, to at least, the northwestern belt of the continent.

In its explanation that numerous aspects of a country's development achieve linguistic recognition in its place names, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* states that the "various" steps in the exploration of America…can be seen reflected in the layers of Spanish, French, Dutch, Indian, and English names introduced by different groups of explorers."(5) Though it is a major reference work found in many public and academic libraries, there is no mention of any African impact on America's development, which may be seen through its toponyms. Seeking to put an end to such oversights, this study delineates a broader and more varied African impact on American toponyms.

A curious off-hand comment turned the writer's attention, in the 1970s, to the impact African Americans may have had on American place names. A female acquaintance rushed into a nearby dormitory bedroom, excitedly recounting to her friend a harrowing experience she had undergone before dawn with another college classmate. The gist of the narrative went thusly: returning them to town after a home visit, the bus driver had dropped his passengers off at the closed bus station. It was already after midnight, so they were unable to catch a cab. Though they returned without incident, she exclaimed that she was terribly frightened because they ended up having to walk through "Colored Town" to get back to campus. The writer, having never heard such a reference before, was surprised and unsettled. The acquaintance turned in surprise to see the writer, then apologetically explained that no harm was intended; it was just a term that whites in her Florida hometown used to refer to the "black section of town."

Further, when the researcher worked as a camp counselor the following summer in a rural settlement near Palakta, Flordia, she was surprised to come upon a street name, "Colored School Road" emblazoned on an old, wooden-plank street marker.

Those encounters led to wondering, "Were there or had there been autonomous towns or settlements established by black people in the U.S.?



Given the opportunity, would African Americans assign racially self-referent names to their town and street names?" Or, "Was the racially referent, 'Colored Town' just derisive slur?" Subsequent to those experiences, it was found that African Americans had exercised onomastic agency in bestowing the alternate names, e.g., "Chocolate City," an alternative name for two different types of predominantly black habitats—one, Washington, DC, the nation's capitol; and, the other a long-standing housing project in Orlando.(6) These are essentially questions about the language of group agency, identity, and autonomy upon the American landscape.

The African enthusiasm for naming and naming ritual has been widely observed and document. From Djdehuty of the Ancients in Egypt, to Nommo of the Dogon in Mali, this enthusiasm is tied to African spiritual philosophy. Obenga says, "we see throughout Africa the creative and powerful force of the word. To name is to beget, that is, to call up a genealogy and an evolution."(7) Further, from this African worldview, the one who names has the power to structure or re-structure reality.(8) We come to understand then the connections between naming, power, and dominion.(9) African descendants desired to structure a reality of self-determination, and freedom from racist oppression and exploitation, by securing plots of land over which they could exercise power and dominion.

Linguistic Status of Names

Place names, or toponyms, are proper names, and proper names are words that serve a particularizing and referential function.(10) However, proper names have varying degrees of transparent meaning, or semantic content, sometimes no more than that the referent is so-called.(11) Accordingly, the *Cambridge Encyclopedia's* place names entry explains that "many thousands of names have an unclear or unknown etymology, and this fact provides a continuing motivation for toponym study." While place names may be "fanciful and idiosyncratic" sometimes, a "small set of creative processes" will account for the "vast majority" around the world. Those creative processes result in categories, such as geographic features; religious import; royal or lofty status; explorers and other famous people; memorable or outstanding events; state of affairs; animals; and other places.(12)

African Onomastics

Though African personal names are characteristically drawn from common nouns, descriptive phrases, and even whole sentences which provide transparent meaning, it is not necessarily so and one may easily find a meaning known only narrowly to bearer (e.g., a revered ancestor name with opaque meaning in the contemporary language community).(13)

To some onlookers beholding African onomastica,

> [t]he African continent offers a bewildering array of names: names of distinctive populations and their subdivisions, their languages and dialect; names of countries, geographical places, and archaeological sites; names of empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms, and villages; terms for territorial and administrative divisions; and names of kinship groups, cults, and associations. This terminological profusion permeates all aspects of life, from personal name giving to…artistic and technical taxonomies.(14)

Considering the deep antiquity of African peoples, cultures, and civilizations, one should not be surprised at this onomastic profusion. It is a basis for the expectation that, being so deeply and broadly ingrained, onomastic Africanisms would survive within the African Diaspora.

Migrating African peoples, upon the founding of settlements, usually named them after their founders.(15) Yai also found that in Yorubaland (Togo, Benin, and Nigeria), for example, the placename also designates the language and ethnicity of the inhabitants.(16) And from oral traditions (e.g., oriki recitations), one could discover information about certain lineages that make up most of the Yoruba ethnic groups. Interestingly, he also found some language mixture among the toponyms where Yoruba have been in contact situations with different ethnic groups in other localities. First, there are hybridized forms, e.g., where emigrant Yoruba have assimilated into the Mahi population of Benin, one may find the toponym, Nagokome, resulting from the agglutination of *Nago* (Yoruba people) + *kome* (district, a determinative in Mahi). This example serves as historical evidence of the persistence of ethnic reference in African toponyms. Second, Yai found toponymic calques, wherein a word from one language is translated into the language of the surrounding population. In a predominantly Fon district in Benin, for example, one will find that the toponym, *Idaaasa Iqbo,* or "underwood," in Yoruba, > *sasa zume,* or "Dasa in the forest," in Fon.(17)

Names and Language Contact

African influences in African American onomastics is to be understood in the context of language contact when speakers of disparate languages and social (and/or ethnic) statuses come into contact within the same geo- and

socio-political environment. Linguistic outcomes may be of three general types: maintenance, mixture, or shift. Language mixture includes the development of creole languages.(18) When features of a supplanted ancestral language persist after language shift, and exert influence within the successor language, these features constitute a *stratum* in the successor language. The language forms in the stratum are variously referred to as *continuity, retention,* or *survivals.* Moreover, social and emotional (i.e., non-linguistic) elements which influence linguistic ones must be considered in analyses of contact-induced language mixture.

Beside the fact that names reflect cultural, historical, and social change, there are other attributes of names that further justify their importance in the study of language mixture induced by a contact situation, as is represented by the African American experience:

1. Because they are lexical items, names are among the easiest linguistic items to transfer into a successor or second language.(19)

2. It is not uncommon that a toponym is the only record of a historical event, or of a person's existence.(20)

African American Onomastics in Historical Context

A historical overview of the North American language contact situation into which Africans were initially plummeted should be considered basically in three eras: Colonial/Enslavement; Emancipation-Reconstruction; and, Outward Migrations. The literature indicates that the language of African descendants began shifting first, from an African polyglot status in the first generations of arrival, to a period of bilingualism between a pidgin and each person's African mother tongue.(21) Then, subsequent generations incorporated elaborated and restructured features into the pidgin, forming deep and more stable regional creoles; they were characterized by mixture of English-Irish, and West African grammatical structures and vocabulary. These creoles lasted throughout the centuries of enslavement. All the while, of course, a smaller number of African descendants would have common access to non-African speakers, which afforded them opportunities to learn other languages. This is not only true for those more frequently in contact with prestige dialects of English, but also those affiliating with Native Americans. Also, the continuous arrival of continent-born Africans right up until the Civil War reinforced persistence of Africanisms.

Colonial and Slavery Era

Africans were brought here mostly in chains from the 1500s to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, an era that lasted longer than any other in African American history to date. Spanning Africa's central region, out to its northwestern bulge, they were kidnapped from places named Abomey, Calabar, Congo, Djenne, Gizzi, Gola, Kanem, Mande, Mina, Ngola, Oyo, Segu, Whydah, and hundreds more.(22) They had been the skilled and unskilled, literate and illiterate, peasant and artisan, bureaucrats and soldiers, royalty and subjects, aristocrats and commoners, and et cetera. Their back-breaking toil and know-how were at the foundation of the development of the "new" Americas. Hall found, for example, that in colonial times, the survival of French Louisiana was due not only to African labor, but also to African technology in rice cultivation, indigoterie, medicine, and surgery.(23) In addition, Africans did the "metal work, shipbuilding and river transport."(24) It was clear that "Africans and their descendants were competent, desperately needed, and far from powerless."(25)

The records indicate that they did not simply wait idly by for deliverance from their brutal servitude. Constantly on the look-out for available opportunities, they were agents on their own behalf. That agency included violent and non-violent resistance to slavery. And, that should come as no surprise when one considers the wide range of culture complexes and civilizations, from which they were so hatefully uprooted. Throughout all of American history, there were numerous courageous, desperate, and determined acts of agency by African descendants in their quest for freedom and self-determination. Prior to the abolition of slavery, the record is replete with news of African resistance, including mutinies, runaways, conspiracies, revolts, and maroonage (settlements of runaways in the wilderness). These acts of daring were committed in the face of white retaliation, including torture, imprisonment, mutilations, and executions. Runaways, with opportunity, giving reasons for having done so, "almost invariably cited unjustified and excessive punishment, overwork, and inadequate food."(26)

Beginning in the early 1500s, many maroon settlements were successfully established throughout the antebellum era. Their members carried arms, and sometimes waged guerilla raids and warfare against the slave plantations.(27) With a few exceptions, the literature does not identify maroon settlements of North America by name, perhaps one indication of their precarious status. Aptheker reported in 1939 that the "mountainous, forested, or swampy regions of South Carolina,

North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama were the favorite haunts of these black Robin Hoods."(28) According to Creel, a careful examination of the existing sources shows that a spirit of rebellion, and strong will to freedom were prevalent among South Carolina slaves.(29) About escapees along its Gullah coastal regions, Creel found that, while African-born persons were more likely to escape singly, a mixed group of American and African-born were more likely to make up a band of maroons.(30) But even among the mixed groups, the predominant identity was that of "African." However, it was sometimes true that whites and Indians joined with the maroon bands.

"Maroonage" around colonial French New Orleans was characterized by more interracial amalgamation and permanence of its settlements. Rather than a widely diverse grouping, the Africans were found to have been taken from mostly Wolof and Bambara speaking regions of the continent. Among the swamps around New Orleans, a network of maroon villages were established, and are identified by name on a 1768 map of the region.(31) The daring Juan Malo, was the singular warrior-governor over this network. One of the villages was apparently named after him, Bayou St. Malo, and another possibly, Bayou Marron, as well. Apropos for his exploits, Malo's surname is from the Mandekan group, perhaps Bambara. As they sought to survive and avoid recapture, these valiant fugitives also forged an autonomous culture from various ethnic backgrounds, to create cohesive communities, a process taking place concomitantly within the woeful confines of "Slave Row," to use Lerone Bennett, Jr.'s, terminology.(32) These communities foreshadowed the cultural syncretism and creolization which would become characteristic of the African American population in the post-slavery eras.

An important element in the maroon mix was Native Americans, who were being killed and cruelly driven from their ancestral lands by the colonial settlers and militias. The fleeing indigenous bands and African escapees established close relations for mutual benefit, and sometimes intermarried. But, they generally maintained separate identities. In Florida, their settlements acquired names that reflect this admixture. Although not so identified in the literature, their towns—bearing names such as Wahoo Swamp, King Cudjoe's Town, and Minatti—indicate African linguistic agency in place-naming. Both "racial" groups were understood to constitute the Seminoles, but those of African descent are most frequently termed Black Seminoles, or a similar variant. On the lushly thicketed Florida frontier, Black Seminoles built housing compounds distinct from the indigenous peoples. Their compounds might be within the same village as their Native American affiliates, or situated in a network nearby, or even more remote villages. By the late 1700s across Flordia, Black Seminoles numbered more than 100,000, a testament to their more than 100-year alliance with indigenous peoples in Spanish Florida.(33) One of the Seminole initiatives which precipitated the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) was the "Dade Massacre" in Sumter County, and its attendant liberation of enslaved Africans from plantations to its north and east.(34) This initiative has been posed as possibly the largest slave revolt in U. S. history.(35) So prominent was African influence in their alliance that, during, General Jesup wrote that, in reality, it was not an Indian, but "a negro war."(36)

Though most maroon camps and setlements in the U. S. were eventually crushed before the Civil War, that was not always true. The Dismal Swamp Maroons persisted from the colonial era up to the War.(37) Their villages stood in the swamplands bordering Virginia and North Carolina. Reaching from the Roanoke are to the Albermarle waterways, the Dismal Swamp sheltered about 2000 fugitives.(38) Similar to the permanent marooners of Louisiana and Florida, they carried on "regular" trade with ordinary citizens. They even assisted the Union Army, as independent contractors, in its triumph over the Confederate militia in their region, during the latter part of the Civil War.

Laeming's cultural analysis of the Dismal Swamp Maroons also revealed some maintenance of distinct African identity in the presence of intimate alliances with fugitive whites, and indigenous peoples.(39) Pondering the possiblilty that there may have been Africans in sufficient enough numbers to form ethnically disticnt villages within the network, he noted that there "was a Congo village, as well as, individual maroons of other specific west African cultural or religious emphases," reflected in their leaders' names, e.g., "Osman (Islamic) and Gamby Gholar and his spiritual associates, who he identified as Yoruba-Dahomean."

Though maroonage was one avenue through which African descendants imprinted their language upon the American landscape in the antebellum centuries, it was not the only way. In fact, marooners were often more campers than settlers, needing to abandon areas quickly to avoid recapture and slaughter. Aptheker posits that those maroon towns and settlements in the U.S., which experienced unusual longevity, probably had done so because they traded in desired goods,

and avoided clashes with white planters and settlers. Furthermore, because the large majority of maroon communities wre destroyed, and the inhabitants captured and/or killed, it could be that the majority of the toponyms they bestowed are lost to history.

In his *Names on the Land,* Stewart expressed no doubt that "many hundreds of small streams and swamps," whose meanings he could not distinguish, "were named by Negroes."(40) He further recognized that "Pinder Town in South Carolina preserved the Kongo *Mpinda* (peanut)." But, he added that "white men probably did the naming after the word had become current in local speech." His understanding that black people did, in fact, assign place names is correct thinking, but his attitude is somewhat problematic. First, he seems unable to conceive of Africans having left their distinct liguistic imprint on large geographical masses; and, second, that when African names appeared as a whole town name, that is was not by direct African American agency.

One attestation concerning personal names is illustrative of the probability of a more than insignificant and indirect African American toponyimc agency. The son of a Mississippi slaveholder recollected the exasperation of white planters over the attributive names insistently given to them by the Africans they held captive on "Slave Row":

> The redesignation would take place in spite of all [resistance], and so thoroughly that often friends and acquaintancs of the family never knew the real name of the child. [Eventually] the parents themselves at last fell into the use of the…strange grotesque…applications of Ripper, Snorter, Coon, Possum, Boots, Horse…and many others like them…Few could get rid of them…barnacle-like they clung to their owners through the whole voyage of life.(41)

When one considers that it was overwhelmingly African labor and skill that cleared and worked the land, it is far from inconceivable that direct African American agency is partly responsible for the African linguistic impact on American toponyms. That is not to say it is easy to unmask. Vass provides a convincing example of an African name upon a massive, as well as famous geoscape: Suwanee River < *nsub'wanyi,* "my house" in Kongo, Mbundu, etc.(42) Other examples may be expected.

Africans escaping slavery did sometimes, indeed, establish settlements and towns in the North and West. The Abolition Movement, particularly through the Underground Railroad, was instrumental in helping Africans to escape to free states. They were not always welcomed, and met with white hostility and/or "white flight." So they, as a group, moved into or evolved into one-race towns, respectively. In 1840, Illinois saw the first of the all-black towns become established in the North. Originally named Lovejoy, after the area's most vocal abolitionist.(43) It was re-named Brooklyn later, and incorporated in 1910 with a black majority in political control. It survives to-date. One early settlement founded by runaways in Maine is Malaga Island. Established in 1847, its "early settlers are known to have maintained their ancestral languages and lived in caves" to avoid recapture.(44) As typical of many eastern island communities, they were squatters. In 1912, however, the inhabitants were dealt with in a ruthless and devastating manner. Forced wholesale by the state into the Maine School for the Feeble-Minded, the inhabitants were, along with their houses and gravesites, wiped from view.(45) An example of the effect of white hostility "out West" may be seen in the fortunes of Kentucky Ridge, established by African Americans in 1851. Established in the quartz mining regions, white vigilantes attacked the settlement, and by 1853, the inhabitants, with their founders, all moved to larger settlements nearby.(46)

From Black Reconstruction to the Great Depression

After a bloody and bitter upheaval across the southern U. S., the Civil War finally brought the 300-plus years old "peculiar institution" to a halt by 1865. Unfortunately, the African descendants' ecstatic Jubilees over their liberty, and "Black Reconstruction" lasted briefly. Bennett explains that it would be among "the first of many illusions and deceptions," as the parasitic exploitation of, and brutality against African Americans would be re-instituted in other guises; one of the first avenues for this reinstitution would be the infamous Black Codes of 1865-1866, to be followed by the notorious Compromise of 1877.(47)

By the opening of the Black Reconstruction period, most African descendants were speaking a set of regional, stable Anglo-African creoles. As they began to take on the status of "citizens," African Americans' language began decreolizing some toward Euro-American English. Decreolization proceeded more quickly among those who left the isolated rural south for metropolitan areas, received formal education, and lived among other in-group members who were "mainstream" speakers.(48) As was always true in the preceding era, they had acquired a repertoire of language varieties and registers to be used to their advantage.(49)

Because disparities in power and opportunity continued, code-switching continued to be practiced. One variety would maintain in-group solidarity, while a different variety would be used in interactions with out-group whites. African language use, per se, became even more restricted among the number of users, and in functional domains (e.g., storytelling) because, with the cessation of illegal African arrivals, there were no ancestral language reinforcements. Deep Anglo-African creoles continued to predominate in isolated enclaves (e.g., Gullah in South Carolina, and Gombo in Louisiana). Additionally, distinctive African American forms became more diffused into the language of Euro-Americans, as levels of intergroup contact increased.

Convinced early on of the non-repentant proclivities of whites, some tens of thousands migrated to Liberia. Although many migrated northward or westward also, the large majority of African Americans stayed in the rural south. Pointing to songs, tales, and other lore of "Slave Row" culture, V. P. Franklin concludes that, with freedom having been considered the ultimate goal of their individual and collective struggles under slavery, it was logical that "self determination and social advancement" would become defining values among African Americans. Whenever amenable, they became vastly more involved in government, schooling, and accumulation of land and property. But, with the spirit of the late 1800s and early 1900s settling on widespread racial hostility toward them, African Americans placed increasingly more emphasis on self-help, mutual aid, racial solidarity, emigration, separatism, and attempts to create all-black communities.(50) These efforts were established within and beyond the confederate states, and in all-black towns or black enclaves of other towns.

The Homestead Act of 1866 brought many of the freedmen into areas more sparsely settled prior to the Civil War; and black towns were created within the former confederacy and without. Land acquisition through the Freedmen's Bureau was woefully insufficient, so most African Americans who managed to acquire land had given up the wait for "40 acres and a mule," and some resolved to make their own land purchases.

Even with 40 acres awarded, or lands collectively purchased, there was no guarantee African Americans would be able to keep it. A wide array of obstacles could be faced, including white opposition. Such was the case that spawned Belle Ville in McIntosh County, GA. As an outcome of General William Sherman's Special Field Order #15, two brothers were awarded land on St. Catherine's Island. Their colony was broken up during the backlash, which returned the properties to the former slaving planters.(51) But, so determined was the group that they pooled their meager monies, formed themselves into the Belle Ville Farmers Association, and leased this acreage, when it was still a plantation. Soon after, they bought it, and their town was incorporated on March 4, 1867.(52)

In December 1875, a national black convention was held in New Orleans. Learning how widespread were racist depredations, the delegates formed "Colonization councils" that helped collect names of African Americans in their representative areas who were interested in leaving. Henry Adams, one of the delegates from what is now Shreveport, LA, wrote, in a letter to the U. S. Attorney General in late 1878:

> "I trust God that the United States will give us some Territory to our selves—and let us leave these Slaveholders to work their own land, for they are killing our race by the hundreds every day and night."

But the "violence, intimidation, fraud and terrorism continued…and by April 1879 the Colonization Council had collected more than 98,000 names of people willing to migrate to the North or West, as well as to emigrate to Liberia."(53)

In the late 1870s, when Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, and other promoters of westward migration, needed names of willing persons, the Council was one of the groups providing them leads. Estimates are "that during the spring and summer 1879 and 1880, nearly 60,000 blacks left Northern Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama for Kansas and Indiana to take advantage of the federal government's offer of land for homesteading.(54) Morris Turner calls this period, ending in 1881, the "Black Exodus."(55)

The Black Exoduster towns came to have names such as Abila, Blackdom, Tullahassee, and Three Creeks. Though scant, some literature about this era addressed onomastic Africanism. Personal names, rather than place names was the subject, though in may still be found instructive for the study of the place names of these post-Civil War black towns. Some African descendants consciously maintained their Africanness. Cudjo Lewis, for example, became a leader of ex-slaves captured form Togo. He also retained his African forename, Cudjo < *koJo,* 'male born on Monday.'(56)

An ironic, but interesting phenomenon served to erode the corpus of surface forms of African names while maintaining African deep structure onomastics simultaneously. Persons reported that in order to inculcate the status of

free citizen, they must discard their slavery time name in favor of a free citizen name, in effect, an Euro-American name. Thusly, they practiced the African postulate of marking life's significant events through bestowal of additional names. African influence was not always masked by this process, because some acquired new names that are English words based on common semantic and/or syntactic categories common in African names; an example found was a calque-phrase name, Try and See.(57)

Having not experienced "a marked improvement in their status from the end of Reconstruction to the onset World War I," black workers were enticed northward, Bennett explains, by "hard pressed" industrialists. Previously, these northern industrialists had severely restricted blacks' employment, preferring white European immigrants, who were now detoured by the war. To take advantage of increased job opportunities, massive numbers of African Americans moved in two "Great Migrations," 1915-1920, and 1920-1924. By 1930, they numbered "more than two million." Marking the first major shift in their overriding status as servants, laborers, and peasants since the 1600s, more than one-third of black workers were employed in industrial occupations. Cohesive black communities developed in these industrial centers; and a northern black professional class emerged.(58) V. P. Franklin described the "complex social networks" developed by African Americans of the Great Migrations, who shared the values of self-determination and freedom with the earlier black-town pioneers:

> With the influx of large numbers of rural blacks into northern and southern urban centers during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Black churches, separate schools, fraternal institutions, voluntary associations and advancement groups sprouted up to meet their social and cultural needs. The expanding populations of African Americans found that they could become a part of a wide array of organizations in which blacks exercised complete control. As long as these institutions functioned, there was little need of the discrimination practiced in white-dominated public and private [ones].(59)

This became the overriding mode until the Great Depression in the 1930s, which forced thousands of self-help organizations to disband. Afterward, African Americans seemed to have thought it was best to pursue integration "into white-dominated programs and institutions, especially those programs offered by the New Deal."(60)

Turner collected copious linguistic data in the 1930s and 1940s from Gullah speakers (a.k.a. Geechees), African descendants who had not migrated, but remained continuously over all the centuries on largely isolated (island) enclaves along the southeastern Atlantic coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. His data analyses culminated in the seminal work, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect.* It showed decisively the richness of African onomastics in this deep creole language variety. Gullahs/Geechees have an official name, plus an alternate, or "basket" name that was kept secret. The basket names were found nearly always to be African homophones. But, there were also some calques which related to weather, physical or emotional state, life situation, or time of birth.(61)

Even though his informants did not remember the meanings of their names, most of which were also personal names in West African languages, they continued to use them, because their older relatives and friends had. Curious about those whose forenames and surnames were both African, it was explained to Turner, by informants who were ex-slaves that "[a]fter slavery, many of them refused to use any longer the name of their former enslavers."(62) In those words, one finds the evidence of a self-determining identity expressed in language. Turner took only slight note of Gullah/Geechee agency in bestowals of place-name Africanisms.(63) His nine examples include Peedee, Tybee, and Wassaw. A native observer of Edisto Island (a Gullah enclave) reportedly said that "the Sea Island Negro is most fertile in naming everything, giving particular names even to the narrow saltwater drains or gutters interlacing the marshes when they are dry at low tide."(64)

From the Post Depression to the Present

Appearing to be fewer in number than those founded by previous black pioneers and exodusters of the post-Reconstruction period, thousands of African Americans settled "suburban" towns for themselves prior to the 1960s.(65) Most of these were established in subsequent migrations from the urban town centers, which were not only white controlled, but also becoming "havens of overcrowding, unemployment, and crime." Weise interprets this black out-migration as having been part of the "national trend toward urban expansion and suburban decentralization," except that they retained a southern rural flavor in the years before World War II.(66) Real estate prices and home ownership were significantly less expensive than in the big cities, and most were blue-collar workers. Their place names include Lincoln Heights, Glenarden, and Kinloch. The professional

class African Americans, not proscribed to slums, overwhelmingly preferred the central city.

Numbering more than 3,500,000 people across this country, African American migration to the suburbs from 1960 to 1980 was "unprecedented."(67) On the heels of civil rights legislation, many opted for integration into more affluent, white suburbs. They generally shunned the older black suburban towns with rural flavor. However, some did, and do, move into a few of the older suburbs, which have managed to thrive and up-grade housing-stocks (e.g., Glenarden, Maryland). During this interval, the migrations were concentrated in and around 12 cities, with the concentrations of greatest magnitude in Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. So, from the close of Reconstruction to the contemporary era, it is clear that through "the act of migration, …families and entire communities moved [in order] to control their own destinies and to give greater meaning and substance to the cultural value of black freedom."(68)

Throughout the post-Depression era, intergroup tensions have persisted, due in large part to continued Euro-American resistance to full freedom, justice, and equality for African Americans. The tension is posed against some highly visible easements in racial discrimination, in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement. Bennett locates the progress of this period in the "middle of the economy." We find the eradication of overt Jim Crow laws, return of blacks to elective offices, diversification of career opportunities, and non-proscription of mobility and inter-ethnic personal relations. He calls this state of affairs a "central paradox" of American life; that is,

> [E]verything has changed in Black America, and yet nothing has changed. This means, among other things, that we have not yet gotten to the bottom line: the integration of the money and the power and the resources. The great movement of the [1960s] …did not and could not at that time destroy the invisible institutional manifestations of racism.(69)

This bi-polarity (and escalating ethnic duality) increases social identity ambivalence that is mirrored in African American language. On the one hand, more African American speakers have shifted closer to Euro-American varieties, (e.g., employing increased denasalization). On the other hand, heightened ethnic distinctiveness has emerged in certain syntactic forms and speech events (e.g., specific subject/verb co-occurrences and rap/rhyme respectively). The in-group vernacular, most popularly referred to as Ebonics or Black English, enhances group solidarity, identity, and/or esteem.(70) Depending on socio-familial background, African American variation along the continuum between "talkin' black" and "talkin' white" is probably more of a conscious choice than in previous eras. And again, it is seen that some distinctive African American forms have become infused into "mainstream" vernaculars. So salient is "black talk" as an American pop culture resource (like jazz or blues), it seems much more likely that some of the most stable African American speech markers (e.g., habitual aspect "be") will cross racial boundaries rather than become extinct.

The advocacy for reclamation of African identity and esteem in this era has definitely impacted personal names. In her study of African American personal names, Kashif found that onomastic Africanisms occur not only as African homophones, but also in the form of calques and hybrids. These hybrids have never been discussed in the research literature.

> a. African Homophones, e.g., Keisha < *kishia*, jealousy in Hausa, also a nickname given to the second wife who is always seen as a rival of the first;
>
> b. African Calques (semantic content transfer), e.g., Prince < *Eze,* Igbo, 'prince' name for one whose grandparent is a hereditary ruler in eastern Nigeria; the informant for this name attests that he uses the English equivalent word to while in the U.S., but reverts to Eze when traveling back home;(71) and,
>
> c. African Hybrids, e.g., Kawanda < *Ka* + *wanda* < *Ka-,* an Ovimbundu prefix used very frequently to form female names from common nouns; *wanda,* a Hausa pluralizer for 'who' or which; or, e.g., ShaKiethia < Sha + Kieth + a < *'Sho,* Yoruba for 'seer or wizard', a male for female name prefix for this major cultural class of names (e.g., Shoyinka); *Kieth,* the male, Euro-American name; *-(y)a,* Arabic, feminizer.

There is also some evidence, in the contemporary era, for conscious revivals of African influenced place names; for example, Oyotunji Village became the name of a black cultural hamlet, founded in the late 1970s, in South Carolina; and the historic town of Prichard, Alabama officially reclaimed one of its former names, Africatown.

So, it is shown that, across the centuries of African American history, non-linguistic factors have interacted with linguistic ones in the evolution African language. The western and central African polyglot of the antebellum era, under influence mostly from English and Scot-Irish dialects, was largely replaced by a set of creolized speech varieties among African descendants. The historical evidence is that African descendants exercised the prerogative of naming settlements, land masses, and other geo-

graphical features in their environs, beginning even during the era in which they were held in bondage, denied the status of free citizens, or landowners. Following Emancipation, African American creoles shifted closer, over the centuries, toward Euro-American codes. But, due to the psychosocial distinctiveness of African descendants, and the internal vitality of African American language, now more than 500 years old, enough features of the supplanted ancestral African language elements have survived to form an African stratum. Intermittently, various linguistic Africanisms have been revived, consciously and unconsciously. Under the influence of a bi-polar psychosocial continuum from assimilationists to separatists, African Americans code-mix and code-switching along the linguistic continuum, ranging from deep creoles (e.g., Gullah and Gombo) to mesolects (e.g., Ebonics or Black Vernacular) to arcolects (e.g., Standard Black English [SBE] or Standard English).(72)

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to expand the identifications of America's African influenced toponyms, especially in terms of their varied manifestations. Propelled by the persisting Black Studies movement, and influenced greatly by the work of Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect,* there is a noticeable increase in the number of contemporary researchers seriously addressing the subject of Africanisms. These studies address African influence within, and beyond the African American collective. Few of these discuss onomastics, but when one considers the literature on the response of names to extended language contact, and the history of Africa's descendants in America, there should be a greater body of such studies. Those that do focus on African American onomastics, deal with personal names almost exclusively.

Vass is the one researcher who has made place names one of the focal points of her efforts to identify Africanisms in American language. Her chapter in a 1993 work she co-edited, "Bantu Place Names in Nine Southern States," expands an earlier publication, which, itself, was an outgrowth of her master's thesis in mass communications. The Bantu branch of African languages covers almost all of central and southern Africa. The Bantu languages of particular import for African Americans include Fang, Kongo, Luba, and Mbundu. Arguing for a predominance of Bantu language influence over all other African language branches, Vass sought to identify retentions from the latter two, predominant in Angola and Zaire/Congo. She was raised in Zaire, the child of Caucasian missionaries. A glance at Turner's small collection of toponyms, taken from the Gullah/Geechee region, and only in South Carolina and Georgia, alerts one very quickly that much is left to discern.

Using the corpus of all the town names in each of nine confederate states, she compared their pronunciations to words and phrases in the Bantu languages. She expanded the corpus to include names of rivers/streams, mountains, locales, and populations; the working definitions of the latter two terms are not provided. To build her case for an Africanism, Vass included elaborations on meanings or emotional character denoted by the proposed Bantu source words. She notes that in Zaire, place names commonly denote "significant human experience, emotion, or action."(73) Too often, she conjectures or sets forth imagined scenarios that the African descendants may have been engaged in or encountered, then proceeds to extrapolate upon the conjectures as if they were attested facts. This was especially problematic when there were more than a few sound differences between the toponym and her proposed Bantu source. She was much less careful than Turner; in order for an African form to be posed as a source by Turner, it had to be "phonetically identical with or strikingly similar to" the Gullah name, emphasizing thereby a "strong probability that the [selected Gullah] names are African words."(74)

However, many of the toponyms Vass proposed as Africanisms are convincing when based on close sound similarities coupled with transparent, rather than conjectured, meanings, and/or when a locality's historian admits that the toponym has an unknown origin or meaning. Another puzzle is that Vass's findings from a random sample of Zaire toponym denotations do not comport with the findings of Cheikh Anta Diop, an African toponym expert of international repute. He found that an African toponym is most typically the personal name of the founder of the town or settlement. Perhaps the difference is explained by whether or not inhabitants migrated to a site; or a pattern shift may have occurred on the Continent with the cessation of the antebellum slave trade.

Theoretical Perspective on Research Needs

As was done in the writer's discoveries of patterns of Africanisms in generations of African American personal names, the methodology employed within amounts to card stacking, i.e., using as many linguistic and non-linguistic facts available which are relevant to African provenance for each selected place-name Africanism.(75) Using racial/ethnic history and make-up of a region is one of

the most convincing card-stacking strategies. Turner targeted Gullah Sea Island habitats and Vass widened the target areas to nine confederate states. So the geopolitical history serves as indirect attestation of African linguistic provenance. The argument for African influence is also more convincing when historians of a locale have found the etymology of its toponym unsure or obscure; it is common in place-name texts to express no consideration whatsoever of African language sources. The analyses within

1. Avoids some of Vass's weaknesses shown in positing a U. S. place name as a Bantu Africanism or Bantuism; she

• often did not identify the specific Bantu language(s) of a posited source, thereby leaving one to assume that she means perhaps all Bantu languages;

• provided no explanation of guidelines for deciding the extent of phonetic similarity necessary between a place-name and its posited Bantu source; this resulted in posited African sources that seem counter intuitive, and therefore unconvincing.

2. Moves beyond "Bantu" language sources so that place names derived from the other African languages, including converging source words, may be identified.

3. Moves beyond African homophones to include other types of Africanisms, as described above.

4. Identifies toponym Africanisms beyond the South, analyzing "autonomous" black towns and settlements across the U. S., from as early as the era of maroonage.

Methodology

Toponym, or place-name Africanisms, were addressed in terms of language mixture resulting from language contact phenomena. These are issues of concern in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, and social psychology, among others. The identification of a toponym as African influenced is based on its linguistic similarities to, and modification of, African forms and structures. A purposive sample of African American toponyms was collected from historical, geographical, journalistic and linguistic surveys. The study began with a central focus on Florida, because it is found to have the longest history of African agency and struggle of any state in the now United States. 164 place names of towns identified in the available literature as having been established and/or founded by African American were collected.

The researcher identified and classified into transfer types all of the African American toponyms which (in their morphological, phonological and semantic characteristics) correspond to or appear modeled upon African names, words, morphological processes, and toponym motifs. Several types of changes in African words toward American English phonology were predictable, e.g., (a) deletion of tones, or (b) simplification of co-articulated stops (ng-, kp- > g, p or n, k, respectively).

The selected African American toponyms were divided into Africanism types: African homophone, African hybrid, and African semantic transfer. They are to be understood as follows:

1. African homophone, the toponym's phone or sound sequence matches that of (an) African source(s); a match means that the sound segments of the African American toponym have undergone no more than two changes that are unexplainable by common American English phonological processes (as those noted above).

2. African hybrid, the toponym conjoins (a) two or more African source words or word-parts or (b) an African source word or word-part and non-African one.

3. African semantic transfer, the toponym is a calque or word(s) in English that shows transfer of an African motif or semantic content of the following type:

(a) town or settlement founder or inspirer,

(b) ethnic/ linguistic group reference,

(c) duplication of another toponym, or

(d) commentary on human state-of-affairs.

The four subcategories typify, but are not exclusive to, African place-name onomastics. However it is firmly established in the language contact literature that ancestral language retentions occur in these "translated" forms. One way that convergence with a non-African language may be unmasked is through comparison of the preponderance of each name type among the non-African language speakers in the contact environment.

Findings and Interpretations

Entry Guide

Below, an alphabetically arranged roster with toponym glosses is provided for each toponym identified as an Africanism. Symbols are to be interpreted as follows:

< is a form of or has its source in

> changed to

[ ] approximate pronunciation is indicated within the brackets (Note: An informal pronunciation guide of broadly represented sounds)

Abbreviations

Sources from the Reference list

Ath, Athearn

Br, Brown

Dp, Diop, 1978

Lmg, Laeming

Ln, Landers

Mc, McCarthy

MTr, Turner 1998

Od, Oduyoye

Rv, Rivers, 2000

Tr, Turner, 1949

Sources from personal communication

Al, Albury, A., 7/00

Ay, Ayittey, G,10/90

CBr, Brown, C., 11/00

Ctr, Carter, W., 1/88

Nj, Njokunma, A., 4/00

Languages

Ak, Akan (Ewe, Fante, Twi)

Egy, Egyptiam or Khemetic

B, Bambara

Bb, Bobangi

Bml, Bamilike

Bn, Bantu (Fang, Kongo, Luba and Mbundu)

Dj, Djerma

K, Kongo

Mdg, Manding(k)o(a)

T, Twi

Yor, Yoruba

Alafia River, FL < *alafia* Yor ' health, peace', a common greeting (Tr, 49, Al). By the 1880's economic decline "many ex-slaves stayed in the [Tampa, FL] area to farm and homestead the land. A group of them established the community of Bealsville, near the Alafia River (Mc, 306).

Angola, FL - same name as that of the central African country. So-called by Cuban fisherman making a land claim in the area in 1821, referring to a "Negro maroon settlement on the Manatee River, across the Sarasota Bay (CBr). Population consisted of hundreds of black men, women and children (CB, 8-9); one of the last refuges for black warriors, having served with Britain in the War of 1812. Also contained escaped slaves from Mobile, AL; Pensacola, FL; St. Augustine, FL; and, Georgia (see Ln, 230-237); disrupted by 1821 Creek raid (Rv, 195).

Boley, OK < [bolee] B 'a fetish'; 'to run'; 'to desert' (Tr, 66). Established in 1903, one of the largest all-black exoduster towns. The city is reportedly named after one of the white founders of the town, but Boley is not found in American surname books, suggesting that the founder referred to may not have been.

Booker, TX < [bokaw] E 'a diviner, priest' (Tr, 67); [boh-oka] K 'to heal (Tr, 68). One of the all-black exoduster towns (MTr, 142).

Bucker Woman's Town, FL < see "Bucker" above. One of the important maroon settlements of free blacks in central Florida, 1814-1840s; aka Buckra…, lead by the sister to the dead Seminole chiefs, Kings Payne and Bowlegs, and mother of Billy Bowlegs. By 1923, transferred her cattle operations and black vassals to creek flowing westward into Peace River, 15 miles below Minatti (Ln, 236, Rv, 195-97) in the Big Hammock, between today's Hernando and Pasco counties.

Coffeyville, KS < *Kofi,* Ak; personal name, male, when born on Friday. An Exoduster colony that lasted only one year (Ath, 78).

Congo **Village,** NC < same as name of the country and language in central Africa. One of the settlements in the Dismal Swamp, NC, its leader, Congo Jonah, was called King Jonah by those of other settlements. He probably was from a noble family of the Congo region (Lmg, 289).

Coosaw, Island/River, SC < [kusaw] Dj 'dusty' (Tr, f.n. 7, 307). Located on the Gullah/Geechee sea islands.

Cudjoe Key, FL < [ko-joe], [kawjoe], [kwajoe] Ak, personal name, male, for 'one born on Monday' '(Tr, 115 & 119). An isolated key out from Key West; etymology of name unknown in Florida place name texts.(76) During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Keys were a major destination of slave ships, and the site of the infamous 1701 shipwreck of the slaver, Henrietta Marie. The Keys were well known for working thousands of enslaved Africans harshly, and prosecuting a zealous abolitionist who tried to secure their escapees well as notoriety over the efforts of a (Mc, 146-153).

Ellaville, FL < [eh-la] Yor 'one of the root sources of life in Yoruba cosmology'; *ela,* K 'catch, throw, or pour out'.(77) A settlement along the Suwanee River in Florida, the land was given to an African woman, formerly a favored servant to the landowner, a Florida government official. The town was wiped out by Ku Klux Klan hordes when the residents lobbied to get a school.

Hayti, NC < [ay-yi-ti] Ga 'name for the first-born son of Ayi, 'a person who brings fulfillment'(Ay); [ati] Twi, name of a deity (Tr, 54); *Ity* Egy 'sovereign, con-

querer'.(78) An African American settlement near Durham, since at least 1877 (MTtr, 121).

[kawkaw], SC < K, 'to judge unjustly'. A place-name on Gullah/Geechee coast (Tr, 113 and f.n. 6,307). *KaoKao,* an important, ancient ethnic group that migrated to Senegal from the Nile Valley (Dp, 92).

Kush, MS - same as that of the ancient Nile civilization. So named by the Republic of New Afrika, this is a district consisting of 25 black counties along the Mississippi River from Memphis to Louisiana (Ctr).

LaVilla, FL < [luh-VEE-la] K, 'relationship, family, clan' (Tr, 126). A freedmen's town (1866-1887)that was pressured into annexation by the larger, predominantly white city of Jacksonville. It was begun through the protection and assistance of a Freedmen's Bureau unit stationed in the area, and is now designated a historic district.(79)

Little **Coney** Colony, LA < [koh-nee] T, personal name, 'speechless, absolutely still'. Exoduster town incorporated in 1881. Led by A. Fairfax, who had been elected to the LA Congress but forced to flee by mob of protesting Democrats (MTr, 85).

Bayou **Malo,** LA < *malo* B, 'shame; reason'; Mdn personal name, 'hippopotamus' (Tr, 128) the name is given to a leader who defies the status quo to benefit society through the use of special powers. One of a network of maroon settlements led by Malo in LA during the late 1700s.(80)

Black **Mingo** Pocosin < [MING-go] Bml, a surname, in French speaking Cameroon; *mingo* Bb 'they'. A swamp in border areas of NC and VA, near Roanoke; "living here were 'black indians' (Lmg, 286)."(81)

Minatti, FL < referring to the huge "sea-cow"; first recording of the term in European texts occurred in 1555; Moloney's *West African Fisheries* is one of the OED citation sources. Coastal West Africans were reported to have high appreciation for its flesh.(82) A maroon settlement located northeast of Tampa Bay's Negro Point maroon settlement north of Bartow in present-day Polk county (Br,39-40); "housed Creek Chief Oponay's slaves and later some of Angola's refugees (Rv, 195)."

Fort **Mose** [moh-say], FL< [maw-say] Vai personal, name, male (Tr, 133); cf., [moosah] Mndn 'name of the prophet' personal name, male, (Tr,134). A fortified town established in 1728 by Spanish about two miles north of present-day St. Augustine in territory they held in Florida. "[T]he old Indian place-name" according to Landers, but no language or ethnic group source given (Ln 294). Complete form of the name, Gracia Real de Santa Theresa de Mose (Ln, 29).

New **Eufala,** FL < [ya-law-fa] Yor, 'to obtain as a pawn (Tr, 184); deemed to have unknown meaning.(83) Seminole maroon plantation established in west central Florida by 1821. Near present day Brooksville, it was led by Simaka.(84)

Ocala (from Ocali, the name of an older Seminole nation encompassing all of Marion County), FL < [awkala-kala], E. Igbo, the judge over land disputes; 'The case is settled!' (Nj); [oko-ah-lay] Yor 'an afternoon's farm work' (Tr, 143).(85) Meaning reported to be obscure though many meanings suggested (Mc,208).(86)

Okatee River, SC < [okati] Umbundu, 'middle, interior'. A river in Gullah/Geechee sea islands area (Tr, f.n.,307).

Oyotunji Village, SC- Yor 'return of the ancient Oyo kingdom' (Al). settlement near Beaufort, established by African Americans for traditional Yoruba cultural practices.

Peedee River,SC < [mpeedee] K, in Angola, 'a species of viper'(Tr, 307). Name for two rivers in Gullah/Geechee region.

Suwannee Old Town, FL < *Suwane,* > Mndg, personal name; [suu-waa-naa] Hausa 'which one's' (Tr, 163); Bn, *nsub wanyi;* 'my house, home'.(87) One of the Seminole-African refugee settlement along this great river, wiped out in 1818 by Andrew Jackson' forces in the opening of the first Seminole War (Rv, 195).(88)

[teetee], SC — Gulla/Geechee place-name (Tr, f.n. 7, 307).

Tybee Island/Creek,SC < /tai bi; Hausa 'an especially fertile, low-lying farmland' (3Tr, f.n. 7,07). An island and a creek in the Gullah/Geechee region.

Wahoo Island/River, SC < /wa-hu/ Yor 'to trill the voice' (Tr, 307). Located in the Geechee/Gullah region.

Wahoo Swamp, FL < see above. Site of Seminole maroon settlements and battles in the 1800s. It lies 80 miles northeast of Tampa, in present-day Sumter County, above the bend in the Withlacoochee River.(89)

Wando River, SC < *Kwando River,* K, a river running from Angola, through Botswanna and Zambia, also name of a large city in Angola (Bk, 292); Hausa, [wan-doh] 'trousers'. A river in the Gullah/Geechee region (Tr, 307).

Wassaw Island/Sound, SC < [wassaw] Twi, a district, tribe, and dialect of the Gold Coast. Located in the Gullah/Geechee region (Tr, 307).

African Homophones

Of the 172 toponyms in the corpus, 31 were found to be African homophones. Multiple or additional African sources were posited for some of them. This strengthens the argument for each proposed Africanism, especially when its semantic field content is opaque, i.e., no longer transparent. Identified in earlier works of Vass and Turner, **Suwanee** River and **Wando,** respectively, are two of the Africanisms for which the researcher was able to posit additional African sources. Concerning Suwannee, Vass had derived it from *nsub'wanyi,* Bn, 'my house, home'. Though its semantic field content is a powerful argument in itself, the Mandingo, *Suwane,* argues for a more powerful influence for two reasons. *Suwane* [suh-wah-nee?] (1) requires no or fewer sound changes vs. *nsub'wanyi;* (2) is an African personal name; and, (3) is nearly the same as the attested name, *Suwanna,* found among Gullah/Geechee females when Turner was collecting their names in the late 1930s. Since a town founder's name is the most typical toponym of migrating Africans, Suwane could easily have been, like the legendary Malo of colonial Louisiana, the maroon founder and leader of the earlier swampy settlements along the famous river. The Hausa [suu-waa-naa]'which one's?' does not have the force of the other two sources, but evokes a picture of Suwane's followers asking which sites along the river should be settled.

Turner derives **Wando** from the Hausa [wan-doh] 'trousers'. Even though it shares an apparent one-to-one sound correspondence with the Africanism, [wan-doh] is easily subordinated in favor of *Kwando* as the predominant African source; *Kwando* not only has a strong sound correspondence with Wando, but shares one-to-one semantic correspondence in its designation of the geographical feature, 'river'. Though not the only one, combined sound-meaning correspondence is always the stronger one. For this reason, some of the homophone toponyms were posited without reference to multiple language sources. This may apply whether the semantic content of the African source (1) has persisted in semantic field content in the Africanism; or, (2) conveys canonical African principles of place naming.

Florida's **Wahoo** Swamp and **LaVilla,** are illustrative. Wahoo has maintained the semantic field of creation of marked sounds from its Yoruba source. It is through consideration of the historical context that the case is sealed. The historical reality is that fleeing and warring bands of Seminole-African maroons had to set up and hide in difficult to access areas, as are swamps; and a war band would have a designee whose role was to give out a special whoop to signal attack. The Seminole soldier, Jumper was documented to have done such in the Dade Massacre.(90) Perhaps the same-named river and island in South Carolina were sites of maroon activity or the founder of the Wahoo Swamp was a fugitive who escaped from South Carolina. Also, Wahoo is very likey the root word for *yahoo* and *yehaw.*

LaVilla (pronounced luh-VIh-luh) shows only a few sound changes in the Kongo source word, [lu-Vee- la]. As is typical, the vowels have been reduced in this homophone Africanism; but the meaning of the Kongo source word, 'relationship, family, clan', shares the semantic field content, 'an ethnic group' with the African principle, thereby stacking the cards more heavily in favor of the homophone's selection.(91) As Yai explained, an African place name is often the same as one's ethnic group and language name.

LaVilla is also interesting because it exemplifies convergence or masking, another expected phenomenon in cultural retention in a contact situation. Its orthography suggests a romance language word. Even the fact of a non-Latin pronunciation would just barely attract attention. Its pronunciation has probably been thought of as simply interference from the English sound system. But the history of LaVilla as an all-black town coupled with the salient sound-meaning correspondences unmasks the Africanism.

African Hybrids

From this corpus, only one hybrid form, **Black Mingo Pocosin,** was found to occur. It is analyzed as Black + Mingo Pocosin; the racial/color reference *black* is a toponym Africanism that has been translated into a semantically transparent English "equivalent" and conjoined to African forms that are retained opaque homophones. It is expected that, with a completed analysis of *pocosin,* it may be found that the toponym is an independent clause or sentence, "They are the black buffaloes." This recalls that African men, serving in America's western cavalries were called "Buffalo Soldiers." These Dismal Swamp maroons successfully resisted destruction, and were not assimilated into the American polity until the end of the Civil War. If the selection of pocosin (with the gloss "buffalo") becomes solidified, it would be an even more powerful Africanism, announcing ethnic identity and dominion over a geographic space in a complete sentence.

There were no admixtures within an indivisible homophone such as that which can be found in African American personal names (as shown above). However, nineteen of the African homophones do co-occur with European

Toponyms by Motif or Semantic Content

Founders or Memorable Africans

Abraham's Town,FL
AdderleyTown, FL
Allensworth CA
Beckwourth, CA
Belltown, DE
Bobtown, LA
**Bookertee, OK
Ceasar's Creek, FL
Coit Mountain, NH
Daniel Votaw Colony, KS
Dempsey, AL
Douglas City, OK
Eldridge, MI
Estill's Station, KY
Ferguson
Haney, OK
Harry's Bay, FL
Hoggstown, KS
James City, NC
King Heijah Town, FL
Langston, OK
Lovejoy*, IL
Montgomery, ND
Mulattoe Girl's Town, FL
Mulatto King's Town*, FL
Nero's Town, FL
*Nicodemus, KS
Payne's Town, FL
Penneytown, MI
Princeville, NC
Rhodes Creek, ID
Singleton Colony, KS
*St. Maurice Colony, LA
*Wild Cat, OK
Winstonville, MS

Ethnic/Color Reference

African Bar, CA
Africky Town, AL
Arkansas Colored, OK
Bayou Marron, LA
Blackdom,NM
Black Star,CT
Blackville,* AR
Brownlee, NA
Canadian Colored*, OK
Darky Spring, ND
Freemanville, FL
Freedmantown, TX
Negro Bar, CA
Negro Point, FL
Negro Slide, CA
Nigger Heaven, CA
North Fork Colored,
Tullahassee, OK
Yemassee, FL

State of Affairs-(emotions,experiences, actions, attitudes)

Belle Ville, GA
Bullet Town, NC
Dearfield, CO
Freedom Hill*, NC
Free Haven, NJ*
Liberty, OK
Little Hell, DE
Lost Creek, IN
Mystery Hill, CO
New Discovery, DE
Parting Ways, MA
Peace, AR
Scuffle Town, KS
Southern Improvement,
AL

Duplicate Place Name

Africa,* FL
Kentucky Ridge, CA
Kush, MS
*Little Africa, NY
Mississippi Town, KS
New Africa, MS
Rusk, OK
Tennessee Town, KS

*Indicates that the name was reported to have been eventually changed.

words, affixes, and modifiers that mostly signal a collective of persons under a system of governance (e.g., town, colony or -ville). Because these are highly transportable and unmarked, and place names are not "required" to have transparent meanings, their co-occurrence with the Africanism has an effect of leveling it toward American English.

African Semantic Transfers

The toponyms which fit into the four African semantic fields are listed by category in the table opposite.

With 39 towns and settlements having been named after African American town/settlement founders, Diop's characterization of the typical African place-name is also true for African Americans. Therefore, this propensity among African Americans is an Africanism. Of the 39 though, three were illustrious figures admired by the founders: Nicodemus, Bookertee, and St. Maurice. Because all three are African, they may just as easily have fit into the ethnic/racial category by indirection. The list of town founders actually exceeds 39 because there were white and Native American ones, e.g., Eatonville, FL, or Payne's Town, FL. There were 11 in the corpus. "Lincoln" far outnumbers them all (e.g., Lincoln City, OK, Lincoln Heights, OH, Lincolnville, FL). Washington and Jefferson do make an impression, though. The listing firmly suggests African Americans' desire to exercise self-determination.

Further, Diop and Yai both argued ethnic designating toponyms are also to be commonly found among Africa's toponyms.(92) There were 17 African American toponyms that corresponded with this semantic content. In could even be argued that toponyms such as Kush and Africa, in the context of American race relations, are indirect ethnic/racial self-references, though here they are grouped under "duplicated place-name" category above. This tendency toward ethnic self reference is an Africanism that predicts such contemporary appellations as "Chocolate City." With a toponyms using the "N-word" and "Darky" we are witnessing, no doubt, that words may elevate or deteriorate in their connotations. Evidently, they were not always slur words among African descendants, like the personal name Africanisms Sambo or Bimbo. An interesting finding was that native American ethnic group names occurred. This occurrence confirms the development of an authentic "Black Indian" identity in America. Both the Tullahassee and Yamassee were known to have integrated and sometimes assimilated with Africans who were exceptional and pivotal as warriors. It is most likely that these towns were so-named because the town founders and some of its inhabitants had been closely affiliated before forced removal to the west.

The same number (17) of toponyms referred to natural environmental features, but the researcher is not yet prepared to list such occurrences as Africanisms. Such names included Cedar Lake, Mud Town and Three Creeks.(93) Yai did provide an example of natural feature toponyms for Fons migrating to Yoruba districts, but he did not suggest they were just as numerous as ethnic references, but ethnic references, in these names, are naturally designators of Africanness. A methodology to show a propensity for such assignations when compared to other ethnic/racial groups needs to be investigated.

With 13 toponyms falling into the category, state-of-affairs commentary, Vass's position was lent some support. Names in this category, like Bullet Town or Parting Ways do evoke a picture of the inhabitants' attitudes and experiences, but contrary to Vass's prediction that the type would predominate was not supported. Diop, with his assertion about town founders' had found the most powerful explanation. However, Vass's explanation that toponym Africanisms were marked by the **absence** of animal reference was firmly supported. Only two occurred on the entire list, Cow Creek and Hare Valley.

The phenomenon wherein African American towns and settlements undergo a series of name changes seems to confirm that toponyms may parallel the stages of creolization evident in other levels of African American language (e.g., syntax). These changes seem to fit along the creole continuum (see also above). The case of Sandy Ground, NY is illustrative.(94) Sandy Ground was settled in 1833 by African American oystermen who chose self-determination and freedom from industry restrictions in Maryland. These settlers first named their town, Harrisville, after one of the founders, and became "the first free black community in New York." Their district is reported to have run a station on the Underground Railroad. Later, they changed the town's name to "Little Africa". Eventually, the town changed to its current name to reflect the "poor quality of soil in the area." Turning to the creole continuun, we may place the original name at the first stage, the Basilect. At this stage the toponym, Harrisville results from the canonical African principle that a town is named after its founder. Since it is a creole, its name becomes mixed by the conjoining of the "Americanism", *-ville*. The name change to "Little Africa" is at a mid-stage, the Mesolect. The name changes to a characteristic that is common, but not predominant in African place-naming, i.e., ethnic and/or duplication of another place-name; it is also mixed through the co-occurrence of the English word,

"Little." Then it shifts to the last stage—the Acrolect, decreolizing to "Sandy Ground." The name refers to natural environmental features, not a defining characteristic of African toponyms. With a movement toward ethnolinguistic distinctiveness, as that being sustained in the current era. It is expected that African revivalist toponyms will emerge. Oyotunji Village ('return of the Oyo kingdom') is clearly such a revival.

Overall, it was found that African influence is identifiable in African American toponyms or place names of the United States, not only in the form of African homophones, but also in the form of hybrids and semantic transfers. Further, a range of Kwa and Bantu languages have contributed over the centuries to African retention. This is so because the overwhelming majority of the ancestors of America's African descendents were brought, so woefully over the centuries, from cultural zone complexes of west and central Africa. Interestingly enough, Cheikh Anta Diop's long standing argument of a fundamental cultural unity of Africans is substantiated by the fact that several widely dispersed African languages provided source words for a single place name. When debates about African American language variety erupt, and consideration is given to Gullah, or Ebonics, or Standard Black Vernacular, the body of African American toponyms belong in those exchanges. The results from this study of African American place names confirm the importance of onomastics in the effort to identify and describe America's African heritage.

Notes

1. The public firestorm over "Ebonics" in the late 1990s is a recent testament to that popular interest.

2. Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949); Annette Kashif, "Generations of African Influenced Names Among African Americans: Forms and Meanings" (Ph.D dissertation, Howard University, 1991); J. Holloway and W. Vass, eds. *The African Heritage of American English* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press); S. Mufwene, ed., *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993).

3. D. Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 114-115.

4. The study of the etymology and use of proper names. See Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopedia,* 426.

5. Ibid, 114.

6. Annette Kashif, personal communication with Dorothy Shabazz, January 2000.

7. T. Obenga, "Who Am I?", *in African World History Project,* J. Carruthers and L. Harris, eds., 31-44 (Los Angeles: ASCAC, 1997), 43.

8. N. Akbar, "The Mummy is Out of the Tomb," lecture given in Washington, DC, 1989.

9. A. N. Wilson, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness* (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1993), 22.

10. S. Mufwene, "Dictionaries and Proper Names," in *International Journal of Lexicography* 13(3)(1988): 268-283.

11. T. Alegeo, *On Defining the Proper Name* (Ganiesville: Uniersity of Florida Press, 1973), 83.

12. Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopedia,* 114.

13. See B. Blount, "Luo Personal Names: Reference and Meaning," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, 1989

14. D. Biebuyck, S. Kelliher, and L. McRae, *African Ethnonyms: Index to Art-Producing Peoples of Africa* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), xiii.

15. C. A. Diop, "A Methodology for the Study of Migrations," in *African Ethnonyms and Toponyms,* 86-109 (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1984), 105.

16. O. Yai, "African Ethnonymy and Toponomy: Reflections on Decolonization," in *African Ethnonyms and Toponyms,* 39-50 (Pairs: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1984), 41.

17. Ibid, 41-42.

18. A "creole" language means, within a mixed language, crystallized at a stage intermediate between an ancestor language, and a targeted successor language that has a second or later generation of speakers.

19. R. Jeffers and I. Lehiste, *Principles and Methods for Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 52.

20. Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopedia,* 114.

21. A "pidgin" is a language with a reduced range of structure and use, characterized in the first stages of language shift. Ibid, 428.

22. Diop, "A Methodology for the Study of Migrations," 15; J. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 50.

23. G. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1992), 121.

24. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana,* 133.

25. Ibid, 155.

26. Ibid, 142.

27. K. Bilby and D. B. N'diaye, "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Culture in the Americas," in *Festival of American Folklife,* P. Seitel, ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1992), 54-58.

28. H. Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States," in *Maroons Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas,* R. Price, ed., 151-167 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 152.

29. Margaret W. Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 114.

30. Ibid, 116.

31. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana,* 212.

32. Ibid, 145-166.

33. Kevin McCarthy, *The Hippocrene U.S.A. Guide to Black Florida* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1995), 44.

34. McCarthy, *Guide to Black Florida,* 42-44.

35. L. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000), 203.

36. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida,* 204.

37. H. Laemming, *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and North Carolina* (New York: Garland, 1995).

38. Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States," 152.

39. Laemming, *Hidden Americans,* 286-293.

40. George Stewart, *Names on the Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 329.

41. William Stewart, "Acculturative Processes and the Language of the American Negro," in *Language in its Social Setting,* W. Gage, ed., 1-46 (Washington, DC: The Anthropological Society, 1974), 20.

42. Holloway and Vass, *African Heritage of American English,* 134.

43. Ibid, 367.

44. Morris Turner, *America's Black Towns and Settlements: V.1* (Rohnert Park, CA: Missing Pages Productions, 1998), 92.

45. Ibid, 94.

46. Ibid, 41-42.

47. L. Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America* (New York: Penguin Group, 1993) 170, 252; V. P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* (Westport, CT: Lawerence Hill, Co., 1984), 111-112.

48. Kashif, "Generations of African Influenced Names," 20.

49. One language which is modified from formal to informal based on the social context of communication.

50. M. Berry and J. Blassingame, *Long Memory: The Black Experience in America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 403.

51. See Bennett, *The Shaping of Black America,* 187-191.

52. P. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 288, footnote 35.

53. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination,* 127-142.

54. Ibid, 132.

55. Turner, *America's Black Towns,* 12.

56. Kashif, "Generations of African Influenced Names," 21.

57. Ibid, 22.

58. Bennett, *The Shaping of Black America,* 267-269.

59. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination,* 143.

60. Ibid, 144.

61. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect,* 40.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, 307, footnote 8.

64. Holloway and Vass, *African Heritage of American English,* 108.

65. A. Weise, "Places of Our Own: Suburban Black Towns Before 1960," in *Journal of Urban History* 19(3)(1993): 50.

66. Weise, "Places of Our Own," 31.

67. Ibid, 30.

68. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination,* 126.

69. Bennett, *The Shaping of Black America,* 341.

70. M. R. Hoover, "Community Attitudes Toward Black English," in *Language In Society* 1(1978): 65-87.

71. It must be remembered that those of royal lineage were not spared the Middle Passage during the devastation of slavery, and are most probably, the original sources of the popularity of this name as an official one among African Americans.

72. Mesolect is a theorized "midpoint" between a deep creole and disparate prestige-dialect target. SBE, Standard Black English, is defined by the use of codified standard English syntax, but with the maintenance of distinctive phonological features and stylistic devices.

73. Holloway and Vass, *The African Heritage of American English,* 108.

74. Ibid, 42.

75. Kashif, "Generations of African Influenced Names."

76. A. Morris, *Florida Place Names* (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press), 61.

77. Holloway and Vass, *The African Heritage of American English,* 129.

78. An analysis for "Pocosin" has not yet finalized; the Kongo word, mpakasa, is a strong possibility.

79. P. Kenney, "LaVilla, Florida, 1866-1887: Reconstruction Dreams and the Formation of a Black Community," in *The African American Heritage of Florida,* D. Colburn and J. Landers, eds. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press), 185.

80. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana,* 214-16.

81. Wimby, R., Roberts, R., and Carruthers, J., *Mdt rn Kmt: Kemetic Name Book* (Chicago: The Kemetic Institute, 1987), 8.

82. Sir Alfred Cornelius Moloney, *West African Fisheries,* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1883).

83. Holloway and Vass, *The African Heritage of American English,* 130.

84. J. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), 15-48.

85. T. Tamuno, "Traditional Police in Nigeria," in *Traditional Religion in West Africa,* in A. Adegbola, ed. (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1983), 181.

86. F. Abate, ed., *American Places Dictionary* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1974), 151.

87. Holloway and Vass, *The African Heritage of American English,* 134.

88. D. Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 76.

89. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida,* 80-89,98-99.

90. Ibid, 79.

91. Kashif, *Generations of African Influenced Names,* 60.

92. Diop, "A Methodology for the Study of Migrations," 92.

93. Toponyms referring to natural features: Beech Bottoms, NC; Cedarlake, AL; Fairmount Heights; Greenwood Village, AL; Highland Beach, MD; Lakeview, AR; Lawncrest, NJ; Mound Bayou, MS; Mud Town, KS; Plateau, AL; Sandy Ground, NY; Star Hill, DE; Three Creeks, MI; Urbancrest, OH; Cow Creek, MI; Hare Valley, VA; Clearview, OK; Small Farms, AL.

94. M. Turner, *America's Black Towns,* 116.

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Autobio-*graphic* Space: Reconciling African American Identity with the (In)Visible Past

coleman a. jordan (ebo)

Space, like language, is socially constructed; and like the syntax of language, the spatial arrangements of our buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender, race, and class relations in society. The uses of both language and space contribute to the power of some groups over others and the maintenance of human inequality.(1)

In this project, I explore what I call "Autobio-*graphic* Architecture," and the ways in which it can facilitate a reconciliation of African American identity today with its (In)Visible Past. The social construction of space and language, pointed out by Leslie Karnes Weisman, is crucial to understanding the role of autobiography in recovering and designing (re)presentations of African American architecture. Thus, our stories and identities need to be recovered and told—both through language, and spatial constructs. While emphasizing that we should learn from the past in order to embrace our present *identities,* I will argue for designing structures that construct American identity as "reconciling" with, and reflecting inclusive and egalitarian spaces for a diverse and multivalent society. The journey I present here is an autobiographical account of my search for an architecture that expresses and constructs identity beyond the stereotypes of "race" and hegemonic "culture," while also celebrating what LaVerne Wells-Bowie calls "rooted[ness] in actual cultural experience and racial memory."(2)

As William L. Andrews stated in his introduction to *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays,* "autobiography holds a position of priority, indeed many would say preeminence, among the narrative traditions of black America." Indeed, "ours is an extraordinarily self-reflexive tradition."(3) As I want to argue, this self-reflectivity ought to become an important feature of the "education of an architect." If we are ever to go beyond hegemonic pedagogues and professional practices that replicates them, we must learn how to engage in what bell hooks terms "recall[ing] yourself."(4) Such a shift in how we view architecture implies a decisive revision of how we define our whole discipline, and our roles and identities in it. In Wells-Bowie's words, we should "want…[our] relationship to space to evoke architecture as it is informed by the humanities, not architecture simply as a technical art."(5)

While employing Toni Morrison's creed that "the past is more infinite than the future," I argue, then, that architecture, like literature, writes its own narratives, which reflect specific constructions of identity. For example, Toni Morrison and Ralph Ellison, consciously wanted "space" to find themselves in American literary tradition, in which they were invisible. Like architects, like masters of language, they had to construct it for themselves. Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man,* and Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination,* show that it is possible to reconcile past and present. These works—a novel and a series of literary critical essays—can be read as African American autobio-*graphic* proofs that we can heal the wounds caused by the legacy of slavery, and construct a space where an all-inclusive *American identity can be recalled.* In these writers, such a reconciliation involves an autobiographical examination of the ways in which knowledge that has been passed on to us can, as Toni Morrison says, "[be] transformed from invasion and conquest to revelation and choice."(6) Again, such unlearning, or decolonization of one's mind, is a desired goal for the "education of the architect/designer."

Like Morrison, who wrote her books because she wanted to read about people like herself, I find myself in search of a similar "space," revelation,

Figure 1. View from the African slave auction hall at Elimna Castle in Elimna, Ghana

Figure 2. "Door of no return." Entry to the male slave dungeon

Figure 3. The first Anglican Chapel in Ghana above and the entry to the male slave dungeon below.

Images courtesy of coleman a. jordan.

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and choice that can house and express African American identity today. Through my autobiographical architectural constructs, I want to reach into the past to reconstruct the present, and create spaces and details in which there are no "invisible" people. A solid foundation reinforces the sustainability of most structures. To blacks in America, that foundation has been obstructed, a *scab*(7), by the social constructions of "race" and racialized definition of American identity. The following statement qualifies this paradox of African American identity:

> Think of how much a black person has to sell of himself/ (herself) to try to get race not to matter… You have to ignore the insults. You have to ignore the natural loyalties. You have to ignore your past. In a sense, you have to just about deny yourself.(8)

Such denial means erasure of one's identity, and thus, of one's roots in the past, not to mention one's cultural heritage in the present. This should be unacceptable, not only to blacks, but to all Americans. In effect, "race matters,"(9) is the corner stone of my work that spans the continents of North America and Africa. By looking into the narratives inscribed into African slave structures, I attempt to construct architecture of African American identity. As bell hooks says, "It is the telling of our history that enables political [and architectural] self-recovery."(10) My autobiographical narrative today recovers Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, West Africa, as a space for reconciliation between the past and present constructs, and the new awareness of African American and American identity.

"Sankofa," a Call to the "Motherland."(11)

This project employs the results of my research in Ghana, while I participated in a preservation program sponsored by US/ICOMOS (United States/International Committee on Monuments and Sites), and my recent work in both Charleston, SC and Liverpool, England. As multinational slave trade centers, the African slave castles provided meeting spaces and "contact zones," as Mary Louise Pratt would call it, for the cultures of North and South Americas, and Europe.(12) This coming together of diverse European and "American," traders in "African gold/human flesh" inspired my inquiry into the specific national and ethnic cultures, whose histories were inscribed into the castles. These cultures were subsumed under all-encompassing geographic, and thus, in a sense, spatial generalizations—i.e., American, African, European.

My research of the slave structures focuses on the ways in which they represent more specific cultural identities and power relations. More important, I examine the stories of survival of the oppressed, and the power/arrogance of the oppressors that were imprinted on the slave castles. My scholarly, and autobiographical, project in Ghana is closely linked to my study of repressed and "invisible" identities encoded in American structures, and the practice and teaching of architecture. I hope to show that the architectural legacy of the African Diaspora should provide a context for reading structures that represent dominant American identity. By examining the conspicuous erasures and absences of the Africanist presence from legacies such as Thomas Jefferson, an architect in his own right who America has structurally memorialized:

> For all this the enforcers of white supremacy claimed, and with justice, a mandate in Thomas Jefferson's well-known doctrine that there was no place for free blacks in American society. If blacks were emancipated and yet remained in America and in the South, then they had to be brought under restraint.(13)

e. g., the Jefferson Memorial, we can begin to reconstruct American identity, to "recall" its true cultural heritage.

Although I was in Ghana to research the preservation efforts concerning numerous castles and forts that served the African slave trade along Ghana's West Coast, I could not resist the call of my ancestors from whence they came. And "come" is not exactly the verb that reflects the historical facts of their removal.

My focus, Cape Coast Castle, one of three appellation castles, was first constructed by the Swedes in 1653. (Figure 1) It was later occupied by the British and the Dutch, due to a change of hands following battles for trade positioning. From this castle trade expanded to the Caribbean, England, and the United States. The castle site was strategically planned, with its foundation upon a rock bed pier on the water's edge of Cape Coast City, the former capital of Ghana during the colonial period when it was governed by England.(14) The dominant scale of the castle is overwhelming, compared to other nearby structures. However, those near-by structures tend to face inland, or away from the castle, as if to deny its presence. The castle's appearance, though imposing in scale, is often ignored by the inhabitants of the area. The form seems to be left alone, desolate, and meaningless. But humbled it is not, as it still stands proud, as a painful reminder of the past but also a "space" where reunion and return are now

possible. As a space that embodies and requires autobio-*graphic* architectural revisions, it can teach us much about the painful and guilt-ridden origins of what we today call African American identity as well as American identity.

"White-washed history" is a term that has been used by those activists opposing the preservation efforts to describe the renovated facades as having suffered an erasure of their characteristic historic texture and authenticity. This argument stems from good evidence, as visitors often question, "is this a new building?" when referring to the castles and forts that have been preserved or renovated like that. Cape Coast Castle was no exception, and I, too, was taken by the "white-washed" vibrant nuance of the facade. Just as the erasure and erosion of these structures were setting in, the erasure of education about the history they represented was also undergoing a process of "white-washing." Astonishingly enough, because of their colonized education in the past, many Ghanaians in the present have not learned the stories of the castles that dominate their coastal landscape.

The authenticity of Cape Coast Castle's facade—the stone and brick from the eighteenth century—has been painted over and, in some cases, parts have been replaced without any account having been left of the old texture. The contrast of images "before preservation" and "after" may, in effect, be indicating that these monuments, that carry much historical depth, seem to have been vandalized. After all, these castles contain the history of many cultures, not to mention that they sustained many European and American economies for centuries. For example, Charleston, South Carolina, where two thirds of America's African slave population landed, succeeded to break free of recession due to productivity of African slaves tending to its numerous fields and plantations. Like South Carolina plantations, the castles and forts in Ghana are now seen as tourist attractions. They are controlled by organizations like GMMB (Ghana's Monuments and Museum Board) and individual European investors that seem to capitalize on their painful history. Even worse, these exploiters of historic spaces often eagerly erase their character under the guise of preservation, which is often conducted without much sympathy for those to whom these spaces embody their sacred past.

For example, there were proposals to convert the slave castles into hotels and restaurants, which were abandoned only after heavy protest from Ghana's African American community and Africanists from the West Indies. Thanks to these protests, many of the structures will become historical museums that are needed to educate both the inhabitants of the areas around them, and the tourists who will come to visit them. Looking at historic slave structures as possibilities for capitalist investments only proves that their original oppressive functions still prevail. Thus the painful history of the "other" is overlooked and, in some cases, identities that are rooted in them irrevocably lost. As John Michael Vlach argues for his research of such structures, it is important to "recover the dimensions of southern architectural history that have…been too long overlooked and unreported."(15) Only when more Americans realize the critical nature of knowing their inter-connected roles in history, will identity politics become an issue of the past. America must become accountable for and face its own identity.

Such coming face to face with their identity means, among other things, that Americans preserve not only the past of slavery at home but also "go back to Africa" to study the structures there. Thus, while keeping in mind that we need to inquire, as Vlach says, "[in] back of the big house," let us leap from the American South back to Cape Coast Castle in Ghana.(16) The plan of this form, outside of the defensive post along the ridge of the castle, is introverted in design as to focus all attention on the inside courtyard, where slaves were routinely brought in, and where the traders came to make their purchases. Designed as early shopping malls, the castles became markets for booming trade in weapons and gold/human flesh. Their functions dictated their design—it had to help separate and sort the humans for sale, and to communicate the power and might that defended their precious contents.

The Governor's Quarters, the master-controller's space of power and indolence was situated overlooking the courtyard on the central axis in line of the entry gate and the exit into the sea. He was positioned in order to always know who entered and who exited. The inhabitants in charge of these structures were governors and officers, as well as their soldiers or crewmen sent from European countries to purchase, sell, and protect their merchandise. For example, the Danish castle, Christianborg Castle, which is located in Accra, Ghana, documents its officers as, "outcast at home, convicts released from Copenhagen jails, bankrupts, or plain rejects from a Danish society eager to get rid of them."

In their "castles" overseas, such "masters," then, "could lead a life of indolence, with little or no restraint. There they might indulge nearly every human passion with utter freedom, whether it be confirmed drunkenness, or unrestrained intercourse with Negro girls. They knew that the deadly climate

was likely to claim them, so it was a 'short life and a merry one' for many of these outcasts." (17)

As mentioned before, overlooking the courtyard and on axis to it, as if to manage or maintain order within the castle, was the governor's quarters. Its central location allowed a view all around with a constant breeze to cool the inhabitants. Cape Coast Castle saw many Governors of different European nationalities. The setting was elaborate compared to settings for the rest of the castle population, enabling them to lay in comfort of both conscience and greed, far from the scenes of pain and torture.

The Store Room often revealed a secret passageway to the women's dungeon. The secret and dark spaces, "passages" and pleasures of hidden power are suggested here. Apart from house wines and objects of personal value, the governor's store room thus also had in store a raw passageway to the women's dungeon, where the master could choose to go for personal pleasure. Female slaves were routinely selected for such "inspection of goods." In these spaces, the governor could play out his dual role of master-leader and rapist.

Palaver Hall, the auction hall, was where merchants/shippers came to purchase their goods. The stillness of this room was as if suspended in time. The ghostly presence of the past howled through this empty room with gaping, arched windows positioned along the side for ventilation and light. Ventilation was provided for the buyers, so that they could breathe easily as they chose their purchases; there was light so that they could see the best of the human stock. Then there is "the wall" that, like the whole room, seems suspended in time, the wall which used to be the backdrop against which the enslaved were sold. A stage of sorts, it celebrated dehumanization; it is a platform, where the slaves appeared with no name, no identity, no life, where they were paraded as mere objects. I grew curious about the effects and emotions of tourists who were in the room with me—both the descendants of the Diaspora as well as the descendants of the oppressors. After all, our "common," painful heritage was all around us….

"On Being Brought
from Africa to America"(18)

'Twas mercy brought me
from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God,
there's a *Saviour* too;
Once I redemption neither
sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race
with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, *Christians, Negroes,*
black as *Cain* (19),
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

The Chapel, the first Anglican church in Ghana, was located in Cape Coast Castle. Christianity was the "white" religion that saved only a chosen few. Might the presence of the chapel signify, though, that maybe there was a conscience to be found in the traders after all? Upon closer examination a paradox is revealed. The chapel is founded/supported by the walls of the male slave dungeons. The entry's greedy "mouth" is directly below the floor of the chapel. The chapel's windows seem to be "eyes" placed above a mouth which resembles, in yet another architectural inter-text, the famous entry and portal of *Palazzetto Zuccari* in Rome. Rasmussen calls Zuccari's portal the "gaping jaws of a giant."(20) A similar association can be made with the dungeon entrance at Cape Coast Castle, windows-eyes peering atop the gaping mouth-entry as if to watch those entering with a "scornful eye." We may want to ask, after Phyllis Wheatley's poem, on whose shoulders, sweat and blood are the church foundations constructed and who receives the burden of redemption?

In the Dungeons…
A charnel stench,
effluvium of living death
spreads outward from the hold,
where the living and the dead,
the horribly dying,
lie interlocked,
lie foul with blood and excrement.(21)

Suffocation, suffocation from lack of air and suffocation from lack of life (or do we dare say "identity"?). The odor, the odorous presence of flesh, stale blood, pain, and death. The excrement and decayed bones that have lain unsettled for centuries are there to this day, they are the floor we walked on. Imagine thousands of slaves packed in overcrowded spaces with no light, no ventilation, no contact with the outside. The dungeons and the structure itself seem to preserve the imprint of their presence. As we know, many had been raped, tortured; some women bore the children of their rapists there, never to see them again after they had been separated from the mothers on the auction block. Millions died in the dungeons from poisonous sewage, tropical diseases, trauma, fear, claustrophobia, and suffocation.

If this feels like a journey, it is because it was one for me.(22)

Like a conclusion or climax, the coldness of the gate at the end of the castle was poignant. I felt this doorway, this "doorway of no return", stared at me, followed me around as if to draw me to it. In this sense it clearly provided a frame and an end to the narrative of our passage. Indeed it is referred to as the "doorway of no return"—the final exit for a slave before she or he reached the destiny in a new land or died at

sea. (Figure 2) As I was told about this final exit by a tour guide during my first visit, I heard that this passage was the exit through which my ancestors were never to return to this place. I immediately looked him the eye and stated, "well, I guess I've returned."

Sankofa!
That bird is wise,
Look. Its beak, back turned, picks
For the present, what is best
from ancient eyes,
Then steps forward, on ahead
To meet the future, undeterred.(23)

Like stories from the past, the monuments, buildings, and sites inscribe not only (his)story but also (our)story as the descendants of Africans in Diaspora. Just as structures are supported on foundations, our origins still inform the present. They are silently whispering the truth about both "his" story and "ours" in white-dominated, patriarchal America. Once the space and detail are created, or corrupted, in the structure, the erasure or distortion of stories and people are etched within the walls.

The entry into the male dungeon at Cape Coast Castle, an entry into our past, is a symbolic construct of a womb/wound of the "motherland" who was raped, deprived of her identity, and who has never healed. This dungeon-"mouth" expelled and devoured many African lives.(Figure 3) It is a space where both death and survival coexisted, much like they do in other sites that witnessed martyrology and genocide.(24)

The stories of the present, are the effects of what was erected and erased in the past. More inclusive education and the communication age have allowed the "other" to see through the deceptions and contradictions that are still often called "tradition." Today we are thus, the descendants of those whose histories sketched and drafted "us," wrote us into who we are. But our present identity still raises questions and creates a need to unlearn and reconstruct traditional knowledge about origins and functions of identity.

In embracing the past we can at least try to come to terms with who we are and how we have been represented. The healing must begin with the desire to know and learn about each other. For example, Nana Cofu Robinson, an African American, lives in-sync with the people of Ghana by embracing their culture and understanding his own.

In "our" stories to come, the future, we attempt to construct an ideal identity by mapping and transforming into positive material the past pain, cruelty, and redemption. In my work, I have realized that I am also retracing a profound Diasporic journey. However, this journey is not simply "back to Africa." My narrative is located between Ghana and the United States and maps one of many routes of self-study that can help both African Americans and all Americans alike to reconcile a difficult past with an uneasy present in a multiethnic culture. It is a look at autobiographical readings of space as erected by and erecting American identity.

I was inspired by the Nsibidi symbols of African origins about which you can read in Robert Farris Thompson's, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy.* This symbol is a metaphorical representation of strength that I have derived from my journey thus far. The original symbol means "all the country belongs to me." It was one of the many symbols used to communicate by Africans in Diaspora. I now (re)interpret it as my logo to mean, his land belongs to me—*and*—us. It's all inclusive!

bell hooks emphasizes that "overall, we have to think deeply about the cultural legacies that can sustain us, that can protect us against the cultural genocide that is daily destroying our past. We need to document the existence of living traditions, both past and present, that can heal our wounds and offer us a space of opportunity where our lives can be transformed."(25)

The appearance of the slave castles as such spaces for transformation of identity can be very deceiving, as the preservation efforts are unclear in their goals. These castles relate different meanings to different people and the reactions to them vary widely. Yet the question remains—why is this part of world history unknown and unclear to so many? It was W. E. B. DuBois who said, "millions of Black men (and women) in Africa, America and the Islands of the Sea…are bound to have great influence upon the world in the future." That future is now, but I want to stress that we must continue "mapping" the past so that we can live together in the more honest and egalitarian present.

As I have shown, the Diasporic roots of many American blacks are architecturally represented by slave castles in West Africa. In my discussion, I have focused on the preservation efforts in Ghana, West Africa, that have enabled many black Americans like myself to visit the slave castles as tourists who seek structures that symbolize their past and cultural roots. While emphasizing that we should learn from the past in order to embrace our present *identities,* I thus hope to design structures that construct American identity as "reconciling" with and reflecting inclusive and egalitarian spaces for a diverse and multivalent society. Thus the journey I have presented here is an autobiographical account of a search for my architecture, one that expresses and constructs identity beyond the stereotypes of "race" and hegemonic "culture."

Notes

1. Leslie Kanes Weisman, *Discrimination by Design: A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, Illini Books edition, 1994), 2.

2. Wells-Bowie's quote comes from the chapter "Talking Black Space," in bell hooks, *Art On My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 153.

3. William L. Andrews, *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1993), 1. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., quoted after Andrews, p.1.

4. hooks, *Art On My Mind,* 153

5. Wells-Bowie quoted in hooks, *Art On My Mind,* 154.

6. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 8.

7. Lebbeus Woods, "War and Architecture," in *Pamphlet Architecture* 15, (Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 24.

8. Mark Whitaker, "White and Black Lies." *Newsweek,* 15 November, (1993).

9. Cornell West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

10. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 176.

11. This term is used in the description of a Ghanaian Adinkra (a past king of Gyaman, now Ivory Coast) symbol which means, "It is no taboo to return and fetch it when you forget."

12. Mary Louis Pratt, "Acts of the Contact Zone" in *Profession* 91 (1991): 34.

13. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark.*

14. Albert van Datzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1980).

15. John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xii.

16. Vlach, *Back of the Big House.*

17. Isodor Paiewonsky, *Eyewitness Accounts of Slavery in the Danish West Indies: Also Graphic Tales of Other Slave Happenings on Ships and Plantations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 15-16.

18. Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" in *The Norton Anthology: African American Literature* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 170.

19. Cain is said to have been "marked" by God. Some readers of the Bible thought that Cain thereby became the first black man.

20. Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 38.

21. Robert Hayden, "Middle Passage," in *The Norton Anthology: African American Literature,* 104-107th verse (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 1504.

22. A term originally used by Nana Cofu Robinson and Queen Mother Robinson to describe the final departure gate for African slaves from the castles and forts.

23. Albert W. Kayper-Mensah, *Sankofa: Adinkra Poems* (Tema: The Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1976), 4.

24. Although not included in this paper, I have begun to make comparative studies to architectural structures of martyrology, such as Auschwitz, and African slave entry ports in Liverpool, England.

25. hooks, *Art On My Mind,* 162.

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